

Born Sinful?

By Theodore W. Elliot *

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PREFACE

It is imperative that you read this book! You would not have it in your hands if you were not interested in spiritual matters. So dive in, the water's fine. God says that SIN separates us from Him. So if you are to have a right relation with the God who lovingly created you, you must also have a proper understanding of what caused each of us, at one time or another, to be separated from Him! This book explores this issue of sin in a way that can reveal to you more about our Father and His love for us than you ever knew possible. I urge you, don't set it aside until you have finished.

Look around you throughout our nation and see the hate, corruption and moral decay. It doesn't take a genius to see we're in serious trouble. There is but one solution. Our country needs a spiritual renewal (Revival) now! Not tomorrow, but today. The principles set forth in this book can help bring about such a restoration. However, I humbly believe this can never take place until each of us take responsibility for our own past actions and cry out to God for forgiveness. The Bible commands us to forsake and repent of our sins! If the responsibility for our sins is not ours, then it is foolishness to require us to repent of

them. The message of this book is that we are not born sinners, but each has become that way through willful actions of our own and thus bear the personal responsibility ourselves. This concept may be new to you, just as it once was to me. Like so many of you, I grew up in mainline denominational churches and was taught that everyone was born a sinner. Any other view was not a consideration. In fact, I wasn't even aware there was another view. This book can open your eyes to the fact that while all have sinned, the Bible does not corroborate the tradition of moral depravity at birth.

God has set His Church as the vehicle to influence society and be the moral rudder of each nation. Unfortunately society has so influenced the churches that most members are indistinguishable from the rest of the world. In a 1996 interview with C-SPAN about his best selling book, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*, Robert Bork said, "While 44% of Americans say they attend church each week, it doesn't seem to affect their actions". There is something amiss in our religion. It is my sincere belief that we have a wrong concept of God and deeply rooted in that wrong concept are the man-made traditions of men. As the bride of Christ, we are to be married to Jesus and not to our traditions or our theology. As you read this book I hope you come to understand that "I have to sin because I was born a sinner" is not something God said but something that man has said and that Satan has used it for his benefit long enough.

My prayer for all of us is that we come to know God as He really is, so that we might worthily praise and serve Him. It is with this in mind that I highly recommend this book to you and anyone searching for the Truth.

John Moore
Destiny Ministries

INTRODUCTION

The visitor sat in his pew on a beautiful Sunday morning.

He had always felt comfortable in his sin and dearly loved it. He enjoyed coming to church once in a while to hear the fine oratory of the pastor and listening to the music. It made him feel good to come to church, not quite so evil as the rest of the world.

Today, though, he was in for a surprise. The pastor had decided that it was time for an evangelistic message.

He began to preach about sin. He told how awful, how deserving of judgment, and what a terrible crime it is. The visitor began to feel uncomfortable in his sin. He began to see it for what it is, how his neighbor had been harmed.

The preacher continued on to show how God has been hurt by sin. Not just by sin, but by our INDIVIDUAL sin. The visitor became still more uncomfortable. He began to get warm, began to sweat a little. He even started to squirm around in his seat as conviction of sin began to build in him and God's broken heart started to become more and more real to him.

The preacher pressed on into repentance. The beautiful Sunday morning wasn't quite so beautiful to the visitor anymore. Now he was turning red from an awareness of guilt and the responsibility of complete and unqualified submission to God.

Then the preacher gives the invitation. Our visitor is torn between his love for his sin and his very real obligation to totally submit himself to and be reconciled with God.

At this point he hears the preacher say, "You can't help being a sinner. You were born a sinner, with a sinful nature that you inherited from Adam."

There it is! That's what he has been so desperately seeking for. His opening for an excuse, a way to escape his guilt. He runs to it saying to himself, "Surely God won't hold me guilty for something that I couldn't help or for something that I had no control over." His guilt vanishes like a wisp of smoke and he can see the beautiful Sunday morning again.

On the way out, he shakes hands with the pastor and compliments him on such a wonderful message. He leaves with his heart still far from God, in total rebellion, still comfortable and complacent in his sin.

Have you ever seen this happen? Almost certainly you have. It doesn't make any difference whether it is a visitor or a deacon. This happens every Sunday all over the world.

How many powerful sermons have had their effect diminished or nullified in the last two minutes or during an invitation.

There is no true doctrine that you should be afraid of or ashamed to mention, for fear of holding someone back from loving God. It really doesn't matter whether the idea is watered down or is not mentioned at all. If it does not lift up both God's kindness and justice, it should be reexamined very carefully.

The purpose of this booklet is to do just that, to examine the statement made by the preacher which gave the anxious visitor his supposed way of escape. Namely, "You can't help being a sinner with a sinful nature that you inherited from Adam." More properly, the doctrine of Original Sin.

Two thousand years ago Jesus had a confrontation with some Pharisees and Scribes. They were worried about His disciples transgressing the tradition of the elders. His response to

them was, "And why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition...you have invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition." He went on to call them "hypocrites", because they were teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men (*See Matthew 15:1-9*). The result of their teaching was that they were "invalidating" God's word.

There are still doctrines being taught in the church today, as indisputable fact, which are really the precepts of men. They have been handed down to us by tradition from our predecessors and have been accepted as fact.

This is not to say that those who teach these doctrines are hypocrites. Those that Jesus called hypocrites, in this passage, knew better. They even talked about "the tradition of the elders." Those who, in all honesty, teach an erroneous doctrine are guilty of no moral wrongdoing. To the contrary, they would be guilty if they taught something which they do not believe. If a man teaches something which he knows to be false, he is nothing but a liar and the Bible is very plain regarding the reward of liars (*See Revelation 21:27*).

In Titus 2:1, Paul said, "But as for you speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine." (*See also Titus 1:9, 1 Timothy 1:3, 4:6*). As Christians we are to make sure that our teaching is sound, as much as it is within our capability, both Scripturally and philosophically.

This lays a great responsibility, upon us to examine our teaching, and in this particular case the doctrine of original sin, to find out whether it is true or is a precept of men.

Many people are afraid to question this, and other doctrines, because they are afraid that they will be making accusations against God or showing doubt about His revelation. Many others are afraid to question this because they have been taught this on the basis of sheer authority and are afraid to question that authority. Many are afraid to question that authority because of denominational ties, or loss of friendship and favor. Many are afraid to think things out, or are afraid of the consequences if they find a difference. I might add that it is often not the case that they are afraid to think things out, but are really only too lazy-minded to do so. Others are afraid to think these things out because, given the presuppositions of their theological system, their final conclusions would render God as a totally unlovable character.

God has told us to "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding." (Proverbs 23:23) Truth is a powerful weapon against the adversary. A weapon without which we are severely limited in our effectiveness. We should never be afraid of truth, the pursuit of it or the consequences of it. We should, rather, be drawn to it, as a mature salmon to its spawning ground.

It has been said by one of our great modern day lay teacher/preachers, that "God has an honest, satisfying answer for every honest why, but not for any rebellious why."

The acquisition of truth is not necessarily either an easy or a quick process. It requires

thought, prayer, honesty, diligent study and analysis. Since God has told us to "buy" the truth, it would seem that an expenditure of some type on our part be made. This is in the form of intellectual output or work.

It seems that the doctrine of original sin is taught almost universally in the church today. It would, therefore, seem reasonable that if this doctrine is true, there should be abundant proof in the Scriptures to confirm it. In 2 John 9 we are told that, "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son." If we are going to teach something as fact based upon the Scriptures, we would be wise to make sure that we are not "going too far" with it. We are told that people are not saved because they do not receive the love of the truth (*See 2 Thessalonians 2:10*). It appears, then, that those who do not love truth and seek it out are not in a state of grace.

Throughout the remainder of this booklet it is hoped that your mind may be stirred to thought, intense thought, maybe even make you mad, for then your thinking will be all the more intense. It is hoped that it will be shown that there is sufficient reason, Scripturally and logically, to have very serious doubt about the validity and virtual undisputed authority of this doctrine.

