

7-19-1953

Churches of Christ Salute You with a Herald of Truth: Infant Sinners

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Garrett

Churches of Christ
Salute You
with a



Infant Sinners

By James D. Willeford

July 19, 1953

Herald of Truth

Infant Sinners

By James D. Willeford

July 19, 1953

A few years ago a preacher stood in his pulpit in a little town of East Texas and said to an American audience, "There are infants lost not a span long." It is needless to say that some of the people in that audience rejected the preacher's assertion for they could not believe it.

This case brings before us a doctrine that is prevalent in many denominations. One Catechism says, quote, "From Adam all men inherit original sin". In the book, "Father Smith Instructs Jackson", Mr. John F. Noll says, "Our souls, being deprived of the supernatural beauty of grace, are not in condition to enter a state of supernatural glory — not even the soul of a little child who has no personal sin, but has inherited original sin." The Augsburg Confession of Faith says, "since the fall of Adam, all men . . . are born sinners" (unquote). These quotations are given to state the case fairly of those who believe that infants are born under the guilt of sin.

We believe the word of God teaches no such doctrine. It may be the belief of some that little children are burdened with the guilt of Adam's sin, but we cannot accept it as a true belief for the Bible says faith comes by hearing the Word of God, (Rom. 10:17). God's word does not teach that infants are born sinners.

It is impossible for sin to be inherited, for sin is the transgression of God's law. Sin is the act of violating God's will, and the act of one man cannot be inherited by another. If a man commits a sin his children may suffer the consequences of his act, but they do not suffer the guilt of it.

In I John 3:4 the Lord says, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law." In what way has an infant transgressed the law of God? Since sin is the transgression of law, a person is never guilty until he commits an act of transgression. Sin is not inherited for it is something a person does of his own choice. The Lord holds us responsible for what we do for he says everyone of us shall give an account of himself unto God, (Romans 14:12). The Bible clearly teaches that sin is committed; not inherited.

The whole question of sin should be restudied by the religious world. When we take the Bible definition of sin, and we learn what it is, we cannot believe it is inherited. The Lord says a person sins after he is drawn away of his own lust, and that sin brings forth death, (Jas. 1:13, 14). Many religious creeds have reversed the Lord's order. They have us born dead in sin because of what Adam did. But the Bible says sin is committed after a person is drawn away by his own lust and that death follows sin.

Upon the idea that we inherit sin from Adam has grown

the practice of sprinkling water upon babies. The Lord says we are to baptize believers, (Mark 16:16). The doctrine that infants are sinners contradicts the Bible, and leads to an unscriptural practice among religious people. Thus the theory is wrong and should be discarded.

Spiritual corruption at birth is impossible for we received our spirit from God. Paul said, "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live?", (Heb. 12:9). The Old Testament prophet said God "formeth the spirit of man within him," (Zech 12:1). Solomon said, the spirit will return to God who gave it, (Eccl. 12:7). Since the spirit came from God and not Adam it could not be sinful at birth. It does not partake of Adam's nature. Our body came by the natural law of the flesh and is subject to death since death resulted from Adam's sin, but the spirit came from God and is subject to sin only after we yield to it, (Rom. 6:13).

If we inherit Adam's sin why do we not inherit the sins of all our foreparents? We descended from them the same as we did from Adam. Can you imagine a God who would lay upon the soul of a little child the actual guilt of all its ancestors? That is no more objectionable than the thought that God holds a child guilty of Adam's sin. In Ezekiel 18 the Lord said, "What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul is the son of mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die . . . The son shall not hear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son, (Ezek.18:2-4, 20).

The Bible says the soul that sins shall die, and the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father. It also says that if the wicked will turn from the sins he has committed he shall live. It does not say that if the wicked shall turn from the sins he inherited at birth he shall live. But he must turn from the sins he committed.

We can rest assured that little children are not sinful at birth for Christ said to his disciples, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," (Matt. 18:3). Jesus says we must be changed into the likeness of children. If the little child is a sinner, then the converted man is a sinner. When a man is converted, he is redeemed by the blood of Christ, and his sins are forgiven, (Col. 1:14). But he is no better than an innocent child. Christ says, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Would Jesus say the kingdom of heaven is made up of people who are like children if infants are born sinners? The Lord drew children to his bosom and blessed them, and he forever refutes the idea that they were born sinners.

