

# The Book of Ephesians

## Week 6: Excursus—Original Sin

### The Doctrine Itself

*“Here we must confess, as Paul says in Romans 5:12, that sin originated from one man, Adam. By his disobedience, all people were made sinners and became subject to death and the devil. This is called original or the chief sin.” **Smalcald Articles III, I 1***

Like actual sin, original sin manifests itself in a failure to keep the First Commandment, “you shall have no other gods.” But more than being simply an instance of breaking this commandment, it is a continuous state of breaking it, and is itself an incessant inclination to break it. Put simply, “people not only lack fear and trust in God, but also do not even have the power or gifts to produce fear and trust in God” (Apology of the Augsburg Confession, II 3).

Lutheranism’s simple explanation of what original sin is:

*“Our churches teach that since the fall of Adam, all who are naturally born are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with the inclination to sin, called concupiscence. Concupiscence is a disease and original vice that is truly sin. It damns and brings eternal death on those who are not born anew through Baptism and the Holy Spirit.” **Augsburg Confession, Article II 1-2***

*“The ancient definition of original sin is that it is a lack of righteousness. This definition not only denies that mankind is capable of obedience in his body, but also denies that mankind is capable of knowing God, placing confidence in God, fearing and loving God, and certainly also the ability to produce such things.” **Apology II 23***

What original sin means for those who have not been made alive by the Holy Spirit:

*“Likewise, we believe, teach, and confess that the unregenerate will of mankind is not only turned away from God, but also has become God’s enemy. So it only has an inclination and desire for that which is evil and contrary to God, as it is written in Genesis 8:21, ‘The intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth.’ Romans 8:7 says, ‘The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.’ Just as a dead body cannot raise itself to bodily, earthly life, so a person who by sin is spiritually dead cannot raise himself to spiritual life. For it is written in Ephesians 2:5, ‘even when we were dead in our trespasses, [He] made us alive together with Christ.’ And 2 Corinthians 3:5 says, ‘Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God.’” **Formula of Concord, Epitome II 3***

### **Original Sin as found in Scripture**

#### **Genesis 3 – Mankind's Fall into Sin**

Genesis 8:32 – Man's heart is evil from his youth

#### **Romans 5:12-21 – Death came through one Man, the First Adam**

Romans 7:18 – "In my flesh dwells no good thing."

1 Corinthians 2:14 – "Natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God..."

Ephesians 2:1 – "You were dead in your trespasses and sins."

### **What does this mean?**

Some folks want to deny either the existence or the severity of original sin. However, a denial either consequently affects other doctrines of the faith. For example, Christ and the Holy Spirit are not needed if we can be justified as a result of our own righteousness and if we are strong enough on our own to love God above all things and fulfill God's commandments (cf. AP II 10). As one who is not sick has no need for a physician (cf. Matthew 9:12, Mark 2:17), the person who is able to bridge the gap between himself and God has no need of a mediator. Also, death becomes implicitly a part of God's natural creation when the corruption of the Garden is not passed on.

*"The knowledge of original sin is absolutely necessary. The magnitude of Christ's grace cannot be understood unless our diseases are recognized." **Apology II 33***

The ripple effects of our fallen nature:

*"The fruit of this sin are the evil deeds that are forbidden in the Ten Commandments [Galatians 5:19-21]. These include unbelief, false faith, idolatry, being without the fear of God, pride, despair, utter blindness, and, in short, not knowing or regarding God. Also lying, abusing God's name, not praying not calling on God, not regarding God's Word, being disobedient to parents, murdering, being unchaste, stealing, deceiving, and such." **Smalcald Articles III I 2***