We have a God who is very reasonable, and wants us to reason with Him (Isaiah 1:18, 41:1, 43:26). If this is true, then He would also desire us to come to logical and reasonable conclusions. I must also add that He does not want us to find out everything by reason alone. If this were so, then He never would have given us the Bible or any other form of revelation of Himself. All that is asked is that our thinking be consistent, and that we keep one very important question in mind during this discussion, that question being: What does this do to the character of God?

It should also be pointed out and made very clear, here, that it is not being set forth that man does not have a sinful nature. What is being said is that man is not BORN with a sinful nature or with a causative something behind the will making sin an inescapable matter or course. It is being said that there is nothing in man's constitution which makes it impossible for him to obey the requirements of God. It is also not being said that man can "earn" us salvation or work his way back to God.

It is easy when hearing something contrary to our own particular view, to read much more into an opposing view than is intended, and then to overreact. Usually this draws the same response and so on back and forth. The result is that the two are farther apart because of their reactions, and do not understand what the other really does believe. It is hoped that as you consider what is being set forth on these pages and not read more into what is written than what is stated with reference to man's ability or inability to obey the laws of God.

With this in mind, let us be as the Berean Christians, and seek after the truth and not sell it for any price.

Simply stated, the doctrine of original sin teaches that because of the sin of Adam:

1. I have a sinful nature BY BIRTH.
2. I have "inherited" this sinful nature from Adam.
3. This sinful nature is going to make me sin, or is a causative something back of the will.
4. I am unable to keep the requirements of God's Law.
5. God is going to condemn me to Hell for having this sinful nature.

With this in mind, let us now present a few questions of reason, which should be considered.

IS THIS SINFUL NATURE IN THE BLOOD?

If I have inherited this sinful nature from Adam, how is this sinful nature passed on to me? What part of me is it, in which this sinful nature is passed on? In what part of my being does this sinful nature reside.

It must be passed on in the physical body somehow, since moral character can not be passed on. Moral has to do with choice, and a choice can not be passed on.

Is sin, then, physical or moral? Is it the act or the motive behind the act? Of course sin is always the motive behind the act. The act only multiplies the effect of the sin.

If a choice is passed on, it is really no choice at all. If it were possible for a choice to be passed on, there is a question that demands an answer: If two Christians have a baby, is their choice to be Christians passed on to the baby? They are much closer to the baby, genealogically, than Adam and their characteristics would be the more dominant or stronger.

Many have said, in desperation, that it is passed on in the blood. If this is true, what happens to a Christian who is injured in an accident and receives some blood given by someone who has not been saved? If this sinful nature is present in the donor's blood, does the Christian who receives it take on a sinful nature again and fall from grace? With the concern over blood supplies being contaminated by the AIDS virus, this should be enlightening to us. If it is possible for innocent people to have their lives destroyed because of tainted blood, through no fault or choice of their own, that is a tragedy of the highest degree. Yet the church holds and proclaims that God is going to hold responsible and send to Hell inconceivable numbers for eternity, for having a constitution over which they had no choice or control. We have a situation with a far more serious and disastrous outcome than AIDS, eternal rather than physical death. Unfortunately we are treating the moral rebels as victims of something over which they had no control. It will do no good to treat victims of AIDS as pitiful without pointing out that, in the vast majority of cases, their dilemma is the direct result of their own choices and actions. The very same holds true in our dealing with the problem of sin and sinners.

If it is true that moral character is passed on through the blood, it would be very easy to convert sinners. All that you would have to do is give them a blood transfusion, using the blood of a Christian.

ARE WE CAUSED TO SIN?

If, because of my nature or constitution, I have been caused to sin, or could not help sinning, how can I be held accountable for it?

Surely, you have seen movies where someone tries to kill someone else by damaging the braking system of a car so that they will not be able to stop the car, then arranging it so that the person drives down a long hill or mountain road. This is exactly what is implied in the doctrine of original sin. It says I could not help sinning and "drove over the cliff." It says that my ability to resist, refuse and reject temptation and sin is nonexistent, that my moral brakes are inoperative. The person driving the car is not guilty of any crime, but is really an object of pity. The Bible does not portray man as pitiful (in the moral realm), but guilty.

Suppose that you have been kidnapped by a gang and are to be held for ransom. During this time you are beaten and starved, which we can call the consequences of sin. All of a sudden the police come to your rescue and see your condition, being at the point of death, barely any life remaining within you. Are you to be tried for a crime and sentenced to prison until the day of your death? No! No just court in the world would do that to you. If it did, all of Heaven would cry out against that court and its judge. Are we to consider God to be less just than this court and its judge? Hopefully you can see the parallel.

WHAT SIN IS COMMITTED BY BEING BORN?

If man has a sinful nature by birth, what sin is committed by being born? It is said that if a baby dies it is taken care of by God's grace and goes to Heaven. In answer to this, refer to Revelation 21:27, which says that nothing unclean shall enter Heaven. No sinful thing shall enter Heaven! The normal response to this is, "But he doesn't take his sinful nature to Heaven with him. It is also taken care of by God's grace." Where in the world do people get the idea that a change takes place in anybody's personality or character after death? They are apparently unaware of what the Scriptures have to say about the continuation of the established character and personality of the individual. Revelation 22:11 states very plainly that there will not be any change that will take place after death. In Proverbs we are told, "Though you grind a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his foolishness will not depart from him." (Proverbs 27:22) Even if the body is totally destroyed, the foolishness that is part of the character would remain. This should tell us plainly that the "sinful nature" is not something physical.

If what is said about God's grace is true, then God must be a respecter of persons and must have some selfish reason. This would make Him a sinner because He would be ruled by selfishness.

Also every person in Hell has a legitimate complaint against God for taking someone to Heaven that had the same sinful nature that he had and that made him sin, and sent him to Hell for all of eternity.

WAS ADAM OUR REPRESENTATIVE?

It has also been taught that Adam was our representative and only made the same choice that we would have made, if we were there. This is referred to as the Federal Headship theory.

The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary puts it this way:

Man is a race with group solidarity, and representative responsibility. The representative principle governs all of human life. Just as every American must say, "I signed the Declaration of Independence in 1776," or "I declared war Dec. 7, 1941," similarly, every descendant of Adam must say, "I became a wicked corrupt sinner in the garden of Eden; and I crucified the Lord of Glory at Calvary. My representatives did it, and the action was mine.

...The remedy for sin, according to the Biblical view (Romans 5:12ff), is based equally upon the representative principle. In the time of world war II one might have repudiated the act of Congress in declaring war. He would then have been moved to a concentration camp. Tojo would have been his representative and Pearl Harbor would have been his deed.

Federalship is not true, and this is shown in the second portion when the representative act of Congress is repudiated, and sympathy is shown for the opposite faction.

If Adam was our true representative and acted as we would have, then he would have had to have the same influences that we have acting upon him. For this to be true, Adam would necessarily have had to have a sinful nature, inherent in his constitution, when he was created. This would mean that his sin would not have been a choice, but rather a causation. He would have done only that which his nature compelled him to do.

Even in our human courts effort is made to determine if the defendant had the capacity to both understand and conform to the dictates of the law. If the defendant did not have the capacity to keep the law, he is absolved of the responsibility and penalty. He may be institutionalized or have some other action taken to protect both himself and society, but guilt is not charged where there is not the ability to obey. He may be an object of pity, but he is not considered to be a rebel to society. A common sense of justice and fairness tells us that this is right.

Since ability and capability are the measure of responsibility, Adam would be relieved of all responsibility for his sin. Are we to consider that a human court is administered more fairly and mercifully than God's is?

This would, in addition, make God responsible for all of the suffering in the universe that resulted from the sin of Adam. If Adam would have been created with a constitution whereby obedience was impossible, and God knew it, then all of the suffering, pain, heartache and torment in Hell could justifiably be laid at God's feet.

