

# Your Child's Depravity and Folly

Romans 5:12-21

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## Entre'

"Isn't she special!" "He is just an angel!" "I may be biased, but she is about the prettiest baby I've ever seen!" "He's as close to perfect as they come!" Have you heard, or even said any of these lines? We love babies! The expectation is anticipated with fear and yet celebration. After the arrival, the anguish nearly immediately gives way to joy and peace. As they grow the worry and anxiety is off-set with special firsts: first solid foods, first word, first steps, first haircut, first ear infection, first vomit, first day of school and the like. We raise, teach and encourage children from even before they are born until...we die (and then often we are remembered and continue our parenting (or grand-parenting) even after we are gone. We often approach children thinking of them as a blank slate to use our pieces of chalk of knowledge, experience and wisdom to guide and guard them into life by writing on their hearts, minds and bottoms. As they get older we reason, discuss, argue and debate to prepare them for the obstacles they are facing in the world "out there."

Not wanting to eliminate the fear of the "out there" completely, but we should be more concerned with their "worlds inside" than the often are. We get caught up in their cuteness, smiles, and laughter. We ignore and excuse rebellion and sin as ignorance and inexperience. Tonight we want to briefly remind ourselves, for parenting and by extension teaching, of the nature of children from a text we recently heard in our Romans series. Remember, this applies to everyone in the room, to everyone at the Chapel, whether you are a parent or grandparent, a bible education teacher or nursery worker because we are in community to encourage each other of all ages to love, know and grow our Lord in increasing measure each day.

## Exposition

Text: Romans 5:12-21

*Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—<sup>13</sup> for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. <sup>14</sup> Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.*

*<sup>15</sup> But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. <sup>16</sup> And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. <sup>17</sup> For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through*

*that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.*

*<sup>18</sup> Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. <sup>19</sup> For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. <sup>20</sup> Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, <sup>21</sup> so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The "therefore" that begins this section shows that it is not a peripheral statement to the logic of the gospel in the letter to the churches in Rome. It is integral to his argument. Pastor Russ stated "the objective reality and subjective demonstration of God's saving love is rooted in salvation history." We have a unity with Adam and Jesus Christ so that their actions affect all those united in them. Thus, when Adam sinned, we are viewed as sinning in him and when Christ died and rose again, we are viewed as having died and risen again with Him. This is particularly difficult for us in today's mindset because of our modern and western emphasis on individuality.

By bringing Adam into the picture we have a real person designated as representative for humanity. Sin entered the world through Adam and thus death entered as a result. Some of this is because everyone exists because of Adam. Only he was created, all of us since have been born. Because he is really and representatively the fount of human nature, death reigns because all human kind is viewed as sinning when Adam did. Even if you never committed a single act of sin, you are still condemned. You sinned in Adam and his disobedience is put to your account. But we also are all sinners, in that we all, without exception, follow Adam in that rebellion. No one has to be taught to sin.

And yet salvation comes because of a unity of representation with Christ. Grace abounds in the face of our universal ruin in Adam. Through Adam's sin, death reigned over us, but through the grace in Christ's righteousness, life will reign in us. So we are in Adam, condemned transgressors ruled over by sin and death. Or, we are in Christ, justified by faith in His cross and resurrection and ruled by the power of His life in us.

### Elaboration:

1.     a. Children from conception are sinners. They are guilty and under condemnation.  
       b. Children are need of the gospel and its radical change and salvation.
2.     a. Children from conception are sinners. They are subject to the curse and complications of the fall. Children face struggles of illness, weakness and fear.  
       b. Children need the gospel and its hope for the future.

3.
  - a. Children from conception are sinners. They are rebellious and idolaters.
  - b. Children need the gospel to expose their hearts and its idols.
4.
  - a. Children from conception are sinners. They are blinded to the truth.
  - b. Children need the gospel to be able to understand God, themselves and their place in the world.

## Extension:

### 1. Children's education

Because we are "in Adam", we are then derived from the process of "be fruitful and multiply." This means we are subject to growth and development. All people must learn and experience. With this in mind we need to be guided in our learning, being warned of danger and instructed in right and wrong. We are not being instructed in "having a right standing before God" but we are to be instructed what God expects and what wisdom involves. Actions and consequences are part of how the world that God created works. The details are often hidden and mysterious, but the general principles hold true. We should not find our complete satisfaction in this world but yet we live and experience it and it is what God has given us for the here and now.

One of the greatest and most important wisdom lessons we should learn and therefore teach children is that they exist in this life at many levels as individuals under authority. First and foremost under the authority of God, but under delegated authority of parents, teachers and other government figures. That actions have consequences and rebellion and disobedience deserves, even requires punishment is a fundamental axiom of this world's order. To try to work around it in a system of rewards and avoidance is not completely adequate.

Your children are by nature rebels and you must work hard to teach obedience as a principle and authority as a habit.

### 2. Children's evangelism

However, teaching a child to be good should never be seen as the ultimate goal. If we overlook or gloss over less than perfect compliance we are teaching that failure is OK and that doing my best is all that matters. Since none of us are perfect, how then should we counter this? By pointing out that God extends to us grace because of the work of Christ. Our failures can be forgiven and covered because of His accomplishment on the cross and received in faith. This can be stated and as the child grows in understanding can be reasoned. But God will grant repentance.

Our extending grace should never be seen as dropping the standard or ignoring the facts. God is said to have accomplished salvation in a way that he did so he could be both “just and the justifier”. To overlook is to be unjust. And yet to expect goodness alone is to deny the gospel.

Children will want to please their parents and even more so others in authority if they have been taught that principle well. It becomes even more important to present the facts of the gospel; the need for forgiveness, the work of grace and the response of repentance and faith and allow God’s Spirit to bring it to life in their experience. To pressure a “gospel” statement is often just another way of being “good” for many.

### 3. Children’s death

And lastly, I want us to ask, “what about when a child dies?” We are treading on emotional ground here and I will confess that I do not have as strong a Scriptural statement as I usually like to have. But let us quickly lay out some facts and then draw a tentative conclusion.

a. Children are sinners and deserving of punishment both as a “child of Adam” and in their very early experience.

b. Children, like all people are “saved” because of the gracious application of the work of Christ in paying for the sins of those God has chosen to bring to himself.

c. The usual context for this is in repentance of sin and faith in God’s provision.

d. Jesus uses children as prototypes for trust and faith. It is not that children inherently are “saved” or are believers but are examples of what faith is like. Faith does not demand complete proof to follow and obey, in fact the use of children implies it might not be possible to completely understand before believing something is true.

e. Jesus demonstrates the importance of children by extending love and compassion to them.

f. At the death of David and Bathsheba’s son, he states some evidence of belief that he would see the child again. This could be a false statement made in grief, a general belief in life after death or indeed a confidence that this child shares in the inheritance promised for those who believe.

g. No one is saved by virtue of their birth circumstances (old or new covenant).

I think, God, because of his grace, extends the work of the cross to children who die prior to being able to understand and respond to the gospel. The Scripture does not give an age of accountability and there is no passage to prove this. This mystery must be given to God.