***Lesson 1 – July 12th ~ Are Babies Born in Sin?***

**OVERVIEW**

The doctrine that states we are born in sin is often referred to as *Total Hereditary Depravity*. It refers to the sin of Adam and Eve and states that all of their children are guilty of their sin at birth, and are therefore born in sin. We will examine this teaching by the scriptures and find that God has not taught this and in fact has taught exactly the opposite.

* The first creed adopted by the Baptist churches in the United States made this statement: “Our first parents by this sin, fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them, whereby death came to all; all becoming dead in sin, and wholly defiled, in all the faculties, and parts of soul, and body. (Philadelphia Confession of Faith with Catechism, Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and Authors, Inc., n.d., p.24)(Dawson, p.24)
* You can see from the statement above that they are claiming we become guilty in our souls of the sin Adam and Eve committed. It is true that our mortal bodies die because of Adam’s sin since they were cast away from God’s garden and the tree of life (Gen 3:22). However, children may deal with the consequences of their parents’ sin, but that is not the same as being guilty of that sin.

**EXPLORE IT**

Matt 18:1-5

Why do we need to be like children to enter the kingdom of God?

Rom 7:9-11

When did Paul die? What death is he talking about?

Ezek 18:5-20

Would God hold children responsible for their parents’ sin?

Deut 24:16

Should children be punished for their parents’ sin?

Deut 1:39

How did God describe the children below age 20 who came out of Egypt?

Eccl 7:29

What is the condition of people when made by God?

**GET IT**

Rom 5:12

Why did death spread to all men?

Rom 5:21

What is the life that Jesus offers? Is it eternal life in our mortal bodies or spiritual life?

Col 2:10-13

Why do people need the circumcision made without hands?

What does baptism rely on to raise us to new life?

What trespasses made us dead? Adam’s, Eve’s, or someone else’s?

Whose sins does God forgive us for?

**APPLY IT**

We may encounter people from others churches who believe this doctrine, if so they will want their children baptized as infants or some other ritual to cleanse them of Adam’s sin.

How can we help them understand their babies don’t need saving?

When do their children need saving?

***Lesson 2 – July 19th ~ Only Some Predestined to Salvation?***

**OVERVIEW**

Some suggest that God has chosen which people he will bless with eternal life and which ones He will send to eternal death, known as *Unconditioanl Election*. It is a doctrine that rises from a few passages, but most strongly from Eph 1:1-14 and Rom 8:28-30. We will examine these scriptures after understanding some basic principles God teaches. We need to remember that on any given subject, the totality of God’s Word is truth, which in other words, means we can’t apply one passage in such a way that it makes another passage wrong. It is the sum total of the passages that help us know the truth.

* The following statement comes from a confession of faith book by Presbyterian churches in the US. “God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass…By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinedated unto life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite it cannot be either increased or diminished. (cited by Gordon H. Clark, *What do Presbyterians Believe?*, Philadelphia and Grand Rapids, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1965, p 36) (Dawson,32)
* We will notice that God, before He created the world, predestined (meaning to establish before what will happen) some things, and that He has foreknowledge (meaning He can see the future) of events, but He teaches us that the way of salvation is open to any who will believe, and He does not give preference to some people over others.

**EXPLORE IT**

Acts 10:34-35

What did Peter realize after He heard why Cornelius had sent for him (Acts 10:29-33)?

Who did Peter say could be accepted by God?

Rom 2:11-16

How will God judge all people?

Acts 17:30-31

Who does God command to repent?

Rev 22:17

Who did Jesus invite to come and drink freely from the water of life?

**GET IT**

Eph 1:1-14

In verse 4, before God made anything, what did He chose for Christians to be?

In verse 5, what did God predestine Christians to?

In verse 13, how does Paul say they became Christians?

Based on the passages we looked at earlier and these in Ephesians, what did God predestine? Choose the option that best fits all the scriptures.

The options are:

* The specific people to be Christians, -or-
* What Christians would be before God, for whoever will believe?

Rom 8:28-30

Who are the called people referred to in verse 28?

Is it possible that God foreknew who would respond to the calling of the gospel (for the calling see 2Thess 2:14)?

If God knew who would respond, does that mean He is responsible for our choices?

What did God predestine those who love God to be?

What did God plan to do for those whom are predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ?

**APPLY IT**

After studying these passages, can anyone respond to the call of the gospel?

If anyone responds to the gospel what has God determined for their destiny?

