

DO WE INHERIT SIN OR A SINFUL NATURE?

David Halbrook

The teaching that we inherit Adam's sin, adds unnecessary sadness to parents whose children die in infancy. The related idea, that we inherit Adam's sinful nature, adds unnecessary complacency to the guilt of sin since "I can't help it." Neither of these teachings are in the Bible, though a few texts are twisted to teach these theories. Consider--

1. *The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son (Ezekiel 18:20).* Neither Cain nor Abel inherited Adam's sin and neither do we. Since children cannot inherit sin, there is no need to baptize the child. The child is not lost, thus does not need to be saved.

2. Adam and Eve sinned—did God give them a sinful nature? No, "God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes" (Ecclesiastes 7:29). They chose to sin, and so do we. Now, we must choose whether to turn to God for forgiveness or to ignore our sin (Matthew 26:28; Acts 2:38). Which do you choose?

-- *Editor's Note:* Most "Bible believers" have been taught that we inherit Adam's sin but have not learned some of these first principle passages. Are you willing to try to help open their eyes? Do not fear their reaction—fear the reaction of God if we refuse to try to teach the lost (Mt. 10:28).

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

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WHEN WORDS WOUND ME

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A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver (Prov. 25:11). Well chosen words are beautiful to the ear. We've all experienced this—but what describes words which are not fitting?

While cursing and lying are never fitting, sometimes well-intentioned words fail to accomplish their goal. For example, when Hannah's heart was heavy because of her barrenness, her husband Elkanah tried to cheer her, saying "Am I not better to you than ten sons?" (1 Sam. 1:8). Though he meant well, do you think that this softened the deep ache of a wife who wanted to be a mother? We are not told how Hannah replied, but what we see of her character shows her to be a woman not usually offering harsh replies (1 Sam. 1:6-7). Might she have been further hurt due to her husband's failure to understand her sadness? Might she have fired back with sharp words to make him feel like she felt or to humiliate him—as they say "Misery loves company"? Instead of reacting in these ways, we find that she turned to the God of mercies and comfort, with no bitterness toward God or man.

When the words of others wound you, how should you respond? First, ask yourself whether they violated God's law or simply did not meet your personal expectations. After answering this question, God has given specific directions with how to proceed.

1. We must respond to sin

When others wound us because of sinful words or deeds committed against us, Jesus has provided the solution—go talk to them privately (Matt. 18:15). The private sins of others ought not be publically discussed if there is hope that the sin can be privately resolved (this is not always possible, Matt. 18:16-17).

For example, Peninnah (the other wife, beside Hannah) mocked and provoked Hannah. Her speech was sinful—she violated the law which required Israelites to love their neighbor (Lev. 19:18). Diotrephes committed this sin, both privately and publically. Regardless of what he believed and taught about Jesus or baptism, the sin

of Diotrephes could not be overlooked. John said that he would *call to mind his deeds* and *malicious words* (3 Jn. 10). When saints slander each other, we cannot stand by quietly. Sin must be confronted.

2. We must use discernment if responding to personal sleights

Not every occasion of hurt feelings involves sin. Hannah's husband did not sin with his flawed attempt at comfort—he lacked the discretion needed to offer *a word fitly spoken*. Sometimes, we will be wounded by Christians whose speech fails to fit our personal need or expectation. On these occasions, if I am hurt by their words, but I understand there was no sin involved, I have two options--

1. Overlook it *The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression* (Prov. 19:11). Sometimes, we maintain a smile and bear with the verbal fumbles of others because their slip was not a transgression against God (which we cannot overlook)—it simply failed my standards. It seems that Hannah overlooked her husband's failure on that occasion. There will be times where others will say something that may hurt our feelings, but their words slandered no one, charged no one with sin, and caused no division. It is possible that they did not even know of the effect of their words (like Hannah's husband). So, if we can overlook their slip and continue to work together, we have developed wise discretion. But, what if I cannot be comfortable seeing or talking to that person due to what they said? What if their words really “struck a nerve” with me, and I do not think I can get over it without talking to them about it? In that case--

2. Resolve it Remember those “words fitly spoken,” that you believe that person lacked? If you believe it is helpful for them to understand the hurt they caused you, then be sure that your words to them are fitly spoken. Pray about this repeatedly so that you do not make matters worse! For example, if in the interest of having a close, tender relationship with her husband, Hannah needed to let Elkanah know that his words made her burden heavier—how should she approach him? How should she begin that conversation? What would be the wrong way to begin that conversation?

Philippians 4:2 seems to indicate that two women were unnecessarily divided from each other and the problem could not be overlooked any longer. Restoring a close bond probably required them to sit down and discuss what happened and how to resolve it. In Acts 15:37-41, Paul and Barnabas had a disagreement which they personally addressed with each other. Do you think that became a shouting match, with false accusations slung at each other? Doubtful. In fact, a reasonable solution was reached which did not sever the relationship between those involved. In fact, if hurt feelings existed, in time they were resolved. Today, is it possible that I might

attempt to resolve a non-sinful, yet personally meaningful, difference with another Christian and having addressed it, move on from that matter and continue working with them? That is not easy—it requires that we be slow to speak, slow to wrath, and sober (Js. 1:19; 1 Pet. 5:8). Beware! Satan will try to use our tongues to turn an occasion where no sin exists into a pointless, raging fire (Js. 3:5). We are equipped to escape Satan's snare by taking the time to examine our own hearts, to pray, and to offer words fitly spoken which will maintain the bond of peace among brethren.

Conclusion These are not new ideas—just ones we all must use while *endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph. 4:3). Put pride aside. If I wound another saint, I am wise to go out of my way to reassure them of my genuine love for them. If I have been wounded, I am wise to go out of my way to reassure the other of my genuine love for them. If we will each do our part, we will defeat Satan's efforts to divide and conquer us, and we can share sweet fellowship in Christ—something else that is beautiful and valuable *like apples of gold in settings of silver*.

Not Forsaking the Assembly (excerpt)

John Gentry

The apostle says Christians have the responsibility to give continual care to the spiritual well-being of fellow Christians. It is the job of every Christian toward every other Christian to prompt and provoke, incite and induce, stir up and stimulate them to greater faithfulness to God in love—of God, His Word, fellow saints, and sinners—and good works—as revealed in the word of God (Eph. 2.10; 2 Tim. 3.16, 17).

The means or method to which the apostle gives emphasis in carrying out this responsibility is the “assembling of ourselves together.” This is not the only way to fulfill this responsibility, but it is one we must not forsake. In our current, country-club, let-me-sit-here-and-be-entertained environment of food, fun, and frolic, the concept of assembling with God's people so that we can serve others as we encourage and edify them is a foreign concept. As a result, attending an assembly of the church every time the doors are open is mocked and berated as a Pharisaical, legalistic practice of some old-fashioned prude who doesn't have a life. Let us get back to the Book and realize that we cannot fulfill our responsibilities toward God and fellow Christians if we “forsake the assembling of ourselves together.”

Have you taken advantage of blood of Jesus by being immersed into His death (Rom. 6.3, 4)? Are you looking for a church that takes their responsibilities seriously? (Read the entire article at www.churchofchristingalena.com)