

## Calvary Discipleship Night

*The Doctrine of Sin: Not The Way It Is Supposed To Be*

### INTRO:

#### Two Burdens for this Class:

#1. I want us to better understand from God's perspective why things in \_\_\_\_\_ are so broken.

#2. I want us to better understand from God's perspective why things in \_\_\_\_\_ are so broken.

<b>Definitions of Sin</b>
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**#1. Sin is a culpable \_\_\_\_\_ of "shalom."**

Jeremiah 29:7 says:

'Seek the welfare [shalom] of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare [shalom] you will have welfare [shalom].'

Plantinga: Culpable disturbance of shalom" suggests that sin disrupts something good and harmonious, that (like a housebreaker) it is an intruder, and that those who sin deserve reproach.

**#2. To \_\_\_\_\_ the mark.**

The Greek word for sin is "*harmartia*." It was a term used in archery, literally meaning "*to miss the mark*." It referred to the distance from the bullseye — in other words, sin was the distance from perfection.

### #3. An offense against \_\_\_\_\_.

Stephen Witmer: The most important truth about sin is the one least recognized in our day. It is this: all sin is primarily offense against God. Where sin is understood as merely as a person-to-person problem rather than as primarily 'theocentric,' motivation for fighting sin is decreased and confusion about the character of God is increased. While recognizing the 'horizontal' (person-to-person) nature of sin, the Bible consistently presents sin as mainly a 'vertical' (person-to-God) offense.

R.C. Sproul: Sin is cosmic treason. Sin is treason against a perfectly pure Sovereign. It is an act of supreme ingratitude toward the One to whom we owe everything, to the One who has given us life itself. Have you ever considered the deeper implications of the slightest sin? What are we saying to our Creator when we disobey Him at the slightest point? We are saying no to the righteousness of God. We are saying, "God, Your law is not good. My judgement is better than Yours. Your authority does not apply to me. I am above and beyond Your jurisdiction. I have the right to do what I want to do, not what You command me to do.

### #4. Sin is any failure to conform to the \_\_\_\_\_ of God in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **What is the Moral Law? (Summed up in the 10 commandments):**

**Jon English Lee** - Being that law that is written on the hearts of mankind, and being the righteous reflection of the immutable character of our sovereign God, the moral law is unchanging and forever binds mankind. Mankind is made in the image of God, and therefore is obliged to honor God's image by always acting in accordance to God's standard of righteousness. The moral law of God reflects God's perfect righteous character.<sup>1</sup>

#### **First, sin involves wrong \_\_\_\_\_, which come in two primary forms:**

- 1) A failure to \_\_\_\_\_ to God's standards...in other words, not doing what God wants (sins of omission).
- 2) Transgression \_\_\_\_\_ God and His standards...in other words, doing what God does not want (sins of commission).

<sup>1</sup> <https://founders.org/2019/03/26/the-moral-law-doth-for-ever-bind-all/>

**Secondly, sin not only includes wrong acts, but also wrong \_\_\_\_\_:**

In the ten commandments it says to not covet your neighbor's things specifying that a desire to steal or commit adultery is also sin in God's sight (Exodus 20:17)

The Sermon on the Mount prohibits sinful attitudes such as anger (Matthew 5:22) and lust (Matthew 5:28)

Paul lists attitudes such as jealousy, anger, and selfishness as works of the flesh (Galatians 5:20)

**Thirdly, sin also includes our moral \_\_\_\_\_:**

Paul says that we were by nature children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3)

We need to affirm that sin is not merely an **action or attitude**; it's a **condition** in which we find ourselves.