We can be sure that infants are not sinners for God did not give a plan for saving them. If they were lost God would have given a plan for saving them. In Matthew 28 and Mark 16,

YOU MAY HEAR THE HERALD OF TRUTH OVER THESE STATIONS

ALABAMA—

Albertville	WAVU	630	4:30 p.m.
Anniston	WHMA	1450	1:00 p.m.
Auburn	WAUD	1230	1:00 p.m.
Birmingham	WSGN	610	8:00 a.m.
Florence	WJOI	1340	8:00 p.m.
Ft. Payne	WFFA	1400	8:00 a.m.
Gadsden	WGAD	1350	1:00 p.m.
Greenville	WGYV	1400	4:00 p.m.
Hamilton	WERH	970	1:00 p.m.
Huntsville	WHBS	1490	7:30 a.m.
Marion	WJAM	1310	9:30 a.m.
Montgomery	WAPX	1600	1:00 p.m.
Scottsboro	WCRI	1050	4:30 p.m.
Selma	WGVG	1340	1:30 p.m.
Talladega	WHTB	1240	1:30 p.m.
Troy	WTBT	1490	1:00 p.m.
Tuscaloosa	WJRD	1150	9:00 p.m.

ARIZONA—

Bisbee	KSUN	1230	1:00 p.m.
Clifton	KCLF	1400	3:00 p.m.
Flagstaff	KCLS	1340	7:30 a.m.
Kingman	KGAN	920	1:00 p.m.
Phoenix	KOY	550	7:00 a.m.
Tucson	KCNA	580	3:00 p.m.

ARKANSAS—

Eldorado	KDMS	1290	1:00 p.m.
Forrest City	KXYK	950	9:00 a.m.
Ft. Smith	KFSA	950	1:00 p.m.
Hot Springs	KWFC	1340	8:30 p.m.
Little Rock	KGHI	1250	1:00 p.m.
McGehee	KYSA	1220	9:00 a.m.
Springdale	KBRB	1340	6:00 p.m.

CALIFORNIA—

Bakersfield	KPMC	1560	10:00 a.m.
Blythe	KYOR	1450	3:30 p.m.
Brawley	KROP	1300	12:30 p.m.
Eureka	KIEM	1480	8:00 a.m.
Fresno	KARM	1430	3:30 p.m.
Indio	KREO	1400	3:30 p.m.
Los Angeles	KCEA	790	3:30 p.m.
Porterville	KTIP	1450	3:30 p.m.
San Francisco	KGO	810	3:30 p.m.
San Luis Obispo	KATY	1340	3:30 p.m.

COLORADO—

Craig	KRAI	1230	5:30 p.m.
Denver	KVOD	630	3:00 p.m.

CONNECTICUT—

Bridgeport	WNAB	1450	3:00 p.m.
Hartford	WTHT	1230	1:00 p.m.

DELEWARE—

Wilmington	WILM	1450	1:00 p.m.
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FLORIDA—

Gainesville	WGGG	1230	1:00 p.m.
Jacksonville	WPDQ	600	5:30 p.m.
Leesburg	WLBE	790	1:00 p.m.
Miami	WQAM	560	1:00 p.m.
Panama City	WPCF	1400	1:00 p.m.
Pensacola	WEAR	1230	5:30 p.m.
Sanford	WTRR	1400	check sta.
Tallahassee	WTNT	1450	5:00 p.m.
Tampa-St. Pete	WSUN	620	1:00 p.m.

GEORGIA—

Atlanta	WGST	920	1:00 p.m.
Augusta	WGAC	580	2:00 p.m.
Brunswick	WGIJ	1440	1:00 p.m.
Cairo	WGRA	1300	3:00 p.m.
Cartersville	WRHF	1450	10:00 a.m.
Columbus	WGBA	1460	7:30 a.m.
Dawson	WDWD	990	2:00 p.m.
Macon	WNEX	1400	1:00 p.m.
ROME	WLAQ	670	1:00 p.m.
Savannah	WDAE	1400	1:00 p.m.
Valdosta	WGAF	910	1:00 p.m.

IDAHO—

Boise	KGEM	1140	3:00 p.m.
Pocatello	KWIK	1440	9:30 a.m.

ILLINOIS—

Chicago	WENR-WLS	890	2:30 p.m.
Quincy	WGEM	1440	8:00 a.m.

INDIANA—

Anderson	WHBU	1240	1:30 p.m.
Bloomington	WTTS	1370	1:00 p.m.
Evansville	WJPS	1330	1:30 p.m.
Ft. Wayne	WGL	1250	1:00 p.m.

IOWA—

Cedar Rapids	WMT	600	7:30 a.m.
Des Moines	KOS	1460	6:00 p.m.
Sioux City	KSCJ	1360	10:30 p.m.
Waterloo	KXEL	1540	8:30 p.m.

