

Imputation of Adam's Sin - Pelagianism Refuted

by John Murray

The sermon refutes Pelagianism by emphasizing the imputation of Adam's sin and its implications for humanity's condemnation and justification through Christ.

Duration: 47:24

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 5:12, Romans 5:15-19

Topics: "Pelagianism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the question of whether it is possible to summarize the preaching of the word of God. He presents reasons why it is important to have this discussion. The speaker emphasizes that the four passages being discussed are connected and deal with the same phase of God's government. He highlights the parallelism between the entrance of sin and death, and the entrance of righteousness and justification of life. The speaker also addresses criticisms of this perspective, including the idea that it contradicts other affirmations in the passage.

Transcript

O Lord, do Thou grant that our interest in these subjects with which we are dealing may not be merely intellectual, but grant that we may realize that we are dealing with Thy judgment upon the whole world and Thy judgment upon us. And do Thou grant that we may realize the gravity of that condemnation that has passed upon all, and of that death with which all are inflicted, because we all sinned in Adam. O Lord, forbid that we should take lightly Thy judgment, and that thus we may be prepared for that real, heart-abiding appreciation of the justification that is in Christ Jesus through His righteousness, as the righteousness of the spotless Lamb of God.

For His name's sake, amen. Out of the hour I have come to this point that you have that principle repeatedly asserted by the trespass of the one. The many died, verse fifteen.

The judgment was from one to condemnation, verse sixteen. By the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one. By the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one, verse seventeen.

Through one trespass, judgment came upon all men unto condemnation. Then, verse eighteen, and then, through the disobedience of the one man, the many were constituted sin. Now do pay attention to these

repeated affirmations, stated in different ways, but all leading to this all-important proposition that death and condemnation came to reign over all men, over the whole human race, by the one sin, one man, Adam.

You might think that the apostle Paul had quite needlessly repeated himself. He was guilty of redundancy, but it is just because the apostle was so jealous to establish that Jesus. Of the significance of the whole human race, of the one sin, of the one man, Adam, that he reiterated that principle in different forms so that it would be absolutely watertight and that the conclusion would be absolutely inescapable.

And it is quite impossible, quite impossible to construe this reiterated emphasis upon the one sin of the one man, Adam, as equivalent to the actual personal sins of all men. Impossible to construe as the actual personal sins of all men. Because, may I say again what I mentioned yesterday, that the whole emphasis here is upon singularity.

But when you are thinking of the personal transgressions of all men, you have in mind plurality, uncountable plurality. Now Paul, or Christ, or at least Paul, that his Pelagian construction is not compatible with the whole structure, is not compatible with the governing principle of this whole earthly structure. The central strand is the parallelism between the entrance of sin, condemnation and death, and the entrance of righteousness parallel between the way in which sin, condemnation and death came to reign and the way that righteousness, justification and life come to be operated.

And in view of that parallelism, there must be an identity of modus operandi, convenience, latent grace, convenience, mode of operation. There must be an identity of modus operandi. In other words, the analogy to the parallelism.

Now what is the parallel in reference to righteousness, justification? What is that side of the parallel? What is the parallel of that? It is this that we are adjusting to the righteousness of the one man Jesus Christ. Nothing could be more obvious. Justified by the righteousness of the one man Jesus.

And Paul is so insistent upon establishing the parallelism here, that he calls the righteousness of Jesus Christ the one righteous act. Firstly, the one righteous act, the one righteousness. Then in verse 19 he calls it the obedience of the one.

So undoubtedly, it is the one righteousness of the one man Jesus Christ. And what Paul is controverting in this part of the first five chapters, what he is controverting now, that is what is true on the other side of the parallelism. What is it that provides the parallel in the case of Adam and Gustav? What is it that provides it? Is it the actual sins of all men at the ground of condemnation? If it were the actual sins of all men, then that would be parallel to the very doctrine that the Apostle Paul is refuting.

