

Concepts of a Sinful Nature 7-19-15 PM

1600 years ago a Roman named Augustine of Hippo created a theology that spoke to the uniform nature of man. He determined (by worldly philosophy) that man was by nature evil. He stated that our sexual reproduction was itself sinful, so all men are conceived in sin, and all bear the guilt of sin¹. Was he correct?

We understand that (generally) all men sin. We may cite Romans 3:23 to demonstrate this (although contextually, it is not speaking about all men sinning, but all types of men, Jews and Gentiles, have law and sin and a need of Christ). Does this mean that our very nature is sinful? Some believe that it does, as we see with Augustine.

Today, almost all denominations teach that man is sinful by nature. These concepts fall into three categories: Mankind has a Sinful Nature (Adam's descendants have a flawed nature); Mankind inherits the wages of Original Sin (We are born guilty of Adam's sin through sexual reproduction and a passing of guilt); Mankind has a Totally Depraved nature (the Calvinist position created in the 16th century states that we could not do good if we wanted to do so). If we have a Sinful Nature, sin is not possible to avoid, and there is nothing we can do to be saved (and therefore there is nothing we can do to be lost).

Do we have a sinful nature? Not according to the Bible, which says in Genesis 1:26-27 that we have been created in the nature of God (NOT sinful), and that sin is a result of individual digression (Ecclesiastes 7:29). We need to see that Jesus had our nature (Hebrews 2:17-18), and He was certainly not sinful.

Is there an original sin or inherited guilt? Again, not according to the Bible. In Ezekiel 18 God thoroughly revealed that He does not hold one person accountable for another's sin. We each suffer the wages of our own sin (Romans 6:23); God does not pass on guilt.

Is mankind in total depravity? Once more, not according to the Bible. Paul stated that Gentiles obeyed the law *by nature* in Romans 2:14. In James 1:13-15 we are told that sin is a result not of our nature but of our uncontrolled desires. Man can act with good intent and purpose, and men seek to justify themselves because ultimately their nature desires to be good.

There is no mention of **sinful nature**, **original sin**, nor of **total depravity** in the Bible. However, there are several texts that those who believe in original sin/sinful nature use to make their point appear sound. They might cite Psalm 51:5 (*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me*); however, they usually do so out of context (we are told in verse 1 that it was "a Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba"). David elsewhere said that only the wicked are conceived in sin (Psalm 58:3). Clearly, David is using poetic language to identify the wickedness of the deed he had done. To prove this, we can look at other Psalms David wrote in which he, in a more joyful demeanor, spoke of his righteous conception (Psalm 22:10). If these are theological statements, they would be contradictory.

Another passage sometimes cited is Romans 3:10 (*As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable"*). It is pointed out that the passage says "no one is righteous". However, again, it is taken out of context. The original context of the quote was Psalm 14:1, which says "*the fool has*

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Original_sin#Augustine

said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good." We see then that this is not a statement to all men, but about the atheist alone. What was Paul's context in quoting it? As mentioned before, Romans 3 contains Paul's teaching that both the Jew and the Gentile are (as a nation and law system) guilty of sin. We see this in the immediately preceding passage of Romans 3:9 (*What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin*). Thus, this passage is NOT saying that no man can do good.

Some may go to Romans 7:5 (For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death) which sometimes is mistranslated in the NIV and NLT to mention a sinful nature. However, this sinful flesh is mentioned in Romans 8:3 as the same flesh Jesus came in; Jesus did not have a sinful nature.

Perhaps even Romans 5:12 is used (*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned*) to condemn all with the guilt of Adam's sin; however, in just a few verses (vs 15) we are told that all men may live through Jesus; this is not a universal point, but a matter of our free will to choose to sin and choose to be obedient (otherwise, if all men are condemned by Adam universally, all men are justified by Christ universally, and there is no Hell or judgment).

There is now no question that there is no such thing as a sinful nature. But this does not answer our original question: Why Do We All Sin? Let us consider first that some people never sin (as children or babies). Second, some people in the Bible did not sin: Jesus is our example. POINT: We do not have to sin; it is a choice. We choose to do so because we have uncontrolled desires (James 1) and we live carnal lives (Romans 8:3). You can choose a sinless life. Jesus set the standard for us to do so.