

**Appendix B:**  
**Doctrine Of Original Sin**  
(Rev. 05/25)

## **Introduction**

As part of my work with teenagers, I routinely encourage them to ask any question that they would like to truly know the answer to. In my world, there are “No Dumb Questions” (NDQ). Why? Because if you don’t understand something and really want to know, then you need to ask someone! (The only “dumb” question in my book is one that you wanted to ask...and didn’t.)

A few years back, I was challenged by a teenager with a tough question: “Do babies who die go to Hell?” I knew what I believed, I knew what verses I would quote, and this seemed like an easy question to answer. However, since I promised my teens not to give “pat” answers, I went home and began to look this up...and my views have changed.

The purpose of this paper is NOT to try to convince you that I’m right...I may not be. My purpose in writing this is to show you that there MAY be another way to look at this question; one that would have serious consequences on the way we view our world and our work as Christians.

Also, I would like to say that since I wrote this, I’ve encountered people who are teaching that all babies go to Hell when they die, that those who are severely mentally-handicapped go to Hell when they die, etc. I’ve also seen people walk away from their faith because they could not, would not, believe in a God that condemned a baby to Hell simply for being conceived...something that they had NO choice in. Because of that, I think this question DOES need to be addressed.

So, with that for an introduction, let’s take a look at the concept of “Original Sin”.

## **Original Sin**

To be sure that we’re all on the same page here, I am going to explain Original Sin as it was explained to me. There may be some differing opinions on what Original Sin is and what it’s not; but for the sake of this paper, and to make sure we’re talking “apples to apples” comparisons, I’m going to define Original Sin as:

*Original Sin is the belief that we are sinful at the moment of conception, sinful at birth, and exist in a state of sin until we are redeemed through faith in Jesus Christ. This “fallen state” is due to the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden and is transmitted – both the sin and the guilt – by heredity to his descendants.*

I know there are other definitions out there that we could use. In the more “minor” formulations of Original Sin, the “sin-nature” that’s described simply means that we’re born with the innate tendency – or, as the Roman Catholic Church describes it: the built-in urge – to sin. (This was the original concept, as I understand it, that was formulated by Augustine.)

For the sake of this paper, I want to talk about the idea that we ARE sinners at conception – which I feel can have some serious consequences for those who believe it – not the idea that we have the innate capacity to sin, which I believe in wholeheartedly!

## **Translation Methodology**

When I studied both Hebrew and Greek in college, I took a class on Biblical interpretation. Much of it

isn't relevant here, but there are two "rules" that I want to use to help you understand my reasoning as we deal with some of the following passages:

1. *All passages must be looked at within the context of the surrounding verses.*
2. *"The language of Scripture may be regarded as figurative, if the literal interpretation will cause one passage to contradict another." (Dungan)*

In other words, as we work to translate the Bible from the original languages into English, we need to be aware that it WAS written by a different culture, in a different time, with different metaphors and idioms, some of which do not translate into our language and culture. In every case, we need to look at the surrounding verses – the context – to develop a clearer meaning.

Second, if the Bible is, as I believe, the written, inspired, inerrant Word of God, then if there's a conflict in Biblical interpretation, the error is in the interpretation, not in the Bible. So, if we're looking at a passage and find that it disagrees with another passage of the Bible, then we need to look for a different interpretation to help us understand what the text is saying. (Much of this "tension" can be removed if we look at the context.)

This will be the methodology I will use for the rest of this paper.

### **Proof Text 1: Psalm 51**

When investigating Original Sin, the passage most often quoted is Psalm 51:5:

*For I was born a sinner – yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. (NLT)*

Now, most of the time I enjoy reading from the New Living Translation, but I don't think they got this one quite as right as they could have. The literal words in Hebrew are:

*"Behold in iniquity was I was brought forth and in sin conceived me my mother."*

What this says is that "in sin my mother conceived me". Now, if that's true, what does that say about me? Nothing, really. It says that my MOTHER conceived me in sin. This could be referring to a literal sin, like adultery, or it could just be an exaggeration – this is poetry, after all! So my mother conceived me in sin – not that I sinned! My mom is guilty, but that doesn't make me guilty of her sin!