Parallel to the very doctrine he is refuting. Namely, that men are justified by their own works. And so the only thesis that can provide the parallel to justification and life is the one sin of the one man Adam.

As the ground of the condemnation of death passed upon all men. The only power providing analogy is the one sin of the one man Adam. That is the ground of condemnation.

So you see, you have actual eschatological and theological consideration. Meditating against the Palladian exegete, and therefore meditating against the exegete of the most current. Well, so much for that, the representation of the Palladian.

Now we come to the next interpretation of this passage. The last clause in verse 12, I hope I've received it right, the Roman Catholics. Now there, it is to be admitted that there was not unanimity in the history of the Roman Catholic Church on this question.

There were two very notable Roman Catholics, who maintained the position that I think is the correct position. They were Catherinus and Pigijs, C-A-T-H-E-R-I-N-U-S-T-I-G-H-I-U-S, Catherinus and Pigijs. But nevertheless, the contentions of Catherinus and Pigijs did not win the day in the Roman Catholic Church.

And although there is a good deal of obscurity in the Roman Catholic representations on this question, to which I'm not going to enter now, nevertheless, the classic Roman Catholic position, the preponderant Roman Catholic position, is that the *pantes imaton*, in Roman 5.12b, the *pantes imaton* refers to habitual or original sin, which is transmitted to Adam's posterity by natural generation. Habitual or original sin, transmitted to Adam's posterity by natural generation. And that, according to the Roman Catholic construction, consists mainly in the privation of sanctity, the privation of sanctity.

Now the Roman Catholic Church recognizes the relationship which that habitual sin sustains to the first sin of Adam. The Roman Catholic Church is quite clear on that point, that this privation of sanctity arises from the sin of Adam, Adam's prevarication, as it is called, in beating the forbidden fruit. But nevertheless, the sin that is passed on to posterity is the habitual sin, resulting from Adam's prevarication.

Now this view will not hold up either. There are existential and theological objections to this Roman Catholic view also. The first I'll mention is simply a presumptive argument, which I don't regard as demonstrably conclusive, but presumably presumptive, and I might call it a grammatical argument.

The presumptive argument against it is that it is very difficult, very difficult to reconcile this interpretation with the use of the historical theorists' aim, because this view refers to a certain condition, a certain condition which is perpetually being passed on from Adam to the whole human race by ordinary generation. And although it is not absolutely impossible, not absolutely impossible to think about the airish tense in that connection, nevertheless it would be quite abnormal. And what you would expect here is the perfect tense, perfect tense, rather than the airish tense.

If that is exactly what Paul had demanded, that all have come to be sinful, then the perfect tense would be perfectly appropriate. He expressed that idea, that all have come to be sinful, because it would denote a present condition resultant upon a past action. The perfect tense would not be, to say the least, the most appropriate.

However, there might be a way which I don't want to discuss now, there might be a way which is not of this woman's definition, is that it is quite contrary to the moralism which is instituted in this passage, quite contrary to the moralism. The central strand again of this passage is the analogy between Adam and Christ. What is Paul's doctrine with reference to justification? It is not that we are justified by having righteousness infused in us.

We are not justified by being made subjectively holy through our relationship to Christ. We are justified by His once for all complete obedience, by His once for all accomplished righteousness. Now, of course, the Roman Catholic Church is not inconsistent at this point, because the Roman Catholic Church does believe that justification consists in regeneration and renovation.

And so on the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification, the parallel would hold, the parallel between Adam and Christ would hold. But the point now is that the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification is not Paul's doctrine. There isn't one syllable, there isn't one syllable in this passage suggesting the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification.

Everything points to our justification by the one righteousness of the one man Jesus Christ. Justification by the one righteousness of all obedience of the one man Jesus Christ. And therefore, again, as in connection with the only parallel, the only parallel that we have become condemned, that we are condemned by the errors of death by the one sin of the one man Adam.

