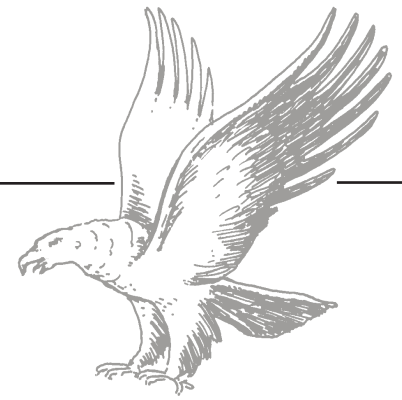


# Wings

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



September 24, 2017

## Born In Sin?

The doctrine of original sin is embraced by almost all factions of modern Christianity. It provides an explanation for humanity's sin problem. But is it Biblical? Could there be another explanation?

*“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me” (Psa. 51:5).*

*“Truly, this only I have found: that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes” (Eccl. 7:29).*



The doctrine of original sin holds that all of Adam's descendents are tainted by the guilt of his sin. We are “by nature” born sinners, hopelessly lost the moment we are conceived. The doctrine was articulated by Augustine in the fifth century, then refined by Calvin in the sixteenth. Today, the doctrine of original sin is a bedrock component of modern theology, both Catholic and Protestant.

It's not hard to build an argument for original sin. The sorry history of mankind, with all the wickedness and evil that permeates our miserable existence, screams that *something* about us is terribly broken. The universality of sin is a common theme in the Scriptures (“All have sinned,” Rom. 3:23; “There is not a just man on earth who does not sin,” Eccl. 7:20; etc.). Indeed, sin seems to be baked into our very nature.

In Psalm 51:5, David's frustration at his own shortcomings seems to affirm this hereditary origin of sin. If David was “conceived in sin,” surely that settles the matter.

But similar language elsewhere challenges that interpretation. For example, David also said, “I was cast upon You from birth. From my mother's womb You have been My God” (Psa. 22:10). Does anyone believe that David was conscious of God's presence while a fetus in his mother's womb? I doubt it. David was using poetic language to describe a relationship with God that extended as far back as he could remember (“from my mother's womb.”) Similar language is used in Psalm 58:3—“The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.” Here, too, the message is not that newborns are chronic liars, but that some people fall under sin's clutches very early in their life.

David's son, Solomon, provides a more straightforward description of man's condition: “God made man upright”—we are born pure and untaint-

ed by sin—“but they have sought out many schemes.” That is, we are born into a world hopelessly corrupted by sin, and that influence starts its work on us immediately. Beginning with our parents, then extending to our relatives, neighbors, friends, schoolmates, co-workers and the broader culture at large, we are exposed to a torrent of temptations that we are ill-equipped to resist. We are born pure, but we are also born ignorant, and the combination of ignorance, physical appetites, and faulty role models dooms us to failure. The evil that early infects our life is pervasive and inevitable—but it is *not* congenital.

To say that we are “born in sin” reinforces a mindset that keeps many people captive to sin's power: “I can't help it . . . I was born that way . . . I'm not responsible.” A correct reading of the Bible destroys that excuse. “Death spread to all men, *because all sinned*” (Rom. 5:12). Whatever the influences that lead us down this dark path, ultimately we are responsible for our own misdeeds. We cannot blame it on our ancestry.

— David King



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