

Week 10: Sin's Misery

Memory Verse: "The soul who sins shall die." (Ezekiel 18:20)

Day 1: What Is the Misery of That Estate?

Weekly Memory Verse: "The soul who sins shall die." (Ezekiel 18:20)

Question: What is the misery of that estate? **Answer:** All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.

Think about the saddest day you can remember - perhaps when a beloved pet died, or when you had to move away from your best friend, or when someone you loved was very sick. That deep sadness in your heart gives us just a tiny glimpse of what it means to be separated from God. But our sadness from these earthly troubles will someday end, while the sadness that comes from sin is much deeper and more lasting.

Our catechism teaches us about "the misery of that estate" that all people find themselves in because of Adam's fall. This misery has several parts, and each one shows us how serious sin really is. First, we "lost communion with God." Communion means having a close, happy relationship with someone. Before Adam sinned, he could walk and talk with God in the garden like a child talks with a loving father. But sin broke that beautiful relationship, and now all people are born separated from God.

Second, we are "under his wrath and curse." God's wrath is His holy anger against sin, and His curse means that the world is no longer the perfect place He created it to be. Instead of the garden paradise Adam and Eve enjoyed, we live in a world filled with thorns, weeds, storms, and suffering. Third, we are "liable to all the miseries of this life" - sickness, sadness, loneliness, fear, and pain. These things happen because sin has broken God's perfect world.

Most seriously of all, the catechism tells us we face "death itself, and to the pains of hell forever." Our memory verse says "the soul who sins shall die." This doesn't just mean our bodies will die someday - it means that sin separates our souls from God, who is the source of all life and joy. Without God's salvation, this separation lasts forever.

This sounds very frightening, and it should make us take sin seriously. But remember - God didn't tell us about these consequences to scare us, but to help us understand why we need

a Savior so desperately. Just as a doctor must tell us the truth about a dangerous disease before he can treat it, God shows us the truth about sin so we can understand how wonderful His salvation really is.

Hymn: Man of Sorrows! What a Name

Prayer Points: • Thank God for showing us the seriousness of sin and its consequences • Ask God to help us understand our desperate need for salvation • Praise God that He didn't leave us hopeless in our misery

Day 2: Hope

Weekly Memory Verse: "The soul who sins shall die." (Ezekiel 18:20)

Lesson Verse: "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life." (Proverbs 13:12)

A small seed falls into dark, cold soil during the winter months. For weeks and weeks, nothing seems to happen. The seed lies buried in the darkness, and if you dug it up, you might think it was dead. But deep inside, something wonderful is happening. The seed is getting ready to burst forth with new life. When spring finally comes, that tiny seed will push through the soil and become a beautiful flower or a mighty tree.

This is what hope looks like. Hope means believing that something good will happen, even when things look dark and difficult right now. Our lesson verse teaches us that "hope deferred makes the heart sick" - when we have to wait a long time for something good, it can make us feel sad and discouraged. But when our hope finally comes true, it's like "a tree of life" - it brings joy, strength, and refreshment to our souls.

Sometimes life can feel very dark and discouraging. We might be sick, or lonely, or afraid. We might see terrible things happening in the world around us. When we learned about the misery that sin brings, it might have made us feel hopeless. But God doesn't want us to despair. Even in the darkest circumstances, He gives His people hope.

Our hope isn't based on wishful thinking or trying to convince ourselves that everything will be fine. True hope is based on God's promises. Throughout the Bible, God promised to send a Savior who would rescue people from sin and death. He promised that one day He would make all things new, and there would be no more crying, no more pain, and no more death. These aren't just nice thoughts - they are certain promises from the God who cannot lie.

The wonderful thing about hope in God is that it changes how we feel even while we're still waiting. Just like that seed buried in the cold soil, we might be going through difficult times

right now, but we know that something beautiful is coming. When we trust in God's promises, we can have joy and peace even in the middle of hard circumstances. This is the hope that makes the heart strong instead of sick.

Hymn: My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less

Prayer Points: • Ask God to help us trust His promises when life feels difficult • Thank God for giving us hope through His Word • Pray for those who feel hopeless, that they would discover God's love

Day 3: Did God Leave All Mankind to Perish?

Weekly Memory Verse: "The soul who sins shall die." (Ezekiel 18:20)

Question: Did God leave all mankind to perish? **Answer:** God, having out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer.

Imagine a great ship that has hit an iceberg and is slowly sinking into the icy ocean. All the passengers are in terrible danger - the water is freezing cold, and no one can swim to safety on their own. Everyone on board faces certain death unless someone comes to rescue them. Now imagine that another ship's captain sees what has happened and immediately changes course to save as many people as possible, even though it's dangerous and costly for him to do so.

This illustration helps us understand what happened after mankind fell into sin. We learned that all people are in the "estate of sin and misery" and face spiritual death. If God had simply left us in this condition, it would have been perfectly just - after all, we were the ones who chose to rebel against Him. But our catechism asks an important question: "Did God leave all mankind to perish?"

