**Biblical Foundations – The Doctrine of Sin (Pt.3)**

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

**The Doctrine of Inherited Sin**- How does the sin of Adam affect us? Scripture teaches that we inherit sin from Adam in at least two ways.

1. **Inherited Guilt:** we are counted guilty because of Adam’s sin. Paul comprehensively explains the effects of Adam’s sin. (Romans 5:12) The context shows that Paul is not talking about actual sins that people commit every day of their lives, for the entire passage (Vs. 12-21) is taken up with the comparison between Adam and Christ. So, when Paul says,**” death spread to all men because all sinned”**, he is saying that through the sin of Adam “all sinned.” This idea, that **“all sinned”** means that God thought of us all as having sinned when Adam disobeyed, is further indicated in the next passage. (Romans 5:13-14) Paul points out that from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, people did not have God’s written laws. Though their sins were **“not counted”** (as infractions of the law), they still died. The fact that they still died is proof that God counted them guilty based on Adam’s sin. This idea is further affirmed in the next verses (Romans 5:18-19) Paul says explicitly that through the trespass of one man **“many were made sinners.”** When Adam sinned, God thought of all who would descend from Adam as sinners. Though we did not yet exist, God through his omniscient providence, looking into the future and knowing we would exist, began thinking of us as those who were guilty like Adam.

The conclusion to be drawn from these verses is that all members of humanity were represented by Adam in the time of testing in the garden of Eden. As our representative, Adam sinned, and God counted us guilty as well as Adam.

1. **Inherited Corruption:** we have a sinful nature because of Adam’s sin. In addition to the legal guilt that God imputes to us because of Adam’s sin, we also inherit a sinful nature because of Adam's sin. This inherited sinful nature is sometimes called **“original sin”** and sometimes more precisely called **“inherited corruption.”** (Psalm 51:1-5) Here is a strong statement of the inherent tendency to sin that attaches to our lives from the very beginning. Therefore, our nature includes a natural disposition to sin. (Ephesians 2:3) This inherited tendency to sin does not mean that human beings are all as bad as they could be. The constraints of civil law, the expectations of the family and society, and the conviction of human conscience all provide restraining influences on the sinful tendencies in our hearts. The impact of our inherited corruption and our tendency to sin, as it relates to God, can be seen in two ways:
   1. **In our natures we lack spiritual good before God**. It is not just that some parts of us are sinful, and others are pure. Rather, every part of our being is affected by sin. (Romans 7:18, Jeremiah 17:9) In these passages, scripture is not denying that unbelievers have good thoughts or motives in any sense (such as truthfulness, fairness, kindness, courage, mercy, etc.), but it is saying that in God’s infinitely holy eyes these thoughts and desires are still tainted by sin and lack a pure devotion to God.
   2. **In our actions we are unable to do spiritual good before God.** This truth is related to the previous one. Not only do we as sinners lack spiritual good in ourselves, but we also lack the ability to do anything that will, in itself please God and the ability to come to God in our own strength. (Romans 8:8) In terms of bearing fruit for God’s kingdom and doing what pleases him, we are totally incapable on our own. (John 15:5) If we have a total inability to do any spiritual good in God’s sight, then do we still have any freedom of choice? Certainly, those who are outside of Christ do still make ***voluntary choices***- that is, they decide what they want to do, then they do it. In this sense there is still a kind of “freedom” in the choices that people make. Yet, because of their inability to do good and to escape from their fundamental rebellion against God, and their fundamental preference for sin, unbelievers do not have freedom in the most important sense of freedom- that is, the freedom to do what is pleasing to God.