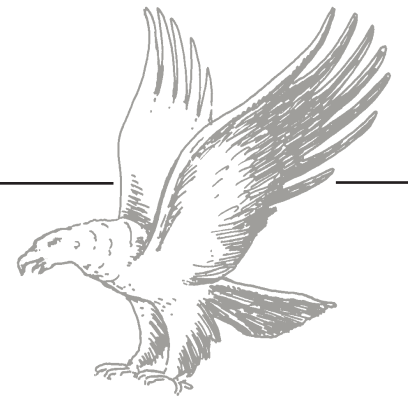


Wings

*"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles."
Isaiah 40:31*



May 10, 2015

Original Sin

A dominant belief in modern Christianity holds that man's nature is entirely corrupt, that we are literally "born in sin." Mankind definitely has a sin problem, but this theory overstates the case.

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

"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" (Eze. 18:20).



There is no question that humanity has a serious problem with sin. We see evidence of it all around us. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). The universality of sin prompts theologians to wrestle with the question of *why* this is so. The most common explanation is the concept of *original sin*, the idea that every human being inherits at birth the stain of Adam's transgression in the Garden of Eden. According to this theory, we are literally born in sin, stained with the guilt of a sin we did not commit, separated from God merely for the bad fortune of being born human. This idea has

so permeated modern theology that it has even influenced some NT translations (e.g., "flesh" rendered "sinful nature" in Romans 8 in NIV—a word choice driven by theological bias rather than scholarship).

This theory may provide a plausible explanation for the prevalence of sin in our world, but it is based on a faulty reading of the Bible, and fails to account for all the evidence.

Paul's discussion of Adam's role in humanity's fall offers a simple description of how sin corrupts our lives. Sin came into a sinless world by Adam's transgression; but the penalty for sin—spiritual death—spread to all men "because all sinned," not because of what Adam did. In other words, each of us is guilty before God because of decisions we personally have made.

Ezekiel is quite explicit in keeping the guilt for sin isolated to the responsible parties. If "the son shall not bear the guilt of the father," then how could all the billions of human beings since Adam be held liable for his sin? We are perfectly capable of making a mess of our own

lives, thank you, without having to borrow the guilt of our forefather.

But didn't David say that he was "brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me" (Psa. 51:5)? Yes, but David also said, "You made me trust while on my mother's breasts. . . . From my mother's womb You have been my God" (Psa. 22:9-10; see Psa. 58:3). These passages are using a common poetic device to describe the life-long struggle between good and evil that rages in our hearts, a struggle that begins very early in life; they are not technical theological pronouncements regarding the origin of sin or faith.

Paul describes the process by which sin enters our lives in Rom. 7:9 – "I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." In his childhood, before he could comprehend the concepts of moral duty and guilt, he was "alive" before God. When he reached a responsible age, he inevitably—as we all do—sinned, and spiritual death was the result.

We all have a sin problem, to be sure. But it's our own, not Adam's.

– David King