

**MILILANI COMMUNITY CHURCH
ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS
WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES
May, 2003**

LESSON 4: SIN (Part 2) INHERITED CORRUPTION

Scripture teaches that we inherit sin from Adam in two ways:

- INHERITED GUILT: We are counted guilty because of Adam's sin
- INHERITED CORRUPTION: We have a sinful nature because of Adam's sin

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

Theologians refer to this inherited corruption as man's "total depravity". Man is "totally depraved" or totally corrupted by sin. His mind, emotions and will have all been corrupted by the Fall.

DEFINITION OF DEPRAVITY: Man's essential condition since the fall, characterized by corruption – Man has an evil and perverted nature throughout.

Negatively: Man is not as outwardly bad as he could be. Because of God's "common grace" people have been able to do much good in the areas of education, civilization, science and technology, the arts, law and general acts of human kindness to others. Also, the constraints of civil law, the expectations of family and society, and the conviction of human conscience all provide restraining influences on the sinful tendencies in our hearts.

Positively: Man is inwardly, essentially perverted in personal holiness and corrupt before God in every element of his personality.

a. Extent of man's depravity

(1) All men are depraved (totally corrupted by sin)

Romans 3:10-12
Character (10)
Practice (11,12)

(2) All of man is depraved (totally corrupted by sin)

Romans 3:13-18
Speech (13,14)
Walk (15-17)
Purposes (18)
Ephesians 4:17-18
Intellect is darkened
Sensibility is debased – "being past feeling"
Will is bent toward evil – "Given themselves over to lasciviousness" See Mark 7:15, 20-23; Eph. 4:17-22

b. Results of man's depravity

(1) General description – "Dead in trespasses and sin" (Eph. 2:1-3). This refers to spiritual death and inability to respond to the things of God.

(2) Incapable of pleasing God. Romans 8:7,8; Gal. 2:16, 5:17; Rom. 3:20

- (3) Under the power of sin
 Eph. 2:1-2 – “fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind”
 Rom. 6:17 – “servants – bond slaves – of the sin nature”
 John 8:34 – “slave to sin”
- (4) Incapable of saving himself, in whole or in part
 “All our works of righteousness are as filthy rags” Isa. 64:6
 “For by deeds of law (righteous works) shall no flesh be justified” Gal. 2:16;
 Rom. 3:20. WE NEED GOD’S GRACE! – Eph. 2:8-9

ORIGINAL SIN

This inherited sinful nature is sometimes called ORIGINAL SIN. It is original in that it comes from Adam, and it is also original in that we have it from the beginning of our existence as persons. David is referring to original sin in Psalm 51:5: *“Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”* This is not his mother’s sin but his own personal sin. He realizes he was sinful from the beginning, that he was born a sinner. See also Psalm 58:3; Eph. 2:3.

THEORIES OF ORIGINAL SIN

1. The Pelagian View of Sin. Pelagius, a British monk in the 4th century (A.D. 383-410). The cornerstone of the Pelagian view of sin is: “If I ought then I can,” or, obligation is limited by ability. He taught that man has a free will and the power within himself to do the things that God commands. Pelagius rejected the doctrine of “inherited sin” or “original sin.” He taught that man was created neutral, neither sinful nor holy, and with the capacity and will to choose freely either to sin or to do good. Everyone is born in the same condition as Adam before the Fall. Adam’s sin did not affect us in any way other than giving us a bad example.
2. The Augustinian View of Sin. Augustine was the great opponent of Pelagius in the fourth century. He was taught by his own experience that he was from his birth guilty and polluted, and that he had no power to change his own nature. He believed that man cannot be saved by his own merit, but solely through the undeserved love of God. Because of the Fall man is now in a state of total corruption and spiritual death. Man’s will is not free. It is in bondage to sin. Salvation is of grace, not dependent on the will of man that is enslaved to sin, but on God’s good pleasure. The disposition to seek God is a work of God’s grace alone.
3. The Semi-Pelagian View of Sin. Semi-Pelagians admitted that men could not save themselves; but held that they were not spiritually dead; they were sick and constantly needed the aid of the Great Physician. They agreed in rejecting the Pelagian doctrine that Adam’s sin injured only himself. They admitted that the effects of that sin passed on to all men, affecting both soul and body. But against Augustine they believed that man is not totally depraved. Men’s power to do the will of God was only weakened by the fall but not entirely. As a result we can make the first step toward God. They taught that the disposition to seek God is the work of man. Once man begins of his own free will to seek God then God will help him.