KANSAS—

Coffeyville	KGFE	690	2:00 p.m.
Dodge City	KGNL	—	1:30 p.m.
Great Bend, Kans.	—	—	—

KENTUCKY—

Bowling Green	KWCF	930	1:00 p.m.
Louisville	WKLO	1080	1:00 p.m.
Mayfield	WKTM	1050	4:15 p.m.
Newport	WNOF	740	2:00 p.m.
Paducah	WKYB	570	1:30 p.m.

LOUISIANA—

Baton Rouge	WLCS	910	1:00 p.m.
Monroe	KMLB	1440	2:00 p.m.
New Iberia	KANE	1240	1:00 p.m.
New Orleans	WDSU	1280	1:00 p.m.
Shreveport	KRMD	1340	1:00 p.m.

MAINE—

Bangor	WABI	910	1:00 p.m.
Portland	WPOR	1450	9:00 a.m.

MARYLAND—

Baltimore	WFRB	1300	3:00 p.m.
Cumberland	WDYK	1230	8:00 a.m.

MASSACHUSETTS—

Boston, Mass.	WVDA	—	—
Gardner	WHOB	1490	1:00 p.m.
Lawrence	WLAW	680	1:00 p.m.
Springfield	WSPR	1270	2:00 p.m.
Worcester	WAAB	1440	1:00 p.m.

MICHIGAN—

Battle Creek	WELL	1400	1:00 p.m.
Bay City	WBCM	1440	1:00 p.m.
Detroit	WXYZ	1270	1:00 p.m.
Flint	WTAC	600	10:30 p.m.
Lansing	WILS	1320	1:00 p.m.
Ludington	WKLA	1450	1:00 p.m.
Mt. Pleasant	WCEN	1150	2:00 p.m.
Muskegon	WKBZ	850	2:00 p.m.

MINNESOTA—

Mankato	KTOE	1420	2:00 p.m.
Minn.-St. Paul	WTCN	1250	7:30 a.m.

MISSISSIPPI—

Booneville	WBIP	1400	1:00 p.m.
Centerville	WGLC	1580	8:00 a.m.
Columbus	WCRI	1340	6:00 p.m.
Greenwood	WABG	960	1:00 p.m.
Jackson	WSLI	930	2:00 p.m.
Kosciusko	WKOZ	1340	1:00 p.m.
Laurel	WLAU	1490	8:30 p.m.
McComb	WSKB	1250	1:00 p.m.
Meridian	WTKO	1450	check sta.

MISSOURI—

Cape Girardeau	KFVS	960	8:30 p.m.
Kansas City	KCMO	810	12:30 p.m.
Poplar Bluff	KWOC	930	check sta.
Rolla	KTRR	1490	8:45 a.m.
St. Louis	KXOK	630	9:15 p.m.
Springfield	KWTO	560	1:00 p.m.

MONTANA—

Bozeman	KXLQ	1450	8:00 a.m.
Great Falls	KXLK	1400	8:00 a.m.
Helena	KXLJ	1240	8:00 a.m.
Missoula	KXLL	1450	8:00 a.m.

NEBRASKA—

Lincoln	KFOR	1240	10:30 a.m.
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N. Platt	KNBR	970	9:00 a.m.
Omaha	KOIL	1290	5:30 p.m.
Sidney	KSID	1240	9:30 a.m.

NEVADA—

Las Vegas	KENO	1460	9:30 a.m.
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NEW HAMPSHIRE—

Claremont	WTSV	1230	1:00 p.m.
Lebanon	WTSL	1400	1:00 p.m.
Manchester	WMUR	610	3:00 p.m.

NEW MEXICO—

Albuquerque	KOAT	1450	3:00 p.m.
Carlsbad	KPBM	740	1:30 p.m.
Clovis	KCLV	1240	1:00 p.m.
Los Alamos	KRSN	1490	3:00 p.m.
Santa Fe	KTRC	1400	8:00 p.m.

NEW YORK—

Albany	WXXW	850	2:00 p.m.
New York	WABC	770	12:30 p.m.
Olean	WHDL	1450	1:00 p.m.
Poughkeepsie	WKIP	1450	1:00 p.m.
Rochester	WARC	950	9:30 a.m.
Saranac Lake	WEAV	960	2:00 p.m.
Syracuse	WAGE	620	12:00 p.m.

NORTH CAROLINA—

Asheville	WLOS	1380	1:00 p.m.
Charlotte	WAYS	610	1:00 p.m.
Durham	WTKI	1310	2:00 p.m.
Fayetteville (Sat)	—	—	—

Salisbury	WFEB	1490	1:00 p.m.
Wilmington	WGNL	1340	8:30 a.m.
Winston-Salem	WAIR	1340	1:00 p.m.

