

**READINGS:** Exodus 20:1-17 & Ps. 51

**SINGING:** 251:1-3 – 1:1, 2 - 294:1-3 – 142:1-2 – 102:1-5

Reminder: *The purpose of the Catechism is to lead sinners to the only comfort in life and death which is found in Jesus Christ only!*

A. The Pathway to lead sinners there

1. clear diagnosis of our condition (Lord's Day 2 & 3)

2. acceptance of this diagnosis of our condition (Lord's Day 4)

**THREE VAIN ATTEMPTS TO DENY REALITY OF OUR TRUE CONDITION**

I. God isn't fair! II. God isn't that harsh! III. God is so merciful!

**I. GOD ISN'T FAIR**

A. Each diagnosis invites response

1. God's diagnosis man: *totally depraved of all -no ability to do good!*

a. we once were 'like beautiful palace & habitation of God

b. it is part of our fallen condition that we *don't weep @ fall!*

B. Yet God still calls us to obedience **despite fallen condition**

1. Consider what God requires: Ezek. 18:31 – Mark. 1:15 – Heb. 12:25

2. We are held responsible for not obeying His call to repent/belief: Heb. 3:18-19; Jude 5; Acts 13:46

C. Objection: *How can God demand this when I am spiritually dead?*

D. Answer: *God holds us responsible to what we were able to do before*

1. Because our *inability as mankind is "self-imposed"*

2. Because our *inability as mankind is "our personal guilt"* (Rom. 5:12)

E. God teaches His people to *drop this objection and surrender to His Word*

**II. GOD ISN'T THAT HARSH**

A. We all know we deserve to be punished (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23)

1. Adam knew that *instantly* upon his sinning

2. As our knowledge/insight about sin grows, this *fear/dread* will grow

a. All sins are *bad* yet some sins are *worse* or *worst*

b. no sins greater than *those done against God's known attributes*

B. All sinners will be punished: *God is terribly angry with all our sins*

1. We are 'cursed' (Gal. 3:10)

a. God's justice will be executed as He will pour out His wrath

b. Execution of God's wrath has started in all temporal sufferings

c. The eternal phase of God's sentence is unfathomable

C. Is God teaching you to reject this pillow of vain hope?

### **III. GOD IS SO GOOD BECAUSE HE IS SO MERCIFUL**

A. Third vain 'thinking' to avoid the reality of our condition

1. The rejection of the diagnosis will prevent you to find true comfort!

B. God's mercy can become a vain ground of hope

1. Truth is that God is *abounding in mercy and grace* (Ex. 34:6-7; Ps. 86:5; 1 John 4:8)

2. No truth is more hidden for our convicted minds

3. Yet no truth is more clearly revealed than God's mercy

a. let His goodness spur you on to seek Him (Rom. 2:4; 12:20-21)

C. God's mercy is vain appeal when His justice is ignored

1. God cannot exercise mercy at the expense of justice (Cat. 11)

a. therefore an appeal for mercy without repentance and turning away from sins is a mockery of God's attributes

b. without repentance there is *no forgiveness – mercy* (Is. 55:7)

2. Sacred truth is that *God cannot show mercy unless His justice is fully honored yet He paved the way **how to do it in the Gospel of Christ***

Close: All mankind's excuses are like Jericho's walls!

A. Looks may be impressive, water-tight yet utterly deceitful

B. Only way to find real comfort in life and death is to *surrender to God's just judgment – approach Him to come with the cord around the neck*