

## LORD'S DAY 4

9. Q. But does not God do man an injustice by requiring in His law what man cannot do?
- A. No, for God so created man that he was able to do it.<sup>1</sup> But man, at the instigation of the devil,<sup>2</sup> in deliberate disobedience<sup>3</sup> robbed himself and all his descendants of these gifts.<sup>4</sup>

1. **Genesis 1:31** Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.
2. **Genesis 3:13** And the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."  
**John 8:44** "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."  
**1 Timothy 2:13,14** For Adam was formed first, then Eve.<sup>14</sup> And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.
3. **Genesis 3:6** So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.
4. **Romans 5:12,18,19** Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned, ...<sup>18</sup> Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. <sup>19</sup> For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

10. Q. Will God allow such disobedience and apostasy to go unpunished?
- A. Certainly not. He is terribly displeased with our original sin as well as our actual sins. Therefore He will punish them by a just judgment both now and eternally,<sup>1</sup> as He has declared: <sup>2</sup> Cursed be every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them (Galatians 3:10).

1. **Genesis 2:17** "...but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."  
**Exodus 34:7** "...keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."  
**Psalms 5:4-6** For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You. <sup>5</sup> The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity. <sup>6</sup> You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.
- Psalms 7:11** God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.  
**Nahum 1:2** God is jealous, and the LORD avenges; the LORD avenges and is furious. The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies  
**Romans 1:18** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness....  
**Romans 5:12** Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned...

**Ephesians 5:6** Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

**Hebrews 9:27** And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment....

2. **Deuteronomy 27:26** 'Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

11. Q. But is God not also merciful?  
 A. God is indeed merciful,<sup>1</sup>  
 But He is also just.<sup>2</sup>  
 His justice requires  
 That sin committed  
 against the most high majesty of God  
 also be punished with the most severe,  
 that is, with everlasting,  
 punishment of body and soul.<sup>3</sup>

1. **Exodus 20:6** ...but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

**Exodus 34:6,7** And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, <sup>7</sup> keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

**Psalms 103:8,9** The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. <sup>9</sup> He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever.

2. **Exodus 20:5** ...you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me...

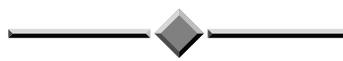
**Exodus 34:7** "...keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

2. **Deuteronomy 7:9-11** "Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; <sup>10</sup> and He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face. <sup>11</sup> Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them."

**Psalms 5:4-6** For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You. <sup>5</sup> The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity. <sup>6</sup> You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

**Hebrews 10:30,31** For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." <sup>31</sup> It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

3. **Matthew 25:45,46** Then He will answer them, saying, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me. <sup>46</sup> And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."



In Lord's Day 1 we profess our faith in the grace of God, the only avenue by which we can escape the punishment of sin and still appear before God. That way is Jesus Christ. Yet man is inclined to look for some other avenue rather than Christ. Man wishes to escape God's wrath and appear before God by travelling down a different avenue, in which it allows him to retain some of his pride. However, there is no way that man can retain his

pride, because there is no other avenue of escape and no other avenue to the Father besides Jesus Christ. As Christ said, "*No one comes to the Father except through Me*" (John 14:6).

In Lord's Day 2 we saw that the avenue of "**good works**" was closed. Man is inclined to think that he can arrive at God's grace himself, by doing good. Yet Lord's Day 2 points out that man cannot

do good works in his own power. Man cannot perform what the law of God requires.

In Lord's Day 3 another avenue was closed to man. That was the avenue of **"innocence."** If man is inclined by nature to all evil, then perhaps he is able to place the blame on God for creating him with that nature. However, we learned that God created man good. Man cannot place the blame for his sin and misery upon God. Man is solely to blame.

Now in Lord's Day 4 other avenues are closed which man might try to walk down in order to escape God's wrath. In Q. & A. 9, man admits that he is to blame. Nevertheless, having admitted this, he questions whether God can still hold him responsible for that which he is not able to do. Man tries to reach the grace of God by walking down the road called **"inability."** Is God just (fair) in asking from us that which we cannot perform? We would say that if a teacher gives an exam which he knows is too difficult for the students, the exam was not fair. The teacher expected more from the students than they could render. That is the point of Q. & A. 9. Is it fair of God to expect more from us than we are able to render? Should God not change His demands? Should He not make His demands easier so that we can render them?

