

LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #13
"Total Inability: The Principle of Representation"
(Scriptures from NKJV)

NOTE: Much of the text herein is quoted directly or paraphrased from the book, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* by Lorraine Boettner.

We assemble again to continue our study in the Doctrine of Predestination. We are making progress, line upon line, precept upon precept, to be able to get all of these concepts together to reach conclusions that the reformed faith sets forth. Today's lesson will be number thirteen in the series, and it is entitled, "The Principle of Representation." We are covering this under the subheading of Total Inability including the following lesson titles, "How Intensiveness and Extensiveness is Man's Sin," "The Defects in Man's Good Deeds," "The Fall of Man" which we looked at last week, and now today, "The Principle of Representation."

What do we mean by "representation?" It is not a difficult concept. All of us are familiar with it every day of our lives, particularly in the form of government which we have in the United States. It is easy for us to understand how a person may act through a representative. We have in the federal, state and local levels of government the principle of a house of representatives. The people of a state act in and through their representatives in the Legislature. If a country has a good president or a good king, then all of the people share in the good results. If a country has a bad president or a king, all suffer the consequences. If a church has a good pastor, the church benefits, but if the church has a poor pastor, the church suffers. If a church has a good board of elders, the church prospers. If a church has a poor board of elders, it suffers. Each one of those individuals or groups of individuals are representatives of the body as a whole. In a very real sense parents stand as representative for, and to a large extent, decide the physical and emotional destinies of their children. By that we do not necessarily mean their eternal destinies, but the future of the children's lives are greatly influenced by the parents representing them. If the parents are wise, virtuous, thrifty, the children reap the blessings; but if they are lazy and immoral, the children suffer. In a thousand ways the well-being of individuals is conditioned by the actions of others, so inwrought is this representative principle into our every day human life. When we come to the Scriptural doctrine that Adam stood as the official head and representative of his people, we have the application of this principle which we see operating all about us. So that is what our topic is this morning. In understanding total depravity and total inability, we must understand the principle of representation. First we are represented by our father Adam and secondly represented by our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dr. Charles Hodge, in his famous works on Systematic Theology, has very ably treated this subject in the following manner. He states:

This representative principle pervades the whole Scriptures. The imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity is not an isolated fact. It is only an illustration of a general principle which characterizes the dispensations [or administrations] of God from the beginning of the world. God has declared Himself to Moses as one who visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation. (Exodus 34:6,7).

Let me interrupt Dr. Hodge's quote. It is not that the children are being punished for their parent's sins, but they are suffering for the sins of the parents, because of the influence that the parents have upon the children. You can see it in a family tree, not only the children suffer, but the grandchildren and great grandchildren will inherit and practice certain practices that are set forth by the original parents. Picking up Dr. Hodge's quote again,

The curse pronounced on Canaan fell on his posterity. Esau's selling his birthright, shut out his descendants from the covenant of promise. The children of Moab and Ammon were excluded from the congregation of the Lord forever, because their ancestors opposed the Israelites when they came out of Egypt. In the case of Dathan and Abiram, as in that of Achan, **"their wives, and their sons, and their little children"** (Numbers 16:27) perished for the sins of their parents. God said to Eli, that the iniquity of his house should not be purged with sacrifice and offering for ever. To David it was said, **"The sword shall never depart from thy house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife."** (II Samuel 12:10). To the disobedient Gehazi it was said: **"the leprosy of Naaman shall cleave unto thee and unto thy seed forever."** (II Kings 5:27). The sin of Jeroboam and of the men of his generation determined the destiny of the ten tribes for all times. The request of the Jews, when they demanded the crucifixion of Christ, **"His blood be on us and on our children,"** (Matthew 27:25) still weighs down the scattered people of Israel. This principle runs through the whole Scriptures. When God entered into covenant with Abraham, it was not for himself only but also for his posterity. They were bound by all the stipulations of the covenant. They shared its promises and its threatenings, and in hundreds of cases the penalty of disobedience came upon those who had no personal part in the transgressions. Children suffered equally with adults in the judgments, whether those judgments were famines, pestilences, or wars, which came upon the people for their sins. And the Jews to this day are suffering the penalty of the sins of their fathers for their rejection of Him of whom Moses and the prophets spoke. The whole plan of redemption rests on this same principle.