Either Adam was created with a constitutionally sinful nature that made obedience impossible in the absolute sense, or we are not. It has to be one way or the other, if Adam was actually our "representative", for that to have any meaning.

The concept of someone making a choice for someone else before they exist, in reality, does away with the idea of choice. How can someone know the choice of another before the other person even exists. How can a choice preexist the one who chooses? To believe that, is to make the word "choose" a word with no meaning at all.

WHAT IS THERE IN THE LAW OF GOD THAT WE CAN NOT OBEY?

What is it that God requires of all moral beings? Is it not love? Or more properly, benevolence or good will?

Charles Finney taught that what God requires of a moral being is to choose universal benevolence or to will the greatest good to all moral beings in their proper relation and perspective. We are to use all of our abilities and capabilities to promote true love and holiness.

For God to require more than we are capable of would be unjust on His part. To require less than the total commitment of all of our abilities and capabilities would not be loving toward all moral agents. A total commitment of all the abilities and capabilities that we do possess is both the most and the least that God requires of us. If there is something that we cannot do, it is not required anyway. God only requires of us to do what we can do. Nothing more. Nothing less. To claim to have a nature that makes it impossible to obey the demands of God is to make a claim based on a misunderstanding of what God's demands are.

Just what is it that God does require of us?

In Micah 6:8, we find these words:

"He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?"

What is there here that is beyond our ability? Are we constitutionally lacking the ability to do justice, to love kindness or to get everything in proper perspective and submit ourselves to our proper place before God? Our conscience bothers us when we are confronted with the awareness that we have not done so, because we know that we could have done so, if we had so chosen.

In Mark 12:28-34, we find these words:

(28) "And one of the scribes came and heard them arguing, recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is foremost of all?"

(29) 'Jesus answered, "The foremost is: 'HEAR, O ISRAEL, THE LORD OUR GOD, IS ONE LORD;

(30) 'AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.'

(31) "The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

(32) And the scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher, You have truly stated that HE IS ONE; AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM;

(33) "AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART, AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

(34) "And when Jesus saw that he answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one would venture to ask Him any more questions."

Is there anything in this passage that even hints that we are to love God with more than all of our heart, more than all of our soul, more than all of our mind or more than all of our strength? There is nothing in this passage, which is Jesus explanation of what God requires of us, that even remotely intimates that we are required to do anything beyond our capability. We are told to do all that we are capable of, but nothing more.

As Finney put it, "To talk of inability to obey the moral law is to talk nonsense."
(Lectures on Systematic Theology, page 3)

WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES REALLY TEACH?

As Christians the final proof of a doctrine is to be found in the Scriptures and not in the manuals or doctrinal statements of the denomination or church that we are associated with. Truth is, also, not to be based upon experience, whether the experience be individual, corporate or common. Truth, properly understood, will not violate experience. Experience, though, is not a safe foundation on which to build a theological or doctrinal structure. Likewise, a doctrinal or denominational statement is not a solid and sure foundation. The only sure foundation that we have is the Word of God. (Timothy 3:16, Acts 17:11, John 5:39, 10:35)

I would like to look at some Scriptures and make some comments about them.

Some of the "proof" texts for original sin will be mentioned and it would be good for us to realize that a verse which can be used to prove either side of an argument actually proves neither side of it. So you may have some verses presented to your mind for consideration in a different light than you are accustomed to. I hope that you will see that many of these "proof" texts can very reasonably be used to explain the opposing view and present some serious problems to the continuity of the Scriptures, if the doctrine of original sin is true.

I believe that if you are honest with yourself, you will find that the doctrine of original sin, as commonly taught, is overwhelmingly contrary to the Scriptures and is a precept of men.

I am not saying that the full meaning of the following Scriptures is as stated in the comments about them, only that they can help us to understand the constitution or nature of man.

It should be remembered that if only one Scripture, taken in context, shows that someone did, or had the ability to avoid all sin, then the argument has been decided. If it can be shown that one of the offspring of Adam was so constituted that he had the ability to live without sin, that he had not lost the ability to will to resist and refuse sin, the doctrine of original sin crumbles.

All Scriptures, unless otherwise stated, are quoted from the *New American Standard Bible*.

1. 1 Peter 1:18

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers."

The New English Bible and the Amplified Bible also state that our vain conversation was "inherited" or "received" by tradition from our fathers. This is in contrast to a form of conduct innate in our constitution. This concerns a form of life and conduct which we learn by both teaching and example, not as a result of physical descent.

2. John 8:38

"I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father."

Jesus said that His teaching and conduct was a result of observing and learning from His Father in the same way ours is. He drew a direct parallel. (*See #1*)

3. Jeremiah 9:12-14

(12) "Who is the wise man that may understand this? And who is he to whom the mouth of the LORD has spoken, that he may declare it? Why is the land ruined, laid waste like a desert, so that no one passes through?"

(13) "And the LORD said, 'Because they have forsaken My law which I set before thee, and have not obeyed My voice nor walked according to it,

(14) "but have walked after the stubbornness of their heart and after the Baals, as their fathers taught them."

The final phrase in this passage is "as their fathers taught them." Again, the source of their rebellion and sin was the teaching and example of their fathers. (*See #1*) The land was ruined because of what they had done, not because of their constitution

In verse 13, God said that they had forsaken His law. This is an act of the will, not a matter of inability of the will.

In verse 14, they are described as walking after the "stubbornness" of their heart. Stubbornness does not mean unable. A stubborn person can be persuaded and brought to submission, but it may not be easy to accomplish. This does not mean that the heart did not have the ability or capacity to obey God's voice. It does mean that their heart was set on the Baals, but was not without the ability to turn from them and follow God's voice. There is a vast difference between being stubborn and being without ability to conform.

Nations are not judged and punished for their innate abilities, or lack of abilities, but for their refusal to do what they know and what they have the ability to do.

4. Mark 7:7-9

(7) "And in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrine the commandments of men.'

(8) "Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.

(9) "He was also saying to them, "You nicely set aside the commandment of God, in order to keep your tradition."

Notice that the commandment of God is "neglected" and "set aside" in order to hold to the tradition of men and to keep tradition. These are both voluntary and responsible acts in their very essence. This shows action. Accountable action. This speaks of responsibility and accountability for personal action. There is nothing that speaks of or implies in the least an inability, or even an innate propensity against observing the commandments of God.

These first four passages all point to a rejection and neglect of God's commandments as a result of the influence, teaching and example of others. In each case blameworthiness is the result of direct action of the will.

5. Ecclesiastes 7:29

"Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices."

God made men (plural) upright, but they (plural) have sought out many devices. More men than Adam were created upright, and they, individually, have sought out their own designs for life.

Notice that this Scripture tells us that they "sought out", not that they were driven to by some irresistible force.

6. Ezekiel 28:15

"You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until iniquity was found in you."

This is commonly said to be referring to Satan. This may very well be, and probably is, true. But the fact remains that Ezekiel was to take up a lamentation over the King of Tyre. The truth of this lamentation must have applied to the King of Tyre also, since his punishment is also mentioned in the same passage.

He was said to be blameless until the day unrighteousness was found in him. This is true of every moral agent. It has to be. How can there be blame until there is something to be blameworthy over.

The word blameless used in this verse in the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance is:

(H)8549. tamiym, taw-mean'; from H8552; entire (lit., fig. or mor.); also (as noun) integrity, truth:--without blemish, complete, full, perfect, sincerely (ity), sound, without spot, undefiled, upright (-ly), whole.

There may be several meanings and aspects possible with this word, but there are none that would imply that there was anything inherently sinful in the character until unrighteousness is found.