## THE ORIGIN OF SIN

1. First, we must affirm that God himself did not sin, and God is not to be blamed for sin. It is impossible for God to do wrong (**Job 34:10**). It is not even impossible for God to desire to do wrong (**James 1:13**).
  - But we must also affirm that God ordains and controls all things (**Daniel 4:35**) so he ordained that sin would come about through the voluntary choices of moral creatures and that God would ultimately accomplish his purposes through this (**Ephesians 1:11**).
2. With respect to the human race, the first sin was that of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-19). **This sin is typical of ALL sin generally:**
  - #1. First, the first sin struck at the basis for knowledge, as it gave a different answer to the question "*What is \_\_\_\_\_?*"
  - #2. Secondly, the first sin struck at the basis for moral standards, giving a different answer to the question, "*What is \_\_\_\_\_?*"
  - #3. Thirdly, the first struck at the basis for ultimate power and authority , giving a different answer to the question, "*Who is \_\_\_\_\_?*"

## ***How does the sin of Adam affect us?***

### *Original Sin, Inherited Guilt, and Total Depravity*

## **Original Sin**

Matt Perman: As a result of Adam's sin we all enter the world with a fallen nature. This is *original sin*--the sinful tendencies, desires, and dispositions in our hearts with which we are all born. Thus, original sin is something *inherent in us*--it is a morally ruined character. The original sin that we are all born with manifests itself throughout our lives in actual sins--the actions, thoughts, and feelings we have that violate God's moral commands. So our sinful hearts (original sin) cause us to make sinful choices, think sinful thoughts, and feel sinful feelings (actual sins). We are not sinners because we sin; rather, we sin *because we are sinners*. We are all born totally imprisoned in original sin. There is no island of goodness left in us.<sup>2</sup>

### Three characteristics of original sin:

*#1. All people are \_\_\_\_\_ with a sinful nature (or original sin).*

- Original sin does not suggest that we were created sinful. God created mankind morally pure and innocent (Ecclesiastes 7:29)

*#2. We all sin because we are sinners by \_\_\_\_\_.*

- We choose to sin according to our sinful nature.

*#3. Original Sin does not refer to the first sin of Adam and Eve, but to the \_\_\_\_\_ of that sin.*

- The result of the first sin is the corruption of the human race. Original sin refers to the condition in which we are born.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-is-the-difference-between-original-sin-and-imputed-sin>

When Adam sinned, God thought of all who descend from Adam as sinners. Sometimes called "original sin", it means that all members of the human race were represented by Adam in the time of testing in the Garden of Eden. As our representative, Adam sinned, and God counted us guilty as well as Adam. **The key chapter illustrating this point is Romans 5.** Notice, here in Romans 5, Paul is not talking about actual sins we commit every day. The passage is a comparison between Adam and Christ...

*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.*

*But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.*

*For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:12, 15, 17-19)*

#### More Biblical support for original sin:

- David acknowledges that he was conceived with a sinful nature (Psalm 51:5)
- The wicked go astray from the womb (Psalm 58:3)
- Paul affirms we were by nature children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3)
- Children do not have to be taught how to do wrong, parents have to teach discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4)
- God does give us a conscience to help constrain this sinful nature (Romans 2:14-15)
- This is also why the Bible teaches that God ordained civil government, to restrain the influence of this sinful nature in society (Romans 13:3-4; 1 Peter 2:13-14)

## **Inherited Guilt**

Matt Perman: The guilt of Adam's sin is credited not just to Adam himself, but to us all. We are regarded as having sinned *in Adam*, and hence as deserving of the same punishment. This is *imputed sin*. Thus, we not only receive polluted and sinful natures because of Adam's sin (original sin), but we are also regarded as having sinned in Adam such that we are guilty of his act as well (imputed sin). Imputed sin is the ruin of our *standing* before God and is thus not an internal quality but an objective reckoning of guilt, whereas original sin is the ruin of our *character* and thus is a reference to internal qualities. Both original sin and imputed sin place us under the judgment of God.<sup>3</sup>

## **Total Depravity**

Paul Washer: One of the most important phrases used by theologians to describe the depth of man's inherited moral corruption or pollution is the phrase "total depravity." The word "depravity" comes from the Latin preposition *de* which communicates intensity and the Latin word *pravus* which means "twisted" or "crooked." To say that something is depraved means that its original state or form has been thoroughly twisted or perverted. To say that man is depraved, means that he has fallen from his original state of righteousness and that his very nature has become thoroughly corrupt. When theologians use the terms "total, pervasive, holistic, or radical depravity" it is important to know what they mean and do not mean.

