

Catechetical Sermon, January 4th, 2026

Canons of Dort, Head 5, articles 4-6: “Falling into Serious Sin”

Scripture Lesson: Psalm 51

Lesson Aim	To understand three things: First, that Christians can and do fall into serious sin, second, that the effects of serious sin wound the soul and offend God and third, despite serious sin, God will preserve us to the end.
Steps to Learning	Read the Canons of Dort, Head 5, articles 4-6 and Psalm 51. Also discuss the sermon and the particulars of the lesson below. It may be best to work through the material over several days or sessions.
Discuss	<p>Christians can and do fall into serious sin. What do we learn about this reality from David’s life?</p> <p>According to 2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12, King David had an adulterous affair with Bathsheba, had her husband murdered, and then went on with his life like nothing happened. However, God ordained Nathan the prophet to preach the law to David, which convicted him of his sin. Psalm 51 is known as a reflection on David’s sin. In this Psalm, he freely confesses that he was conceived in sin and was responsible for his sins; he doesn’t make excuses for his sin. Christians today can be like David falling into serious sin and when this happens, they need to confess the sin to God seeking his forgiveness.</p> <p>The Canons of Dort summarize the Scriptures by stating that serious sins wound the soul and offend God. How does David’s life reflect this reality?</p> <p>David, in Psalm 51, confesses that God is just in his judgment against him. This confession reveals that God is offended; all sin is against him. And in this offense, David likely grieved the Holy Spirit, suspended the exercise of faith, severely wounded his conscience and lost the awareness of grace for a time (language from the Canons of Dort). These are descriptions of a vital relationships to God, which has been disrupted. David’s (and our) legal relationship in justification never changed; he was still saved when he sinned. But his vital relationship had been greatly affected.</p> <p>The Canons of Dort argue that despite serious sin, God will preserve us to the end. How does this work?</p> <p>The Scriptures make it clear that God’s elect can’t be lost based on the very nature of election, which is unchangeable and based on God’s decision to save regardless of our bad, sinful decisions. The Holy Spirit sustains us also so that “He who has begun a good work in us will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).</p>
Bible Reading	Genesis 31-36 (Reading the great stories of the Old Testament)