7. 2 Peter 2:14-15

(14) "having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin; enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children

(15) "forsaking the right way they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;"

Here we are given a great deal of information on this subject. Notice first of all that their hearts were trained in greed, not that it is a natural or constitutional condition. The word "trained" that is used here is the Greek word "gumnazo", which is number 1128 in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance. Strong's definition of the word is:

1128. *gumnazo*, *goom-nad'-zo*; from G1131; to practice naked (in the games), i.e. train (fig.):--exercise

Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words defines the word:

Primarily signifies to exercise naked (from *gumnos*, naked); then, generally, to exercise, to train the body or mind (Eng., gymnastic)

The idea is that of developing consistency in something because of discipline, repetition and training. As Vine points out, this is the word from which we get the word "gymnastic" and we all know how much training, discipline and dedication is put forth by those that hope to excel in the sport.

This is the same word that is used in 1 Timothy 4:7-8, where we are told, "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." And "bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come."

Hebrews 5:14 uses the same word when it says, "But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. "

Again in Hebrews 12:11, we find these words "Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Yet again, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:27 (NKJV) "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

It is something learned through practice. Also, we are told that they have forsaken the right way, indicating that a choice was made. It was not something in which their own individual will was not involved in, but was rather the prime and only cause. The result of this choice was that they had gone astray, and were not born astray. The word "loved" used, concerning Balaam and the wages of unrighteousness, is the Greek word *agape* which plainly indicates choice not just a natural, involuntary following.

What we have, then, is a choice to follow the example, or curse, of Balaam to forsake the right way, to gratify a trained greed, with the result that they have gone astray. (*See #5*)

8. Hebrews 2:17

"Therefore He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

Jesus was made like His brethren in all ways. If we are born with a sinful nature and He was not, then He could not have been made like us in all ways.

9. Hebrews 4:15

"For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weakness, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin."

If we are born with a sinful nature and Jesus was not, then He had an unfair advantage and could not have been tempted in all things as we are.

What this, and Hebrews 2:17, are telling us is that since Jesus has experienced the same temptations that we have, He is therefore able to understand what we face and become a merciful high priest for us.

The real meaning of this verse is to be found in the last three words: "yet without sin." The writer of Hebrews is saying that if you try to say that you could not help sinning, that the temptations were just too strong for you to resist, that we just cannot keep the law or do what God requires of us, Jesus will be able to say, "What temptation did you face that I didn't? What was required of you that you could not meet? I met it. If you say that you cannot do what is required, How is it that I did? What forces did you have acting upon you that I did not have? What handicaps did you face that I did not also bear? I was tempted in all ways just as you were, and I didn't sin. Away with such excuse making!"

We have a high priest who can understand what we have had to face, and is ready, willing and able to help us. But we also have a high priest who will not buy any excuses that won't hold water.

10. Romans 3:12

"ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE. TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS: THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD. THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

When we see the phrases "have turned" and "have become," this should tell us that there is a change from one state or condition to another. How can you move to Chicago if you already live there? This shows a very definite change of the will or character. This is not a case of going from lost to more lost. At the very least it shows a change from neutral to rebellion. For them to become useless, they had to have had some useful quality.

11. Psalm 53:3

"Every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt."

Again we see a change in state or character. We see a turning from and a becoming. This has the same implications as Romans 3:12 does. It shows a becoming corrupt, not a corruption at birth.

12. Isaiah 53:6

"All we like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; And the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."

Again we see that we have gone astray and have turned. This shows a change in state or status, as do numbers 10 and 11 above.

13. Isaiah 56:11

"And the dogs are greedy, they are not satisfied. And they are shepherds who have no understanding; they have all turned to their own way, each one to his unjust gain, to the last one."

This shows again that sin is a turning away, not a weakness or an inability to obey.

14. Isaiah 64:6

"For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment, and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind take us away."

We have become unclean, and it is our iniquities that take us away. We see the same thing that we have seen in the last 4 passages. A becoming something that we previously were not, and that it is our iniquities that take us away, not Adam's

15. Judges 2:17, 22

(17) "And yet they did not listen to their judges, for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed themselves down to them. They turned aside quickly from the way in which their fathers had walked in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do as their fathers.

(22) "in order to test Israel by them (nations not driven out), whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk in it as their fathers did, or not."

They also turned aside.

God stated that He was testing them to see if they would keep the way of the Lord. If they were born with a nature that makes it impossible to obey and meet the requirements of the Lord, this was a meaningless test. If they could not, then they would not. It is that simple.

Notice also, that it is stated that their fathers did keep the way of the Lord. This should show very plainly that it is possible to do. This was long before the Holy Spirit was given, yet we hear so often that we cannot obey God, even with the Holy Spirit's presence and aid. They did it without Him.

16. Psalm 14:1-3

(1) "the fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they have done abominable deeds; there is none who does good.

(2) "The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.

(3) "They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one."

Yet again we see the same thing, that they have turned aside and have become corrupt.

17. 2 Kings 21:22

"So he forsook the LORD, the God of his father, and did not walk in the way of the LORD."

Amon forsook the Lord. To forsake means to renounce, desert or abandon. All of these imply an act of the will, or choice. Amon chose to depart from the Lord and His ways.

18. Psalm 119:52-53

(52) "I have remembered Thine ordinances from of old, O LORD, and comfort myself.

(35) "Burning indignation has seized me because of the wicked, who forsake Thy law."

The wicked are those who forsake God's law. If there were no way for them to keep God's law, there would be no reason for burning indignation, only for pity. In this case the indignation could, justifiably, be directed at the one who knowingly gave laws that could not be kept, with such severe consequences for disobedience. The indignation is a result of those who choose to rebel against such right and proper requirements, when conformity is entirely within the grasp of the offender.

19. Proverbs 2:17

"Who forsakes the companion of her youth, And forgets the covenant of her God."
(NKJV)

Here we again see that God is forsaken and forgotten.

20 Jeremiah 9:5-6, 13, 14

(5) "And everyone deceives his neighbor, and does not speak the truth, they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they weary themselves committing iniquity.

(6) Your dwelling is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know Me,' declares the LORD.

(13) "And the LORD said, 'Because they have forsaken My law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice nor walked according to it,

(14) "but have walked after the stubbornness of their heart and after the Baals, as their fathers taught them."

Here we see that they have taught their tongues to lie, not that they were inherently liars. That they have refused to know God, not that they did not have the capacity or opportunity to know Him. We see that they have forsaken His law, not that it is contrary to their nature. We see that they walked with stubborn hearts as their fathers taught them, not that their conduct was in any sense determined by their constitution.

21. Ephesians 4:17-19

(17) "This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind.

(18) "being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;

(19) "and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness."

Here is a very important and interesting passage. Notice that people are excluded from the life of God, because of ignorance, which is the result of a hard heart. Their hard heart is the result of being callous. This is the result of giving themselves over to sensuality, or living for the desires of the flesh supremely.

In verse 17, when Paul said "walk no longer" like the Gentiles, he was telling them to do something that he knew to be within their power. Stop doing that! In verse 18, he says

that they are excluded from the life of God because of ignorance and that this ignorance is the result of a hard heart. In verse 19 is a key. Paul says that they have "become callous" and "have given themselves over to sensuality." It should be very plain from this that man is not born already a slave to sin, and impotent to resist any sin. This shows a yielding to and growth in sin.

Paul said in effect that they were excluded from the life of God because they became callous and gave themselves over to a state different from what they were before.

It is all the result of a choice as shown in Romans 6:19

22. Romans 6:16-19

(16) "Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?"

(17) "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed.

(18) "and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

(19) "I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification."

This shows us that we have presented or yielded ourselves to impurity on an individual basis. This shows a choice and not a coercion or causation. Slavery to sin is not constitutional or inherent, but is the result of personal volition.

This passage also shows whose responsibility it is to turn away from sin. As you presented....now present. Man does not lose the ability to submit and yield to God. We are actually commanded to do something that we are taught that we allegedly do not have the ability to do.

Verse 17 shows that it is possible to become obedient from the heart. It also points, very strongly, to the premise that some sound teaching is involved. (*See #21*)

23. Romans 7:9

"And I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died."

Paul claimed to have been alive before the commandment, not "born dead."

24. Romans 7:14

"For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into bondage."

