

KJV Romans 5:18 Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life.

Does Paul say we have to pay Adam's penalty? That is not what it says. He is only saying that Adam's sin resulted in our sin, and resulted in our condemnation. But there is a condition for the condemnation. Adam's sin must first result in our being sinful. Only after that condition is met are we condemned. What if there is no condition that we sin to be condemned? Let's look at the text again:

KJV Romans 5:18 Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification⁵¹ of life.

Do you see that if there is no condition in the imputation of guilt that their can be no condition in the imputation of righteousness! And if there is no condition either way, then we would have to be universalists, saying that all men will be saved.

However, the truth is that there is a condition both ways. First, we who inherit Adam's sin nature must be sinful before we are guilty and condemned, and when we are guilty and condemned it is for our own sin. That's condition number one. Condition number two: in order to obtain the righteousness of life we must put our trust in God and learn obedience from Him.

We must not be confusing the disease of sin being inherited or visited on descendants with the judgment assigned to Adam. Each man is assigned his own judgment for his own sin. That is justice. Nor should we confuse Christ's payment of that penalty with a righteous status before God. We obtain a righteous status only when we become righteous. Then after we become righteous, it is legally counted as righteousness.

Let us consider what Paul said in Romans 5:12:

KJV Romans 5:12 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:

This text is a bit confusing, but the NKJV straightens the last phrase out, "because all sinned". Paul is given the condition of the death sentence,

⁵¹ The translation would be better "righteousness" here.

"because all sinned" and not because Adam's sin is put into our account such that Christ has to die to pay the penalty of Adam's sin for us to be forgiven. Yet Augustine and Calvin fiddled with the Greek text "ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον" and said it meant "in whom all sinned". They said that all men sinned when Adam sinned taking "ἐφ' ᾧ" to mean "in" Adam. The only trouble is that "ἐφ' ᾧ" (*heph-ho*) really does not mean "in whom" but "upon which" and has the sense of "because that".

The Extent of Man's Sinfulness

Mankind is very sinful. But are all men equally depraved? And are all men totally depraved? These questions will reflect on justly judging the situation as it is. Consider the following passage:

Rom 3:9 What then? Are we better [than they?] Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.

Rom 3:10 As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one;

Rom 3:11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.

Rom 3:12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."

Rom 3:13 "Their throat [is] an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps [is] under their lips";

Rom 3:14 "Whose mouth [is] full of cursing and bitterness."

Rom 3:15 "Their feet [are] swift to shed blood;

Rom 3:16 Destruction and misery [are] in their ways;

Rom 3:17 And the way of peace they have not known."

Rom 3:18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Paul is actually quoting some scriptures here put together from the book of Psalms. David is speaking of the wicked in the original context. From the original context, we would have to conclude that the answer to both questions is a loud "No!" How do we explain Paul's use of the passages then? Is Paul introducing a new doctrine of total depravity of all individuals? Is he saying that everyone is equally wicked in the extreme degree? It might seem so, if we hold to the doctrine that Adam's personal transgression is placed in our account, and then taught that we are to be judged for that one sin. But as already shown, that is not the case at all. If we do not have to accept the one doctrine of injustice, then we do not have to swallow the injustice of total depravity, when it is plain to all that not even unbelievers are totally depraved! They are lost for their own sin, and under condemnation. But totally depraved? No. They are still created in the image of God, and there is still that which can be loved.

What Paul is comparing then is two groups of people. Using "we" he is speaking of Israel as a nation, and using the word "Greeks", he speaketh of the nations. He is saying that Israel has been equally as wicked as the nations, and still was at that time. Paul does not have to prove that the nations are wicked, so he quotes from David's complaints about his own fellow countrymen to establish that Israel has been just as wicked.

Therefore, this passage is not an argument for the depravity of all individuals, at the low level of the wicked Israelites David describes in the Psalm quotations, nor is it an argument for the equal depravity of all men. It is only Paul's argument against Jews taking national pride in the righteousness of the nation, and thereby thinking that by being born Jews they are right with God.