I interrupt his quote again. Do we not see that in a time of war all kinds of people suffer and die, not just soldiers? What Dr. Hodge is saying is that we can see this all around us, like in the history of Israel when God sent judgments in the form of diseases, pestilences, and plagues, it wasn't just the ones who had sinned that suffered, multitudes suffered who had not sinned because the sins of the people were representing the entire nation. That is

why that even now in our American history, we are suffering from the sins of our forefathers, and the problems we are dealing with today were brought about by many issues that were set forth hundreds of years ago. Also, the plans and the policies that are being implemented today, will have long-range reaching effects. I won't be here to see them, but I am already seeing some of the beginnings of them. We are dealing with the sins of representation. Picking up the quote again,

Christ is the representative of His people, and on this ground their sins are imputed to Him and His righteousness to them. No man who believes the Bible, can shut his eyes to the fact that it everywhere recognizes the representative character of parents, and that the dispensations of God have from the beginning been founded on the principle that the children bear the iniquities of their fathers. This is one of the reasons which infidels assign for rejecting the divine origin of the Scriptures.

They cry out, "unfair, unfair" that children and grandchildren should have to suffer for the sins of the parents.

But infidelity furnishes no relief for these. History is as full of this doctrine as the Bible is. The punishment of the criminal involves his family in his disgrace and misery.

Do you understand what we have just stated? Take for example the young man we heard about on the news this morning who killed six or seven people and injured another. This is almost a weekly or a monthly thing that is occurring. Do you see how his actions cast a bad reflection upon his parents? If he had lived and been able to produce children, do you see how his children would have been affected in their lives because of what the father did long before they were even born? So it is not just the Bible that affirms "representation," every day life affirms it.

The spend-thrift and drunkard entail poverty and wretchedness upon all those connected with them. There is no nation now existing on the face of the earth, whose condition is not largely determined by the character and conduct of its ancestors.

That is a profound statement, and I concur a hundred percent in that the problems and the sufferings of different nations can be traced back to the sins of the ancestors that have brought them on.

The idea of the transfer of guilt or of vicarious punishment lies at the foundation of all the sacrificial offerings under the Old Testament, and of the great atonement under the new dispensation. To bear sin, in the Scriptural language is to bear the penalty of sin. The victim bore the sin of the offerer.

Dr. Hodge is talking about the Old Testament sacrificial system. He says again,

Hands were imposed upon the head of the animal about to be slaughtered, to express the transfer of guilt. That animal must be free from all defect or blemish to make it the more apparent that its blood was shed not for its own deficiencies but for the sin of another. All this was symbolical and typical. And this is what the Scriptures teach concerning the atonement of Christ. He bore our sins; He was made a curse for us; He suffered the penalty of the law in our stead. All this proceeds on the ground that the sins of one man can be justly, on some adequate ground, imputed to another.¹

Do you see the significance of all of the animal sacrifices under the Old Covenant? In one of the sacrifices, it was required that the lamb be absolutely blameless. It had to be shut up and examined to be without spot and without blemish. The priest would lay his hands upon that little innocent lamb's head recognizing that the offerer who was presenting the lamb was transferring the guilt of his sin to an innocent victim. One liberal called this "a slaughterhouse religion" of the Old Testament economy. However, if it was done in a proper way, when the blood started draining from the little lamb's throat, it would bring about humility and a remorse of conscience on the part of the offerer, because he knew that he should have been dying rather than the little lamb. He should have perished, but instead it was transferred to a representative for him. Jesus Christ was shut up for thirty-three years or so to be examined, and He was the Lamb that was found to be without spot and without blemish. He could ask the multitudes, **"Which one of you can convince me of sin?"** (John 8:46). When He hung on that cross, He hung there dying, not because of His own sin, but for the sins of others, in particular those of His own people. As the innocent victim, He has the guilt of His people's sin imputed and charged to Him through this principle of representation. This principle of representation lies at the heart of the gospel plan of redemption.

Let's look at some texts of Scripture.

Romans 5:19 - **"For as by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience, many will be made righteous."** One man's act affected the lives of many, not just another person, but all the people who descend from Adam. One man's act of obedience will affect the lives of many who will become righteous because of His action.

Also Romans 5:12 - **"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned,"** Note

¹Systematic Theology, II, pp. 198, 199, 201)

that it says, **"Death through sin."** Why do people die? It is because of sin, and death spreads to all men because all have sinned.