### ***Total Depravity does not mean...***

1. ... that the image of God in man was totally lost in the fall. In Genesis 9:6, 1 Corinthians 11:7 and James 3:9, the Scripture still refers to humans having been "made in the likeness of God," therefore there is a real sense in which the image of God remains in every person.
2. ... that man has no knowledge of the person and will of God. The Scriptures teach us that men and women know enough of the true God to hate Him, and enough of His truth to reject it and attempt to restrain it (Romans 1:30; 1:18).

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

3. ... that man does not possess a conscience or that he is totally insensible to good and evil. In Romans 2:15, the Scriptures teach that all men and women possess a conscience. If not seared (1 Timothy 4:2), such a conscience may lead people to admire virtuous character and actions.
4. ... that man is incapable of demonstrating virtue. There are men and women who love their families, sacrifice their own lives to save others, and perform great acts of generosity and altruism. It is recognized that humans are capable of the love of others, civic duty, and even external religious good.
5. ... that all men and women are as immoral or depraved as they could be, that all men and women are equally immoral, or that all men and women indulge in every form of evil that exists. Not all humans are delinquents, fornicators, or murderers, but all are capable of such. That which restrains them is the grace of God.

***Total Depravity does mean...***

1. ... that the image of God in man has been seriously defaced, or disfigured and that moral corruption has polluted the entire person - body (Romans 6:6,12; 7:24; 8:10,13), reason (Romans 1:21; 2 Corinthians 3:14,15; 4:4; Ephesians 4:17,19), emotions (Romans 1:26,27; Galatians 5:24; 2 Timothy 3:24), and will (Romans 6:17; 7:14-15).

R.C. Sproul: To be totally depraved is to suffer from corruption that pervades the whole person. Sin affects every aspect of our being: the body, the soul, the mind, the will, and so forth. The total or whole person is corrupted by sin.
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2. ... that man is born with a great propensity or inclination towards sin. All men and women are capable of the greatest evil, the most unspeakable crimes, and the most shameful perversions.

3. ... that all that men and women do is contaminated by their own moral corruption. Men and women's moral corruption and sin pervade their most commendable deeds (Isaiah 64:6).
4. ... that the deeds of man are not prompted by any love for God or any desire to obey his commands. No man or woman loves God in a worthy manner or as the law commands (Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Matthew 22:37), nor is there a man or woman who glorifies God in every thought, word, and deed (1 Corinthians 10:31; Romans 1:21). All men and women prefer self to God (2 Timothy 3:2-4). All the acts of altruism, heroics, civic duty, and external religious good are prompted by the love of self, but not the love of God.
5. ... that the mind of man is hostile toward God, cannot subject itself to the will of God, and cannot please God (Romans 8:7-8).
6. ... that mankind is inclined to greater and greater moral corruption, and this deterioration would be even more rapid than it is if it were not for the grace of God which restrains the evil of men and women.
7. ... that men and women cannot free themselves from their sinful and depraved condition. They are spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:13), morally corrupt (Psalm 51:5), and cannot change themselves (Jeremiah 13:23).

**Just how sinful are we? Key passages on total depravity:**

*John 6:44, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day."*

*1 Corinthians 2:14, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."*

*Jeremiah 13:23, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil."*



- **No one can change his basic nature.**

One of the most clear passages about the extent of our inherited depravity is found in the Apostle Paul's summary in his letter to the Romans, chapter 3.