***Lesson 3 – July 26th ~ Jesus Died only for Certain People?***

**OVERVIEW**

Since the time of John Calvin in the 1500’s, many have been convinced that Christ died only to save certain people whom God chose before the beginning of creation, and only these people would be allowed by the Holy Spirit to know the true teachings of God in the Bible, known as *Limited Atonement*. They point to a few passages such as John 17:12 where Jesus said “… Those whom you gave me I kept…”, they point out that God gave certain people to Jesus, but they ignore other passages that clearly teach Jesus came for all people and He desires all people to be saved. However, the truth is that all people will not be saved (See Matt 7:13-14); many will follow the wide and easy path that leads to destruction. The reason isn’t that God will not save them, but that they will not seek Him (See Matt 7:7-8). Below is a statement explaining this belief:

* “Christ’s redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary sacrifice of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ’s redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith, which united them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their salvation.” (David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, The Five Points of Calvinism, Defined, Defended, Documented, Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1975, p.17.) (Dawson,34)

**EXPLORE IT**

1Timothy 2:3-7

Who does God desire to be saved?

How will they be saved? (See also John 18:37)

Hebrews 2:9

Who did Jesus suffer the death of the cross for?

1John 2:1-2

What does Jesus do for His children?

To whom is the mercy of Jesus available?

**GET IT**

John 6:33-40

Who are the people God has given to Jesus that they should not be lost?

**APPLY IT**

Romans 1:16

To whom does God offer salvation through Christ? Who will receive it?

***Lesson 4 – August 2nd ~ God’s Grace only for a Few?***

**OVERVIEW**

This teaching is often referred to as *Irresistible Grace*. It is connected to the teaching of babies being completely born in sin and the idea that God has predestined some individuals for His salvation. This idea is that the ones God predestined for salvation He will give grace by the Holy Spirit and they will not be able to resist it, their choice will play no part in this grace. The following quote explains this teaching:

* “Although the general outward call of the gospel can be, and often is, rejected, the special inward call of the Spirit never fails to result in the conversion of those to whom it is made. This special call is not made to all sinners but is issued to the elect only! The Spirit is in no way dependent upon their help or cooperation for success in His work of bringing them to Christ. It is for this reason Calvinists speak of the Spirit’s call and of God’s grace in saving sinners as being “efficacious,” “invincible,” or “irresistible.” For the grace which the Holy Spirit extends to the elect cannot be thwarted or refused, it never fails to bring them to true faith in Christ.” (David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, The Five Points of Calvinism, Defined, Defended, Documented, Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1975, p.49.) (Dawson,35)
* The bible plainly teaches that humans have a responsibility after hearing the Word of God, to believe it and obey it.

**EXPLORE IT**

Rom 3:21-26

To whom does God offer grace?

Does God require something of those who will receive grace?

Heb 11:6

What must someone do who believes in God?

1 Peter 1:22-23

What part do we have in purifying our souls? What part does Jesus have?

**GET IT**

Rom 6:15-19

How does our decision of who to follow affect the grace God offers us?

What is the pattern of teachings we are entrusted to?

**APPLY IT**

Since God’s grace is available to any who will believe, how can our belief help others to receive this grace?

***Lesson 5 – August 9th ~ Once Saved Always Saved?***

**OVERVIEW**

This is another belief and teaching of John Calvin that some religious denominations believe, the *Perseverence of the Saints*. It is a teaching that stems from the doctrine of original sin, it is thought that since man is completely born in sin and needs God to enlighten him by the Holy Spirit in order to be saved that once God has done this to a person that person cannot fall away from the grace or salvation of God. Here is how the *Westminster Confession of Faith* states this idea:

* “They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace: but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.” (cited by; David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, The Five Points of Calvinism, Defined, Defended, Documented, Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1975, p.56.) (Dawson, 36)
* There are many scriptures that refer to the possibility of falling away or of apostasy, but usually those who believe this teaching respond by saying anyone who fell away wasn’t really a Christian in the first place. The passages below clearly warn Christians who have been enlightened or have been in fellowship with God, about suffering destruction if they fall away.

**EXPLORE IT**

Heb 6:4-6

What does the passage say is impossible to do?

Is it possible for someone enlightened and a partaker with God to fall away?

Heb 10:26-29

Who is this warning directed towards?

John 15:5-6

What is the danger of not abiding with Jesus?

What does it mean to abide or remain with Jesus?

Rom 11:22

Why would someone be cut off from God?

**GET IT**

Heb 10:35-39

What are Christians encouraged to do so they won’t fall away to destruction?

**APPLY IT**

What can you do, this week, to encourage another Christian to persevere?

Works Consulted

Dawson, Samuel G., Denominational Doctrines: Examined, Explained, Exposed, Amarillo, TX, Gospel Themes Press, 1990.

Stream, Carol, *Christian History Magazine-Issue 34: Martin Luther: The Reformer's Early Years* (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 1992).