

"Born in Sin"

When God made man, did He make him good or evil? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In Search of the Lord's Way." Some say people are born entirely in sin, but we want to hear from the Lord. We think you do too, so stay with us.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way, we're here to search God's Word for the Lord's will. The Lord's way is the way to an abundant life on earth and eternal life in heaven. Nothing is more important! Riches lose their luster, and health and youth fade, but God's promises grow sweeter and better day after day. We're so delighted that we have that privilege of coming into your home. And we want to be a part of your life each week.

Years ago I heard a preacher teach that every person from birth has a nature that is totally corrupt, perverse, and sinful. Because of this inborn corruption, he said the natural man is totally unable to do anything spiritually good. The sinner is so spiritually bankrupt that he can do nothing pertaining to his salvation. He cannot believe on his own or repent of his sin. This natural man is enslaved to sin he said; he's a child of Satan, rebellious toward God, blind to truth, corrupt, and unable to save himself or prepare himself for salvation.

He said that when Adam chose evil in the garden, he plunged himself and the entire human race into such spiritual ruin that mankind cannot choose spiritual good over evil. He no longer has free will. He said men inherited this total depravity. And the only answer to these problems is a miraculous change from God; and once man is saved, he can never be lost. Well this doctrine also suggested that God arbitrarily chose from heaven who would be saved and who would be lost. That man has no choice in the matter.

Over the next few weeks we're going to examine the Scriptures to see whether this doctrine is true or false. As always, we want to know what God's Word says, because God's Word is utterly reliable.

We believe you'll want to know more about this so we offer the information on this program free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. Now we also stream our program on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Titus 2:11 to 14, and explore the Scriptures, the word of God, to see if we're born in sin.

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to Titus, chapter 2, verses 11 to 14. "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." Let's pray together. Father we're grateful for the joy we have in Christ, and how that You have been able to help us to turn our lives around. Oh Father, help us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, and to live in a way that would please You. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

We're asking today what the Bible says about the spiritual condition of the soul when a baby is born. First, let's go to Romans 7:7 to 11. "What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, 'You shall not covet.' But sin, taking opportunity through the

commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. (Then he said) I was once alive (speaking spiritually) apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.”

Romans 7 teaches that people learn from the commandments what is right and wrong. When we allow evil desires to cause us to break the commandment, we sin against God and spiritually die. James 1:13 to 15 describes more specifically when spiritual death takes place: he says “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.” Sin is an act, not an inheritable trait. You can’t inherit the act of stealing, or the act of gossip, or fornication. People choose to act. Sin is accomplished after a choice, not inherited.

God’s Word everywhere holds each person responsible for his or her own sins. I urge you to read the entire chapter of Ezekiel 18 for yourself. God clearly doesn’t hold children guilty for the sins of their parents or parents guilty for the sins of their children. Ezekiel 18:1 through 4 says: “Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘What do you mean by using this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers eat the sour grapes, But the children’s teeth are set on edge?’ ‘As I live,’ declares the Lord GOD, ‘you are surely not going to use this proverb in Israel anymore. Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. (And then he says) The soul who sins will die.’”

Some people think that children inherit the guilt of their parents. Some say we as children of Adam and Eve have inherited their wicked nature and are guilty of their sin. Some say an infant who dies is lost eternally; others say they go to limbo. You cannot find the concept of limbo in Scripture, that’s made up; it’s of human origin. But little children who die aren’t lost; they haven’t inherited Adam’s guilt. Why? Well Ezekiel 18 verse 20 says, “The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father’s iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son’s iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself.” Now babies don’t know right from wrong and they cannot sin. One can only be lost for his own sins.

Romans 14:12 says, “So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.” Now you may be kin to the most Godly person in the world, but that will not help you on judgment day. You can’t inherit someone else’s righteousness. Your father may be a preacher or an elder, and your mother may be a saint, but you cannot inherit salvation from your parents. You must choose to follow the Lord yourself.

You may be kin to the most sinful person in the world, but God will not hold you responsible for what he or she has done. God will hold you responsible for your own actions. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 10 says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”

Now we all tend to want to blame others for our sins or to look down on others for their wickedness. I recently received a touching card from a viewer who said, “As much as I would be astonished at the sins of others, with an honest appraisal I am much more astonished and offended at my own.” My friends, if I’m lost on judgment day, I’ll have nobody, nobody to blame for my sinful life

but me, myself. I may have learned to sin from other people, but you see it was my choice to do it myself.

Spiritual death means a person is separated from the grace of God. Isaiah 59:1 and 2 says, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear." When people allow sin and iniquity in their lives, that's when they separate themselves from God. Sin means that God turns His back on us and will not hear our prayers.

Sin causes animosity between God and man. Sin takes place when man selfishly says to God, I won't live by Your rules. I will do what I want to do. And sin utterly offends God and alienates us from God. James 4 and verse 4 says that "whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." When you choose to embrace a sinful world and reject God, you make an enemy of God. Now you didn't start out an enemy, but you became one through your sin.

Paul preached to some pagan philosophers in Athens, who didn't know God at all. And in spite of this, he said to them in Acts 17 and verse 29 that we are all "offspring of God." Now Hebrews 12 and verse 9 reveals that God is "the Father of spirits." Whether you know God or not, the spirit that is inside you came from God. You are His offspring, created in His image. And God didn't make you evil. You chose to do evil. Psalm 58 and verse 3 says, "Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb that they are wayward and speak lies." Now these are not newborn babies, these are people that have gotten a little older and they go astray, they're not born astray.