*Romans 3:10-12, "as it is written: 'None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.' "*

#### **Other passages:**

- There is none that do good (Psalm 14:3)
- No man is righteous before God (Psalm 143:2)
- There is no man that does not sin (1 Kings 8:46; Proverbs 20:9)
- Paul affirms everyone is under sin and none are righteous (Romans 3:9-10)
- All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)
- We all make mistakes (James 3:2)
- If we say we have no sin then we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8-10)

## **The consequences of our sin:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Death – separation of soul and body which all humans will see (James 2:26).

\_\_\_\_\_ Death – separation from God, which is the current status of all unbelievers (Ephesians 4:18).

\_\_\_\_\_ Death – the permanent condition of separation from God in a place the Bible calls hell, the final destiny for all who never receive Christ's liberation and new life (Luke 12:5).

## **How does God deal with sin?**

- 1) God \_\_\_\_\_ it (sometimes).
  - a. How often? More than we think or know.
  - b. Gen. 20:6, Ps. 19:13
- 2) God \_\_\_\_\_ it.
  - a. He doesn't enjoy it, but He does permit it.
  - b. Rom. 1:24-26
- 3) God \_\_\_\_\_ (or re-directs) sin for His good purposes.
  - a. E.G. – Joseph
  - b. Acts 2:36 (Christ's crucifixion)
- 4) God \_\_\_\_\_ it (restrains it).
  - a. Think about Job. God restrains or limits the extent or impact of what satan can do.
  - b. Ps. 124:1-3
  - c. 1 Cor. 10:13
- 5) He \_\_\_\_\_ it!
  - a. Why Jesus went to the cross! One day we will live in heaven where sin is no longer present.

## What has Christ done about our sin problem?

Here's a very brief summary of the five core things Christ accomplished in his death.<sup>4</sup>

### 1. Expiation

Expiation means the removal of our sin and guilt. Christ's death removes — expiates — our sin and guilt. The guilt of our sin was taken away from us and placed on Christ, who discharged it by his death.

Thus, in John 1:29, John the Baptist calls Jesus "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Jesus takes away, that is, expiates, our sins. Likewise, Isaiah 53:6 says, "The Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on him," and Hebrews 9:26 says "He has been manifested to *put away sin* by the sacrifice of Himself."

### 2. Propitiation

Whereas expiation refers to the removal of our sins, propitiation refers to the removal of God's wrath.

By dying in our place for our sins, Christ removed the wrath of God that we justly deserved. In fact, it goes even further: a propitiation is not simply a sacrifice that removes wrath, but a sacrifice that removes wrath and *turns it into favor*. (Note: a propitiation does not turn wrath into *love* — God already loved us fully, which is the reason he sent Christ to die; it turns his wrath into *favor* so that his love may realize its purpose of doing good to us every day, in all things, forever, without sacrificing his justice and holiness.)

Several passages speak of Christ's death as a propitiation for our sins. Romans 3:25-26 says that God "displayed [Christ] publicly as a propitiation in his blood through faith. This was to demonstrate his righteousness, because in the forbearance of God he passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration of his righteousness at the present time, that he might be just and the justifier of him who has faith in Jesus."

Likewise, Hebrews 2:17 says that Christ made "*propitiation* for the sins of the people" and 1 John 4:10 says "in this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the *propitiation* for our sins."

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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from <https://mattperman.com/2011/04/6-things-christ-accomplished-by-his-death/>

### 3. Reconciliation

Whereas expiation refers to the removal of our sins, and propitiation refers to the removal of God's wrath, reconciliation refers to the removal of our *alienation* from God.

Because of our sins, we were *alienated* — separated — from God. Christ's death removed this alienation and thus *reconciled* us to God. We see this, for example, in Romans 5:10-11: "For if while we were enemies, we were *reconciled to God through the death of his Son*, much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."

### 4. Redemption

Our sins had put us in captivity from which we need to be delivered. The price that is paid to deliver someone from captivity is called a "ransom." To say that Christ's death accomplished redemption for us means that it accomplished deliverance from our captivity through the payment of a price.

