

**The Theology of the Westminster Standards**  
**WCF 7.3 – The Covenant of Grace**

*“For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.  
<sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” – 1 Cor 15:21–22*

**I. Review: The Covenant of Works**

*“The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.” (WCF 7.2)*

Q. *What special act of providence did God exercise toward man in the estate wherein he was created?* A. When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon pain of death. (WSC 12)

- A. Who are the **parties** of the Covenant of Works?
- B. What is the **condition** of the Covenant of Works?
- C. What was **promised/threatened** in the Covenant of Works?

*“[In the Covenant of Works] [Adam’s] probation was temporally limited; (2) it was concentrated in one man; (3) it was made as clear and objective as possible; (4) the reward promised was as glorious and as great as possible. For all these reasons, man cannot do otherwise than accept gratefully the covenant of works in which God placed him.” – Geerhardus Vos*

**II. The Context of the Covenant of Grace**

*“Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.” (WCF 7.3)*

- A. What does WCF 7.3 say was the condition or circumstance in which God condescended to make a second covenant, the covenant of grace?

WSC Q. 17. *Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?* A. The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

WSC Q. 18. *Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?* A. The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell consists in the guilt of Adam’s first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

WSC Q. 19. *What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?* A. All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.

- B. How should this historical reality inform our personal, individual coming to faith in Christ?

*“If we do not perceive our wretchedness and poverty, we shall never know how desirable is that remedy which Christ has brought to us, or approach him with due ardour of affection. As soon as we know that we are ruined, then, aware of our wretchedness, we eagerly run to avail ourselves of the remedy, which otherwise would be held by us in no estimation. In order, therefore, that Christ may be appreciated by us, let everyone consider and examine himself, so as to acknowledge that he is ruined till he is redeemed by Christ.”*

– John Calvin on Is 53:6

### III. The Parties, Terms, and Consequences of the Covenant of Grace

- A. Who are the parties of the Covenant of Grace?

1. **John 6:37** – *“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”*

*“There are two sorts of Covenanting, one external, professed, visible, conditional, another internal, real, [and] absolute.”* Samuel Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life Opened* (1655), ch. 13.

- B. What is the condition of the Covenant of Grace?

1. **Eph 2:8** – *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God ...”*

- C. What was promised/threatened in the Covenant of Grace?

1. **John 3:16–18** – *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.<sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.<sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”*
2. **1 John 2:19** – *“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.”*

*“The covenant of grace is nothing other than a covenant of works accomplished in Christ, the fulfillment of which is given to us by grace.”* (Geerhardus Vos)

*“Yet what if it were true? ‘So, the All-Great were the All-Loving too’—God’s own Son delivered up for us all, freedom from the world, sought by philosophers of all the ages, offered now freely to every simple soul, things hidden from the wise and prudent revealed unto babes, the long striving over, the impossible accomplished, sin conquered by mysterious grace, communion at length with the holy God, our Father which art in heaven!”*

– J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, 114