The Catechism defends the justice of God by mentioning that, when God created man, He created man with the ability to keep these demands. It is man's own fault that he lost this ability through sin. Man must not try to place the blame on God. Consider this example: I hire a contractor to build me a house, and I pay him half of the cost with which he is supposed to buy the necessary materials. He cashes the cheque but promptly gambles it away. He comes to me and says, "I cannot build your house. I squandered your money." Do I not have the right to hold him to his contract? Do I not have the right to take him to court? I certainly have! So God is perfectly just in requiring of us what we were capable of doing before our fall into sin.

In fact God would be unjust if He did not uphold His original demands. God's justice lies in His faithfulness to His covenant that He made with man. Let us realise that there are two sides to the coin. God has to be fair to Himself as well as to man. Suppose that I hired a young man to mow my lawn and agreed to pay him twenty dollars for the three hours work that it would take him. It would be unfair if after he had cut the lawn I told him that he still had to prune the rose bushes and weed the flower beds before he would get the twenty dollars. I would be increasing the demand, which would be unfair to the young man. Yet I would also be unfair to myself if I lowered the demand. Paying the young man twenty dollars for working only one hour and for mowing only one third of the lawn, I would short-change myself.

God is incapable of such injustice, either towards man or towards Himself (cf. 2 Timothy 2:13). Therefore the demands of the covenant must remain unchanged.

God's faithfulness to <u>man</u> prevents Him from <u>increasing</u> the demand
God's faithfulness to <u>Himself</u> prevents Him from <u>decreasing</u> the demand.

Now what? We cannot render this perfect obedience. The road called **"inability"** is closed. We are directed to go to Jesus Christ, Who has come to earth as our Representative. He came to render this required obedience for us. If we go to Christ in faith we will receive Christ's righteousness (which means perfect obedience to God's law).

However, man first wishes to try another avenue. He tries to walk down the avenue called **"overlook"**. He wonders whether or not God might simply overlook his sins. Maybe God will forget all about them and not punish us for our disobedience. Maybe God will do what parents sometimes do. A child who has done something wrong says to his Mum, "Sorry Mum! I will not do it again." Then Mum overlooks the wrong and the child is not punished. Yes,

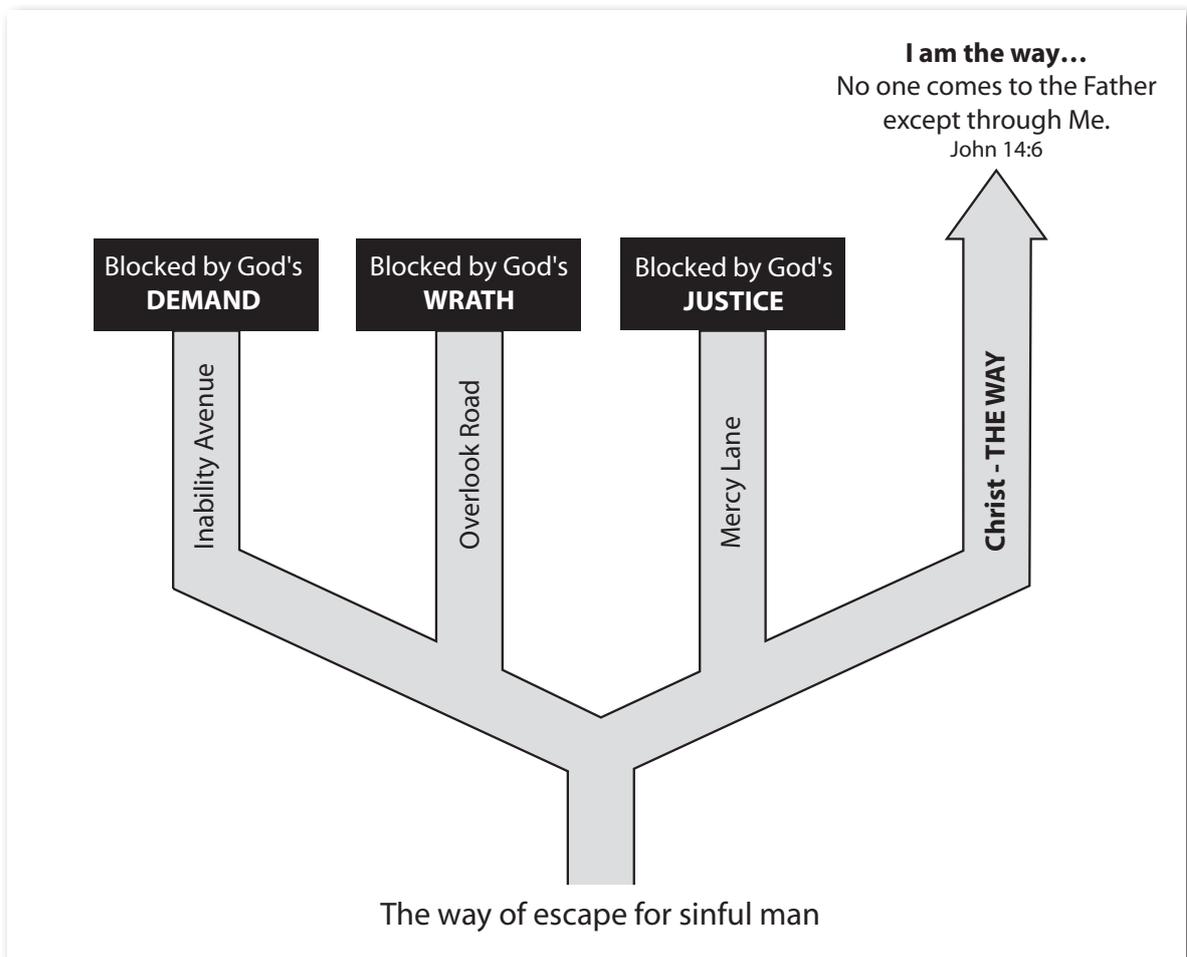
maybe God is like that “mother”. Maybe God will overlook our wrongdoing.