To put this in perspective, let me use an example I found online when I was doing this research. Consider the phrase, "In drunkenness, my husband beat me." Do we attribute "drunkenness" to the wife in this sentence? No. Clearly the meaning is that the husband is drunk, not the wife. If we understand this to be true here, why is it different for Psalm 51:5?

If we read further in Psalm 51, we find another interesting verse:

*Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. -  
Psalm 51:7 (NLT)*

Again, I usually enjoy the NLT, but here I also think they miss with their translation. Why? Because the literal words in Hebrew are:

*“Purify me with hyssop and I will be clean, wash me and more than snow I will be whiter.”*

So, if we're to take the English translation of verse five literally, does that mean we should take verse seven literally? If so, then you can argue that we really don't need Jesus to be our Savior; all we need is to soak a plant in some water, take a bath, and we're cleaned! I would assume that most people would NOT be willing to believe that a quick trip to the Walmart Garden Center would be all that we need to be forgiven of our sins! (Not that Walmart carries hyssop, last time I checked...)

A lot of Original Sin people argue that Psalm 51:7 is “clearly” meant to be symbolic, although they can't point to anything that “clearly” justifies their interpretation based on the words in Psalm 51. Unfortunately, there's no Hebrew word or mark that indicates, “Take this part literally but the rest of the text is symbolic!” In other words, if we're going to take Psalm 51:5 literally, then we probably should take Psalm 51:7 literally, as well. (Remember: There are NO “verses” in the original text, so this is part of the same “paragraph” in Hebrew.)

The alternative is to realize that the entire passage is poetry, which can include exaggeration, hyperbole, analogies, and metaphors. If we do this, then Psalm 51 makes sense without having to argue about “this is literal and this is not”!

### **Proof Text 2: Psalm 58**

Another “proof text” quoted by those who support the doctrine of Original Sin is:

*Justice—do you rulers know the meaning of the word? Do you judge the people fairly?  
No! You plot injustice in your hearts. You spread violence throughout the land. These  
wicked people are born sinners; even from birth they have lied and gone their own way.  
- Psalm 58:1-3 (NLT)*

On a side note, I cannot read this passage without picturing babies in diapers, smoking cigars, five-o'clock shadow on their faces, bowler hats, playing poker, and drinking. That will give you an idea of the depths of depravity these babies have reached...and also an idea of the cartoons that I watched as a child. (Go watch old Looney Tunes for further research!)

In this case, the Hebrew pretty much says the same thing. Furthermore, since it's the start of the chapter, we have no other context (so far) to help us with the interpretation. Because of this, it would seem that these verses would be a justification for the belief in Original Sin...except...

There are two fundamental flaws to this being a “proof text” for Original Sin:

First, we need to determine who the people are who are “born sinners” according to this passage. If you read Psalm 58:1, it's clear from the context that this is referring to “rulers” who it goes on to describe as “wicked people”.

The Hebrew text does NOT include a Hebrew word for “everyone”; it simply says that those who are unrighteous, unfair **rulers** are “born sinners”. Because it fails to specify everyone, it’s reasonable to assume that there are people who are NOT “born sinners”, just as it would be fair to assume that there are people who are not born “rulers”. From the context, it’s clear that the writer is addressing those in authority who are unjust.

