

## Original Sin

From John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Twenty Chapters of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, trans. Thomas Myers (Edinburgh, Scotland: Calvin Translation Society, 1843), Vol. II, 241-242, emphasis added; updated to modern American English.

### **Ezekiel 18:20**

“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. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.”

### ***Total depravity and original sin***

The Scriptures teach that the whole human race is born in sin as a result of the fall of Adam. When we consider the perishing of the whole human race, it is said with truth that we perish through another’s fault. But it is added at the same time, that every one perishes through his own iniquity. If then we inquire into the cause of the curse which presses upon all the posterity [descendants] of Adam, it may be said to be partly another’s and partly our own: another’s, through **Adam’s declension from God, in whose person the whole human race was spoiled of righteousness and intelligence, and all parts of the soul utterly corrupted.**

### **Ephesians 2:1 “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”**

So that every one is lost in himself, and if he wishes to contend with God, he must always acknowledge that the fountain of the curse flows from himself. For before the child was born into the world, it was corrupt, since its mental intelligence was buried in darkness, and its will was perverse and rebellious against God.

### **Isaiah 53:6a “All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way...”**

As soon as infants are born they contract pollution from their father Adam: their reason is blinded, their appetites perverted, and their senses entirely vitiated. This does not immediately show itself in the young child, but before God, who discerns things more acutely than we do, **the corruption of our whole nature** is rightly treated as sin.

There is no one who during the course of his life does not perceive himself liable to punishment through his own works; but **original sin is sufficient for the condemnation of all men.**

When men grow up they acquire for themselves **the new curse** of what is called **actual sin**, so that he who is pure with reference to ordinary observation, is guilty before God. Hence Scripture pronounces us all naturally children of wrath: these are Paul’s words in the second chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians (Ephesians 2:3: “[We] were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”) If then we are [by nature, in our natural condition] children of wrath, it follows that we are polluted from our birth. This provokes God’s anger and renders Him hostile to us. In this sense David confesses himself conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5: “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.”). He does not here accuse either his father or his mother so as to extenuate [excuse] his own wickedness; but, when he abhors the greatness of his sin in provoking

the wrath of God, he is brought back to his infancy, and acknowledges that he was even then guilty before God. We see then that David, being reminded of a single sin, acknowledges himself a sinner before he was born; and since we are all under the curse, it follows that we are all worthy of death. Thus, the son properly speaking shall not die through the iniquity of his father, but is considered guilty before God through his own fault.