You can only be sold into a state other than the one you are in. In other words, you can only be sold into bondage, if your original state is something other than bondage. There is a difference between being born into something and being sold into something.

25. Romans 7:17, 20

(17) "So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me.

(20) "But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me."

Paul very plainly states that he had come to a point where it was no longer him doing it, but sin having the upper hand. Originally, it was Paul that was the sole author of his sin. Paul continued, (21, 23) "I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good....but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

Paul has shown the same progression of character that he had just shown in chapter 6, verses 16-20 (*See #22*)

Also, this whole passage found in Romans 7, needs a little more explanation.

This passage is commonly used to try to show that Paul had a continual struggle with sin throughout his life. In many Bibles the passage found in verse 14 through the end of the chapter have a heading something like "*The Conflict of Two Natures.*" It is commonly held that Paul was writing of his present condition, and therefore sin is the continuing experience and normal way of life for all Christians.

Greek writers frequently used the present tense while describing something that happened in the past. This was done to heighten the vividness and mental awareness of the experience being related. You have almost certainly been in conversations where the same thing has happened. Your mind and imagination are transported to a more easily realized experience of the narrative.

When this passage is taken in the context of chapters 6-8, it is impossible to come to the conclusion that Paul was leaving any room for the idea of present, continuing sin in the life of any Christian.

What Paul was talking about was his experience before and leading up to his conversion,

not the present, common experience of Christian.

26. 1 Kings 18:22

"And it will come about when I leave you that the Spirit of the LORD will carry you where I do not know; so when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth."

Obadiah stated that he had feared the Lord from his youth. This would have been impossible, if, as the doctrine of original sin teaches, we are born in rebellion against God, with no capability to obey and submit to Him.

27. Genesis 8:21

"And the LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, 'I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will ever again destroy every living thing, as I have done.'"

Notice the words "from his youth." This says nothing about the cause of a sinful nature. It does indicate when it begins to develop.

28. Psalm 58:3

"The wicked are estranged from the womb; these who speak lies go astray from birth."

This has the same implications as #27.

29. 1 Kings 15:5

"Because David did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite."

According to this Scripture, David only turned aside once in his life, and that was when he was a grown man. This is the Holy Spirit's evaluation of David, because all Scripture is inspired by God.

How could he have done this if he was born with a nature and constitution that would cause him to sin at a very early age, if not from birth?

Remember that it only takes one instance to show that something is possible.

If David so lived his life as to have the Scriptures testify to this, it must be possible for anyone. This is not to say that it is easy, but that is something that can be done.

30. 2 Kings 2:1

"And Jehoash did right in the sight of the LORD all his days in which Jehoiada the priest instructed him."

Here is a king who "did right...all his days." This was without the Holy Spirit, as we have Him today (*See #29*)

It is well worth noting that he had a wise teacher to aid him, one to give him wise counsel, not erroneous concepts and doctrine (teaching).

It is a sad truth that if you teach people that they can not do something, with any semblance of authority, they will believe you and not even put forth any effort to try. We can see this all through society. People are told that they can not help what they are, that their heredity, or education, or race, or sex has limited their opportunity to succeed. The welfare rolls are loaded down with those who believe that all their problems are somebody else's fault and they can do nothing about it themselves and that they need somebody else's help, people who believe that is someone else's responsibility to fix their problems, without any effort or commitment on their part.

It is really a sad state of affairs that the church is doing the same thing, and that with far greater consequences! This teaching that tells sinners that they can not help what they are, and that they can not respond to God in any way leaves myriads indifferent to the demands and claims of the Gospel. If we would teach what is right and put the responsibility for sin where it belongs, we would begin to see conviction of sin and repentance. And not until then!

31. 2 Kings 18:3, 6

(3) "And he did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done.

(6) "For he clung to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses."

Again we find one, Hezekiah, who kept His commandments, and did not depart from following Him. (*See #29*)

32. 2 Chronicles 29:2

"And he did right in the sight of the LORD according to all that his father David had done."

This is another testimony of King Hezekiah, that he kept his character upright before God. (*See #29, 31*)

33. 2 Kings 2:22

"And he did right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the ways of his father David; nor did he turn aside to the right or to the left."

Here again we find one who has the testimony of the Holy Spirit's inspiration that he, Josiah, was able to and did keep all of the commandments of God. (*See #29*)

34. 2 Chronicles 34:2-3

(2) "And he did right in the sight of the LORD and walked in all the ways of his father David; and did not turn aside to the right or to the left.

(3) "For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still a youth, he began to seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, the carved images, and the molten images."

Here, again, is the testimony concerning Josiah. He did right, did not turn aside, and began to purge the land of false gods. All of this from one who began to seek the Lord while he was still a youth. How could this be if he was born with a nature that leaves him unable to obey or respond to God. The very fact that he did all of this and purged the land of false gods should silence in utter shame the lame excuse that we are "born dead" and cannot obey God.

35. 2 Chronicles 15:17

"But the high places were not removed from Israel; nevertheless the heart of Asa was blameless all his days."

Another one whose life bears witness that man can meet God's requirements. The KJV translates this verse as saying that Asa's heart was perfect all his days. (*See #29*)

What God requires of us is that we live blamelessly. If there is something that negates our ability, we are not to blame and are objects of pity. To restate what has been said earlier, all that we are required to do is what we can do.

36. 1 Kings 15:14

"But the high places were not taken away; nevertheless the heart of Asa was wholly devoted to the LORD all his days."

This is a parallel statement regarding King Asa. (*See #35*)

37. 2 Chronicles 20:32

"And he walked in the way of Asa his father, and did not depart from it, doing right in the sight of the LORD."

This is a testimony of Jehoshaphat of the same ability. (See #29)

38. 1 Kings 22:43

"And he walked in all the way of his father Asa; he did not turn aside from it, doing right in the sight of the LORD. However, the high places were not taken away; the people sacrificed and burned incense on the high places."

This is a parallel statement to #37, regarding Jehoshaphat. (See #29)

39. 2 Chronicles 26:4-5

(4) "And he did right in the sight of the LORD according to all that his father Amaziah had done.

(5) "And he continued to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding through the vision of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God prospered him."

This time the testimony concerning Uzziah shows us the same thing. (See #29)

40. 2 Chronicles 27:2

"And he did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah had done; however he did not enter the temple of the LORD. But the people continued acting corruptly."

This time Jotham's life bears testimony of the same capability of obedience to God's requirements. This time notice that the people continued to act corruptly. Jotham was able to continue in the requirements of the Lord amid a heathen, wicked environment. Yet we are bombarded with the concept that we cannot do this today, even with the assistance of the Holy Spirit of God, which he did not have. (See #29)

41. Job 1:1

"There was a man on the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil."

Job was blameless and upright before God. So much so, that God even bragged about him to Satan. (See #29)

42. Luke 1:5, 6

(5) "In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a certain priest name Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

(6) "And they were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord."

How many of the commandments and requirements of the Lord does this passage tell us that they were able to keep? It tells us that both of them were righteous and blameless in all of the commandments and requirements. Again this is describing the character and actions of people before the Holy Spirit was given, as He is today (*See #29*)

43. Psalm 119:9

"How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Thy word.?"

The implication here is that man may, or has the capability, to keep his way pure and according to the Lord's word. There is nothing here, or anywhere in Psalm 119, to indicate other than that the law and testimony of the Lord are within the reach of every moral being.

44. Proverbs 23:13-14

(13) "Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you beat him with the rod, he will not die.

(14) "You shall beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from Sheol."

If this sinful nature is inherently constitutional, how can discipline change it, or bring it under control?

If this sinful nature is passed on in the blood, how can the rod of discipline remove it from him? The only way that could be, would be to beat the child until there was no blood left in it, and actually kill the child. Again, if this sinful nature is in the blood, when people die and their soul is separated from their body, are they then free from this sinful nature? This would make all sin purely physical and not moral..

The purpose of disciplining children is to teach and influence them toward proper conduct. The disciplining has nothing to do with altering the constitutional make-up of the child, but does have to do with the will.