Second, we need to read a little bit further into the passage to see what the context is on the other side of Psalm 58:3. If we continue to the next couple of verses, we find something interesting:

*They spit venom like deadly snakes; they are like cobras that refuse to listen, ignoring the tunes of the snake charmers, no matter how skillfully they play. - Psalm 58:4-5 (NLT)*

If we’re going to take the first three verses as literal, then, again, we should probably take ALL of the verses as literal, right? Again, as with Psalm 51, there’s no Hebrew word that indicates “this is the actual meaning” and “this is meant to be an exaggeration”. (Also, remember that there wouldn’t be verse divisions, so that’s not an option, either.) If we do take this literally, not only do we have beer-swilling babies, but it means that they can spit venom at their enemies! Literally!

The alternative is to realize that both of these passages are examples of Hebrew poetry, and poetry often has larger-than-life images and ideas. You expect poetry to contain imaginative ideas and descriptions that are obviously NOT meant to be taken literally. If we do this, then Psalm 58 makes sense without having to argue about “this is literal and this is not”!

### **Biblical Conflicts If Original Sin Is Correct**

Like I mentioned at the start, when we translate the Bible into English, we need to be careful about NOT creating conflicts between other passages. If a conflict does exist, it’s an error on our part, not the Bible’s. Because of that, let’s see some of the errors that occur if Original Sin is correct:

If Original Sin is correct...

#### **1. God Is Wrong**

*And the LORD was pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice and said to himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. I will never again destroy all living things.” - Genesis 8:21 (NLT)*

God uses the phrase “from childhood”, not “at conception” or “from birth”. The Hebrew word here (Strong’s: 5271) means literally “early life”, not “at conception” (Strong’s: 2029), or “at birth” (Strong’s: 3205). In other words, God says we’re bent toward evil from a young age; NOT before we were born. That means that if the formulation for Original Sin as I’ve described it is correct, God got it wrong: We’re sinners at conception, not later as God seems to imply here. How did God miss that?

The alternative is that God knew what He was talking about, the Bible recorded His words faithfully,

and that there's a time in our early childhood – again, see Strong's: 5271 – when we can choose to either follow or reject God. We aren't BORN sinful; sin becomes a choice in our lives at an early age. (This is often referred to as "The Age of Accountability".)

## 2. Isaiah Is Wrong

*By the time this child is old enough to choose what is right and reject what is wrong, he will be eating yogurt and honey. - Isaiah 7:15 (NLT)*

Okay, again I have a problem with the NLT. If you read the original Hebrew, there's no mention of the word "child". Does this mean that they got the translation wrong? Not exactly, because there are clues within the text that argue that this IS a child that Isaiah is talking about.

If you look at the second half of the sentence, you will notice that the person being described is able to eat "yogurt" (curds) and "honey". This diet is not something given to an infant but is, instead, appropriate for toddlers starting at the age of around two.

Why does it matter? Because Isaiah does NOT say that an *infant* is able "*to choose what is right and reject what is wrong*"; he says, instead, that a *child* is. If we were sinners at conception or at birth, we've already chosen what is wrong for WE are what is wrong! It's not a choice we even need to make; it's inherent to our very nature.

The alternative, as Isaiah seems to indicate, is that there's a choice involved and that we cannot make that choice until we're older. (Again, the "Age of Accountability".) This reading makes sense with the rest of the Bible, but would be in conflict with the definition of Original Sin that we're talking about.

## 3. Jeremiah Is Wrong

*Let us now lie down in shame and cover ourselves with dishonor, for we and our ancestors have sinned against the LORD our God. From our childhood to this day we have never obeyed him." - Jeremiah 3:25 (NLT)*

If we take a look at the Hebrew, we find that Jeremiah uses the word for "childhood". (Again, this is Strong's: 5271; the same word God used in Genesis 8:21.) Shouldn't Jeremiah have said, "from our moment of conception to this day..."? Like both God and Isaiah before him, Jeremiah ignores the words for "at conception" and "at birth", but instead uses a word that implies "toddler".

Based on that, this passage seems to say that there's a point in childhood where we had the opportunity to CHOOSE to obey God and that we didn't. But that goes against the Original Sin teaching, based on Psalm 51:5, that we're conceived in sin!

