

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR MAN FROM START TO FINISH

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

E. SIMPLIFYING How Man's Becoming Depraved Harmonizes With Ezekiel 18 (Romans 5:12)

I. Introduction

- A. A big debate exists 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. One side holds the verse teaches (1) Adam's Federal Headship, that when one is conceived, God creates his soul with a depraved nature (A. H. Strong, Sys. Th., 1970, p. 612) while (2) Augustine taught Adam's Seminal Headship, that when Adam sinned, everyone's will sinned in Adam's will, 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 the divine inspiration of Scripture!
- D. We thus view Romans 5:12 in the Greek text and *simplify* it to understand how it harmonizes with Ezekiel 18:

II. SIMPLIFYING How Man's Becoming Depraved Harmonizes 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. There are 26 ways to interpret *eph* and 10 ways to interpret *ho*, **some** literal and **some** figurative, but with *eph* and *ho* used as **one phrase** (*eph ho*) in this **context**, this **phrase** can be interpreted **only five ways!** *Yet, amid* these **five ways** are *differing meanings* for *eph* and/or for *ho!* We thus view the **five ways** as **SIMPLIFIED**:
 1. One can interpret *eph ho* to mean "in him," that is, in the "one man" mentioned at the start of Romans 5:12. Yet, that "one man" antecedent for *ho* is very far from the *eph ho* phrase itself, so such a translation is unlikely (Barnes' Notes on the N. T., 1962, reprint (Grand Rapids, Kregel Pub., 1975), p. 584).
 2. Second, one can make *ho* ("that") refer to **death**, but doing so would leave sin resulting from death instead of death resulting from sin like Scripture teaches everywhere else, *Ibid.* This interpretation would thus err.
 3. Third, the (heretical) Pelagian theological view (that holds all men are born without sin but become sinners by post-birth acts of sin and are saved by good works) interprets the phrase *eph ho* to be an idiom to mean "because" to claim that death passed on all **because** "all men have sinned in their own persons." (Charles Hodge, Com. on Rom., rev. ed., 1886, reprint (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1974), p. 148-155) Yet, this view errs: (a) some infants die without committing acts of sin. (b) Romans 5:13-14 teaches 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. (d) The whole Epistle to Romans argues against the self-merit idea in Pelagian theology. (John Murray, NIC Com. on the N. T.: Romans, 1968, reprint (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1980), v. I, p. 183-184).
 4. Fourth, one can treat *eph ho* ("for that") as an idiom with causal meaning (as in "3" above), but to claim that all sinned in Adam's sin (*Ibid.*, p. 184), the interpretation held by those who hold either to the Federal Headship or to the Seminal Headship views. Yet, Paul uses the Romans 5:12 verb *haymarton* ("sinned") elsewhere **never** of a **single** trespass **in** Adam, but of **personal acts** of sin by **individuals after they were born** (cf. Rom. 3:23 et al.), cf. Wm. Hendriksen, N. T. Com.: Exp. of Rom., V. I, Chapters 1-8, p. 178-179.
 5. Fifth, one can view *haymarton* ("sinned") as personal acts of sin, but **without Pelagian theology**, **without** holding one is born sinless and is then saved by works (as follows): one can view *haymarton* as acts of sin rising out of a sin nature inherited from Adam by interpreting *eph ho* to be an idiom with causal force (as in "3" and "4" above), but with the **inferential** sense where "for that" (*eph ho*) implies **further** "for *this reason* that, *since*," (*epi touto hoti*), *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 **evidenced** by the fact that all have since committed acts of sin. This view is preferred: it treats *haymarton* as personal acts of sin like Paul's other uses of it and explains his abrupt break in thought at Romans 5:13-14 as he felt driven to teach men sinned between Adam and the Law though the Law that defined sin as sin was not yet given, *Ibid.*, p. 179.

Lesson: *Romans 5:12 claims all men are depraved by inheriting Adam's sin nature and Ezekiel 18 claims all are accountable for their own acts of sin. These passages harmonize in support of the divine inspiration of Scripture.*

Application: *(1) May we hold to the doctrine of original sin by inheriting Adam's sin nature (Rom. 5:12) and that God holds each accountable for sinful acts (Ez. 18:1-32). (2) May we uphold the divine inspiration of Scripture.*