Romans 5:13-14 - **"Until the law, sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come."** Who in the world are these people who have not sinned? What does it mean that these people have not sinned like Adam sinned? In last week's lesson we saw the difference between Eve's sin in which she was deceived and the sin of Adam which was a willful act of personal disobedience. Now here are some people springing forth from Adam who have committed no personal acts of disobedience. Yet, nevertheless they are suffering death on the part of another. How is this coming about? Because Adam's sin is imputed to all of his descendants. So you do not have to commit a personal act of transgression in order to come under the condemnation of God. Someone already did it for you, and all men come into this world under condemnation, under the wrath of God even though they have not committed personal acts of transgression, nevertheless they die. The fact that they die indicates somebody has sinned. Incidentally, a number of scholars hold that these individuals in this text are infants. **"Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses even over those who had not sinned according to the transgression of Adam."** They believe that these are infants who come into this world without having any personal transgressions or acts of sin. Nevertheless they die.

Romans 5:18 - **"Through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation"** It is as if God had said: If sin is to enter, let it enter by one man, so that righteousness also may enter by one man. What if there had been another way which most religions teach? They say that sin enters through each personal act of transgression. So, according to them, you have all of these billions of descendants of Adam who become sinners the first time they commit an act of sin. Then the question is, how would they hope to be made righteous? They would have to provide their own personal acts of righteousness. Do you see that? Is that what you desire? Do you want to say it isn't fair that I have to suffer for what Adam did? If you take that position, don't you dare come to Christ and ask for His righteousness. That wouldn't be fair for Him to die so that you might become righteous. If you adopt the position that men come into the world innocent, then basically you are rejecting the heart of the gospel of substitution - the just for the unjust, and you are putting yourself in the position that you have to present enough good deeds to offset your bad deeds. Listen, if we know the holiness of God, it only takes one bad deed to ruin the whole thing. Suppose you are that one who comes into this world without sin. The first time you sin you have to try to make up for that sin, and all of the deeds you do from there on are not sufficient to bring satisfaction to the holy character of God. So rather than

seeing this as being unjust, if we recognize our sinner-hood, we ought to be thankful that God chose to bring sin into the world through one man so that through one Man, men might be saved. That is good news for sinners. It is not good news for self-righteous people, but Jesus didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. (Cf Matthew 9:13). The gospel is for sinners only, those who recognize their sin and their helplessness, but they are lost and condemned. There is good news in a Representative - His name is Jesus.

Adam was not only made the father, but also the representative, of the whole human race. If we fully understood the closeness of this relationship between him and the human race, we would fully realize the justice of the transmission of his sin to them. Adam's sin is imputed to his descendants in the same way that Christ's righteousness is imputed to those who believe in Him. Adam's descendants are, of course, no more personally guilty of his sin than Christ's redeemed are personally meritorious of His righteousness. That is, when Adam sinned, I didn't sin in the sense that I was there. I was only there through a representative. So his personal sin was not only infused, but was imputed to me. Therefore, I become righteous in God's sight not by having the infused righteousness of Christ put in me, but His imputed righteousness charged to my account, just like Adam's imputed guilt is charged to my account. So we stand justified in the action of Christ.

Suffering and death are declared to be the consequence of sin; and the reason that all die is that **"all have sinned."** (Romans 5:12). Keep that in your thinking as we come to the conclusion of the lesson. We are going to see how all of this makes sense between the justice and the mercy of God. We know that it is a fact that many suffer and die in infancy, before they have committed any sin themselves. Get your thinking caps on. It follows that either God is unjust in punishing these innocent infants, or that in some way, these infants are guilty creatures. What is the wages of sin? "Death." Do infants die? Yes. What causes their death if they have not committed personal transgressions? Is God unjust to punish innocent infants who have never personally sinned? This is a problem whatever your system of theology is - whether it is Pelagian, Semi-Pelagian or Calvinism. The reality is that these infants die. Somehow that is a just punishment for sin since the wages of sin is death. What then causes their death? To this the Pelagian system has no answer, and it just chooses to ignore the whole concept by cutting these things out of the Bible and reducing Christianity to a system of good works and ethics--helping the poor and doing good. As far as dealing with sin and righteousness before a holy God, Pelagianism really does not take the Bible seriously and cannot answer the issue before us.

If these infants are guilty, how have they sinned? It is impossible to explain it on any other supposition than that they sinned in Adam, and they could not have sinned in any other way than by representation. (Cf. I Corinthians 15:22; Romans 5:12, 18).