The alternative is that this verse can be seen as an extension of what God says in Genesis 8:21 and that sin is an individual choice, not an inherent flaw.

#### 4. Ezekiel Is Wrong

*‘What?’ you ask. ‘Doesn’t the child pay for the parent’s sins?’ No! For if the child does what is just and right and keeps my decrees, that child will surely live. The person who sins is the one who will die. The child will not be punished for the parent’s sins, and the parent will not be punished for the child’s sins. Righteous people will be rewarded for their own righteous behavior, and wicked people will be punished for their own wickedness. But if wicked people turn away from all their sins and begin to obey my decrees and do what is just and right, they will surely live and not die. All their past sins will be forgotten, and they will live because of the righteous things they have done.*  
- Ezekiel 18:19-22 (NLT)

If we’re guilty because of Original Sin, then we ARE blamed for our parent's sins – their sin, and the sin of Adam, is passed to us at the moment we are conceived! If that’s true, then Ezekiel isn't even close to being correct! Original Sin teaches that we ARE held accountable for Adam’s sin, which directly contradicts Ezekiel.

The alternative is that Ezekiel IS correct and that we aren't responsible for any sins other than our own. In fact, Ezekiel tell us, “The person WHO sins...”, not “The person who IS sin will die.” That means that this passage matches what we see in Genesis, Isaiah, and Jeremiah: at some point, sometime in our childhood, our choices decide if we’re sinful or if we choose to follow God’s commands.

#### **(II) Logical Conclusions**

As we’ve seen, the doctrine of Original Sin doesn’t match with what we find elsewhere in the Bible. However, there are other outcomes which, while not directly contradictory to other Bible passages, still lead us to some illogical conclusions. Again, these are not “translation errors”, instead they’re logical fallacies that arise from the belief in Original Sin as expressed in this paper. These include:

##### 1. God Creates Us To Be Sinful

*You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother’s womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous — how well I know it.* - Psalm 139:13-14 (NLT)

*Yes, remember your Creator now while you are young, before the silver cord of life snaps and the golden bowl is broken. Don’t wait until the water jar is smashed at the spring and the pulley is broken at the well. For then the dust will return to the earth, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.* - Ecclesiastes 12:6-7 (NLT)

According to King David, God made our body (Psalm 139); and, according to Solomon, God made our spirit/soul (Ecclesiastes 12). If somehow either our bodies or our spirits are sinful at conception, since we’re conceived in sin, doesn't that mean that God – who gave us both our bodies and our spirits – makes us sinful? So, how does a Holy God create unholy creatures? Where, exactly, does Original Sin come into play?

The alternative is that God creates us to be exactly who He wants us to be, He gives us our soul, gives us the ability to choose, and then He wants us to choose Him. Since He knows we won't choose Him, however, God provides us with a Savior, Jesus Christ, to bring us back to Him. This all fits with the rest of the Bible, but not if Original Sin is true...

The reason this concerns me is because I've heard atheists use this very argument as a proof against God. Their argument is that, because we're condemned at conception, God is an unjust judge! Skipping matters of God's sovereignty for the time being, if we choose not to accept Original Sin, then God's judgment and justice is dependent solely on OUR actions, not on Adam's.

## 2. We Have The Ability To Change God's Work

This belief goes right along with the previous statement:

*Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good! - Genesis 1:31a*

If God gives us a "good" body and a "good" soul and yet we can, by our very nature, be sinful at conception, then we possess the ability to change God's works. We have created an ontological shift, a change in the very nature of who we are, independent of God's will. This means that we've recreated ourselves in our own images, not in God's. This gives us power co-equal with God because, in the womb, we can change that which He has created.

The alternative, however, says that sin is an action that we choose to undertake. Sin is, quite simply, taking our eyes off of God and focusing them on something or someone else. Sin is our choice and while it destroys the relationship, it doesn't allow us to fundamentally change God's creation.

