

## GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR MAN FROM START TO FINISH

### Part III: God's Righteousness Imputed To Man, Romans 3:21-5:21

#### D. Harmonizing How Man Became Depraved With Ezekiel 18

(Romans 5:12)

#### **I. Introduction**

- A. A big debate has existed in Christendom over the meaning of Romans 5:12 that claims, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."
- B. Two main views on this verse have been (1) Adam's Federal Headship, that when a human is conceived, God creates that soul with a depraved nature, A. H. Strong, Sys. Theol., 1970, p. 612. (2) Augustine taught Adam's Seminal Headship, that in Adam's one sin, everyone's will in him sinned, so each is born in sin, Ibid., p. 619.
- C. However, both views strain against God's teaching in Ezekiel 18:1-32 that a **son** is **not** responsible for his **father's act of sin**, what leads to a challenge of the unity and hence infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture!
- D. We thus examine Romans 5:12 in the Greek text to understand how it harmonizes with Ezekiel 18:1-32:

#### **II. Harmonizing How Man Became Depraved With Ezekiel 18, Romans 5:12.**

- A. The Greek phrase that translates the important English phrase, "for that all have sinned" (KJV) is *eph* (for) *ho* (that) *pantes* (all) *haymarton* (have sinned), U. B. S. Greek New Testament, 1966, p. 542.
- B. This phrase can be interpreted **five** ways, so we view each one for evaluation in light of the rest of Scripture:
  1. First, Jerome's Vulgate takes *eph ho* to mean "in him," that is, in the "one man" Adam. However, the antecedent "one man" at the start of the verse is far removed from this phrase, making such a translation unlikely (Barnes' Notes on the N. T., 1962, reprint (Grand Rapids, Kregel Publications, 1975), p. 584).
  2. Second, one could make **death** the antecedent of *ho* ("that"), but this would reverse the Biblical view that death is the product of sin, not its cause, and Barnes claims it would not be a logical view anyway, Ibid.
  3. Third, the heretical Pelagian view takes the prepositional phrase *eph ho* idiomatically to mean "because" to claim that death passed on all men because "all men have sinned in their own persons." (Charles Hodge, Com. on Romans, rev. ed., 1886, reprint (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1974), p. 148-155) However, this view has serious theological problems: (a) infants die without having committed acts of sin, what causes us to dismiss the Pelagian view outright; (b) verses 13-14 in the context teach the opposite, that death reigned over those who had not sinned like Adam; (c) five times in the context, Paul claims one man's sin caused the many to die (verses 15-19) so that death came by Adam's one act of sin and (d) Paul's whole Epistle to Romans argues against the self-merit idea in the Pelagian view of salvation of a self-help ability in man to save himself. (John Murray, NIC Com. on the N. T.: Romans, 1968, reprint (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1980), vol. I, p. 183-184).
  4. Fourth, one can treat *eph ho* as an idiom with causal meaning so that all men sinned in Adam's sin (Ibid., p. 184), the interpretation that those who hold to the Federal Headship view or to the Seminal Headship view would adopt. However, that translation contrasts with Paul's use of *haymarton* ("sinned") elsewhere where it never means a single trespass in Adam, but personal acts of sin by individuals (cf. Rom. 3:23 et al.), cf. Wm. Hendriksen, N. T. Com.: Expos. of Rom., Vol. I, Chapters 1-8, p. 178-179.
  5. Fifth, one can take *haymarton* ("sinned") to be personal acts of sin, but **without Pelagian theology**: one can view the sin as acts rising out of inherited depravity through Adam by viewing *eph ho* idiomatically as causal, but in the inferential sense where *eph ho* equals *epi touto hoti* ("for this reason that" or "since"), Ibid., p. 178, ftn. 152. Paul would thus claim that as by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death spread unto all men as is **evidenced** by the fact that all men have sinned since Adam. This view is preferred, for it treats *haymarton* like all of Paul's other uses of it and explains the abrupt break in thought at verses 13-14: Paul would feel impelled to explain how men had committed sins between Adam and the Law when, as his critics might charge, he held that until the law there were no sins, Ibid., p. 179.

***Lesson:*** *Romans 5:12 teaches that all men became depraved by inheriting a sin nature through Adam with the result that all have since then committed acts of sin, not that Adam acted as their federal or seminal head in his act of sin. All men are thus accountable to God for their own sinful acts in harmony with Ezekiel 18:1-32.*

***Application:*** (1) *May we hold that all men are guilty of original sin via inheriting Adam's sin nature and so also uphold the teaching of Ezekiel 18:1-32 that God since then holds each person accountable for his own acts of sin.* (2) *May we thus uphold the infallibility and inerrancy of ALL of Scripture in light of its UNITY.*