

## WERE WE ALL BORN IN SIN?

By Mark Lindley

The old doctrine of Original Sin is still alive. Every now and then, one might hear a preacher state that we all have “Adam’s nature,” and that we are “born in sin.” The doctrine is referred to as Original Sin or Total Hereditary Depravity. Many denominations of our day believe it.

The doctrine suggests that after Adam sinned in the Garden, he passed on his “sin nature” to all people. Every baby is born “defiled in body and spirit,” and is “totally depraved,” not because the baby has sinned but because Adam sinned.

Some believe that Psalm 58 teaches this doctrine: “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the deaf adder that stops her ear; Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.

Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Lord.” (verses 3-6.) Based on this passage some have said that “babies speak lies” because they have inherited “Adam’s nature.”

Let me assure you that babies are pure, innocent, and are not born in sin! Further, babies have never inherited a “sinful nature” from Adam! This is an ugly, false doctrine that should be opposed by all who respect God’s Word.

Well, what about Psalm 58? I affirm that Psalm 58 does not teach Original Sin as seen by the following: 1) The passage is describing David’s enemies, not innocent babies; 2) The passage says that the ones under consideration “go” astray, not that they “are born” astray; 3) Newborn babies cannot talk, much less “speak lies”; 4) The ones David describes have “teeth,” but babies do not have teeth;

5) Neither Adam nor Adam’s “nature” is mentioned in this passage; 6) This passage is an inspired exaggeration, designed to show the wickedness of David’s enemies who were also God’s enemies. Obviously, the language is not to be taken literally. Babies do not “literally” go astray “as soon” as they are born; rather, wicked men make wicked choices early in life and go astray. That is all the text teaches. No passage teaches that babies are born sinners!

Adam did not have a “sinful nature.” God created him pure and sinless. But Adam chose sin. This is precisely how people become sinners today. We choose sin and therefore commit sin. “Whoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” (1 John 3:4.) Sin is committed, not inherited.

— Ripley, MS

## The Deceitfulness Of Sin

By Joe Slater

Think how long the list would be if you cataloged all the world’s problems. One little word, however, summarizes them all: sin. Among the innumerable negative qualities of sin, Hebrews 3:13 warns us against its deceitfulness. “Exhort one another daily . . . lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

Something deceitful gives a false impression. It may do so by statement, by appearance, or by influence. If we buy into that false impression, we become hardened; that is, we become obstinate and stubborn, unwilling to listen to God’s instruction through His word. Such an attitude leads inevitably to “falling away from the living God.” (Hebrews 3:12.)

Sin deceives us by wearing the mask of a servant. It appeals to us as something we can use to better our situation. In Eden, Satan assured Eve that the forbidden fruit would serve her, making her wise like God. (Genesis 3:5.) Rather than serving her, however, sin became her master.

It destroyed her fellowship with God and ruined her relationship with her husband. She lost her paradise home, and introduced a cycle of misery affecting all of humankind to this day.

Sin deceives us by wearing the mask of a servant to disguise its true nature as a cruel taskmaster. But Satan has even more tricks up his sleeve. Sin also presents itself as something attractive rather than ugly. The forbidden fruit in Eden looked “good for food” and “pleasant to the eyes” (Genesis 3:6). Our first parents realized the true destructive nature of sin only after they had yielded to its deceitfulness.

An urban legend claims that during a sanitation workers strike, some citizens of New York City got rid of their garbage by gift-wrapping it and putting the packages in unlocked cars. Thieves unwittingly became trash collectors! Like the shrewd citizens of New York City, Satan is a talented gift-wrap artist. He knows just how to make ugly garbage (sin) look like a

lovely present. Beyond all doubt, sin can be pleasant – even fun! We must discern carefully lest we fall victim to his deception.

More extreme than masquerading as a servant or even something pleasant, sin deceives us by appearing to be right. “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” (Proverbs 16:25.) Saul of Tarsus sincerely believed he was doing the will of God as he attempted to destroy the Lord’s church. Sin looked right to him. Radical Muslims who torture, rape, and murder those they call “infidels” may feel certain such deeds are not sinful, but “good.” Countless professing Christians teach and practice things they sincerely believe are “good,” not realizing those things are contrary to the word of God.

Yes, sin is deceitful! And the best defense is a good offense. “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.” (Psalm 119:11.)

— Justin, TX

# Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

## THE BOOK ABOVE ALL BOOKS

By Bobby Key

The wise man said, “Of making many books there is no end.” (Ecclesiastes 12:12.) If this was true in his day when books were slowly produced by hand on papers, and later on parchments of skin, how much more is it true of our day? Thousands upon thousands of new titles were produced in this country last year, not even including all the reference books, textbooks, tracts, catalogs, and promotional booklets printed. Yet in the midst of the flood of books currently for sale, there is one book that has always towered above the rest as the world’s best seller, the book that has long been recognized as the best of the best.