## 3. I Am Not Responsible For My Actions

*When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. - Romans 5:12 (NLT)*

If Original Sin is true, then I'm not ultimately responsible for my sins – Adam is! It's Adam's fault that there's sin, it's Adam's fault there's death, and it's Adam's fault that I continue to sin to this day. The great thing is that I'm not responsible for my own actions and for my own choices that cause me to fall short of God's glory – it's all Adam's fault! I've even spoken with people who have told me, "I was screwed up before I was born, so why should I even try?"

The alternative is that the first sin WAS committed by Adam, that death and the fall of Creation accompanied his choice, that we inherited a "sin nature" - the ability to choose evil – but that my sin is still my own fault. I am solely responsible for my choices and I don't get to blame anyone for my sins.

The reason I think this is especially dangerous is because, in extreme formulations, I've heard people argue "The Devil made me do it!" or "I was influenced by demons." This is simply taking the idea that "I'm not responsible!" to the next level. We are – and always will be – accountable for our choices.



#### 4. Jesus Cannot Be Fully Man

*This letter is from Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News. God promised this Good News long ago through his prophets in the holy Scriptures. The Good News is about his Son. In his earthly life he was born into King David's family line, and he was shown to be the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is Jesus Christ our Lord. - Romans 1:1-4 (NLT)*

If Original Sin is a part of being “human” and if Jesus was fully human, then He was sinful at conception. If Jesus somehow avoided Original Sin, He wouldn't have been fully human because that is the nature of humans, according to this doctrine. If Jesus didn't avoid Original Sin, then He couldn't have been the perfect sacrifice required, because a sinful person dying for sinful people would accomplish nothing.

In defense of their position, I've had some people argue that Original Sin is passed from the father to the child, not the mother. Since Jesus' Father is God, not Joseph, Jesus wouldn't have “inherited” sin as part of his intrinsic makeup. While this is an ingenious way to eliminate the problem, there needs to be Biblical proof that shows this point of view is correct.

Continuing this thought:

*This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. - Hebrews 4:15 (NLT)*

According to this, Jesus was tempted but didn't sin. That seems to imply that sin is not inherent, something that is a fundamental part of us; but rather sin is a choice that we make when we give into temptation! Again, this wouldn't match with the doctrine of Original Sin.

The alternative is that we're born as God created us, that we reach an “Age of Accountability”, and then we make our choices. Because the choices are our responsibility, not Adam's, we're responsible for the consequences. Jesus, being both fully God and fully man, makes the right choices throughout His life while we humans fail along the journey. We stand condemned and in need of a Savior because of our sins; Jesus becomes the perfect sacrifice because He never sins. With this understanding, there's harmony with all of the Biblical passages without a need to resort to unsubstantiated arguments.

The reason I think the Original Sin conclusion is dangerous is because it lends support to those who argue that Jesus was NOT truly human. Rather than attempting to understand how Jesus could be both God and man has led some people to reject the humanity of Christ – in fact some cults are based on this belief. This can lead to other conclusions, as well, which can be – and has been – used to lead others astray.

#### 5. The Unborn And Babies Go To Hell

This was the reason this discussion began:

*After Nathan returned to his home, the LORD sent a deadly illness to the child of David*

*and Uriah's wife. David begged God to spare the child. He went without food and lay all night on the bare ground. The elders of his household pleaded with him to get up and eat with them, but he refused. Then on the seventh day the child died.*

*David's advisers were afraid to tell him. "He wouldn't listen to reason while the child was ill," they said. "What drastic thing will he do when we tell him the child is dead?"*

*When David saw them whispering, he realized what had happened. "Is the child dead?" he asked. "Yes," they replied, "he is dead."*

*Then David got up from the ground, washed himself, put on lotions, and changed his clothes. He went to the Tabernacle and worshiped the LORD. After that, he returned to the palace and was served food and ate.*

