**Original or Inherited Sin**

**INTRODUCTION:**

1. From the United Methodist Church website, under the section entitled, “The Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church.”
   1. Article VII: “Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelegians do vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.”
   2. On the “standeth not in the following of Adam,” see Romans 5:12.
   3. The “Pelegians” referred to in this statement are the followers of Pelegius, who did not believe man was born with a sinful nature inherited from Adam.
2. It is this doctrine of original sin or inherited sin that we want to examine more closely in this lesson.

**BODY:**

1. Passages Often Used in Defense of “Original Sin”
   1. Psalms 51:5; 58:3
      1. Perhaps Job 31:18 will help explain the figurative language used in these two passages from Psalms: “from my mother’s womb I guided the widow.”
         1. Obviously, Job didn’t help widows right out of the womb—he’s just saying this is something that characterized his entire life (relatively speaking).
      2. So in Psalms 51:5, when David takes us back to the time of his conception and birth, he’s telling us he’s known **sin** his “entire life.”
      3. As for 58:3, does a child really speak lies as soon as they are born? He’s talking about a “life-long” habit or practice the wicked have developed.
   2. Ephesians 2:1-3, especially verse 3 (“were by **nature** children of wrath”).
      1. The Greek word phusei rendered “nature” in many translations can denote “a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon, page 660).
         1. 4:17-19 helps explain how it became second “nature.”
      2. Ephesians 2:1, NAS: “You were dead in **your** trespasses and sins.”
      3. “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” (Colossians 2:13, NAS).
   3. The main reason I don’t believe any of these passages teach original or inherited sin is because the Scriptures plainly teach otherwise.
      1. Ezekiel 18:20.
      2. In the judgment, each one is held accountable for his/her own conduct.   
         2 Corinthians 5:10.
2. But at what point does one become accountable to God? At what point does someone become a sinner, and in jeopardy of being lost eternally?
   1. It certainly doesn’t start at birth, or in those early formative years.
      1. Ecclesiastes 7:29.
         1. Some would say this refers to the original state of man, before sin was committed.
         2. I don’t believe that; I believe it’s a general statement about all men, but let’s grant that for argument’s sake.
      2. What about Deuteronomy 1:39?
      3. And Romans 7:9?
      4. Why would Jesus say of “little children” “of such is the kingdom of heaven” if they were depraved sinners? (Matthew 19:14).
      5. Again, if they’re evil by nature, why would He say in the previous chapter, “Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).
      6. And why would Paul write in 1 Corinthians 14:20, “In malice (evil—NAS) be babes?
      7. But what do we do with those passages in Proverbs, like 22:15? “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him.”
         1. Here are some quotes from various authors in childrearing books: “Your child is born sinful.” “Sin is bound up in the heart of a child.” “Remember, it’s the sin inside them that messes everything up.”
         2. If their nature is so corrupt, if they’re inclined to evil continually, then how would the “rod of correction” be so successful?
         3. And the “rod of correction” wouldn’t be the cure for sin, would it?
   2. But at some point a child matures to the point that they DO understand good and evil; they mature to the point that they’re capable of refusing the evil and choosing the good.
      1. Remember what we read earlier in Deuteronomy 1:39: “who today have no knowledge of good and evil.” But they will eventually, and it’s foolish to think that can’t happen until they’re about 21, or whatever age we might consider someone to be a full-grown adult. (Josiah began to seek the Lord at age 16—2 Chronicles 34:3).
      2. Isaiah 7:15-16.
         1. So it’s not just the maturity to know good and evil, but the ability to refuse evil and choose the good.
      3. And as far as this maturity is concerned, let’s think about the things a person must understand in coming to Christ for salvation.
         1. They must understand they have sinned against God, understand that they are capable of choosing what’s right, and they haven’t always done that. See Romans 3:23.
         2. They must understand the eternal consequences of their sin, that they are lost, that if they die in their sins they will go to hell.
         3. But they must also understand the great love shown to them is Jesus offering Himself for them.
         4. They must understand the commitment they are making to Christ; they must understand what it means to deny self, or crucify self, and give their all to Jesus (after all, it is compared to a marriage—Romans 7:1-4; Ephesians 5:22-33).

**CONCLUSION:**

1. From the song, “Thank You Lord for Homes”:
   1. “Thank you, Lord, for little children, how they fill our hearts with love! Humble, innocent, and trusting like your children up above. In our hands, as clay they’re molded, ever learning morn and eve. What a heritage we’re leaving, precious children who believe.”