In addition, if this removes the sinful nature, it would be easy to convert people...beat them, or inflict some other method of punishment! The cruelest prisons would become the most effective "transformation centers." Also, every person in Hell may have a realistic complaint, because with enough punishment, their sinful nature will be gone.

This would mean that Christ died needlessly. God would be negligent if He knew of a "surefire" way to convert all sinners and rescue them from Hell, and did not use it, but rather sent Jesus to suffer and die to win just a few. It would show that God really does not have the best interest of lost sinners in His heart, because He would have the means

available to save all, yet chooses not to.

All that this Scripture is telling us, is to teach our children about the Natural Law of Consequences. We are to teach them that good consequences follow right conduct and bad consequences follow wrong conduct. (Galatians 6:7) When this is taught, the child will have less difficulty in choosing good and refusing evil, when he does come to have a real understanding of right and wrong. (See also *Proverbs 22:15*)

45. Isaiah 7:14-16

(14) "Therefore the LORD Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

(15) "He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good.

(16) "For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken."

Jesus, Himself, when He came as a child had to grow to a point when He "reached the age of accountability." He came as we do, with no unfair advantage over us. (See #8 & 9)

46. Matthew 18:2-4

(2) "And He called a child to Himself and stood him in the midst,

(3) "and said, 'Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

(4) "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Become as a child to be converted! Is God asking us to become a totally depraved child? Is this to become a new creation, to continue on in a depraved state? Jesus said whoever humbles himself as a child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. He did not say believes or has the faith of a child. Jesus was talking about the moral purity and malleability of a child, not the faith of a child like we hear so much.

47. Matthew 19:14

"But Jesus said, 'Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'"

Does the kingdom of heaven belong to totally depraved, unregenerate children? Are children so constituted at birth, yet we are to emulate them. Revelation 21:27 tells us that nothing unclean shall enter into heaven. Unfortunately some have gone so far as to hold

to the view that children will not go to heaven without some form of mystical, judicial or ceremonial intervention on their behalf.

In the face of this is Jesus statement of this verse, "for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (*See #46*)

48. Mark 10:13-15

(13) "And they began bringing children to Him, so that He might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them.

(14) "But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, 'Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

(15) "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all."

(*See #47*)

49. Romans 5:12

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned."

Because all sinned. This is a very plain statement: because all sinned. People are sinners because they sin, just the same as a drunkard is a drunkard because he drinks. A thief does not steal because he is a thief, he is a thief because he steals. A person does not sin because he is a sinner. It is the other way around, he is a sinner because he sins.

This verse has nothing to do with a constitutional nature that causes sin. It tells us that sin has spread to all, "because all sinned."

50. Romans 5:18-19

(18) "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men; even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.

(19) "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous."

To remain consistent, if condemnation came to all men through Adam, the all are justified by Jesus. If we are going to use the first part of verses 17 & 18 to prove the doctrine of original sin, then the Universalists are right and all will be saved. This passage is not talking about the cause of our sins, but rather the occasion of sin and the occasion or circumstance of salvation. This will be discussed later.

51. Deuteronomy 24:16

"Father shall not be put to death for their sins, nor shall sons be put to death for their fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin."

Children shall not be put to death for the sin of anyone but themselves. Children shall not be put to death for the sins of their father, or of Adam. Everyone will be accountable for their own lives and character. This passage is talking about governmental/civil situations, but God will certainly be more just and equitable than any arrangement in human justice. The principle remains intact, each person is accountable only for their own standing before the court, earthly or heavenly. Whenever you see God instructing us about principle and justice, you learn something about the way He will deal with things Himself.

52. 2 Kings 14:6

"But the sons of the slayers he did not put to death, according to what is written in the Book of the law of Moses, as the LORD commanded, saying, 'The fathers shall not be put to death for the sons, nor the sons be put to death for the fathers; but each shall be put to death for his own sin.'"

Again, each is responsible for his own sin only. (*See #51*)

53. 2 Chronicles 25:4

"However, he did not put their children to death, but did as it is written in the law of the book of Moses, which the LORD commanded, saying, 'Fathers shall not be put to death for sons, nor sons put to death for fathers, but each shall be put to death for his own sin.'"

The same principle is again set down, as coming from the Lord. (*See #15*)

53. Jeremiah 31:31

"But everyone will die for his own iniquity; each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth will be set on edge."

Again we see that everyone is responsible for his sons only. (*See #51*)

55. Proverbs 14:23

"The wicked is thrust down by his wrongdoing, but the righteous has a refuge when he dies."

This also points out that it is by his wrongdoing. It is not by his nature, or someone else's actions or nature. Including Adam's.

56. Isaiah 50:1

"Thus says the LORD, 'Where is the certificate of divorce, by which I have sent your mother away? Or to whom of My creditors did I sell you? Behold you were sold for your iniquities, and for your transgressions your mother was sent away.'

We are sold for our iniquities, not someone else's. (See #51)

57. Ezekiel 18:1-4, 19, 20

(1) "Then the word of the LORD came to me saying,

(2) "'What do you mean by using this proverb concerning the land of Israel saying, 'The fathers eat the sour grapes, but the children's teeth are set on edge?'

(3) "As I live," declares the LORD God, "you are surely not going to use this proverb in Israel any more.

(4) "Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die.

(19) "Yet you say, 'Why should the son not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity?' When the son has practiced justice and righteousness, and has observed all My statutes and done them, he shall surely live.

(20) "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."

This passage refers to God's dealing with nations and individuals. However a principle is stated, (*See #51 comments*) that God deals with individuals absolutely fairly, and individually. That we are accountable for ourselves and our own developed character. We are not held accountable for the actions of anyone in our lineage, all the way back to and including Adam.

Verse 19 states very clearly that God considers it possible for a person to practice justice and righteousness and to observe and do all of His commandments, even with a wicked father.

This whole chapter should be read, but these verses give us the general idea of the whole chapter.

58. Ezekiel 33:12

"And you, son of man, say to your fellow-citizens, 'The righteousness of a righteous man will not deliver him in the day of his transgression, and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he will not stumble because of it in the day when he turns from his wickedness;

whereas a righteous man will not be able to live by his righteousness on the day when he commits sin."

This verse shows very plainly that even a wicked man has the ability to obey the demands of God upon his life. It says, "and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he will not stumble because of it in the day when he turns from his wickedness." Even his own wickedness can be overcome when he decides to seek the Lord in humility and sincerity. Yet we are taught that we cannot obey God before we develop greater and greater bondage to sin. But God says that even your wickedness will not cause you to stumble when you do seek Him.

What does this say to most of the modern day teaching about repentance, about responsibility, about carnality and so on?

This is one powerful passage dealing with this subject, as well as eternal security, "carnal Christianity" and victorious committed living.

We are not going to have conviction of sin and revival in the world until we get back to placing responsibility where it belongs, on the individual himself. Not on Adam, society, heredity or education. These are all influences, and can be very powerful. But someday we will have to answer God's question; "What did you do with the abilities and capabilities that you did possess?"

59. Acts 3:19

"Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."

The Amplified Bible also used the word "return" and the KJV says "be converted." How can you revert or return to a place or condition that you were never in at a previous time? You cannot return to Chicago, if you have never been there before. Peter was speaking to people who had never been converted to Christ before. He was demanding of them to return to a right state of fellowship with God.

Peter also said, "that your sins may be wiped away." There is nothing in our innate nature that will be wiped away. It does not say that Adam's fallen nature, in you, may be altered or eradicated. It says that your sins may be wiped away.

60. 1 Peter 2:25

"For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls."

We are described as having returned to Jesus. Again, how can you return to some place or condition that was not in your previous experience? (*See #59. Also #23*)

61. Jeremiah 31:19

"For after I turned back, I repented and after I was instructed, I smote my thigh; I was ashamed, and also humiliated because I bore the reproach of my youth."
(See #59)

62. Isaiah 55:7

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him; And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

Again we see that we are to return to the Lord. (See #59)

God has told the wicked to forsake his way. It certainly looks as if God believes that it is possible for the wicked to forsake his own way. He has not told him to forsake his endowments or constitution.

