

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Conceived In Sin?

(Jerry Fite)

David writes, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5). Is David saying commenting on his beginning as a product of an adulterous relationship on his mother’s part? Scripture says “Jesse begat David” (Ruth 4:22), and offers no indication that David was the result of an adulterous affair, any less than Jesse’s seven other sons were legitimately his from a lawful relationship with David’s mother (cf. 1 Samuel 16:10-12). Is David conveying that a sinful or fallen nature is inherited through a blood line to Adam? Many think so.

Mitchell Dahood states concisely, “All men have a congenital tendency toward evil”. If this is true, must we also assume we have a congenital tendency to “hope” and “trust” in God? The Psalmist writes, “For thou art my hope, Or Lord Jehovah; thou art my trust from my youth. By thee have I been holden up from the womb; Thou art He that took me out of my mother’s bowels: My praise shall be continually of

thee” (Psalm 71:5-6). David was no so tainted with a fallen sinful nature that he could not trust in God at birth: “But thou art He that took me out of the womb; Thou didst make me trust when I was upon my mother’s breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb; Thou art my God since my mother bare me” (Psalm 22:9-10). How are there a congenital fallen nature and a congenital trust in God in the same person from the womb?

These passages are not speaking about what we inherit through a common bloodline, but are conveying experiences that within a context seem to have always been our lot.

Psalm 51 was written as David felt the weight of his sin with Bathsheba. He committed adultery with her, tried to deceive in order to cover up the sin, and had her faithful husband and David’s faithful soldier, Uriah, killed. (cf. 2 Samuel 11:1-5, 6-21). Only when David’s anger is kindled regarding a rich man who spares his own flock, but takes another man’s only and beloved

ewe lamb; and Nathan drives home the point of the story by saying, “Thou art the man”; does David feel the gravity of his actions and confesses, “I have sinned” (2 Samuel 12: 1-14).

David certainly does not wish to convey a doctrine that contradicts other clear Scriptural statements: “...the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son” (Ezekiel 18:20). Children are innocent, not born tainted with the sin of their fathers, and manifest the character essential for the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:14).

David is so weighed down with the guilt of his sin that he cannot dismiss it. “My sin is ever before me” (Psalm 51:3). He is so burdened with guilt that he feels God has broken his bones (Psalm 51:8). In such a contextual setting, we should not be surprised if David feels as if he “has never been good”, even from his beginning: conception. It is the same hyperbole conveyed in the statement, “But I am a worm, and no man” (Psalm 22:6).