There are three things we had to be released from: the curse of the law, the guilt of sin, and the power of sin. Christ redeemed us from each of these.

- Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law: "Christ *redeemed us from the curse of the law*, having become a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13-14).
- Christ redeemed us from the guilt of our sin. We are "justified as a gift by his grace, *through the redemption* which is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24).
- Christ redeemed us from the power of sin: "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your fathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Note that we are not simply redeemed from the guilt of sin; to be redeemed from the power of sin means that our slavery to sin is broken. We are now free to live to righteousness. Our redemption from the power of sin is thus the basis of our ability to live holy lives: "You have been bought with a price; *therefore glorify God in your bodies*" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

### 5. And he Did All of This By Dying *As Our Substitute*

The reality of substitution is at the heart of the atonement. Christ accomplished all of the above benefits for us by dying *in our place* — that is, by dying *instead of us*. We deserved to die, and he took our sin upon him and paid the penalty *himself*.

This is what it means that Christ died *for us* (Romans 5:8) and gave himself *for us* (Galatians 2:20). As Isaiah says, “he was pierced through *for our transgressions*, he was crushed *for our iniquities* . . . the Lord has caused the iniquity *of us all* to fall on him” (Isaiah 53:5-6).

You see the reality of substitution underlying all of the benefits discussed above, as the means by which Christ accomplished them. For example, substitution is the means by which we were ransomed: “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom *for many*” (Matthew 20:28). Christ’s death was a ransom *for us* — that is, instead of us. Likewise, Paul writes that “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law *by becoming a curse for us*” (Galatians 3:13).

Substitution is the means by which we were reconciled: “For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the just for the unjust*, in order that he might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18). It is the means of expiation: “He made him who knew no sin *to be sin on our behalf*, that we might become the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21) and “He himself *bore our sins in his body on the cross*, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24). And by dying in our place, taking the penalty for our sins upon himself, Christ’s death is also the means of propitiation.

To close: Two implications. First, this is very humbling.

Second, “Greater love has no one than this, than he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

### The Effects of Sin on the Mind

**Dever: “Sin once tolerated seeks to be accepted, and sin once accepted seeks to be celebrated.”** – *true in our world and in our own hearts.*

#### See Romans 1:18-32

*Romans 1:21 - For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

**Al Mohler:** When we look at Scripture, we are drawn to make a distinction in our minds between natural knowledge and supernatural knowledge. Of course, an unregenerate person can know that two plus two equals four, find a cure to a disease, design a magnificent structure, or devise a technology that literally changes the world.

However, when it comes to the most important issues of life, meaning, and questions about God and our soul — that is the point at which our reason is most corrupted. Leaning on Romans 1, the Reformers remind us that the unregenerate mind can never reason its way to salvation. The unregenerate mind will never reason its way to the cross. The cross is foolishness to Greeks. There is no way that we can find salvation in our intellect, because it is devastatingly fallen.

In 1 Corinthians 2:14, Paul writes, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."

**Al Mohler:** The unregenerate mind cannot understand regenerate things. It is not an educational problem; no amount of education can solve this problem. No manner of communication, illumination, seminars, classes, studies, or degrees will lead one to salvation, because the unregenerate reason is opposed to God. The unregenerate mind sees the gospel as foolishness and folly.

## **Fourteen Noetic Effects of the Fall<sup>5</sup>**

**Noetic Effects:** The intellectual consequences of sin.

- The noetic effect of [sin](#) is the effect upon the mind. The Greek word for "mind" is "nous." Therefore, "noetic" deals with the mind, or the rational aspect of the person. This effect means that our reasoning abilities are no longer pure and proper all the time. But, it does not mean we will always reason improperly. We can think rationally, use mathematics, make proper judgments, etc. But, as is obvious, there are many false religions in the world that are believed and defended intellectually. So, the noetic effect of sin upon the mind most assuredly manifests itself in the belief of false gods, false Christ, false gospels, etc.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Adapted from <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-way-the-world-thinks-meeting-the-natural-mind-in-the-mirror-and-in-the-marketplace>

