



Formula of Concord Session Two: Original Sin and Free Will

- **What is sin and can it be avoided? Did God create it?**
- **What are the capabilities of our free will? Do we cooperate in our own salvation? Our own sanctification?**
- **Review: very brief historical introduction to Formula of Concord**

Original Sin: Status

A controversy about original sin has arisen among some theologians... What is it precisely? One side argued this: through Adams's fall, mankind's nature, substance, and essence are corrupt. Since the fall, the nature, substance, and essence of a human being is original sin itself... So since the fall there is now no difference whatever between the nature and essence of mankind and original sin because the nature is corrupt through sin.

The other side taught... original sin is something in mankind's nature, body, and soul, and in all a person's powers. It is a horrible, deep, inexpressible corruption of mankind's nature and powers... A distinction must be maintained between the nature and essence of the corrupt person and his body and soul, which are God's creation and creatures in us even since the fall. (SD, I.1-2, p.511-512)

- **At first glance, is this a very important distinction/argument? Why or why not?**

Original Sin: Affirmative and Negative Statements

First, it is true that Christians should regard and recognize the actual transgression of God's commandments as sin; but sin is also that horrible, dreadful hereditary sickness by which the entire human nature is corrupted. (SD I.5, p.512)

- **Why should this distinction be recognized?**
- **Read and discuss:**
 - Psalm 51:5; Romans 7

Second, the following is also clear and true: God is not a creator, author, or cause of sin. By the instigation of the devil through one man, sin (which is the devil's work) has entered the world. (SD I.7, p.512)

- **If God created everything, how is it possible that He did not create sin/evil?**
- **Read and discuss:**
 - Romans 5:12; 1 John 3:7



Third, reason doesn't know and understand what this hereditary evil is... It must be learned and believed from the revelation of Scripture (SD I.8, p.512)

- **What are the implications of this belief/teaching/confession?**
- **Read and discuss:**
 - Psalm 19:12; 1 John 3:7

We reject and condemn the teaching that evil lusts are not sin, but are created, essential properties of human nature. (Ep. I.12,, p.475)

- **Why would this teaching be dangerous/destructive to faith? (Think of implications for creation, incarnation, sanctification, and resurrection)**

We likewise reject the Pelagian error. It alleged that human nature even after the fall is not corrupt, and especially in spiritual things human nature has remained entirely good and pure in its natural powers. (Ep. I.13, p.476)

- **Why would this teaching be dangerous/destructive to faith? (Think of implications for justification, baptism, communion, God's Word)**

Free Will: Status

The chief question is only this and this alone: What is the intellect and will of the unregenerate person able to do in his [her] conversion and regeneration from his/her own powers after the fall? (SD II.2, p.520)

- **At first glance, is this a crucial argument or distinction? Why or why not?**



Free Will: Positive Statements

- **Read and discuss:**
 - Genesis 8:21
 - Jeremiah 17:9
 - Ezekiel 11:19-20
 - John 6:29,44; 8:37
 - Romans 3:11-12, 8:7
 - 1 Corinthians 2:14; 4:7; 12:3
 - Ephesians 2:5-8, 4:17-18
 - Galatians 5:17
 - Titus 3:4-7

The Scriptures deny to the intellect, heart, and will of the natural man all readiness, skill, capacity, and ability to think, to understand, to be able to do, to begin, to will, to undertake, to act, to work, or to agree to work anything good and right in spiritual things from himself. (SD II.12, p.522)

God's Word testifies that the intellect, heart, and will of the natural, unregenerate person in divine things are not only turned entirely away from God, but also are turned and perverted against God to every evil. (SD II.14, p.523)

The Scriptures do not credit the human powers of the natural free will with conversion, faith in Christ, regeneration, renewal, and all that belongs to their effective beginning and end... Reason and free will are able to live an outwardly decent life to a certain extent. But only the Holy Spirit causes a person to be born anew and to have inwardly another heart, mine, and natural desire. (SD II.25-26, p.525)

- **Overstatements? Why or why not?**
- **What are the implications for ourselves? For the ministry of the church? Encouraging?**

God works through this means (i.e., the preaching and hearing of His Word). He breaks our hearts and draws us to Him. Through the preaching of the Law, a person comes to know his sins and God's wrath. He experiences in his heart true terrors, contrition, and sorrow. Through the preaching of, and reflection on, the Holy Gospel about the gracious forgiveness of sins in Christ, a spark of faith is kindled in him. This faith accepts the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake and comforts itself with the Gospel promise. So the Holy Spirit (who does all this) is sent into the heart... Neither preacher nor hearer is to doubt this grace and effectiveness of the Holy Spirit. They should be certain that when God's Word is preached purely and truly, according to God's command and will, and people listen attentively and seriously and meditate on it, God is certainly present with His grace. (SD, II.54-55, p.530)

- **Encouraging? Why or why not?**



Free Will: Positive Statements

We reject:

...A person's will has no freedom or ability to perform (to a certain extent) outward righteousness and respectable behavior. [Stoics and Manichaeans]

...that the free will, from its own natural powers, without the Holy Spirit, can turn to God and believe the Gospel. [Pelagians]

...that a person from his own natural powers can begin to do good and to convert himself. Then, because a person is too weak to bring it to completion, the Holy Spirit comes to the aid of the good begun from a person's own natural powers. [Papists]

...that a person is not absolutely dead to good in spiritual things, but... to a certain extent, although feebly, the will can do something toward salvation; it can help and cooperate in it and can qualify itself for it.

...after regeneration a person can completely fulfill God's Law in this life. [Semi-Pelagians]

...that God, without any means, without the hearing of the divine Word, and without the use of the holy Sacraments, draws people to Himself, enlightens, justifies, and saves them.[Enthusiasts]

(SD, II.74-80, p.p.533-534)

- **Can someone believe these things and be saved?**
- **Should they?**