

# The Old Paths

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## “Eating Sour Grapes”

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**I**n Ezekiel 18:2-3, Ezekiel told the people, *“The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.”* The proverb that was used by the children of Israel had to do with inherited sin. There were those at that time who believed that the guilt of a man’s sins was inherited through his father. Does this sound familiar? For years, the denominational world has been teaching that man is born a sinner, and leading many astray.

The doctrine of inherited sin (Total Hereditary Depravity) is nothing new. Man’s teaching concerning inherited sin simply states that because Adam sinned, we are born with a “sinful nature.” With such, we are born sinners, and there is nothing we can do about it. We can do nothing “good” by ourselves.

We might be familiar with this teaching through the acronym “TULIP.” Our study will focus on the “T” (Total Hereditary Depravity, or Inherited Sin). This is the cornerstone of the doctrine popularly described as “Calvinism.” Though folks before Christ’s time had taught it, and then Augustine taught it in his time, it was John Calvin who “popularized” it in modern times. Still, if we can prove the

first point of this doctrine to be untrue, the rest of the doctrine falls.

### The Fall Of Adam

When talking about “inherited” sin, it is only logical to look to the first man as the one who placed sin upon all mankind. Therefore, we need to see what Adam’s nature was in the beginning.

In Genesis 2, God created man (Gen. 2:7). After man’s creation, God gave him something to do (Gen. 2:15-17). At this time, God and man had such a close relationship that God walked in the garden in the cool of the day with Adam (Gen. 3:8). God had prepared the Garden of Eden for man to live in forever so long as he obeyed God.

In Genesis 3:1-6, we see man yielding to temptation and sinning against God. Adam and Eve yielded to the three avenues in which one can sin (I Jn. 2:15-17). Because Adam and Eve sinned: 1) Man’s eyes were opened (v. 7). 2) Woman assumed the role that she has today (v. 16). 3) Adam was cursed (v. 17-19). 4) God dressed them in proper clothing (v. 21). 5) They died spiritually that day (v. 23-24). 6) Eventually, they died physically (Gen. 5:5). Up to this point, both those in the Lord’s church and those belonging to denominations would agree.

The question is, what happened to Adam’s children (descendants)? Were they born in sin? Was Adam’s guilt passed on to them? Read Genesis 4:4-7. *“And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and*

*of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door...”* In this account, God told Cain that if he did well, he would be accepted, but if not, “sin lieth at the door.” Take note of this, because God’s word in Genesis 4 differs greatly from the doctrine of Calvinism that says we can do nothing that is not sin! According to Calvinism, sin did not “lie at the door” for Cain, it was already deeply rooted in Cain, thanks to Adam’s sin! Yet, God did not say that. In fact, He had respect toward Abel’s offering, (Therefore, how could such an act be sin?) and later we read that Abel lived “by faith” (Heb. 11:4)!

Another descendant of Adam that needs to be studied is Enoch. The Bible says he “walked with God” (Gen. 5:21-24). How can one “walk with God” being born in sin? How could God fellowship someone whose every move was sin? God cannot fellowship those in sin (Isa. 59:1-2; I Jn. 1:5). We could pose the same question for Noah who also, “walked with God” (Gen. 6:9).

When we look at Adam’s descendants and their ability to please God, the only logical conclusion is that there is not inherited sin. A man is responsible for his own sin, just as God says (Deut. 24:16; Ezek. 18:1-3, 20; Col. 3:25).

### Some “Proof-Texts” Of Inherited Sin.

Knowing that so many believe in “inherited” sin, we need to study the passages used to support the claim that we have inherited sin from Adam. One

passage used to prove “inherited” sin is Psalm 51:5. It says, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Sounds convincing, does it not? However, Psalm 51:1-4 sheds greater light on David’s words. “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: ... blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,....” In context, this psalm was written after Nathan had confronted David (II Sam. 12:1-7). Psalm 51:5 is not an account of David being an illegitimate son, for he was Jesse’s eighth son (I Sam. 16:10-11). He was not confessing something over which he had no control like “inherited” sins. This psalm is very personal. He is confessing that he has been a sinner from an early age. Thus, he asks for God’s forgiveness of his sins and his sins alone!

Another passage to study is Psalm 51:7, 9-12. David said, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow .... Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.” Why was David not concerned with Adam’s sin, or his children’s sin? It is because he knew that his sin was not inherited, nor would he “pass” his sins on to others! He would answer for his own sins, and no one else’s!

Some have claimed that the apostle Paul taught “inherited” sin in Romans 3:23. He wrote to the Romans and said, “For all

have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” In truth, this passage teaches that each individual sins when he chooses to transgress God’s law. He said, “All have sinned.” This phrase shows action on the part of every individual. James said, “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (Jas. 1:14-15). If we can understand James, we can understand that Paul was teaching the same thing in reference to temptation and sin! He said that those that have sinned, “come short of the glory of God.” Paul did not say that men were “born short of the glory of God.” Paul shows that every man has a choice to make.

Another passage that is used by the Calvinist is Romans 5:12. It says, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Once again, this shows action and decision-making on the part of each individual (Jas. 1:14-15). For this verse to say what the Calvinist wants, it would have to read, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, by Adam’s sin.”

These are not the only passages used, but these are the ones most used by the Calvinists. In truth,

these passages teach just the opposite of what the Calvinist wishes to teach. Let us now consider some other passages that show that man’s sin is not inherited.

### Passages Refuting The Doctrine Of “Inherited” Sin

Isaiah taught that the sins that separated between man and God were individual in nature. He said, “your iniquities have separated between you and your God ... your sins have hid his face from you” (Isa. 59:1-2). Probably one of the clearest passages on this subject is the passage in James where he taught that man was made in the likeness of God (Jas. 3:9). Is God inherently sinful? Answer that question, and the controversy is over!

The text of Ezekiel 18 teaches that man does not inherit sin. Read Ezekiel 18:4, 20. The reason God had to tell them that sin was not inherited was because they didn’t listen to Him in Deuteronomy 24:16! God said, “As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel” (Ezek. 18:3). In like manner, there is no reason for us to use this proverb in the USA!

Read John 3:16. Is this an individual act, or can people “inherit” their belief? If salvation is an individual act, then so is sin. If not, why not? Please study Colossians 3:25 as well.

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