<sup>6</sup> From Matt Slick, <https://carm.org/what-is-the-noetic-effect-of-sin>

**Cornelius Van Til:** [The intellect of fallen man] may be compared to a buzz-saw that is sharp and shining, ready to cut the boards that come to it. Let us say that a carpenter wishes to cut fifty boards for the purpose of laying the floor of a house. He has marked his boards. He has set his saw. He begins at one end of the mark on the board. But he does not know that his seven-year-old son has tampered with the saw and changed its set. The result is that every board he saws is cut slantwise and thus unusable because it is too short except at the point where the saw made its first contact with the wood. As long as the set of the saw is not changed, the result will always be the same. So also whenever the teachings of Christianity are presented to the natural man, they will be cut according to the set of sinful human personality.

The saw (analogous to our reasoning faculty) does indeed work; it is the same saw that was previously set correctly. Because of its faulty setting, however, even though it works, it always cuts with the wrong slant.

Van Til, *Defense of the Faith*, 4th ed., 97<sup>7</sup>

There are many facets of the daily intellectual life of human beings that are directly linked to the fall. While the noetic effects of the fall are inexhaustible, it is helpful to sketch out some of the ways in which they are noticeable.<sup>8</sup>

1) **Ignorance:** had there been no fall, there would have been no ignorance. The things of God, even his invisible attributes, are clearly seen in creation, but the fall has clouded our ability to see these things. Ignorance would have been impossible until the fall, whereas it is now axiomatic.

- "The very fact that ignorance exists is evidence of the Fall. Adam and Eve were not affected by ignorance. We can be affected by an absolutely fatal ignorance."

2) **Distractedness:** every single human being has theological "attention deficit disorder." We are easily distracted.

- "We cannot maintain our concentration. These days there is a lot of attention to attention deficit problems. But, of course in this sense, to be a fallen human is to have an attention deficit problem and every one of us, knowing our attention, is fully aware of that. We are distracted very easily."

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<sup>7</sup> Adapted from <https://exegesisandtheology.com/2008/10/15/van-til-on-the-noetic-effects-of-the-fall/>

<sup>8</sup> Quotes from Al Mohler come from his program, The Briefing, on May 5, 2017, <https://albertmohler.com/2017/05/04/briefing-05-04-17>

**3) Forgetfulness:** everyone has committed to memory things that he has now forgotten. Forgetfulness would be impossible had we not sinned.

- "One of our main frustrations is we no longer know everything we knew. And that's not only forgetting eighth-grade algebra, that is also forgetting something that we read just an hour ago. We do not remember as we wish we would. Prejudice is a fourth problem, every single human mind affected by sin is affected by prejudice."

**4) Prejudice:** intellectual prejudice is one of our besetting problems. The problem is that we do not know ourselves well enough to know our intellectual prejudices, because we are prejudiced even in our thinking about our prejudices. One of the great achievements of the postmodern mind-set has been the forcing of an honest discussion of intellectual prejudices.

**5) Faulty perspective:** because of our finitude, we all have a finite perspective on reality. Had we not sinned, we would all share a right and accurate perspective. As it is, we are shaped by cultural, linguistic, tribal, ethnic, historical, individual, familial, and other blinders. We do not see things as others see them, but we assume that others who are right-minded must see things as we see them. The famous "parable of the fish," often attributed to Aristotle, asks the question, "Does a fish know that it is wet?" The idea conveyed in the parable is that if you want to know what being wet is like, then do not ask a fish, for he does not know he is wet.

- "We do not see as we should. Just take a painting, if you turn it sideways or upside down, at least in terms of representational art, it changes the picture entirely. Sometimes given our own faulty intellectual operations we fail to have the right perspective and thus we misjudge reality."