What is this book of which we speak? The Bible, the all-time book of books. It is loved and respected by millions (billions?) of people all over the world.

The Bible is inspired of God. Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:21.) God is the originator and creator of all things. He has given us many gifts, including life itself. However, few gifts from God are more precious to man than the Bible.

The Bible is the book into which God has breathed His will and revealed His desires for man. The apostle Paul wrote, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17.)

One must believe and obey the Bible to be saved. An infidel once said, “There is one thing that mars the pleasure of my life. I am afraid that the Bible may be true; and if the Bible is true, then I am lost, and will be lost forever.”

— Deceased

“The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever . . . I rejoice in Your word as one who finds great treasure . . .” (Psalm 119:160, 162.) “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12.) “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God . . .” (1 Peter 4:11.)

## CALLED OUT AND SPECIAL

By Milton Smith

Ekklesia is the Greek word that is translated into our English word church. It is derived from the very ekkaleo which carries the meaning “to call out.” The word, in its simplest form, refers to any “group” of people who might be called forth or assembled together for any particular purpose. Thus, as one reads through the New Testament he will notice that Ekklesia is used in more than one sense.

First, this word is used to refer to an assembly of people in a most general way. For example, we find ekklesia being used to refer to a gathered assembly of citizens (Acts 19:39), Israel as a group of people who were called out of Egypt into the wilderness (Acts 7:38), and, of course, people gathered together for religious worship. (Hebrews 2:12.) Thus, we find that this word is used in the New Testament in a general sense of a group of people gathered together for any special purpose. But we quickly notice that this word is used to refer to an assembly of Christians in a local area. Thus, we read of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), the church in Antioch (Acts 11:26), the church in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:1), and the church at Corinth. (1 Corinthians 1:2.)

But we notice that this same word is used in the plural to refer to congregations that assembled at different locations. When Paul addressed “the churches of Galatia” (Galatians 1:2), he was referring to congregations that assembled in different areas of Galatia. Likewise, the apostle John was instructed to write to “the seven churches of Asia” in Revelation 1:4; a reference to seven churches located in the region of Asia Minor. But this same word is also used to refer to the collective body of Christ. (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18.) In other words, every Christian in the world belongs to the spiritual body of our Lord. No greater honor can be bestowed upon a person than to belong to this particular body. All Christians should rejoice every day that our Lord has given to us the privilege of belonging to His body as His special “called out group.”

— Tulsa, OK

“And He put all things under His feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.” (Ephesians 1:22,23.) “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9.)

## FEEDING THE INNER MAN

By Wayne Burger

Spiritual gurus and modern day cults have given the idea of meditation a bad connotation. Actually, meditation is a Biblical idea and a wonderful means for spiritual growth. To meditate means to spend time in deep thought about a particular subject.

Jean Fleming suggests another reason few folks do much meditating. "Our practical, materialistic society so values action over meditation, study and prayer that we often feel guilty when we stop to think, study or pray." (Between Walden and the Whirlwind, p. 47.)

"Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening." (Genesis 24:63.) When Joshua took over leadership of the nation after Moses' death, God instructed, "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night." (Joshua 1:8.) Several times in Psalm 119 David said that he meditated (v. 15, 23, 48, 78, 97, 99.) Even though we do not have a specific mention of Jesus meditating, it is implied in that He spent time alone. (Matthew 4:14:13, 22-23; Mark 6:31; Luke 6.)

Of course our goal should be like the righteous man in the first Psalm and it says of him, "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night." (v. 2.)

Somewhere I've come across a statement which should be our challenge: "In the midst of our chaotic lives of activities, demands and responsibilities, it is possible to retreat, reflect and read and by so doing to feed the inner man, to grow in our spiritual lives, while remaining intensely involved in a very needy world."

Let's find the time, even if it is just a few minutes a day, to meditate on God's word.

Each one must find his special spot and time. Isaac's time and spot was evening and in a field. (Genesis 24:63.) David said that he meditated during the night watches while in bed. (Psalm 119:148; Psalm 63:6.) Some folks prefer morning, others prefer evening and some during the day. The time matters to no one except you. What's best for you? Hopefully, you can find a time when you can be alone with your Bible and your God.

Great blessings await us when we meditate.

— Littleton, CO

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:1,2.)

## EDITORIALLY SPEAKING . . .

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This issue of OLD PATHS completes 44 years of continuous publication. To those of you who make this work possible through your ongoing and generous support, thank you! Your help has always made the difference in keeping us above water. 2020 has been a difficult year for all of us! As many of you choose either year's end or a new year's beginning to contribute as you are able, allow me say in advance and one more time: Thank you!)

