

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Romans: Charter Of God's Salvation Grace
Part III: The Justification Of The Sinner By Faith Through Grace, Romans 3:21-5:21
D. Understanding The True Origin Of Man's Spiritual Depravity
(Romans 5:12)

I. Introduction

- A. A troubling theological debate has long occurred over how we become sinners according to Romans 5:12: (1) Pelagians and their heirs, the Arminians, hold the verse means man becomes a sinner or respectively has Adam's sin imputed to him as he chooses after birth to resist God's wooing to the contrary, and (2) Calvinists hold God imputed Adam's sinful act to all so that all people are guilty of his act of sin!
- B. Yet, there are serious problems with each of these: (1) The Pelagian and Arminian views do not explain how infants die before they consciously commit sins, and (2) the Calvinistic view strains against Ezekiel 18:1-32 where God extensively claims it is unjust to teach He holds a son guilty of his father's act of sin!
- C. We thus view this verse to grasp the **true** origin of man's depravity and God's upright condemnation of it:

II. Understanding The True Origin Of Man's Spiritual Depravity, Romans 5:12.

- A. The Pelagian view takes the phrase, "for that all have sinned" in Romans 5:12 to be an idiom that means "because" where death is said to pass on all men as all sin in their own persons at birth (John Murray, NIC Com. on the N. T.: Romans, 1968 reprint, 1980, vol. I, p. 183-184); however, (1) infants die before birth without committing acts of sin, so man is guilty of original sin at conception (Psalm 51:5); (2) Romans 5:13-14 teaches death reigned over those who had not sinned as Adam; (3) five times in Romans 5:12-21 Paul held one man's sin caused the many to die so that death came on all due to Adam's single act of sin, and (4) the book of Romans argues against the self-merit idea in Pelagian "soteriology" (salvation belief)!
- B. Heirs to this Pelagian view, the Arminians, modify Romans 5:12 to teach God imputes to man his inborn tendencies from Adam to sin only when he, after birth, consciously, voluntarily chooses it versus the power God has specially given him to the contrary, A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology, 1970, p. 601. Yet, this view errs for the same reasons listed in "II,A" above regarding its forerunner Pelagian view.
- C. The Calvinist takes the words, "for that" (*eph ho*) idiomatically with causal meaning to hold all men were held by God's imputation to have sinned (federally as our judicial representative, or seminally as our ancestor) in Adam's sin, Ibid., Murray p. 184. However, (1) Paul's use of *haymarton* ("sinned") here never elsewhere means a single sin by Adam, but acts of sins by others, W. Hendriksen, N. T. Com.: Exp. of Rom., v. I, p. 178-179. (2) Then, Ezekiel 18:1-32 widely denies a son is guilty of a father's sinful act!
- D. Thus, we hold "sinned" (*haymarton*) means personal acts of sins by individuals, but **not with Pelagian or Arminian theology**, and that all inherit Adam's sin nature and hence commit acts of sin, (Ibid., p. 178):
 - 1. The phrase "for that" (*eph ho*) can be taken idiomatically as causal, but in the inferential sense where *eph ho* means *epi touto hoti* ("for this reason that" or "since", Ibid.) to suggest that through Adam, sin entered the world, and death by it, so death spread to all as seen in the fact that all have since sinned.
 - 2. In support, (a) this view leaves *haymarton* meaning what Paul's uses of it elsewhere mean -- acts of sins by men apart from Adam; (b) it also readily explains the abrupt break at verses 13-14, that Paul addressed how men had committed acts of sin between Adam and the Law to counter his critics' charge that he claimed that until the law there were no sins, Ibid., p. 179. (c) Lexical authorities vary widely on the meaning of *eph ho* here, allowing for our view: Moulton & Geden's vernacular lexicon sees it as "on condition that," and cites a reading that renders it "to the effect that," The Voc. of the Grk. N. T., p. 232-233, and C. F. D. Moule treats it as "inasmuch as" though letting its appearance in Philippians 4:10 mean "with regard to which", An Idiom-Book of N. T. Greek, 2nd ed., 1959, reprint, 1975, p. 132. (d) This view harmonizes with Ezekiel 18:1-32 where no one is accountable for another's sinful act(s).

Lesson: *Opposite Pelagianism, Arminianism and Calvinism, Adam alone committed his first sin, but, in doing so, he corrupted his nature that we in turn inherit to become sinners at conception, and thus sin.*

Application: *Thus, God rightly (a) holds all men to be sinners at conception via their inherited sinful natures, and He also (b) holds all accountable for their acts of sin that arise from their sin natures!*