63. Revelation 14:5

"And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless."

Here the Scripture is talking about the 144,000 servants and uses the word "blameless" in describing them. If the doctrine of original sin is true, how is God going to bring this about without changing the nature of man? Every soul in Hell would have a legitimate complaint against God for not doing the same for him.

64. Deuteronomy 1:39

"Moreover, your little ones who you said would become a prey, and your sons, who this day have no knowledge of good or evil, shall enter there, and I will give it to them, and they shall possess it."

Sons who have no knowledge of good or evil. Doesn't it seem amazing that this is exactly the same condition that Adam was in previous to his fall? Yet we are suppose to believe that these children have a sinful nature inherited from Adam because of his fall. (See #45)

65. Genesis 3:22

"Then the LORD God said, Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat and live forever."

Are we to believe that God has a sinful nature because of His knowledge of good and evil?

66. Genesis 3:16-19

(16) "To the woman He said, 'I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you shall bring forth children; yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.'

(17) "Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you saying, "You shall not eat from it"; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.

(18) "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field;

(19) "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

If the doctrine of original sin was to have the prominence and authority that it is given, God surely would have mentioned it here. The most devastating and far reaching consequence of the fall that man teaches, and God does not even mention it in the curse. Is God lax in His revelation to us? He surely would have told us about such a thing as this, wouldn't He?

67. Matthew 13:27

"And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'"

In the parable of the wheat and the tares, good grain was expected to result. The seed that was sown had no defect in it and had the capability to bring forth good grain. Jesus said that the tares were the result of the work of an enemy, not an inherently bad seed.

In His explanation of the parable, Jesus said that the world was the field. The field had the capacity to bring forth either or both types of crops. There is nothing inherent in anything mentioned that dictates that the crop must be faulty. The tares, in the parable, are the result of the work of the enemy, but grow from the same soil (environment).

The point to be taken in this discussion is that wheat was expected. If nothing else, this shows that wheat was possible and that tares are the unwanted and, in light of the context, an unexpected result.

68. Luke 15:11-13, 24

(11) "And He said, 'A certain man had two sons;

(12) "and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate

that falls to me.' And he divided his wealth between them.

(13) "And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living.

(24) "for this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found. And they began to be merry."

In the parable of the prodigal son, we see that he asked for his share of the estate and left his rightful place with his father. He chose to leave home. The whole point of this parable is the reconciling of a son to his father. A son had left his proper place to the ruin of all that he had, except for the love of his father. In verse 24 we see the son described as dead and lost, the very same description used of those outside of Christ. His state was the result of his own choice, just like ours is. He is described as having come to life again and having been found, just as in the conversion of a lost and dead sinner. This also is the result of a choice to return, in proper humility, respect, repentance and love to the father who longs for his reconciliation. So it is with conversion.

69. Luke 15:4-7

(4) "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it?

(5) "And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

(6) "And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'

(7) "I tell you in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

Here Jesus is showing us a shepherd going out to find a sheep that was once in his possession. He is not going out to find sheep that never were his. He said he found his sheep which was lost. (*See #59*)

70. Colossians 2:13

"And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions."

Everything mentioned here is on a personal basis: your transgressions, your flesh, or transgression. Where does it say that we were dead in Adam's transgressions or flesh or that we were forgiven for Adam's transgressions? If we are held guilty for Adam's fall or for being his offspring, why are we not forgiven for that? We are only accountable for and forgiven for our own individual sins. Even if we did receive a nature from Adam that

was inherently rebellious, we are not held accountable for it, but only for what we have done in our own rebellion against God.

71. Hebrews 3:18

"And to whom did He swear that they should not enter His rest, but those who were disbelieving."

Those who cannot enter His rest are those who are personally refusing to obey God. It says nothing anywhere of those who are not able to obey, but much of those who refuse to obey.

72. John 3:36

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

The Amplified Bible and the J. B. Phillips translation of this verse says that the phrase "does not obey," really means "refuses to obey." The context shows this to be accurate. If we are commanded to obey God, it must be something that is within our grasp. If we do not do something that we are commanded to do, and that it is possible to do, the only alternative is that of refusal and rebellion and therefore guilt. If it is something that is not possible for us to do, guilt and accountability disappear and an object of pity replaces it.

73. James 1:14-15

(14) "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

(15) "Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death."

This lust, mentioned in verse 14, has been said, by various teachers, to be this sinful nature that we are born with.

The word that is translated here as "lust," is the Greek word "*epithumia*," which means desire, longing, lust. This is the same word used in Luke 22:15, where Jesus said, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." Are we to conclude that the desire that Jesus had to eat that Passover with the disciples was the outworking or manifestation of a sinful nature? It is also the same word used by Paul in Philippians 1:23, where he said, "But I am hard pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better." Should we take it to mean that a result of a sinful nature is a desire to be with Christ?

If this "lust" is in itself sinful then Jesus Himself was sinful in His nature and constitution, as was Paul in his regenerate state. There is nothing in itself sinful with the desire used in this verse. It is merely an occasion or opportunity for temptation in the

same sense that the desire for food is the occasion or opportunity for gluttony.

Notice, in the passage, that it is not until one is carried away and commits the sin itself that it brings forth death. The only thing that brings forth spiritual death is sin, not constitution.

ANSWERS TO SOME OF THE ORIGINAL SIN PROOF SCRIPTURES.

Let us go on to look into some of the "proof" Scriptures for the doctrine of original sin.

Probably the main text cited as proof of the doctrine of original sin is Psalm 51:5:

"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me."

The subject of this verse is not the state or constitution of David at, or before, his birth. The subject of the verse is his conception.

According to the Strong's Concordance the word used for iniquity, where David says that he "was brought forth in iniquity," is the Hebrew word "*avon*." The Strong's definition is:

H5771. *Avon*, aw-vone'; or 'avown (H2 Kings 7:9; Psa. 51:5 [H7]), aw-vone'; from H5753; perversity, i.e. (moral) evil:--fault, iniquity, mischief, punishment (of iniquity), sin.

Using this information, it is possible that David was saying that his birth was the result or punishment of iniquity or sin. This is not to say that this is the only or proper way that "*Avon*" is used in this verse, but that it is a possibility.

When he said that, "in sin my mother conceived me," he used the word "*chet*". The Strong's definition for this word is:

H2399. *chet*', khate; from H2398; a crime or its penalty:--fault, X grievously, offense, (punishment of) sin.

This word apparently has the same possibility as "*Avon*" But there is a difference in the usage, based upon the context of the verse. David's birth was the result of his conception. The "*Avon*", referring to his birth, is the result of the "*chet*", which referred to his conception.

It is definitely possible to have a cascading of the results of an action. We see this all the time in life as well as in Scripture.

If David's birth was an act of iniquity, how could he justly, be held accountable for it? It is far more reasonable to look at his birth as the result of a previous action. This is especially true since David mentions the conditions of his conception in the second half of the verse.

This is a far more reasonable interpretation of this verse than to hold that David was implying that when he was born, he was inherently depraved.

If we look a little farther into the Scriptures we find that David had two sisters, Abigail and Zeruah (1 Chronicles 2:13-17). In 2 Samuel 17:25 we find out that David's sisters were the daughters of Nahash. A little more investigation shows us that Nahash was an Ammonite king (1 Samuel 11:1, 12:12). This would mean that David had the same mother but a different father than Abigail and Zeruah. David's mother was either an ex-concubine or ex-wife of the Ammonite king, Nahash. This would also help to explain why David was always looked down on by his brothers (1 Samuel 16:11, 17:28-30). She was apparently a Jewish woman, because no Ammonite shall enter the congregation of the Lord to the tenth generation (Deuteronomy 23:3), which David certainly did. She may have been considered defiled because of her marriage to Nahash, to make David's conception sinful.

