

Chapter Eight: Sin and Evil, Part Two

“*And probably, if we had been in Adam’s place, we would have sinned as he did. For there .. is nothing in us that wasn’t also in Adam. He had all the resources we have and more: a good character, a perfect environment, an intimate relation with God. He encountered only one single source of temptation. So, Adam was, humanly speaking, more likely to succeed in obeying God than we are today. If anything, we are better off to be judged in Adam than to be judged as individuals.*”

Inherited Sin (aka Original Sin)

We Inherit Adam’s sin — Rom 5: 12-19; 1Co 15:22

- People died between Adam & Moses, before there was written law (v. 13-14)
- “The many” died because of the trespass of “the one man” (v. 15)
- Condemnation came from the sin of the one man (v. 16)
- Death reigns because of the transgression of the one man (v. 17)
- Condemnation comes to “all people” because the trespass of the one man (v. 18)
- “The many” are constituted sinners because of the one (v. 19)
- Summary: “in Adam” all die (1 Co 15:22)
- But notice how Paul weighs this all out - which is bigger, which side of the equation wins: the “in Adam” side or the “in Christ” side?

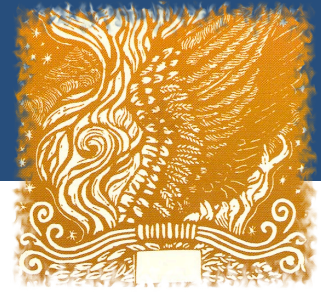
Adam represents us in his sin — God “imputes” Adam’s decisions to us; God declares that Adam’s decisions are ours. How fair is it of God to hold us guilty for Adam’s sin? Some considerations:

- If God did not condemn us for Adam’s sin, he certainly would condemn us for our own. See the quote above.
- Human life always has a corporate dimension. “If a king takes his people into an unwise war, all citizens must bear the consequences of his wrong decision.”
- The way the Bible sets things up, if we are unable to accept sin coming through Adam alone in the first place, we cannot accept salvation coming through Jesus alone in the second place.

Inherited Corruption (aka Total Depravity)

Sin is not just about guilt or blame — it is also about **a corrupt nature that we inherit from Adam & Eve**

- We are born sinful in the root of our being (Ps 51:5; cf. 58:3; Eph 2:3 “by nature children of wrath”)
- All our thoughts, words, and deeds come from sinful hearts (Mt 7:17-20; Mk 7:14-23; Lk 6:43-45)
- So, apart from God’s grace, we can never please him (Rom 8:8).



What about unbelievers who do “good” things? All the following are necessary for doing a “good work”:

A right standard
The law of God

A right goal
The glory of God

A right motive
Godly faith and love



Common Grace **(Common Love or Common Favor)**

Sinfulness extends to all areas of life

- Sin “includes our best deeds, even those that seem to conform to the law.” ... Sin “extends to our thinking, our understanding, so that we don’t even understand the things of God correctly.”
- How deep is sin? Could a worldwide flood wash it away? The flood did not wash sin away. Indeed, it stands as God’s witness that sin is so bad that even the most righteous are not exempt from it. Something much greater, and much worse than a universal flood must deal with it — nothing less than the blood of the Son of God.”
- Sin is deep, and it is also extensive — *all* have sinned, Jew & Gentile alike (Rom 1-3)

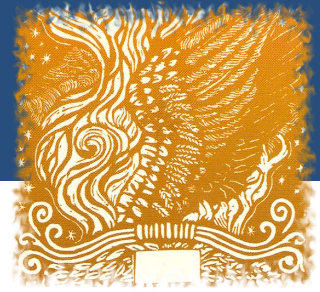
Total inability

- Rom 8:7-8 ... “the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.”
- Total inability is moral, not physical or psychological. Nobody can say, “I won’t believe in Jesus, because I cannot.” The truth is: apart from God’s grace nobody *wants* to believe in Jesus.

Despite inherited corruption, believers are at least in the battle — (Rom 6:14; Ezk 36:25-27; Rom 6:1-23; 8:5-17; 1In 3:9; 5:18)

Unregenerate people are totally depraved but not necessarily as bad as they could be. What keeps them from their worst sins is *common grace*.

- Common grace is **any blessing of God that does not save a person from sin**. (The actual term “grace” does not appear this way in Scripture, but is a legitimate inference from Scripture’s overall teaching.)
- God restrains sinners (Gen 4:15; 11:6; 20:6; 2Kg 19:27-28; Job 1:12; 2:6)
- Often unbelievers do relatively good things (2Kg 10:29,31; Lk 6:33; 11:13).
- Relatively good deeds may externally conform to Scripture and be helpful rather than harmful to society (= *civic righteousness* — as a result, we can & should thank God for countless public servants & benefactors who do not know the Source of the good that they do!)
- If Judas could preach Christ and work miracles in his name (Mt 10:1-42), it is possible that even gifts of the Holy Spirit may rest upon those in whom he has not taken residence and who are ultimately lost (Heb 6:4-6 — see also Mt 7:15-23).



Actual Sins

Quite apart from considerations of inherited sin and inherited corruption, **we must confess that our own sins are sufficient to land us in hell** — Ezk 18:4: Rom 3:23: 6:23

What about believers' sins? The Father's electing love (Rom 8:28-39), Christ's work on the cross (Rom 8: 1-3), and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:4-27) have certain implications:

- Our sins do not affect our legal standing with God (Rom 6:23; 8: 1: 1 Co 15:3). We're still children of God even when we sin (1Jn 3:2; 1:8).
- Our sin disrupts our fellowship with God (Pss 32, 51, 73; Isa 59:1-2), grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30; Isa 63:10), prompts our Father's discipline (Heb 12:6,9-10: Rev 3: 19), hinders our fruitfulness (Jn 15:4), stirs up inner conflict (1 Pt 2:11; Gal 5:17), and may even diminish heavenly reward (1 Co 3: 10-15; 2Co 5:10).
- However, as we repent, those same sins become "an occasion for growth, as we recognize our own helplessness and are driven to the resources found only in God, as we embrace Jesus afresh through the gospel" (Lk 7:36-50, esp. vv.47-48: 18:9-14, esp. vv. 13-14).