Yet again we confront God’s faithfulness to the covenant. God is faithful, not only to His covenant demand, but also to His covenant wrath. The Catechism stresses this when it says: *“Therefore God will punish sin, as He has declared!”* God has spoken, and always keeps His Word. *“And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent.”* (1 Samuel 15:29).

Furthermore, we should examine what prompts us as humans to overlook something. If a cashier in a department store overcharged us five dollars, we would likely go back and demand our five dollars. However, if she overcharged us only five cents, we would probably overlook it. The point is that we will only overlook those things which are unimportant to us. We will not overlook important things.

We might be inclined to say that God should overlook our sins, for how serious are they? Yet our sins are very serious. Our sins are nothing less than treason! Our sins are nothing less than spiritual adultery. Our sins offend God greatly. He is terribly displeased with them. He will not overlook them. Thus once again, the Catechism blocks the road called **“overlook.”** Man is directed to go to Jesus who bore God’s wrath for our sins. God’s wrath no longer burns against those who cling to Christ.

Still man tries one more avenue. He pleads clemency. He tries the avenue called **“mercy.”** *“But is God not also merciful?”* Can we not trust in God’s mercy to deliver us from our sins and misery? Yes, God is merciful! He will deliver us, but not apart from satisfying His justice. These two seem to be opposed to each other. We might suppose that God is either one or the other, but that He cannot be both. However, the Catechism



teaches us that God is both just and merciful. His justice and mercy go hand in hand. God's mercy and justice meet in the person of Jesus Christ.

In Christ, the demands of the covenant are met. Christ obeyed the law of God perfectly. He did so on our behalf, and this obedience, this righteousness, is ours if we turn to Christ in faith. By faith we receive

these benefits of Christ. Furthermore, the wrath of the covenant is satisfied in Christ. Christ bore our punishment and curse. By His stripes we are healed. Yet be certain of this: there is no mercy apart from justice. If there were, we would have no need of Christ. There is, however, no other avenue than Jesus Christ.



**Questions:**

1. Man tries various avenues to escape God's judgment. In Lord's Days 2 & 3, what blocks his escape down each of these avenues?
2. In Lord's Day 4 man tries three other avenues to flee God's judgment. The first avenue is *inability*.
  - a. How does man try to use this avenue to escape God's wrath?
  - b. What blocks the road?
  - c. Why is God not unjust in maintaining His high demands?
  - d. Can God justly lower His demands if He wanted to? Why or why not?
  - e. With the road of *inability* closed, where is man directed to go? Why?
3. The second avenue is *overlook*.
  - a. How does man try to use this avenue to escape God's wrath?
  - b. For what two reasons will God not overlook our sins?
  - c. With the road of *overlook* closed, where is man directed to go? Why?
4. The third avenue is *mercy*.
  - a. How does man try to use this avenue to escape God's wrath?
  - b. What blocks the road? Does this roadblock contradict God's mercy?
  - c. With the road of *mercy* closed, where is man directed to go? Why?