It has been said that Nahash was another name for Jesse. This is just speculation. The name Nahash translated means "serpent," and Jesse means "extant" or standing out or above. It doesn't seem logical that the same man would have two names with such different meanings.

All of this certainly opens up a whole area of possibilities that is very rarely heard of, though it is very reasonable and is in complete conformity to the Scriptures.

It must be impressed that only David's conception was improper, sinful or illegal, not his birth. This is because the Scriptures tell us that no bastard shall enter the congregation of the Lord to the tenth generation (Deuteronomy 23:2).

See the chart, at the back of this booklet on David's Family Tree.

Another proof text that is used is Romans 3:9-12, 23:

(9) "What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin.

(10) "as it is written, 'THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE

(11) 'THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTAND, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS GOD:

(12) 'ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD. THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE

(23) "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"

All that his passage is telling us, when taken in context (1:18-3:31) is that sinners who sinned without the law and sinners who sinned with the law, are sinners because they

sinned and knew better. Verse 12 has been mentioned earlier (*See #10*), and shows a turning away and becoming something else. Verse 23 says nothing about any cause of sin, but only states that all have sinned or committed sin.

Another passage that is used is Romans 7:14-24:

(14) "For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.

(15) "For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.

(16) "But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the law confessing that it is good.

(17) "So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me.

(18) "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing if the good is not.

(19) "For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish.

(20) "But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it but sin which dwells in me.

(21) "I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good.

(22) "For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,

(23) "but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

(24) "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?"
This passage has also been mentioned before (*See #24 & 25*), and is only a natural result of presenting yourself to sin according to Romans 6:16-19, also mentioned before (*See #22*). It is also the result of trying to get freedom by a religion of works alone.

Another passage that is used as a proof text of the doctrine is Ephesians 2:1-3:

(1) "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

(2) "in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

(3) "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

To begin with, in verse 1, it is specified that you were dead in your sins, not Adam's.

In verse 3 the word "lusts" is again the Greek word "*epithumia*" which was discussed earlier. The word itself does not have an evil or carnal connotation. If it did Jesus and Paul had problems with lust. (See #73) The problem comes when people live for these desires.

This passage says they were "indulging" the desires of the flesh. According to the dictionary, indulge means: to give way to, to allow oneself a gratification, to treat oneself to. These are all voluntary acts. To indulge the desires of the flesh is to give into, to seek after, to submit to the drawing of the desires. To indulge always implies a giving in when resisting and refusing was always possible. There is no determinism involved.

The word nature in verse 3 literally means "growth" and figuratively means "disposition or constitution." Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament tells us that this nature is the result of habit. '...c. a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature...by (our depraved) nature we were exposed to the wrath of God; Eph.ii.3 (this meaning is evident from the preceding context, and stands in contrast with the change of heart and life wrought through Christ by the blessing of divine grace;...[Other (see Meyer) would lay more stress here upon the constitution in which this 'habitual course of evil' has its origin, whether that constitution be regarded (with some) as already developed at birth, or (better) as undeveloped....]'"

God has told us certain things that we are to let our minds dwell upon (Titus 4:8). This is because, "As a man thinketh, so is he." (Proverbs 23:7 KJV) In other words, a man's thoughts become his actions, his actions become his habits, and his habits become his nature, his nature becomes his character, and his character determines his destiny.

When something is practiced enough, it becomes "second nature." That is one reason why athletes practice so much using repetition.

When a baseball player works and practices at developing his skill, it becomes almost an instinct to react a certain way. Many people will think that he is a natural at his position, when what they are seeing is the result of, usually, a lifetime of work and practice. Ted Williams was, perhaps, the greatest hitter of all time. A number of times, during broadcast interviews, I have heard people tell him that he was a great natural hitter. He always told them that there is no such thing, that his ability was the result of hours upon hours of practice and self discipline. When something is practiced enough it becomes natural or second nature.

When you learned to drive a car, you were very careful and kept your concentration on what you were learning. After a while you became more comfortable and you didn't need to focus your attention so much. Now most of what you do is a "second nature" to you.

So much so that there have been times that you did not remember the last 15 or 20 miles that you drove. You were mentally on automatic pilot. That is what the word nature, according to Mr. Thayer, is all about in this verse.

All that this passage is telling us is that we grow into a sinful nature by practice and by seeking fleshly desires as an end in themselves. (*See #5*)

Romans 5:12-19 is another passage that is commonly used to support this doctrine:

(12) "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned. -

(13) "for until the Law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

(14) "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam's offense, who is a type of Him who was to come.

(15) "But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.

(16) "And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgement arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification.

(17) "For if by the transgression of one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

(18) "So then as through the one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men; even so through the one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.

(19) "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous."

All that this passage is showing is that Adam was the occasion of sin and that Jesus is the occasion of salvation. By occasion is meant the opportunity or circumstance. Without a being with the ability to choose between holiness and sin, there could be no virtue or blame in that being. He would be under the law of cause and effect. The ability to choose holiness or sin was the occasion or opportunity for sin to enter the world, through Adam. This can be shown by a person having a car capable of going 120 miles per hour as being the opportunity to drive over the speed limit. Christ is also the occasion of salvation. Without Him, salvation is impossible. He is the opportunity or circumstance whereby man can be saved. This is not to say that all are saved because of Him, just as all are not lost because of Adam, only that the opportunity is present. (*See #50*)

HOW ARE WE BORN

Let us now look at a new born baby and see just what its nature is.

It is born neither holy nor sinful, since both of these require a choice to live according to what we know to be right and proper or to refuse to do so. A baby is born innocent! It has made no choice yet. Proverbs 24: 12 says, "If you say 'See, we did not know this,' does He not consider it who weighs the hearts? And does He not know it who keeps your soul? And will He not render to man according to his work?" For a person to be accountable for his choice, he must have understanding in the moral realm. (*See also John 9:41, 15:22, James 4:17*)

Because a baby's ability of emotion grows faster than its understanding does, it becomes easier to gratify its emotions as it grows. By the time it has grown to have enough understanding of right and wrong, it has learned to gratify itself first. This makes it easier for it to sin than to choose to live according to the dictates of its understanding. This is intensified and accelerated by the influence of the sins of others around them. (*See 1 Peter 1:18 KJV, Luke 17:1, 2, John 8:38*)

According to Isaiah, even Jesus had to learn to choose between right and wrong. (*See #45*) He was not born with any unfair advantage over us. (*See #8 & 9*)

CONCLUSION

From these Scriptures, comments and questions I believe that it should be apparent that the doctrine of original sin has great problems. There are many Scriptures that show sin is universal in extent. There are none that show sin is inherited, except by tradition. There are none that tell me that God is going to send anyone to Hell for doing something that someone else committed or that I couldn't help and had no control over. There are many that tell me I am responsible for my sin, because I chose it. All sin is a choice to gratify myself, regardless of what my action and attitude does to God or my fellow men.

Man does have a fallen physical nature. But that is not the same thing as a fallen moral nature. The physical state does have an influence of the moral, but this is in no way a causation.

It is important to remember that God only requires of us that which we are capable of doing. We can do no more than to commit everything that we do have, and have control of, to Him. To love Him with all of the heart that we do have, with all of the soul that we do have, with all of the mind that we do have and all of the strength that we do have. Beyond that, we can never be held accountable or blameworthy. This is exactly why Mr. Finney said, "To talk of inability to obey the moral law is nonsense."

May we quit teaching the precepts of men and speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. May we stop blaming everyone else and everything else for sin and put the responsibility for sin where it belongs, on the individual that commits the sin.

Until we get these simple and basic truths right, we will find it virtually impossible to see conviction of sin and real revival.

APPENDIX

This excerpt from a sermon by Charles Finney is added to show how seriously one of the greatest evangelists ever viewed this subject. His approach to this subject was one of the foremost reasons that his preaching, teaching and ministering were so successful, and why his converts remained true to the Gospel much longer than we see in our present day efforts of evangelism.

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