**Biblical Foundations – The Doctrine of Sin (Pt.1)**

**What is sin? Where did it come from? Do we inherit a sinful nature from Adam?**

**Definition of Sin**- The history of humanity as presented in Scripture is primarily a history of mankind in a continuous state of sin and rebellion against God and of God’s plan of redemption. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the nature of the sin that separates man from God. ***Sin may be defined as: any failure to conform to the moral law of God in ACT, ATTITUDE, or NATURE***. Sin is here defined in relation to God and his moral law. Sin includes not only individual acts, such as stealing, lying, and committing murder, but also **ATTITUDES** that are contrary to the attitudes God requires of us. We see this in the Ten Commandments, which not only prohibit sinful actions but also wrong attitudes. (Exodus 20:17) The Sermon on the Mount prohibits sinful attitudes such as anger and lust. (Matthew 5:22, 28) Paul lists attitudes such as jealousy, anger, and selfishness as works of the flesh opposed to the desires of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:19-21) A life that is pleasing to God is one that has moral purity not only in its actions but also in its desires of the heart.

The definition of sin given above specifies that sin is failure to conform to God’s moral law, not only in action and attitude but also in our moral nature. Our very nature, the internal character that is the essence of who we are as persons, can also be sinful. **Before we were redeemed by Christ, not only did we engage in sinful acts and have sinful attitudes, we were also sinners by nature**. (Romans 5:8, Ephesians 2:3) Other descriptions of the essential character of sin have been suggested. Probably the most biblically accurate description of sin in relation to God’s moral character and his moral law is **“lawlessness”**. (1 John 3:4) When Paul seeks to demonstrate the universal sinfulness of humanity, he appeals to the law of God- whether the written law given to the Jews (Romans 2:17-23) or the unwritten law that operates in the consciences of gentiles (Romans 2:14-15). In each case their sinfulness is demonstrated by their lack of conformity to the moral law of God.

**Biblical Descriptions of Sin**- the above definition is a very broad and general definition of sin. The Bible often uses the word **“sin”** in a general and all-encompassing context. However, there are instances where sin refers to a specific act or violation of God’s moral character or his moral law.

1. **Trespass or transgression**- step across a line or established boundary. (Judges 2:20, Leviticus 5:15, James 5:16)
2. **Iniquity or unrighteousness**- any act or thought that is in opposition to God’s righteousness. (Psalm 28:3, Psalm 66:18, 1 John 1:9)
3. **Uncleanness or Defiled**- any act or behavior that would cause one to be ceremonially unclean. (Romans 1:24-25, Ephesians 4:17-19)
4. **Miss the mark**- a general reference to any or all the above terms. (1 Corinthians 5:21)