*His advisers were amazed. "We don't understand you," they told him. "While the child was still living, you wept and refused to eat. But now that the child is dead, you have stopped your mourning and are eating again."*

*David replied, "I fasted and wept while the child was alive, for I said, 'Perhaps the LORD will be gracious to me and let the child live. But why should I fast when he is dead? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him one day, but he cannot return to me.'" - 2 Samuel 12:15-23 (NLT)*

The key passage to notice here is what David says after his child dies: *"I will go to him one day, but he cannot return to me."* If Original Sin is true, the baby is already in Hell because of Adam's sin imparted at conception. David is often called, "A man after God's own heart."; unfortunately, David would have had to totally miss the mind of God if this is true!

In addition, I've had people tell me that the reason David makes this statement is because he might believe that he stands condemned because of his sins. That's why David would believe that he and his child will be reunited in Hell. They have argued that it was his grief that blinded David from realizing the error of his words. (In other words, the Bible is correct, but what David said was wrong, based on his human perceptions and emotions.)

Another argument that I've heard regarding this passage is that God has a "special dispensation" for babies which brings them into Heaven. Unfortunately, I have yet to see Bible verses which back up this viewpoint, other than referring to this story, which would be circular reasoning. The mental and/or spiritual gymnastics that it takes to attempt to reconcile Original Sin with the salvation of the "sinful" unborn and infants would seem to indicate that Original Sin is an incorrect formulation.

The other problem with regarding a "special dispensation" is that it means that a Holy God allows sinful creatures who are unrepentant to spend eternity in Heaven with Him! If God can do that for infants, why not tribes in South America who have never had the chance to hear about Jesus? In fact, why doesn't God make that same allowance for all of humanity?

However it seems, based on this statement, that David believes that the unborn and infants are in a state of grace – like God, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel imply – because they have not yet reached the Age of

Accountability. This means that we're conceived and even born "good" because we're God's creation. Since an unborn child or an infant hasn't had the opportunity for making choices – because they haven't reached the "Age of Accountability" – it means that they could not and did not fall short of God's glory. In that case, David will see his child again in Heaven.

The reason I think the doctrine of Original Sin is dangerous in this case is two-fold:

First, I've actually heard Christian leaders tell grieving families that their children were burning in Hell because of Original Sin. How could they not? I will give them credit, however; if they believe that the child is cursed at conception, then they at least have the courage to state their beliefs, even when they're not likely to be accepted or appreciated.

Second, the idea of creating a "special dispensation", especially if it cannot be supported from the Bible, opens the doors to creating further errors. Why can't I decide that there's a "special dispensation" for people living in other countries? For pets? For plants? For sins that I feel are acceptable? The answer is that I CAN create any "dispensation" I want! Since we've made an exception for one, who's to say that someone cannot make any exception they want?

#### 6. Children Are NOT Examples Of Faith

Continuing our discussion of children:

*One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could lay his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him. But Jesus said, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children." And he placed his hands on their heads and blessed them before he left. - Matthew 19:13-15 (NLT)*

Why would Jesus hold up children as a role model for adults? You would think, based on Original Sin, that children would be the LEAST likely example Jesus would choose! Instead of praising them, Jesus should have pointed out how hopeless children are since they stand condemned already and aren't old enough to understand or accept a Savior.

By the way, this same passage in Mark makes even less sense:

*One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could touch and bless them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him. When Jesus saw what was happening, he was angry with his disciples. He said to them, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." Then he took the children in his arms and placed his hands on their heads and blessed them. - Mark 10:13-16 (NLT)*

We're to become like despised, hopeless, sinful children? Why? Using the example of children who are, according to the doctrine of Original Sin, condemned to Hell already, would be the worst example available to use. Again, with the Disciples present, Jesus missed a great opportunity to compare the hopelessness of being a child with the joy of salvation that comes from being an adult!