But while we are not personally guilty of Adam's sin, we are, nevertheless, liable to punishment for Adam's sin. Dr. A. A. Hodge says,

The guilt of Adam's public sin is by a judicial act of God immediately charged to the account of each and every one of his descendants from the moment he begins to exist, and antecedently to any act of his own. Hence all men come into existence deprived of all those influences of the Holy Spirit upon which their moral and spiritual life depends . . . and with an antecedent prevailing tendency in their natures to sin; which tendency in them is itself of the nature of sin, and worthy of punishment.

I interrupt the quote again. What causes people to sin? Since everybody is sinning, what is the root cause of that? It is our nature. Where did we get our nature? From Adam, and just as I inherited certain personal physical characteristics from my Mother's side of the family, so all of us inherit the moral characteristics of Adam. None escape it. This is the reason why all men are practicing sinners because all men come into this world with a nature that is sinful. If we reject that, what have we got left? Again, we would just be reducing Christianity to a system of moral ethics of doing the best that you can and loving your neighbor as yourself. That all sounds real good, that is the law of God, but how many of you have ever done that? Would you like your destiny, whether you are going to heaven or not, to be determined or based upon how well you have loved your neighbor? I wouldn't, but that is what the Pelagian system, which professes to represent Christianity, bases itself upon. Picking up A. A. Hodge's quote again:

Human nature since the fall retains its constitutional faculties of reason, conscience and free agency, and hence man continues to be a responsible moral agent.

When Adam sinned and I inherited his nature, I didn't lose my brain. That is part of the faculty of being a human being. I didn't lose my affections, my emotions, and I didn't lose my will. I still have the ability to choose right from wrong, that is what makes up a moral agent. But the problem is that since my fall in Adam, I always choose the wrong when it comes to the things of God. That is why the Scripture describes that sin is rampant through all of man's faculties, and that we are said to be dead in trespasses and sins. So that while all of the faculties remain intact, each one of them is ruined - even the will has been ruined by sin. The Semi-Pelagian doesn't agree with this in the sense that he acknowledges all that we are saying, but he is saying that God bestows a gracious ability back to man through the redemptive work of Christ in common grace so that man has the same ability to choose good from evil as Adam had before the fall. So that is why that when a Semi-Pelagian minister makes his exhortations, he is recognizing that God has "done all He can do or will do" without violating man's free agency. That is why he is trusting in the will of his hearers to respond to his exhortations. When I stand and preach, I am preaching to a

cemetery of people who are dead in trespasses and sins, so my confidence rests not in my skills and my abilities, but in God's power to raise the dead. That alone is our hope. Oh, that today's evangelism would grasp that. Yes, I make the same exhortations that the Arminian makes, but I do not stand and say that "God has done everything He can do, the rest is up to you." I tell the sinner that it is his duty to repent and believe the gospel. When? Today is the day of salvation. Harden not your heart. (Cf. Hebrews 4:7). We preach human responsibility the same way that the Semi-Pelagian preaches human responsibility, but our hope for success does not lie in the human will, but in the power of God to make the will willing, as you have heard me say many times, "in salvation God doesn't violate the will of man, he just 'wiggles the willer' and sets it free, so when we come to Christ, we come willingly." The Psalmist states, **"Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power."** (Psalm 110:3). When God's power in regeneration works, then there is a response. This is not necessarily something that the individual is physically conscious of at the moment it occurs. Regeneration occurs in the subconscious of man which he becomes conscious of when he discovers his attitude toward sin, righteousness and Jesus Christ has changed. This is what deceived me as a small child, that you will not know that God has regenerated you unless there is some physical sensation like a tingling sensation that runs up and down your spine, or else you shout, or else you cry. Various conversions may have experienced these things, but this is not regeneration. You don't look for these things, you look to Christ. And while you are looking to Christ elevated upon that cross like the brazen serpent was in the Old Testament, you suddenly discover the He is representing me, and you are broken. You cast yourself upon the mercy of God. Picking up A. A. Hodge's quote again, regarding the sinner who has all of his faculties, reason, consciousness, and free agency,

Yet he is spiritually dead, and totally averse to and incapable of the discharge of any of these duties which spring out of his relation to God, and entirely unable to change his own evil dispositions or innate moral tendencies, or to dispose himself to such a change, or to co-operate with the Holy Spirit in effecting such a change.²