**6) Intellectual fatigue:** with the fast pace of modern life and the multitude of matters pressing for our attention, we can begin to feel depleted in our intellectual capacities and mental reserves.

- "We grow tired. Our minds, our reason, will grow tired. We are also a psychosomatic unity, so our mind is not disembodied, rather we are mind and body together and that means that fatigue affects us, even the operations of our mind."

**7) Inconsistencies:** it would be bad enough if we were merely plagued with inconsistencies. The bigger problem, however, is that we do not even see them in ourselves — though they are more readily detected by others.



- "Inconsistencies mean that something is wrong. The law of non-contradiction means that two contradictory truth claims cannot both be equally true, but every one of us, no matter how consistent we seek to be, in our own inability to be totally consistent is affected by inconsistencies."

**8) Failure to draw the right conclusion:** this is a besetting intellectual sin. Most people do not even recognize that they are drawing the wrong conclusions. There is the willful denial of and blindness toward data.

- "We can be presented with absolutely correct data and still draw the wrong conclusion. That is very frustrating and we see that in others, we need to be able to see it in ourselves as well."

**9) Intellectual apathy:** if we did not bear the noetic effects of the fall, we would be infinitely passionate about the things that should be of our infinite concern. Our intellectual apathy, which works its way out in every dimension of our lives, is one of the most devastating effects of the fall.

- "We sometimes simply don't care enough to intellectually engage. That too is an effect of sin."

**10) Dogmatism and closed-mindedness:** we hold to things with tenacity that we should not hold onto at all, because the intellect seizes upon certain ideas and thoughts like comfort food. They are only taken away from us with great force, even if reason and data directly contradict them.

- "Some people simply come to the position that they hold to their conclusions and those conclusions are impervious to any further conversation or evidence. That too is a problem, because we should never close our minds. The Christian worldview, by the way, mandates that we hold tenaciously to Christian truth, but that's not over against the evidence, but rather on the basis of the evidence. That's why the Christian worldview insists that the mature Christian is not someone who runs from the question, but someone who runs into the questions with confidence that God is speaking in Scripture and on biblical authority those questions can be answered also in conversation with others in the history of the Christian church who have struggled on the basis of Scripture with those very same questions."

**11) Intellectual pride:** the Scripture states that "'knowledge' puffs up" (1 Corinthians 8:1). One danger of higher education is the besetting sin of human pride that comes

alongside human achievement, for intellectual achievements are some of the most highly prized trophies.

- “That’s a sign of sin where we grow so confident in the operations of our own reason, we can grow overconfident to our own embarrassment. Pride can show up in every dimension of our lives, including our intellectual lives.”

**12) Vain imagination:** Romans 1 indicts vain imagination, exposing the fact that we make images of God out of created things — even “birds and animals and creeping things” (verse 23). As the psalmist writes, “Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?” (Psalm 2:1).

- “Vain imagination is another and this is simply the fact that we can even fantasize reality in a way that supplants the real reality, so to speak. We can imagine a world and we can live in that world, and that is often a major problem.”

**13) Miscommunication:** translation is difficult, and miscommunication is one of the great limitations upon intellectual advance. We live on the other side of both Genesis 3 (the fall) and Genesis 11 (confusion of language at Babel). From the story of the Tower of Babel, we understand that this issue of miscommunication is not an accident. Some of these noetic effects are because God has limited our knowledge.

**14) Partial knowledge:** we know only in part, and sometimes we do not even know how partial our knowledge is.

**Al Mohler:** All of these noetic effects of the fall are tied to the will. These effects influence not only our intellectual activities but also the way our intellectual activities work their way out in other aspects of our lives — our emotions and intuitions. Human knowledge works in what might be called “intellectual auto-pilot.” We operate the only way a sane person can operate. Our emotions and intuitions are shaped by our intellect, which is shaped by our will. As such, we find ourselves not always thinking in an openly rational, self-conscious way. Nonetheless, we remain driven by thinking that is working its way out in intuitions and emotions.