The alternative is to consider an “Age of Accountability”; a time when children begin to choose right from wrong. Before that, they would exist in a state of grace since they haven’t sinned. Also, children who are introduced to God at an early age simply accept, by faith, what they’re told. They haven’t had time to build up the cynicism, they haven’t lost their sense of wonder. With these two thoughts in mind, children are the perfect example of who the Kingdom of God belongs to: Those in a state of grace and those who accept on simple faith.

The reason I think the doctrine of Original Sin is dangerous here is due to a lack of focus in ministry. Churches routinely spend their time, energy, and money on what happens for the adults in the sanctuary, while children’s ministry is often an afterthought. When we DO think about it, we (usually) put the least trained and experienced people in those rooms to “babysit” while the adults learn.

The Bible tells us, and an “Age of Accountability” motivates us, to follow the command given in Proverbs 22:6:

*Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it. - Proverbs 22:6 (NLT)*

By the way, in case you think that this can be safely ignored, let me share with you another quote:

*“Give me four years to teach the children and the seed I have sown will never be uprooted.” - Lenin*

There is a war going on for the souls of children. Are we fighting it by sending out our best troops to train the next generation, or are we only focused on the adults because their money pays for our buildings and salaries?

#### 7. Job Was Amazing From Birth

This is, in my opinion, the weakest of arguments that I can put forth. However, the Book of Job is considered Hebrew poetry, just as the Book of Psalms is. Because of that, we can reach a highly illogical conclusion if we apply the same standards we use in Psalms 51 and 58 to Job:

*“If I have denied the desires of the poor or let the eyes of the widow grow weary, if I have kept my bread to myself, not sharing it with the fatherless—but from my youth I reared them as a father would, and from my birth I guided the widow... - Job 31:16-18*

If we’re to take Psalm 51:5 as literal, then shouldn’t we take Job 31:18 as literal, as well? If we take Job 31:18 literally, then that means that Job raised orphans as a young man and when he was an infant he helped widows! Does this make sense? No. However, we have to consider this as true if we first take Psalm 51:5 literally.

The alternative, like we’ve discussed, is that this is simply poetical exaggeration; something that’s not meant to be taken literally.

The reason I think that Original Sin is dangerous here is because when people take passages from the Bible that are clearly figurative and apply them in a literal fashion, there can be consequences. I’ve

read of people who have leaped off of buildings because:

*For the Scriptures say, '[God] will order his angels to protect and guard you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.' - Luke 4:10-11 (NLT)*

By the way, this verse is ALSO in Psalms...which people argue that we should take literally! (Check out Psalm 91:11-12!)

## **The Alternative Viewpoint**

If Original Sin, as formulated here, is NOT true, then what's the alternative? While I've explained the alternative viewpoint as we've gone along, I wanted to end this document by summing up the major points and, at the same time, explaining the logical outcomes.

1. **God makes us "good"**. He gives us our body and our souls. Because He is Holy, what He gives us is Holy and "good". (Ecclesiastes 12:6-7, Psalm 139:13-14) This means that we are, from conception to birth to early childhood, what God called "good" way back in Genesis 1. We're not sinful because we haven't reached a point where we can consciously choose to sin or not sin.

The logical outcome to this is that when we look in the mirror, we should be able to echo David's declaration, *"I am fearfully and wonderfully made!"* (Psalm 139:14) Because sin is not who we ARE, it's okay to be okay with who God made us to be. All humans have inherent worth because we are God's creations, and we all have the same potential for both evil and good.

2. **There is an "Age of Accountability"**. As God indicates in Genesis 8:21, and as echoed by Isaiah (Isaiah 7:15) and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 3:25), there will come a point when we can choose to follow God or not. This is the same choice that Adam had in the Garden of Eden and it's the same choice we face today.

Our nature, because we're not perfect, means that we will, eventually, choose to sin. It's inevitable, since we're faced with literally thousands, if not millions, of choices each day. Because we're created "good", not "perfect", there's no chance for a human to make it through life without making a single mistake, although some, like Enoch (Genesis 5:22-24), come closer than others.