What Dr. Hodge has done here is that he has shut the door against Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism. Let me ask you this question. Why is it that most people object to Calvinism when we talk about irresistible grace and effectual calling? What do they object to in that? What is their problem? They do not like the fact they are not in control, but God is in control. It effects the will, and they believe that this violates man's free agency. If God just regenerates without the consent of the sinner, then that violates man's free agency. That is Calvinism. Now lets move back to Semi-Pelagianism. In that system, the Holy Spirit does

² Presbyterian Doctrine, p. 21

convict, but not to the point of regeneration. Are you thinking? The Pelagian comes on the scene and says, if the Holy Spirit does anything, it is a violation of man's free agency. That is, if the Holy Spirit convicts a person of sin, the Pelagian says that is a violation of man's free agency. God can do absolutely nothing on His part without violating man's free will, and according to that system, God will never do that. Do you remember back in our previous study that according to a Pelagian, "Man saves himself." The Semi-Pelagian says "Man saves himself with God's help," and the Calvinistic system says "God saves sinners." If you went on a visitation tour of the churches in Birmingham, Alabama, and you were watching closely to what was being said, you would pick up on how these systems operate. That is why it is important to understand theology. It has been said that theology is the queen of the sciences. By the queen, it means that it is superior to medicine, to astronomy, geology, and all of the sciences which men and women go to college to learn. However, none of them can measure up to the science of theology, the knowledge and study of God. If you have sat under my ministry for any length of time, you can understand why I am passionate about what I believe, because it is about God, and I find that only the Calvinistic and reformed system has an adequate explanation to the data of the Scriptures, and that the other systems come short of describing how a person is made righteous in the sight of God.

One final quote, and we will be ready for the summary. Dr. R. L. Dabney, the outstanding theologian of the southern Presbyterian Church, says this:

The explanation presented by the doctrine of imputation is demanded by all except Pelagians and Socinians.

Those two are about one and the same, and the only systems of theology that do not demand imputation. Picking up the quote again,

Man's is a spiritually dead and a condemned race. See Ephesians 2:1-5, *et passim*.

"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins," And in Ephesians 2:1-5 it lists all the characteristics of the unregenerate man, self-centered, dominated by spiritual death, and then it comes down to the words, **"But God."** **"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)."** God intervenes. That is why we say, God saves sinners. Picking up the quote again,

He is obviously under a curse for something, from the beginning of his life. Witness the natural depravity of infants, and their inheritance of pain and death. Now, either man was tried and fell in Adam, or he has been

condemned without trial.

This is the conclusion. If man enters the world suffering, having committed no personal acts, either his trial of probation has already occurred in Adam, and God has judged the race by a representative, or else God has unjustly judged the entire race without a trial. All men come into this world under the sentence of death. Either that sentence came about as a result of somebody representing us, or else we have been assigned the penalty of death without ever having time for a personal probation. Since all suffer, it is one or the other. Infants suffer and die because of the actions of their representative or else God has tried them and punished them with death without giving them an opportunity for their personal probation and trial. So then do you also see that our probation was over in Adam? Man is no longer under a probationary period. Adam ended that. Dr. Dabney ends his quote:

He [man] is either under the curse (as it rests on him at the beginning of his existence) for Adam's guilt, or for no guilt at all. Judge which is the more honorable to God, a doctrine which, although a profound mystery, represents Him as God as giving man an equitable and most favored probation in His federal head [Adam]; or that which makes God condemn him untried, and even before he exists.

Which one of these give the most honor to the justice of God--by falling in Adam through a representative or else God condemning the human race without any trial? Which one would you prefer? Which one does the Bible set forth? Why are we all in this room in agreement today, and multitudes do not agree about this? We agree not only because the Bible teaches it, but because we have personally been brought to see and to feel our sinfulness and our helplessness. Do you see why this is offensive to a person who considers himself to be religious but denies the Bible? What does the religious person consider himself to be? He considers himself to be morally free, and a good person. He responds to this teaching by saying, *"You are telling me that I am a sinner, that I deserve the wrath of God in eternal punishment in hell? Why, I fast, I tithe, I speak in the name of Jesus, I do all of these things, and you are telling me that I am condemned for what another did?"* That is why this message of the gospel is an offense, the "old rugged cross" is a stumbling block to the self-righteous person, and men will not change unless God does something. We will close there.