



"Begin early to teach, for children begin early to sin."
—Charles H. Spurgeon

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Has Humanity Reached Total Depravity? (Part Two)

In Part One, we exhaustively covered God's declaration in [Genesis 6:5](#) that the humans of Noah's day were altogether evil, from their innermost intentions to their most public behaviors. As a result, [God](#) called Noah to build an ark for the deliverance of his small family while God sent a worldwide flood to destroy the rest of humanity and all its works. Some have estimated that as many as nine to ten billion people died in that divine act of judgment.

God, however, says something shocking in [Genesis 8:21](#). Noah had landed the ark on the mountains of Ararat and built an altar to offer a sacrifice to the Lord. [Genesis 8:21](#) is God's response: "And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, 'I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.'"

He repeats some of the same words that He used in [Genesis 6:5](#), restating His judgment of humanity's moral state. After the [great Flood](#), sent to punish human sinfulness, God deems man's heart to be just as corrupt as it ever was

before the Deluge! The Flood had changed nothing about human character. All it had done was execute judgment on the sinners, whittling humanity down to a mere eight people and giving them a chance to do better.

God judges, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." The final phrase, "from his youth," acknowledges an extremely narrow window of potential [goodness](#): when children are young. Babies are born morally neutral, that is, with the ability to do good or evil, yet because of their flesh, they are more likely to lean the wrong way, toward selfishness and [sin](#). At base, human, carnal nature wants everything for itself.

People living after the Flood and all those who have lived down through history until today have the same sinful, wicked nature. As much as evolutionists would like to argue the point, humanity has not improved. People have the same nature that God describes as "evil" in [Genesis 6:5](#) and 8:21. Because it is the story of God's redemption of mankind, Scripture bears out this fact throughout its pages, showing the depths of man's sin and the sublimity of God's gracious [love](#).

David writes of mankind's corruption in [Psalm 14:1-3](#):

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is *none* who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who [seek God](#). They have *all* turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is *none* who does good, no, *not one*. (Emphasis ours throughout.)

By David's day, mankind had not changed for the better. As He did when Noah emerged from the ark, God looks on human beings and finds "none who does good, no, not one." A few hundred years later, Isaiah opens his prophecy with similar words about the nation of Israel, whom God describes as a people carrying a massive load of sin on their backs:

Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away backward. Why should you be stricken again? You

will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment. ([Isaiah 1:4-6](#))

They were so full of sin, He concludes, that new attempts to turn them back to Him would be futile, since they would only rebel again (verse 5). A person as sick as Israel was sinful was bound to die. God's description in Isaiah parallels His later, more universal pronouncement in [Jeremiah 17:9](#), "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked [or, *incurably sick*]; who can know it?"

In [Romans 3:9-18](#), the apostle Paul provides a complete indictment of mankind:

What then? Are we better than they [the Jews]? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that *they are all under sin*. 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; there is *none* who does good, no, *not one*. Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of [peace](#) they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

If we failed to understand how complete is humanity's wickedness before God, Paul adds in [Romans 3:19](#), "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are [under the law](#), that *every* mouth may be stopped, and *all the world* may become guilty before God."

Even [Jesus](#) testifies to mankind's sinfulness, saying to His disciples in [Matthew 7:11](#), "If you then, *being evil*, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things

to those who ask Him!" ([Matthew 7:11](#)). Even this tossed-out description of human wickedness echoes His assessment in [Genesis 6:5](#) that people are "only evil continually." People have not changed.

Finally, the apostle John records Jesus' more formal statement of human depravity in [John 3:19-20](#):

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

Human sin is a matter of degrees. Not all are flagrant sinners. Many try hard to do good, as they understand it. However, in God's eyes, humans grow corrupt from a young age. His conclusion may be more understandable by remembering that just one sin is enough to incur the penalty of breaking His law: death. How many of us have committed just one sin? If we are honest with ourselves, we are more like the Israelites who bore an ever-growing burden of sins throughout their lives.

In Part Three, we will consider whether we are living in a time of wickedness like the [days of Noah](#).

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Original Sin and Holiness](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh (1932-2023)

God did not create this vile human nature. God gave Adam and Eve a neutral spirit and free moral agency; our parents presumptuously chose the toxic Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, negatively predisposing their offspring to sin. Human nature is the product of mankind's neutral spirit contaminated with Satan's evil prompts. The apostle Paul realized this prompt or force (another law warring in his members Romans 7:23) ravaging

and captivating his mental processes. Everyone is individually responsible for sin. The spirit God initially placed within Adam was very good; Satan contaminated man's heart, but encouraged him to blame God. As God calls us, we are to strive to be holy, or to be like God. Conversely, sin is the departure from God's revealed will (commission or omission). God gives us a new heart and the ability to repent; we must respond to God's efforts to change us. It is a life and death matter. We need to cling intimately to God, earnestly seeking God's forgiveness and guidance to continually make the right choices.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[What Sin Is](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Over the last half-century, sin has gone out of vogue. In the secular public's mind, it is a religious matter and not something of much consequence. But it matters a great deal to God because it is not only the cause of all the misery in the world but also the reason humanity is so far from Him. John Ritenbaugh explains the basics of sin and what God wants us to do about it.

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