Now, the third argument in refutation, the third argument in refutation, is again the sustained emphasis of the passage in verses fifteen through ninety, sustained emphasis of the passage, that condemnation has passed upon all, and that death comes to reign over all by the one sin of the one man Adam. Verse fifteen through sixty. By the trespass of the one commandment, the judgment was found won and to come to end.

By the disobedience of the one commandment, remember the five distinct instances in which that very same principle is asserted. By the disobedience of the one commandment, remember the five distinct instances in which that very same principle is asserted. In a very indifferent form, in order to exclude all, that it was by the one sin of the one man Adam that condemnation has passed upon all men, and that death came to exercise its sway upon it.

Now, habitual sin, original sin transmission, can never be caught. Surely that is not so. Adam, like all the weakness involved in health, he became sinful, he became depraved, but that depravity transmitted to posterity can never be caught.

And so you see, the Roman Catholic interpretation, which is nowadays, we come to Calvin's interpretation, and Calvin's own, exegetically speaking, Calvin's interpretation is identical to Roman Catholic, exegetically. His view of original sin is radically different. Rome construed original sin, habitual sin, as consisting very largely in the privation of sanctity.

And Calvin regarded original sin as radical depravity. Radical depravity, as consisting not simply in the loss of original righteousness, but the corruption of man's whole nature. I repeat, consisting not simply in the loss of original righteousness, but the corruption of his whole nature.

You must remember that a great deal of the polemic of the reformers on this question was directed against the Roman Catholic view of original sin, habitual sin. The polemic of the reformation, especially of Calvin and the reformers, is to a very large extent focused on the reputation of the Roman Catholic doctrine. But nevertheless, exegetically speaking, Calvin's own interpretation of Roman 512b, that whole pamphlet came out of, is in the same category as the Romanist interpretation.

Because he takes it, as we say, to original sin, to hereditary depravity. What he calls hereditary depravity. That in Adam all became sinful.

And you'll find that in his commentary, of course, and you'll find it also in music. You'll find it quite clearly stated in his commentary on Romans. But Paul distinctly affirms that sin is propagated to all who suffer its punishment.

And this he afterwards more expressly declares when a little later he assigns the reason why all of Adam's posterity are subject to the dominion of death. Even this, he says, being that we all have sinned, but to sin is in this case to be corrupt and vitiated. He just quoted Romans 5:12b, in that all sin, inasmuch as all sin, but to sin is in this case to be corrupt and vitiated.

For that natural depravity which we bring from our mother's womb, though it does not immediately bring forth its fruit, is nevertheless sin in the sight of God and deserves his vengeance. And this is the sin which they call original. For so Adam at his first creation received both for himself and for posterity the gifts of divine favour, so by falling away from the Lord was he in himself corrupted, vitiated, depraved, and ruined our nature.

Having been directed of God's likeness, he could not have begotten seed, but like himself. Therefore we all have sinned because we have all been imbued with natural corruption, and so are become wicked and perverse. Now there's a total difference between the Catholic conception of this adversity that we all derive from Adam and the Roman Catholic conception of this human sin, but you see, it is in the same category of subjectivity.

Now, this had been an Augustinian tradition, an Augustinian tradition. The Roman Catholic Church followed that Augustinian tradition, but of course watered down the Augustinian conception of original sin. Calvin did not water down the Augustinian conception of original sin, but he did not get above or beyond the Augustinian tradition in the interpretation of this particular passage.

And so the same argument must be pleaded against Calvin's own interpretation of this passage, and are pleaded against the Roman Catholic Church. And I don't need to repeat these, but they all apply. I would not urge the first presumptive argument with the same vigor, or with the same term, against Calvin's view, as I would the Roman Catholic, because the way he puts it, you might possibly, you might possibly reconcile it with the Aeolus Tent.