NORTH DAKOTA—

Fargo	KFGO	790	1:00 p.m.
Grand Forks	KILO	1060	1:00 p.m.

OHIO—

Cleveland	WJW	850	1:00 p.m.
Columbus	WHKC	610	1:00 p.m.
East Liverpool	WOHI	1490	1:00 p.m.
Lima	WIMA	1150	9:00 a.m.
Toledo	WTOL	1230	1:00 p.m.
Youngstown	WBBW	1240	8:30 a.m.

OKLAHOMA—

Ada	KADA	1230	1:00 p.m.
Enid	KCRC	1390	1:00 p.m.
McAlester	KTMK	1400	1:00 p.m.
Muskogee	KBIX	1490	2:00 p.m.
Oklahoma City	KTOK	1000	9:30 a.m.
Tulsa	KRMG	740	2:00 p.m.

OREGON—

Eugene	KASH	1600	1:00 p.m.
Medford	KMED	1440	7:30 a.m.
Portland	KEX	1190	3:30 p.m.
Redmond	KJUN	1240	3:30 p.m.
The Dalles	KODL	1230	1:30 p.m.

PENNSYLVANIA—

Johnstown	WCRO	1230	1:00 p.m.
Lemoyne	WCMB	1460	7:30 a.m.
Philadelphia	WFIL	560	2:00 p.m.
Pittsburg	WCAE	1250	3:00 p.m.
State College	WMAJ	1450	9:00 a.m.
Wilkes-Barre	WILK	980	5:00 p.m.

RHODE ISLAND—

Providence	WPJB	1420	1:00 p.m.
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SOUTH CAROLINA—

Columbia	WCOS	1400	1:00 p.m.
Florence	WJMX	970	10:30 a.m.
Orangeburg	WDIX	1405	7:00 a.m.
Sumter	WSSC	—	1:00 p.m.

SOUTH DAKOTA—

Aberdeen	KSDN	930	10:30 a.m.
Huron	KLJV	1340	9:00 a.m.

TENNESSEE—

Chattanooga	WAPO	1150	100 p.m.
Jackson	WTJS	1390	1:00 p.m.
Johnson City	WETB	790	6:15 p.m.

Knoxville	WBIR	1240	1:30 p.m.
Memphis	WHBQ	560	9:30 p.m.
Morristown	WCRK	1450	9:00 a.m.
Nashville	WSIX	980	4:00 p.m.

TEXAS—

Ablene	KRBC	1470	1:00 p.m.
Amarillo	KFDA	1440	1:00 p.m.
Austin	KNOW	1490	2:00 p.m.
Beaumont	KFDM	560	1:00 p.m.
Big Spring	KBST	1490	1:00 p.m.
Brownfield	KTFY	1300	4:30 p.m.
Brownwood	KBWD	1380	6:30 p.m.
Corpus Christi	KEYS	1440	9:00 a.m.
Del Rio	XERF	1570	9:00 p.m.
El Paso	KEPO	690	3:00 p.m.
Ft. Worth	WBAP	570	1:00 p.m.
Graham	KSWA	1330	4:30 p.m.
Houston	KXYZ	1320	8:00 a.m.
Longview	KFRO	1370	1:00 p.m.
Lubbock	KFYO	1340	4:00 p.m.
Midland	KCRS	550	1:30 p.m.
Nacogdoches	KOSF	1230	1:00 p.m.
Paris	KPLT	1490	4:00 p.m.
San Angelo	KGKL	960	1:00 p.m.
Texarkana	KMCB	1230	1:00 p.m.
Wichita Falls	KFDX	990	2:00 p.m.

UTAH—

Provo	KCSU	1490	3:00 p.m.
Salt Lake City	KUTA	570	7:30 a.m.

VERMONT—

Brattleboro	WTSA	1450	1:00 p.m.
Burlington	WJOY	1230	1:00 p.m.
Montpelier-Barre	WSKI	1240	

Christ commanded the apostles to teach all nations and to baptize people who believed the teaching. In Acts 2:38 the Lord teaches that repentance must come before baptism. This excludes infants for they cannot be taught; they cannot believe, and they cannot repent. Are they sinners before they know their right hand from their left? If so, then God would have said to baptize them, and since he did not, we can be sure they are not sinners. Infants do not need to be saved for they are not lost. They are safe —S-A-F-E— until they are old enough to know right from wrong. When they are of sufficient age to be taught God's word, believe in Christ, and repent of their sins they are held accountable unto the Lord. Some quote Christ's statement, "Suffer little children to come unto me," as proof they needed baptism. He was blessing children; not baptizing them. Philip Schaff, one of the world's foremost church historians, says, "Christ, who is the truth, blessed unbaptized infants, and declare: 'To such belongs the kingdom of heaven.'" (Page 255, Volume II, A History of the Christian Church). If infant baptism became universal practice and all people were baptized in infancy, Christ's command to baptize believers could not be obeyed. The Lord's word would be rendered null and void by an unscriptural practice of men.

