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THE DILEMMA OF SIN

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ADAM'S SIN
AND THE
EFFECT ON THE HUMAN RACE

The effect of Adam's sin on the human race was that of passing on to his descendants sin. His selfish act placed all human kind in sin. Romans 5.12 states that,

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.

Along with the sin came death and changes in the environment in which they had been created. Man's new nature became depraved and prone to sin and death passed on to all men.

Adam's sin changed the way men sin. Since Adam chose to sin he then passed on to his descendants the nature to choose sin. Chafer puts it like this, "They do not become sinful by sinning, but they sin because by nature they are sinful."¹

There were penalties assessed for Adam's disobedience and they were physical death, spiritual death, and the second death for those that warrant it. The physical death was eminent since God said, you will "surely" die (Gen 2.17). The spiritual death is that of the lost or separated from God due to Adam's sin. The third death which was passed on is the second death and for those who elect to continue in their sin will find that they are eternally separated from the love of God.

According to the Biblical doctrine of sin man sins in several ways. Man sins because he disobey the laws of God, because sin is part of the nature of man, because Adam's sin imputed to all men death, and accordingly then all men are "under sin" Gal 3.22.

Man sins first because he does not measure up to God's standard and falls short of the Glory of God. In the second, man's nature has been changed and he has become "children of wrath". Third, in Romans 5 it states that because of Adam's sin, now man's sin must be paid for by imputing on Jesus the sins of mankind. And fourth, being under sin can only be changed by Jesus Christ placing a repentant soul under His grace.

SECULAR THEORIES CONCERNING SIN IN THE RACE

There are a number of secular theories concerning sin in the race. Some of these theories of imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity are "The Pelagian Theory", "Arminian Theory", "Federal Theory", "Mediate Theory", "Augustinian Theory" (Corporate

¹Lewis Sperry Chafer, Major Bible Themes Revised by John F. Walvoord. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), 176.

Personality Theory), and "New School Theory". At issue is Romans 5.19 "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." Because Adam and all his descendants are of the same creation (all men) then the sin of Adam is the sin of the race.

The Pelagian Theory was devised by a British monk named Pelagius and he spread his theory in 409 AD. His theories were reviewed by the Council of Carthage in AD 418 and determined to be condemned. Pelagius believed that everyone is created innocent by God as Adam was in the garden. That man is free from a depraved state and able to make their own transgressions of God's laws. According to Pelagius, Adam did not pass anything but a bad example on to his descendants. Pelagius further said that physical death was not a consequence of Adam's actions but rather an act of nature. He used the same scriptures others use to interpret entirely different positions one from another. He used Romans 5.12 and interpreted it to say that all men will incur death by sinning and will do so as Adam was their example. Really going a field, Pelagius states that man can be saved by law and that some individuals have been so saved because they have obeyed God perfectly. These individuals according to Pelagius can be saved by grace but that is not entirely necessary since they have remained perfect and therefore have been saved by their works of perfection.

The Arminian Theory expounded by Professor Arminius places man in a position of being destitute of original righteousness and that Adam has passed upon his descendants misery and death. Arminian theory states that God has given all people from their immediate creation a consciousness of the Holy Spirit and can with this help counteract the inherited depravity and can obey God should they choose to do so. Death passes on to all men not because of Adam's sin but because God decreed that all men should suffer the consequences of Adam's sin. This theory has several difficulties. To name just two, they are, the improper use of the Holy Spirit and contradiction of Scripture.

The Federal Theory briefly stated is a theory of Covenants as espoused by Cocceius and Turretin. According to these two scholars God made a covenant with Adam. The terms of the covenant was that Adam would be his race's representative and any actions which Adam would take would place on his descendants the same penalties. The descendants of Adam would receive eternal life if Adam was obedient to God. The descendants would become corrupt and would experience death if Adam sinned. Since Adam did sin, God placed Adam's transgression upon all mankind as defendants of a sinner.

The Mediate Theory according to Professor Placeus is that all men are born physically as well as mentally depraved. That depravity is a native depravity and is itself sin. It is an inborn depravity by virtue of propagation from Adam and is passed to all of his descendants.

The Augustinian Theory according to Augustine states that God imputed Adam's sin immediately to his descendant because Adam was the

head of the whole race at the time that he transgressed God's law. Adam's action constituted the will of the race to go against God and therefore corrupted itself by Adam's sin.

The New School Theory finds it's roots in old Puritan anthropology and according to this theory all men are born with a predisposition to sin. The theory further states that with this predisposition to sin man actually sins as soon as they are morally capable. This action is labeled as "vitiosity of nature" because it leads to sin. God does not impute to Adam's descendants Adam's sin but imputes to each man his own sins and transgression.

These theories have been discussed briefly, since it is known that these theories have multiple facets and space in this paper does not allow the expounding of their errors.

