

From Your Pastor

A Study of the Shorter Catechism

Question 17: Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?

Answer: The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

An Explanation: There is a lot of unhappiness in the world. As the blues song says, “*Nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen*”; this is the sad testimony of many souls in this world. In the Bible, we learn that true happiness (or “blessedness”) and contentment for man comes from holiness (Deut. 8; Ecc. 8:12, 12:13; Matt. 5:3ff). Holiness is God-likeness in our person and hearts. We were created upright and holy, and so we were happy (Gen. 2; Eph. 4:23ff; Ecc. 7:29). But mankind has fallen into an “*estate of sin and misery*”. The opposite of holiness and happiness is sin and misery: “...*My soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is*” (Lam. 3:17).

Mankind’s soul has been made miserable by sin; we are truly *Les Miserables!* God’s image in man has not been wholly lost in the fall, but it has been defaced and deformed. Like a beautiful statue that has fallen and crumbled into pieces, or a magnificent painting that has been sprayed with graffiti like a bathroom wall, there remains some beauty in the pieces and painting, but man is incapable of healing himself from this awful predicament. Because of sin, man’s heart is deceitful above all things and sick (Jer. 17:9), unable to do good (Jer. 4:22), self-satisfied (Hos. 13:5-6; Rev. 3:17), full of futility and vanity, and darkened in understanding, dead in trespasses and sins, and alienated from the life of God (Eph. 2:1-3; 4:17-18).

But not only was mankind effected by the fall into sin and misery, but all creation, all nature, this entire world in which we live deeply feels the subjection and bondage. As the Apostle Paul puts it, the creation has been subjected to terrible sin and misery because of Adam’s sin, and now longs for the full restoration of all things:

“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning...” (see Romans 8:20-25).

Every deer that runs from your presence, every lion that roars at you, every snake that seeks to bite you, is a reminder that you have single-handedly made a mess of creation in your rebellion against God, and been unfaithful in caring for creation and nature as you were created to do, and the animals’ behavior toward you can be healthy reminders of your sin against God (**and them!** Thank God, that in his kindness, he gives us loving Labradors who love us silly in spite of our sins!! Pets are evidences of God’s grace).

Let us thank God that Jesus Christ has come into this world of sin and misery, not only to bring man restoration and hope in His salvation, but to begin the New Creation with the sending of His Spirit. Christ, in His sorrow, misery, forsakenness, and brokenness on the cross, has come to bring us joy, hope, reconciliation to God, healing through His love—and a new world for us to live in characterized by holiness and happiness! God in Christ is reconciling sinners, restoring the image of God in them, and preparing the cosmos for a full and restoration and blessedness! As the Apostle Peter teaches us:

“But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace” (2 Peter 3:13-14).

A Prayer: Father, thank you that you sent Christ to bring a new creation into our hearts (2 Cor. 5:17); that you have begun the process of restoring us into your blessed image, and to give us a foretaste of joy and bliss of the New Heavens and the New Earth (Eph. 1:14; 2 Cor. 1:20-22; Heb. 6:4-6). Thank you that you have begun the restoration of the sons of God and the whole cosmos (Rom. 8:22ff)! Let us live as those who hope with great faith and patience for the full realization of all of your powerful promises to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Thank you, Holy Spirit, that you have come into our sin and misery to bring forth in our hearts the power of the Age to Come, and the immeasurable great resurrection power that we need to be holy and sanctified and blameless on the Day of Christ’s appearing (Eph. 1:19ff)! Amen.

In Christ’s love,
Pastor Biggs

“I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.”

- ^{ESV} 2 Corinthians 11:2