This is his own statement. By falling away from the Lord, what is Adam's? By falling away from the Lord, he in himself corrupted, vitiated, depraved, and ruined our nature. That fact, he's looking upon it, vitiated and corrupted, might be quite compatible with the use of the Aeolus Tent.

Now, of course, we come to the classic participant of Romans 5:12b, the classic participant view. You see, we are still concerned with this clause in Romans 5:12b, in that offense. What does Paul mean? Now it is quite clear, in verse 12, quite clear, that the universal reign of death rests upon the fact that all sinned, no one deceived, and so death penetrated to all men in that all sinned are on the ground of the fact that all sinned.

That's quite clear. And whatever may be contemplated in that heaven may be, it is the reason why death passed. But in verse 15 through 19, all sinned and all deceived, that the universal reign of death rests upon the one trespass of the one man Adam.

The one trespass of the one man Adam. And so you have two indisputable statements. The universal reign of death rests upon the fact that all sinned are on the ground of the fact that all sinned.

Likewise, that the universal reign of death rests upon the one trespass of the one man Adam. What's it got to do with that? Are we to suppose that Paul was dealing with two entirely different situations? He was dealing with two entirely different situations. And that in verse 12 he's dealing with one situation, the

explanation of which is simply that all sin, whereas in verses 15 through 19 he is dealing with an entirely different situation, which the explanation is the one sin of the one man Adam.

Now unless you are going to identify these two, unless you are going to identify the situation in verse 12 and the situation in verses 15 through 19, the scene with which Paul is dealing, that is, what you are bound to conclude that he is dealing with a different situation, dealing with an entirely different truth complex. How is that possible? Is it possible for us that Paul has two entirely different situations of guilt in these two passages, one in verse 12 and another in verse 15? Is it possible? And that's the question I'm going to discuss right now. And I'm going to present reasons why we must hold the law of case form of 1, 2, and 3. I'm going to present reasons why we must hold that Paul is dealing with the same situation, the same truth complex, the same case of God's blood.

And the first reason is this. The default passage is a eunuch. Law of case form of 1. The default passage is a eunuch.

As I said repeatedly, the central strand is the parallelism. The remaining part of the lecture was not recorded, so I shall play it into the tape myself from my notes. The last part of the lecture was Mr. Murray gave three reasons why we should hold to that position that says Paul is dealing with the same situation, the same truth complex, the same phase of God's government.

Mr. Murray gave the first reason that the whole passage is a eunuch. And he said that, as I said repeatedly, he had said that the central strand is parallelism. The central strand is the identity of the modus operandi.

It is quite impossible to suppose that in verse 12 Paul is dealing with one phase of God's government, and in verses 15 through 17 he is dealing with another. He emphasizes the closely knit eunuch of the whole passage. The second reason is that not only is this passage a closely knit eunuch, but we must remember that in verse 12, that verse 12 is an unfinished comparison.

If verse 12 were completed in the context of its own terms, its own, and if it were possible to think that there is a radical transition at the end of verse 12, or for that matter that it would be possible for us to think Paul is dealing with two distinct phases of God's government. This is, however, not possible, for we only know what the hypothesis of 12 would be if it were completed in its own terms from the hypothesis which we find in verses 15 through 19. In other words, Paul doesn't complete the comparison in verse 12 because he relies on the succeeding verses to supply the hypothesis which verse 12 would have required if completed.

And the third reason is that Paul is dealing with the same phase of God's government. Verse 14 makes it impossible to interpret verse 12b in any other terms than that which is unfolded later in verses 15 through 19. For verse 14 tells us that death reigned over those who did not sin after the similitude of Adam's transgression.

The reign of death in verse 14 is the same reign referred to in verse 12 when Paul says that the sins of Adam are passed through to all men. So in verse 14 Paul is saying death passed on to and reigned over certain persons who did not voluntarily transgress as Adam did. The only reasonable inference is that the sin of Adam had implications for those whom death reigned over.

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