

The Theology of the Westminster Standards
WCF 6.5–6 – Our Ongoing Sin Problem

“Till sin be bitter; Christ will not be sweet.” – Thomas Watson

I. WCF 6.1–6 “At a Glance”

A. Section 1 – The first sin, and the permission, purposes and glory of God

1. *“Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned, in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin, God was pleased ... to permit ...”*

B. Section 2 – The consequences of sin for Adam and Eve

1. *“By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God ...”*

C. Section 3 – The consequences of their sin for their descendants

1. *“They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed; and the same death in sin, and corrupted nature, conveyed to all their posterity ...”*
2. **Rom 5:12** – *“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man ... and so death spread to all men because all sinned ...”*

D. Section 4 – Original corruption and our actual sins

1. *“From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.”*
2. **Rom 3:10–11** – *“None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God ... no one does good, not even one.”*
3. **Matt 15:19–20** – *“For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. ²⁰ These are what defile a person.”*

*“The helix of sin can twist in different directions but its tendency is always downwards, unless stopped by the grace of God.” – Chad Van Dixhoorn, *Confessing the Faith*, 90.*

II. WCF 6.5 – The Persistence of Original Corruption, Even in the Regenerate

This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be, through Christ, pardoned, and mortified; yet both itself, and all the motions thereof, are truly and properly sin. (*WCF 6.5*)

A. Three Key Realities

1. Those unite to Christ (by faith) have been regenerated by His life in them!
 - a. **Eph 2:4–5** – *“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.”*

2. The dominion of sin is broken for those united to Christ!

- a. **Rom 6:6–7** – “*We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.*”⁷ *For one who has died has been set free from sin.*”

“Because the old man was condemned and put to death in Christ’s death on the cross, the body of sin, the flesh, the old mode of existence of sin, has lost its dominion and control over those who are in him. In Christ’s death and resurrection they have been transferred to the new order to life—the life order of the new creation, the new man.” – Herman Ridderbos, *Paul*, 63

3. Some (many?!) remnants of corruption remain in every part (*WCF* 13.2).

B. How does Paul envision the Christian life in Gal 2:20?

1. **Gal 2:20** – “*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*”

“On the one hand, in virtue of their communion with Christ, believers belong to the new creation, they have been redeemed from the present aeon and have gone over into the kingdom of Christ; on the other, they are still in the flesh, and consequently with all their present mode of existence they belong to the present world.” – Ridderbos, *Paul*, 301

III. **WCF 6.6 – The Nature and Consequences of Sin**

Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereunto, doth, in its own nature, bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all miseries spiritual, temporal, and eternal. (*WCF* 6.6)

A. Key Texts

1. **Eph 2:3** – “*... we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*”
2. **Gal 3:10** – “*For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.’”*
3. **Rom 6:23** – “*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

B. Are all sins equally heinous? Can you give an example?

As there is no sin so small, but it deserves damnation; so there is no sin so great, that it can bring damnation upon those who truly repent. (*WCF* 15.4)

For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
¹² as far as the east is from the west,

so far does he remove our transgressions from us (Ps 103:11–12)