THEORIES OF IMPUTATION OF SIN

According to Chafer, three theories of imputation are set forth in the Scripture. They are,

The sin of Adam is imputed to his posterity. . . the sin of man is imputed to Christ. . . and the righteousness of God is imputed to those who believe."²

According to Romans 5.12-14 Adam's sin is imputed to all men. Since all men have the Adamic nature and are "in Adam" then they are said to have sinned in Adam.

Adam being the federal head of the race placed sin upon all members of the race and death passed to all, for all have sinned. The other occurrence of a sinful nature in Adam's descendants comes by inheritance of a sinful nature through the generations of Adam. Men by the very nature of birth in the Adamic line are sinful. The penalties for sin are physical death, spiritual death, and the second death. Man must do something with the sin nature of his inheritance. Man can accept God's decree to believe in Jesus Christ as Savior upon whom God has imputed man's sins.

Since God imputed Adam's sin to man, God also provided a way to escape the three types of death. This way was the imputation of man's sin on Jesus. The Bible says in Isaiah 53.5,6

He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. . . and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

God further places His righteousness on us if we will believe that He imputed our sins to His Son Jesus. Thus God imputes righteousness in Christ upon those who will believe.

²Chafer, Major, 175.

WHAT IS DEPRAVITY AND THE SIN NATURE?

Depravity and the sin nature is man's lack of righteousness and holy affection for God, combined with his corrupt moral nature and bent to evil. Thiessen says that "The Scriptures speak of human nature as wholly depraved."³ This wholly depraved nature is not in the sense of a complete opposition to God. It does not mean that man is totally and completely prone to commit all the sins. Many Bible passages indicate that man is not totally depraved but that some keep the law, while others go from bad to worse in their evil ways. Other scriptures state that man given a choice between himself and God will choose himself. Still other scripture indicate that man at times has an enmity toward God. Romans 7.18 tells us that man is similar in nature as the apostle Paul when he said,

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me: but how to perform that which is good I find not.

Depravity has produced an inability in man to give up self and to find God's way acceptable to him. Being in sin has caused the free will of man to choose between two evils. He may need to choose the lesser of two evils or the greater of the two evils. This freedom also allows man to respond to the grace of God and will aid him in repentance and belief in the Son of God to be saved.

THE PROBLEM OF SIN IN THE INDIVIDUAL

Mankind by his very nature is capable of determining his ability to sin or not to sin. Mankind as a whole has determined that "No one is perfect" by their own admission. The Bible says "For all have sinned" Romans 3.23. This existence of sin in each of us has been called the "Universality of Sin". This sin has been determined to exist in everyone and according to Romans 3.10 "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NO, NOT ONE:"

This nature of sin is not just participating in the sin of the world but must be understood to be present in each of us as a propensity to sin. This is to say that man is not limited to the acts of sin but by his very "nature" sinful. Many Scriptures address this nature. Some are Ecclesiastes 7.20 "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not," 1 John 1.8 "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," and Romans 3.12 THEY ARE ALL GONE OUT OF THE WAY. . . THERE IS NONE THAT DOETH GOOD, NO NOT ONE." The problem of the existence of sin in the individual may best be described by the classic passage found in Romans 5.12-14

³Henry C. Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 191.

As by one man sin entered into the world. . . death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.

Sin exist in the individual by the declaration of both man and God.

THE PROBLEM OF GUILT

Guilt is clearly a part of sin. The sin nature of man would not be complete without the guilt nature of man to convince him of his inabilities to please God. Accordingly, one finds in 1 John 3.20 "For if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things." This condemnation is our guilt nature and we by our very being experience our guilt as through the heart.

Guilt according to the Scriptures indicate that guilt is in degrees and is relative to sins committed. The Old Testament Mosaic law described different sacrifices for different violation of the Mosaic law. New Testament indications of degrees of sin are represented in such Scriptures as John 19.11 "he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin," and Romans 2.6 "Who will render to every man according to his deeds."

According to Thiessen there are four degrees of guilt.⁴ Man is by his nature a sinner and when they reach the age of accountability man's nature causes him to personally transgress God's law. That guilt is determined by the degree of knowledge concerning God and actions taken against God's law. Degree of guilt is determined by the sin committed. These sins may be those of willful indulgence as compared to that which Peter experienced when he denied Christ even though he did not wish to do so. The fourth degree of guilt is the condition of the heart. The Bible says that man can harden their hearts to the will of God. This hardening of the heart can cause the soul to ignore the wooing of the Holy Spirit and to not accept God's redemptive grace and pardon for sin in Christ Jesus.

CONCLUSION

No matter what theory is expounded or by what expert, sin is real, and guilt is just as real as sin. God in His wisdom placed within sinful man guilt. Guilt requires a reconciliation. The only reconciliation which will wash away sin and guilt is the blood of Jesus Christ. Man may accept Christ's death on the cross for forgiveness of sin and removal of guilt for past sins. Whether, he elects to remain full of sin and guilt is up to him. The great hymn asks and answers this question concerning sin. What can wash away my sin?/nothing but the blood of Jesus.

⁴Thiessen, Lectures, 193.

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