

CALVINISM: ORIGINAL SIN

The term *original sin* points back to Adam and Eve's first transgression. It is used to convey the idea that every human being is born under the guilt of their original disobedience since the entire human race is descended from them. Consequently, this teaching is also termed *inherited sin*. As noted in our last article, this concept was promulgated among Protestants by John Calvin and is the cornerstone of the *Calvinism* now affecting so much of our religious world.

To make certain we do not misrepresent Calvinism on this point, we will not summarize the doctrine of original sin in our own words. Rather, we will quote from a recognized Calvinistic document...

"They (Adam and Eve, JFB) being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions" (THE CONSTITUTION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, U.S.A., *Confession of Faith*, Pg. 35, 36).

That is what John Calvin taught. It is what the Calvinist still teaches. However, it is not what Jesus Christ taught. To the contrary, the Son of God described little children, those whom men must be like to enter the kingdom of God, as those whose nature depicts the citizenry of that blessed realm (Matthew 18:1-3; 19:14). That doesn't sound at all like Jesus thought children were born bearing a totally corrupt nature inherited from Adam, does it? What God, and therefore Jesus, the Son of God, always taught was that man is made upright but sins and is accountable for such sins, in his own going astray (Ecclesiastes 7:21). As Ezekiel 18:20 puts it, "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself."

So, God's charge against us is not Adam's sin but rather our own transgression of his will (Romans 3:23) by which each person becomes spiritually dead, each one by virtue of own sin. As Paul put it, "...death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). —Jerry F. Bassett