The wonderful answer is no! God "out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life." This means that even before He created the world, God chose to save some people, not because they deserved it, but simply because He is loving and merciful. The phrase "mere good pleasure" means it was entirely God's choice - He wasn't forced to save anyone, and those He saves didn't earn His favor.

God didn't just decide to save people and then leave them to figure out how to escape from sin on their own. Instead, He "did enter into a covenant of grace." A covenant is like a special promise or agreement. In this covenant of grace, God promised to "deliver them out

of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer.”

Notice that God does all the work in this salvation. He chooses who will be saved, He makes the covenant, He delivers people from sin, and He provides the Redeemer who makes it all possible. People can’t save themselves any more than passengers on a sinking ship can rescue themselves from icy waters. But God, like a loving captain, comes to the rescue of those He has chosen.

Hymn: The God of Abraham Praise

Prayer Points: • Praise God for His mercy in choosing to save anyone at all • Thank God for making a covenant of grace to rescue sinners • Ask God to help us trust completely in His plan of salvation

Day 4: Merciful

Weekly Memory Verse: “The soul who sins shall die.” (Ezekiel 18:20)

Lesson Verse: “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” (Psalm 103:8)

When a judge sits in a courtroom, he has an important job to do. If someone has broken the law, the judge must be fair and give them the punishment they deserve. A good judge doesn’t ignore crimes or pretend they didn’t happen - that wouldn’t be just. But imagine if that same judge also had the power to pay the penalty himself, so the guilty person could go free. That would show both justice and mercy working together.

This is a picture of how God deals with our sin. Our lesson verse tells us that “the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” But what does it mean that God is merciful? Mercy means not giving someone the punishment they deserve. When we sin against God, we deserve His wrath and judgment. But instead of immediately punishing us, God shows mercy.

The verse says God is “slow to anger.” This doesn’t mean God doesn’t care about sin or that He’s not serious about justice. It means He is patient with sinners, giving them time to repent and turn to Him for forgiveness. If God were quick to anger, He would punish sin the moment it happened, and none of us would survive. But because He is slow to anger, He gives people opportunities to hear the gospel and believe.

God is also “abounding in steadfast love.” The word “abounding” means overflowing, like a cup that’s so full it spills over the sides. God’s love isn’t small or limited - it’s huge and

overflowing. And it's "steadfast," which means it never changes or gives up. Even when we fail Him again and again, His love remains strong and faithful.

But how can God be both just and merciful? If He's just, doesn't He have to punish sin? If He's merciful, doesn't that mean He ignores justice? The beautiful answer is found in Jesus Christ. At the cross, God's justice was satisfied when Jesus took the punishment for sin, and God's mercy was displayed when He offered forgiveness to all who believe. God didn't ignore sin or pretend it wasn't serious - He dealt with it completely through His Son.

Hymn: There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

Prayer Points: • Worship God for His perfect balance of justice and mercy • Thank God for being patient with us when we sin • Praise Jesus for making it possible for God to be both just and merciful

Day 5: John Bunyan

Weekly Memory Verse: "The soul who sins shall die." (Ezekiel 18:20)

In a small English village over 350 years ago, there lived a man named John Bunyan who worked as a tinker - someone who fixed pots and pans. John didn't have much education and came from a poor family, but he had something much more valuable than money or schooling. He had experienced God's amazing grace in his own life, and he wanted to share that good news with everyone he met.

But John lived during a time when the king of England said that only certain preachers from the official church could speak about God in public. John believed that God had called him to preach the gospel, even if the government said he couldn't. So he continued to hold meetings in fields and barns, telling people about Jesus Christ and how He saves sinners from the misery of sin and death.

The authorities warned John many times to stop preaching, but he couldn't keep quiet about God's wonderful salvation. Finally, they arrested him and threw him in jail. The judge offered to let him go free if he would promise never to preach again, but John refused. He said he would rather stay in prison than stop telling people about Jesus. And that's exactly what happened - John spent twelve long years in that cold, uncomfortable jail cell.

But God used even John's time in prison for good. While he was locked up, John wrote the most famous Christian book ever written except for the Bible itself - "The Pilgrim's Progress." This book tells the story of a man named Christian who travels from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. Along the way, he faces many dangers and difficulties, but he keeps pressing on because he knows where he's going and why the journey matters.

John's book became incredibly popular because it helped people understand their own spiritual journey. Everyone who reads it can see themselves in Christian's story - we're all traveling from the misery of sin toward the joy of salvation. The book has been translated into more languages than any other book except the Bible, and millions of people have learned about God's grace through John's simple but powerful story.

When John was finally released from prison, he continued preaching for many more years. He became known as one of the greatest preachers in England, even though he had never attended university. John's life shows us that God can use anyone - even a poor tinker - to do great things for His kingdom. Most importantly, it shows us that the hope of salvation is worth any sacrifice we might have to make.

Hymn: He Leadeth Me

Prayer Points: • Thank God for people like John Bunyan who were willing to suffer for the gospel • Ask God to give us courage to share His love even when it's difficult • Praise God that He can use ordinary people to do extraordinary things for His kingdom