

# **Study of the Augsburg Confession**

## **Part 2: Sin and Human Will (Articles 2, 18, 19)**

### **Augsburg Confession Article II (2)**

Our churches teach that ever since Adam sinned (Romans 5:12), everyone is a sinner the moment they are alive, and everyone is born sinful (Psalm 51:5). This means that people do not respect or trust God and naturally want to sin. This desire to sin makes everyone die physically and spiritually unless they are born again spiritually through Baptism and the Holy Spirit. (John 3:5)

Our churches reject the teachers called Pelagians and all other groups who think that people are not sinful when they are born. Those people say that Christ's death for us was not very important. They think that people are able to use their own power to become good.

### **Augsburg Confession Article XVIII (18)**

We teach that people have some free will (ability to choose). They can use their minds to choose a life that looks good. But people can't make themselves good enough for God. They can't honor God or believe God with their whole heart. They can't throw out all evil desires from their heart. Only the grace, help and work of the Holy Spirit can do those things. The Holy Spirit does His work through God's word. Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 2:14, "Natural man doesn't receive the gifts from the Spirit of God."

This is not a new teaching. The early church teacher Augustine wrote this in the third book of *Hypognosticon*.

We admit that all people have free will, because all people have understanding and reason (thinking). But they are not able to do anything for God. People by themselves can't love God with their whole heart or honor Him. They can only choose to do things that look good or evil. For example, they can choose to work or not work, choose to eat or drink or visit a friend, get dressed or undress, build a house, get married, do business, or do other good things. People can't do those things without God, because all things are from Him. But people by themselves (without God) can choose to do evil, worship an idol, murder, etc.

### **Augsburg Confession Article XIX (19)**

We teach that Almighty God created and continues to take care of the world. Sin in wicked people comes from a will (desires) that is turned against God. That is what the devil and evil people want. When God stops His work in people, then people's desire evil; they don't want God. Christ said this in John 8:44, "When the devil lies, he speaks according to who he is."

### **Explanation**

These articles talk about sin, free will, and what causes sin.

When do people become sinners? Before they are born, when they are still inside their mother, they are already sinners. Some people think babies are born innocent, with no sin. You know how children inherit certain things from their parents. If the parents have

blue eyes, the children can inherit blue eyes. If the parents are tall, the children can inherit that height. Adam was a sinner. The Bible says (Genesis 5:3) that Adam had a son in his image. That means his son was a sinner the same as Adam. All of us inherit sin from our parents. So all people are sinners from the time of conception in our mothers (Psalm 51:5).

It is good if you understand these terms: original sin and actual sin. Actual sin means doing wrong things, saying wrong things. When most people think of sin, they think of actual sin. When you break a commandment, that is actual sin. Original sin is different. Original sin doesn't mean you did something wrong or broke a commandment. Original sin is the sinful heart people inherit from their parents.

“Free will” is the idea that people can choose their own way. Can we choose to believe in God? Can we decide to trust in Jesus, or to follow the 10 Commandments? Many churches think we have free will, that we can choose our way. Article 18 shows that we don't have free will. We can choose to do things that look good. But we can't make ourselves truly good. We can't make our hearts clean. Only God can do that.

The Bible describes our “free will” and abilities this way. By ourselves, we are dead. Can a dead person do good things? No. Can a dead person make decisions? No. A dead person can't do anything. Without Jesus, we are spiritually dead and can't come to God. The Holy Spirit must work in us with God's word to give us faith and bring us to Jesus.

Sinful people don't want to follow God. Article 19 says sinful people want to sin. God continues to do good and take care of us, but people continue to sin. Sin doesn't come from God. Sin comes from the devil and people's evil desires.

For more, see these pages online.

<http://atlanta.clclutheran.org/bibleclass/bookofconcord/article2.html>

<http://atlanta.clclutheran.org/bibleclass/bookofconcord/article18.html>

<http://atlanta.clclutheran.org/bibleclass/bookofconcord/article19.html>

### **Questions**

1. How are babies born sinful? It seems like babies can't break the commandments, so how can they be sinful?
2. Explain the difference between original sin and actual sin.
3. Since everyone is born a sinner, what do all people need?
4. Suppose a person says they have free will. They think they can choose to believe in Jesus or do good on their own. They don't need God's help. To prove it, they say they can decide to donate a lot of money to help hurricane victims; that is their choice. The same, they can choose to do good works for God and believe in Jesus. How do you answer?