Prior to the Age of Accountability, we're incapable of choosing right or wrong, good or bad. We simply respond to the world around us without conscious thought or decisions. We're driven by our basic needs, rather than our wants. (Babies cry for food because they're *hungry*, not *greedy*!)

The first logical outcome of this is that, for some, they may never reach an Age of Accountability. I've worked with adults with severe developmental disabilities. Due to their nature, I don't believe some of them will ever reach a point of maturity where they CAN choose. I think that state of grace will exist for them throughout their entire life.

The second logical outcome to this is that sin becomes personal; it's MY choice to sin, not Adam's. I don't get to worry about – or blame – my ancestors for my sins. I make the choice to break the relationship with God, I make the choice to go my own way, and my choices lead to my condemnation. And, while I need not be ashamed of who I AM, I certainly can be ashamed of what I've DONE!

3. **God is a righteous judge.** Because we, personally, break God's rules, then God has every right to judge us and to find us guilty.

The logical outcome to this is that God's judgment isn't an example of a capricious judge holding random people accountable for the sins of other people, as some would argue. Instead, this is a Holy Judge holding everyone accountable for their own sins. It's His right to do so, because the standard we need to hold to is perfection – like God is perfect – yet we all fail and fall short.

4. **God wants a relationship with us.** We were created to be in relationship with God. We see that in Genesis 1-3, where God creates Adam and Eve and then spends time walking in the Garden with them! (Genesis 3:8) We see that in the terms Jesus uses when He tells us to call God "Father". (Matthew 6:9)

The logical outcome is that, because of our choices, we walked away from God. To be restored to the righteousness of God, we need a Savior, Jesus Christ, to bring us back to Him. (John 3:16)

5. **Ultimately, it's our choice (once again) to either follow God or rebel.** As with the choice of Adam, the choice of the nation of Israel (Joshua 24:14-15), or the choice of the Rich Young Ruler (Luke 18:23), we can either follow God...or not.

The logical outcome is that God provides the means to restore the relationship WE chose to break by providing us with the choice to return to Him. In both cases, God honors the human right to choose, the right He gave us! We can choose to walk away in the first place, and with all of the choices in front of us, we all will. Finally, we can choose to return, which not all will.

6. **Our focus needs to change.** If Jesus, Himself, spent time with children, rather than relegating them to either the Disciples or putting them at a distance, then we need to make sure that our "best" not only focuses on adults, but children as well. After they've reached the Age of Accountability, we need to be deliberate, intentional, clear, and simple in explaining the faith that they will need to last throughout their life. If we don't make it a priority to train our

children, we need to know that the world will...

The logical outcome is that God had a purpose in mind when He told us to “train up a child in the way they should go”. (Proverbs 22:6) If we don’t prepare the youth for the world around them, they’re more likely to walk away from their faith as they grow older...like we see happening in our culture today.

## Appendix: Additional Challenges

In this space, I want to put other texts that people have brought to me to defend either viewpoint, with my comments as to how they fit into the discussion:

### 1. Romans 5:12

The text in question says:

*When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. - Romans 5:12 (NLT)*

On the surface, this seems to argue that sin and death are spread to everyone (all people / men) because of Adam's sin. However, when we examine the Greek, we find something quirky:

*Because of this, just as through one man **sin** into the world entered, and through **sin**, death; also thus to all men death passed, for that all sinned. - Romans 5:12 (Greek)*

What's quirky is that the bolded-italic "sin" words are all nouns; in other words they describe a "thing". The bolded-underlined word "sin" is a verb; in other words, it's an action. To put it simply, all men who did the action of sin died. What sin-action does a baby do? None. What sin action does an infant in the womb do? None.

In this case, the English translation could be interpreted to mean that "all" are sinners; however, in the Greek, it quickly becomes apparent that this description is limited only to those who choose to commit a sinful action.