"AGAIN I WILL SAY, RE-  
JOICE!"

By Dalton Key

The apostle Paul's life was anything but easy. Following his conversion to Christ, his life was littered with countless examples of opposition, affliction and painful persecution. He wrote the Corinthian brethren recounting several examples: ". . . in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in hunger and nakedness - besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches." (2 Corinthians 11:23-28.)

A lesser man might have complained of his fate and given up the fight. But Paul was made of sterner stuff. While imprisoned in Rome, his words to the Philippians ring forth with amazing faith and faith-based optimism. "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain . . . one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus . . . Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say rejoice!" (Philippians 1:21; 3:13,14; 4:4.) The zenith of the apostle's positivity is revealed in the powerful words of Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

This powerful perspective runs counter to the message put forth by today's modern, conventional wisdom. Paul's attitude appears unthinkably naive to the insulated intellectuals dominating our airwaves presently. Did Paul not realize - could he not own - his victimhood? Was he unaware of just how unjustly he was being treated? We can imagine today's talk show hosts sobbing over Paul's pitiable story while insisting he "open up" and "vent his rage."

Paul's view of things may have been unusual and may still be out of the ordinary, but his mind-set squarely agrees with heaven's will. "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.)

Paul believed with unbridled fervor that which many of us have either never known or long forgotten. He believed in personal responsibility - "I." He believed in positive, forward-thinking affirmation - "I can." He believed in assertive action - "I can do." He believed in limitless potential - "I can do all things." And of highest importance, he believed in divine providence - "I can do all things through Christ."

Do we believe what Paul believed?



## GROWING IN FAITH

By Milton Smith

Peter that He would be praying that his faith would not fail him. In a way, Jesus was informing Peter that even though he was a chosen apostle, he would not be exempt from Satan's attacks. But his main protection from this dark adversary would be an unfailing faith, and for this kind of steadfast faith Jesus would be praying.

Paul once likened our faith to a spiritual shield that enables us to "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." (Ephesians 6:16.)

But what exactly is Satan's goal when he attempts to sift us as wheat? The answer is rather obvious: he wants our faith to fail us. And this enemy from the dark side can tell when his goal is being met. When we begin to drift away from the church, he is winning. When we neglect to read the

On one occasion, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan desires to have you that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed that your faith will not fail . . ." (Luke 22:31,32.) We clearly recall how Satan did, indeed, "sift" Peter to the point that he denied his Lord three times. Satan also tried to go after Job, but the great patriarch was able to stand fast against Satan's assaults.

Satan loves to go after God's faithful servants. This, of course, means that if you are a child of God, Satan desires to have you as well. It is a most unsettling thought to think that Satan actually wants to sift us as wheat! In other words, he wants to agitate us. It is an effort on his part to drive us from our steadfastness.

It is interesting that Jesus told

## "GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS"

By Danny Tunnell

Bill Gaither was asked an intriguing question: "What are the greatest song lyrics ever written?" He responded without hesitation, "Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made; Were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade; To write the love of God above, would drain the ocean dry; Nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky."

It would be hard to argue with Mr. Gaither's choice! Love is such a great attribute of God. In fact, the Bible says, "God is love." (1 John 4:8.)

Another salient virtue of God is His faithfulness. Even if we believe not, He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself. (2 Timothy 2:13.) Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17.) "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works." (Psalm 145:8,9.) The Lord does not change. (Malachi 3:6.) "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." (Hebrews 13:8.) "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not

consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:23.) "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19.) "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." (Hebrews 8:12.) "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27) "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20.) The joy of the Lord is our strength. (Nehemiah 8:10.)

A song writer born in a log cabin in Franklin, KY in 1866 was able to combine these biblical thoughts in a song. In 1923, Thomas Chisholm penned, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness."

His words: "Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father. There is no shadow of turning with Thee. Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not. As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be. Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!"

Bible, our adversary counts this as a great victory. When we get out of the habit of praying, Satan rejoices. When we lower our moral standards and begin to blend with the world, Satan is delighted. All of these things are clear signs of a weakening faith.

From his own unpleasant experience, Peter later warned us readers to be "sober" and "vigilant," because our "adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter. 5:8.)

Many centuries ago, God's faithful prophet Amos spoke of Jehovah's coming judgment on the drifting children of Israel with this simple warning: "Woe to those who are at ease in Zion." (Amos 6:1.)

— Tulsa, OK

Morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed Thy hand hath provided. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!" He continues: "Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth. Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide. Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow; Blessings all mine, and ten thousand beside!"

It would be hard not to say, "Amen!"

— Miami, OK

### Old Paths

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