What Paul concludes about individuals is:

KJV Romans 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Notice that Paul is saying everyone falls "short" of the glory of God. In other words, each man is sufficiently short of God's righteous standard. All are sinners. Yet Paul is not denying that some were less short than others. For it is written:

KJV Genesis 6:9 These *are* the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man *and perfect* in his generations, *and* Noah walked with God

KJV Job 1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name *was* Job; and that man *was perfect*⁵² and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.

KJV **Daniel** 10:11 And he said unto me, O **Daniel**, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.

KJV Ezekiel 14:20 Though **Noah, Daniel, and Job, were** in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall *but* deliver their own souls by their righteousness.

Were these men totally depraved?

Cleansing from Sin

⁵² The Hebrew means "blameless" in these passages.

Just as remission of guilt (forgiveness, pardon) is confused with being recognized as righteous before God, so also the cleansing, or wiping away of the penalty of sin is confused with the cleansing away of the sinful behavior and thinking.

Wiping away guilt means wiping the penalty off God's books. Wiping away a sinful life requires sanctification of the worshipper. Let us consider this text:

NKJ 1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Do you notice the condition of cleansing is "if we walk in the light"? John is focusing on sanctification here. Also, notice that "cleanses us" is in the present tense. It is an ongoing process. We could legitimately translate it "is cleansing us" as the Greek present covers the sense of the English present progressive also.⁵³

In order to understand how the cleansing happens, we must remember what "blood" represents in the Scripture. Blood represents "life".⁵⁴ Jesus gave his life in dying to pay the penalty for our sin, but he rose again, and is giving us his raised life to cleanse us from the sin nature. Jesus' divine life in his blood was shed for the payment of the penalty. Jesus' divine life was restored so that he might give from that life to bring us back to life from the deadness of our sin nature. Christ's faithfulness is made our faithfulness through learning to be his disciple and to obey his commandments. We are being sanctified by his life, cleansed by his blood (life).

John also said:

KJV 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Notice the condition of believing the good news: if we confess our sins. And John means if we confess our sins, and go on confessing our sins. But there are many who believe in some philosophy that keeps them from

⁵³ "Progressive Present", pg. 518, Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics*, 1996.

⁵⁴ Lev. 17:11.

confessing sin from the heart, or who pay lip service to a doctrine by which they think they are free of sin⁵⁵:

KJV 1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

John records God's promise for those who confess sin. He will cleanse them from all unrighteousness. John puts things in order: First comes confession, then forgiveness, and then cleansing from all unrighteousness. We should not think that the last part is completed until Christ returns.

Yet there are Christians who hold perfectionistic doctrines. Some believe in a dichotomy between their mind and their spirit or their flesh and their spirit. When Paul spoke of the flesh, he meant that part of himself that was infused with the sin nature. However, these Christians will say that their real spirit, their real self is free from sin because they misunderstand the need for on going sanctification. They divorce themselves from any responsibility or guilt from ongoing sin because of a belief that their spirit is fully cleansed. We call this dichotomy (between the material flesh and the pure spirit) Gnosticism.

But when do the Scriptures say that we will be completely and finally cleansed from sin?

RSV Leviticus 16:30 for on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before the LORD.

Atonement means a wiping away of sin. The sacrifice of Christ has been accomplished, but the results of His resurrection are still on going. The life (blood) of Christ still cleanses us from sin. I mean his life is still changing us. We are not yet totally cleansed from sin.

God gives Israel a promise about the day of Atonement:

RSV Leviticus 16:30 for on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before the LORD.

⁵⁵ We are indeed free from Sin, but not without sin. How do I say this? The Hebrew word for sin "חַטָּאת" is often used to mean "*guilt of sin, punishment for sin*" (BDB). We are free of the guilt and punishment in Christ. This distinctly Hebrew meaning of sin is not understood by many Christians, and so they are confused into thinking they sinless in some sense.