

forth in sin. He was born into a sinful world. So are we and our children. The lure of sin effects us as we grow up. It is all around us from birth.

Some also point to another Psalm (Psalm 58:3), but it, too, says the wicked “go astray” not “born astray”. In their hearts they “work Unrighteousness” and “weigh out violence” (vs. 2). It is from birth that evil influences begin to work on the innocent one, working estrangement from God.

### **Born Innocent**

“Truly, truly, I say unto you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3).

This certainly does not sound like Jesus looked upon children as being totally depraved in sin. This is such a different view of children from how Calvin saw them!

We do inherit things from our parents, but those things do not include sin. We inherit our physical traits from our earthly parents. We inherit our spiritual traits from God. He is therefore called “the Father of spirits” in a passage plainly discussing the spirits of human beings (Hebrews 12:9). Paul refers to us as being “the offspring of God” (Acts 17:28,29). Who dares say our spirit is already tainted by sin at birth.

This unbiblical doctrine brought yet another dilemma that had to be dealt with. How does one explain how Jesus, the sinless One, was born without inheriting Adam’s sin through Mary? Catholicism devised the doctrine of

the “immaculate conception” of Mary. She was born without sin, and had none to pass on to Jesus. But, where, pray tell, is that in the Bible? Instead, it says that He became “flesh and blood” as we are because He “had to be made like His brethren in all things” This does not involve inheriting sin, He is without sin (Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15).

A final point to be made is one of accountability. God does not demand of us or hold us accountable for that which we cannot help. Jesus, for example, said, “If you were blind, you would have no sin” (John 10:41). Jesus is talking about being unable to comprehend right and wrong. Infants have no sin because God does not hold them accountable. Paul referred to this early stage in his life as well. He was spiritually “alive” but then “when sin became alive” he died (Romans 7:9).

**If you would like to have an in home bible study on this or other subjects, please visit the congregation of the church of Christ nearest you or visit the web site [www.forestgrovechurchofchrist.net](http://www.forestgrovechurchofchrist.net)**

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# ***Do We Inherit The Guilt Of Adam's Sin?***

By Jon Quinn



*The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself.*

**Ezek 18:20**

The doctrine of original sin states that all of us are born sinners. Our parents pass along the guilt of Adam and Eve's original transgression to us, their children, even as they received the same from their parents, and so on, back to the fall of man in the garden.

John Calvin said, "Again, I ask: whence does it happen that Adam's fall irremediably involved so many peoples, together with their infant offspring, in eternal death unless because it so pleased God?" He concluded by saying, "The decree is dreadful, I confess." (Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 2, page 955).

One human written religious creed, the Philadelphia Confession of Faith, says, "They (Adam and Eve - J.Q.) being the root, and, by God's appointment... the guilt of sin was imputed, and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation, being now conceived in sin..."

Let us consider this teaching in light of what the Scriptures actually say. If the Bible teaches it, then it is true. If not, then it is false. It matters not how widespread the teaching is, who believes it, or what the creed books written by men say.

### **Is the Guilt of Sin Inherited?**

"The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment of the father's iniquity; nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon

himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be on himself." (Ezekiel 18:20; cf. vss. 19-32).

Though there are many passages that contradict the doctrine of original sin, I can think of none that do it stronger than these verses in Ezekiel. The Lord has said, "Therefore, I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct," (Ezekiel 18:30). Any doctrine that says we are judged by the conduct of our ancestors, including Adam's, is clearly wrong.

While we are here, compare Calvin's statement quoted earlier with the following Scripture:

**God:** "For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies." (vs. 32).

**Calvin:** "...so many peoples, together with their infant offspring, in eternal death unless because it so pleased God?"

Many other passages also show the impossibility of transferring the guilt of sin (Jeremiah 31:27-30; Deuteronomy 24:16; Galatians 6:5).

### **The Definition of Sin**

"Everyone who practices sin practices lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness." (1 John 3:4)

Sin is an act of unrighteousness. It is something we do. It is an act that is lawless, or contrary to God's law. The Bible never refers to sin as something that we are born with. It is never defined in God's word as a natural weakness or an inherited trait.

For example, the Lord commands, "Thou shall not commit murder." I am not a murderer unless I commit an act that violates that command.

While it is true that all of Adam's descendants pay the consequences of Adam's sin (i.e., we live in a cursed world; we suffer physical death, etc.) that is not the same thing as being guilty of Adam's sin. A child of a drunkard may suffer the consequences of his parent's misbehavior, but this does not mean the child himself is guilty of drunkenness.

### **The Consequences of the Fall**

"Then to Adam He said, 'Because you ... have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it...'" (Genesis 3:17; see context: vss. 14-24).

One reads in vain for the idea of original sin in the account of man's fall as related in the Bible. Genesis records many consequences resulting from the first transgression. There is pain in childbirth, the ground is cursed, and physical death (the body returning to dust) is decreed. But nothing at all about children inheriting the guilt of Adam's sin.

### **What About This?**

"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." (Psalm 51:5).

Some take David's words to mean that he was born a sinner, but that is not what he said. He said that his mother brought him