Infants are not born guilty of sin for the Lord says that people "are all gone aside; they are together become filthy, (Psa. 14:3). If tiny babies were born filthy this verse should read "they are become filthier." The Lord settles the matter for he says we go aside and become filthy. Since this is true we certainly were not born that way.

A statement of David is sometimes used to prove that we are sinners at birth. The Psalmist said, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me," (Psa. 51:5). In this passage David does not say a word about his being a sinner when he was born. He mentions the act of conception before he even had a being and he said, "in sin did my mother conceive me." His mother's act that led to his conception was sinful. David said, "my sin is ever before me," (Psa. 51:3) and as he thought of his own sin he reluctantly recalled his own mother's sin in conceiving him. No man can prove by David that tiny infants are depraved at birth.

When David's little boy died at the age of seven days he said, "wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me," (2 Sam. 12:23) David was inspired by the Spirit of God, but it never curred to him that his son was born a sinner, even though the boy was conceived out of wedlock. David knew the child was pure and so he longed to go where the child went! The Psalmist of Israel could say with the poet:

"Little children, flowers from heaven,
Strewn on earth by God's own hand,
Earnest emblems to us given,
From the fields of angel-land!"

Those who teach that infants are born sinners quote Romans 5:19 to prove their position. In this passage Paul

said, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Notice carefully that Paul says that by Adam's disobedience many were made sinners, and by the obedience of Christ many were made righteous. If Paul is teaching that everyone was born a sinner because of Adam's sin he is also teaching that everyone is born righteous because of Christ's obedience. Friends this is universalism. The truth of the matter is that sin entered the world through Adam's transgression, and a person becomes a sinner when he sins. And righteousness entered the world through Christ's obedience and we become righteous when we obey the will of Christ.

Some may ask, "If people are not born guilty of original sin why do all sin?" In answering this question I ask, Why did Adam and Eve sin? They were not born sinners. They were created in the image of God, and yet they sinned. They were tempted and they fell. Today the same thing happens. The Bible says a man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it brings forth sin. Adam sinned because he chose to do so. He was not forced into the act, but he committed it of his own free will. The Lord says all men die in Adam, (1 Cor. 15:22). We suffer physical death because of sin which entered the world through Adam's transgression. But the Lord does not say the human race died spiritually in Adam, and became guilty of his sin. The guilt of his sin was not laid upon us. Sin is the personal transgression of God's law; not something inherited from Adam.

The Lord says that "each one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Rom. 14:12). Paul said, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad," (II Cor. 5:10). These passages teach that we are responsible for our own sins, and not the sin of our parents.

Friends of mine, before I would believe babies are born sinners the Bible would have to declare it in unmistakable terms. It is strange that men can believe it since the Bible does not say we are born sinners. The advocates of infant depravity quote scriptures which show the baneful influence of Adam's sin upon the race, but not one says infants inherit the guilt of his sin. Let us stay with what the Lord actually says, and not read anything into his word. Men who claim to be doctors of theology may affirm that little babies are sinners, but you will seldom find a mother who will say it. Nothing is more precious than a little child. In the Old Testament God says, "And a little child shall lead them." As we look at the purity and innocence of these small ones we are refreshed and inspired to live a more noble life. Little children are teachable, trustful and innocent.

In that great day when God makes up his jewels all children who have been plucked in the budding years of life will be in the number for they have died without sin.

Truly we could ask in the words of the poet —

“Who would not be an infant now,
To breath an infant's prayer?
O manhood! could thy spirit kneel
Beside that sunny child,
And fondly pray, and purely feel,
With soul as undefiled.
That moment would encircle thee,
With light and love divine;
Thy gaze might dwell on Deity,
And heaven itself be thine.”

To all in this vast audience who are not children of God may I remind you that Jesus said, “except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven,” (Matt. 18:3, 4). The Lord requires us to be humble for humility is the way of obedience. Paul says Christ “humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” (Phil. 2:8). If Christ, the Son of God, humbled himself to the point of dying upon the cruel cross, will you not humble yourself enough to obey the Lord when he said, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins?” (Acts 2:38). If you trust your heavenly Father as a little child trusts its earthly father you will “Repent . . . and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord,” (Acts 3:19).