The Scriptures do not describe us as totally depraved; rather they describe us as weak. Saying humans have a weakness to sin is not the same thing as saying they're totally unable to do any good. The Lord Jesus told the apostles in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26 and verse 41) We want to do good but we often find ourselves doing the wrong thing.

God told Adam and Eve not to eat fruit from "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Now this is not the tree of the knowledge of evil and evil, it's the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve received knowledge of good as well as evil. They were not totally corrupt in knowledge. Though they sinned, they had a knowledge of good.

The Lord God said in Genesis 8 and verse 21, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth (not from the birth, but from youth)." All of us have these have these same selfish, evil desires inside of us. Yes they tempt us to sin against God. And we have to fight them all of our days, but that doesn't mean that we cannot also do good.

Think with me. In the parable of the sower, there are different kinds of soils or hearts. The Bible says in Luke 8 and verse 15, "But the seed on the good soil stand for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop." Well this good and honest heart belongs to a person who's not yet a Christian, not yet saved. Remember Cornelius, the first Gentile convert. The Bible says in Acts 10 and verse 2 that Cornelius, though not saved was nevertheless "devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly."

The apostle spoke of this spiritual battle going on inside of him, that goes on inside of all of us. He said in Romans 7:21 to 23, "So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members." We

all, everyone of us, face this battle of wanting to do right and often finding ourselves doing the evil things that we hate. But this doesn't mean that we are totally corrupt and incapable of believing.

Let me ask here some questions for those who believe we are totally depraved and incapable of good. Hebrews 11:6 says that "without faith it is impossible to please God." My question is, why would God demand faith from all men, when He knows that men are incapable of believing what is written in His Word? The Lord Jesus said in Luke 13 verse 5, "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Why would Jesus Christ condemn people for failure to repent if they're incapable of repenting or doing any good thing toward their salvation?

Luke 18:15 to 17 says, "And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them. But Jesus called for them, saying, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. "Truly I say to you, that whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all." Well how can this be if infants are born wholly corrupt and unable to do good? Why would the Lord speak so glowingly of babies if they were so bound up in sin?

At this point, someone is probably asking, "Phil, don't you know about Psalm 51:5? Well here the NIV reads "Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." Well doesn't this imply that we are born in sin?

Well the NIV translates poorly here. Literally, David's words would be translated: "Behold in iniquity I was born and in sin my mother conceived me." David is saying he was born in an evil and sinful world. Let's remember that sin is an act, it's a transgression of God's law. Sin is not an inherited trait; it's learned and acted out.

Now I speaking English because I was born in an environment that speaks the English language, and I learned it. In Acts 2 the apostles spoke with the miraculous gift of tongues to people from many nations. When they heard the apostles, they marveled and said, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?" (Acts 2 verse 7 to 8). People are born in a language? One learns a language by being born into an environment that speaks it. In the same way, one learns sin by being born into a world that practices it.

To make this passage say that David was born depraved and sinful as a baby would make it contradict what David says in Psalm 22 verses 9 to 10, he says "Yet You (God) are He who brought me forth from the womb; You (that is God) made me trust when upon my mother's breasts. Upon You I was cast from birth; You have been my God from my mother's womb." Oh, from the time he was little, David learned both good and bad, both trust in God and later on sin.

Now God didn't make us totally evil and incapable of believing or incapable of repenting. Oh we're all weak, but we can change. And thank God for that! Let's pray together. Father we're so grateful for the love that you give us, and Father that You give us the free will to be able to change and to become better people. Father help us to love You, to believe in You, to trust You, to serve You. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

2 Corinthians 5 verses 19 to 20 says that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. And therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; and we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

Now why do Christians urge others to be reconciled to God? The word “reconcile” means “to bring back into harmony.” A reconciled husband and wife were once in harmony, and well then they separated, and later restored to harmony. If an infant is born utterly in sin, he cannot be reconciled because he was never in harmony with the Lord in the first place. God’s answer to man’s sin came in the form of preaching the cross of Christ, telling people what God did for them, so that they might believe, repent and obey. We’re not totally depraved. Infants are born spiritually pure; they separated from God when they sinned and now need to be reconciled to God by responding to the gospel.

The Lord God gave up His Son Jesus to atone for our sins, and offered the gift of salvation to those who respond in faith, and love and obedience. And even in our sins, we can respond to the gospel. Because of God’s grace, we can change.

Believe Jesus is the Christ! Turn your heart from sin to the Lord. Confess Jesus the Christ, as the Son of God. And be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. “Be saved from this crooked generation.” God made you capable of faith, repentance, confession and baptism. You don’t have to remain in sin. In Acts 2:41 those who gladly received the word were baptized. And all through the book of Acts lost people responded to preaching, they believed it and they obeyed. And my friend, you can too!

We hope that today’s study of God’s Word about the nature of man has made you think. If you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message or this series, then mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org.

Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now our programs appear on our website www.searchtv.org. We also offer Bible Correspondence courses. And if you’d like to have one, just let us know. We offer free study sheets that go along with our programs. You can actually download them before the program, and they’re free, or you can write and ask us and we’ll be glad to send you one. Now if you call us, or you talk to us, we won’t ask for money and we won’t put you on a list.

But we do ask that you please go and worship with a church of Christ in your area. Churches of Christ are a loving group of Christians and they support us and they want to be your friend. And if you’re looking for a church home, we’ll be happy to help you find a sound one. Well as always, we’ll be back next week, Lord willing. So tell a friend about our program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord’s Way.