

Facing our Failures

Day Two of the Heidelberg Catechism
[1563]



Last Week: The conclusion of Day One

Question: What must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort?

Answer: Three things:

first, how great my sin and misery are;
second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery;

third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.

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The Day Two Questions:

1. How do you come to know your misery?
2. What does God's Law require of us?
3. Can you live up to all this perfectly?

How do you come to know your misery?

Answer: The law of God tells me.

²⁰Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

²¹So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²²For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?

Romans 3:20, 7:21-24

What does God's law require of us?

³⁷ Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Matthew 22:37-40

[Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18]

Can you live up to all this perfectly?

Answer: No. I have a natural tendency to hate God and my neighbor.

For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. ¹⁰ As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God...

Romans 3:9-11

Can you live up to all this perfectly?

⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us... ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

I John 1:8,10

The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.

Genesis 6:5

Can you live up to all this perfectly?

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

Jeremiah 17:9

⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. **Romans 8:7**

Can you live up to all this perfectly?

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

Ephesians 2:1-3

Can you live up to all this perfectly?

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

Titus 3:3

Wrap-up thus far:

- On a relative scale, it appears to us that some humans are more righteous or virtuous than others.
- On an absolute scale, no human is righteous to the point of achieving the standards demanded in the Law of God
- From the perspective of human destiny, the human condition is indeed miserable!

Tonight's Take-home:

We cannot give thanks in all circumstances unless we understand the depth of our misery and hopelessness of our own human condition without Jesus Christ and the salvation which he offers.

Let us pray...