In contrast to the Semi-Pelagians, Augustinians taught that original sin was not simply a weakening of our power for good, but was SPIRITUAL DEATH. Against Semi-Pelagians Augustinians also taught that in the work of conversion it is not man that begins it is the Spirit of God. The sinner has no power to turn himself to God, but is turned by divine grace before he can do anything spiritually good.

4. The early Arminians (17th Century) believed men inherited a corrupt nature from Adam but denied that this involved any sin or guilt (in other words they denied the imputation of the guilt of Adam's sin to his posterity). They said, yes we inherited Adam's corrupt nature, but since we inherited it, we are not responsible for it. So God gives us sufficient grace so that by a decision of our own free will we can be saved. So salvation for the Arminians depends on a decision of our will initiating our salvation in contrast to Augustine who said man is spiritually dead and unable to come to God so that salvation is a result of the sovereign grace of God.

Against the Arminian view, Augustine and the Reformers—Martin Luther and John Calvin—believed that man was not only fallen in Adam but he is fallen today. He is unable to turn to God, or do anything spiritually good in the sight of God. He is TOTALLY DEPRAVED – dead in sin and unable by his own strength to even take the first step toward God. SALVATION THEREFORE MUST BE A WORK OF THE SOVEREIGN GRACE OF GOD.

THE CHRISTIAN AND SIN

Becoming a Christian does not immediately free us from indwelling sin (I John 1:8-10). Though we have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us (Romans 8:9; John 7:38-39) and we have a new nature that desires to please God (Romans 7:22), we as believers still have our old sin nature dwelling in us until we reach heaven (Romans 6:1-11; Galatians 5:19-24). We are a "new man" in Christ, but our bodies have not yet been redeemed; so we still have to fight with the old sin nature until the day we receive our glorified bodies (Colossians 3:5-11; I Peter 2:11; Galatians 5:17). In the meantime we are commanded not to yield ourselves to the desires of the sinful nature (called the "flesh" in the KJV).

Read Romans 6:1-11.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CHRISTIAN SINS?

1. Our legal standing before God is unchanged. We are still justified by the imputed righteousness of Christ (Romans 5:1). We are still forgiven (Romans 8:1). Because salvation is not based on our merits but is a free gift of God (Romans 6:23), and Christ's death paid for all our sins – past, present and future.
2. We are still children of God and we retain our membership in God's family (we keep our "adoption"). I John 3:1-3.
3. However, our fellowship with God is disrupted and our Christian life is damaged when we sin. Even though God does not cease to love us, he is displeased with us (Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 12:6; Hebrews 12:9-10). When we disobey, God is grieved, just as an earthly father is grieved with his children's disobedience, and He disciplines us (Revelation 3:19).

"Although they never can fall from the state of justification, yet they may, by their sins, fall under God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of His countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance." (Westminster Confession of Faith, chap. 11, sec. 5)

4. When we sin as Christians, it is not only our personal relationship with God that is disrupted. Our Christian life and fruitfulness in ministry are also damaged (John 15:4). When we stray from fellowship with Christ because of sin in our lives, we diminish the degree to which we are abiding in Christ.
5. Paul says that if Christians yield themselves to sin, they increasingly become "slaves" of sin (Romans 6:16), whereas God wants Christians to progress upward on a path of ever-increasing righteousness in life.
6. Peter says that sinful desires that remain in our hearts "*wage war against your soul*" (I Peter 2:11). The picture is that sinful desires within us are like soldiers in a battle and their target is our spiritual well-being. To give in to such sinful desires, to nurture and cherish them in our hearts, is to give food, shelter, and welcome to the enemy's troops. If we yield to the desires that "wage war" against our souls, we will inevitably feel some loss of spiritual strength, some diminution of spiritual power, some loss of effectiveness in the work of God's kingdom.
7. When we sin as Christians we suffer a loss of heavenly reward (I Corinthians 3:12-15; II Corinthians 5:10).

THE REMEDY FOR SIN IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN

1. Whenever it comes to our attention that we have sinned, then we should readily and willingly acknowledge it (I John 1:9). The word "confess" literally means "to say the same thing" – that is, to agree or to acknowledge fully. When a believer confesses his sin, he agrees with what God says about that sin. There must also be an element of repentance and a desire to forsake that sin (Acts 19:18).
2. Since it is fellowship within the family of God that is broken by sin, then it is that same fellowship that is restored when confession is made. Sin does not expel us from the family, but it does hinder full enjoyment of the family life. Confession restores that relationship.
3. The eternal relationship of belonging to God's family can never be broken, but fellowship within the family can be interrupted by sin. That is why confession of our sins is so important (I John 1:9). Sin is always a serious matter in the life of a Christian because it affects God, others and ourselves.