

O Thou Who Didst Thy Glory Leave

Augustus Toplady (1740–1778)

O Thou who didst Thy glory leave,
Apostate sinners to retrieve
From nature's deadly fall,
Me Thou hast purchased with a price,
Nor shall my crimes in judgment rise,
For Thou hast borne them all.

Jesus was punish'd in my stead,
Without the gate my Surety bled
To expiate my stain:
On earth the Godhead deign'd to dwell
And made of infinite avail
The sufferings of the man.

And was He for such rebels given?
He was; the Incarnate King of Heaven
Did for His foes expire:
Amazed, O earth, the tidings hear:
He bore, that we might never bear
His Father's righteous ire.

Ye saints, the Man of Sorrows bless,
The God for your unrighteousness
Deputed to atone:
Praise Him, till with the heavenly throng,
Ye sing the never-ending song,
And see Him on His throne.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

Tried with Fire: Those Who Cannot Believe

Kevin T. Bauder

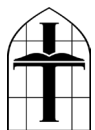
The missionary was well stricken in years and ready to see her Lord. She didn't regret the decades that she and her husband had spent pushing into the jungle to bring the gospel to unreached peoples. She didn't resent the bouts of disease or the other hardships they had endured navigating the rivers. Still, she had one sorrow: "I can't remember where we buried my babies." She had held them, one after another, there in the bush where she gave them birth. She had done her best to nourish them, but the fever took each in its turn. She and her husband would bury each baby at some bend of the river. Then the river's course changed, and she was left without markers to find their graves. Her aged eyes now brightened at the thought of seeing these children whom she had left in the jungle. She was ready to be reunited with them in the presence of her Lord.

Was her expectation justified, or was she misled? This question is terribly personal for the many mothers and fathers who have seen their infants taken from them. It deserves an answer, and that answer can be found in Romans 5:12-21.

Some people believe that babies are innocent of all guilt. Since they cannot be charged with any sin, a just God would never condemn them. Romans 5:12, however, rules this answer out of bounds. This verse clearly connects sin and death. The fact that all die is proof that "all sinned," in the past tense. The verb points back to the time when Adam brought sin into the world and death by sin. In other words, the only people who die are those who bear the guilt of Adamic sin.

Even newborns are moral persons. Even though they are not yet able to make individual moral choices, they are members of the human race that sinned when Adam sinned. That is why David could lament that "I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5). Through one man's disobedience "the many" (i.e., the mass of individuals) were constituted sinners (Rom. 5:19). Human beings do not become sinners when they sin. They sin because they are sinners.

Bodily death was not the only result of Adam's sin. His one transgression resulted in condemnation for all humans (Rom. 5:18). The guilt of original sin



In the Nick of Time is published by Central Baptist Theological Seminary.

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brings both the consequence of physical death and the judgment of eternal condemnation for all of us. In other words, infants are justly condemned by God because of their participation in Adam's guilt. This condition is universal, as Paul's use of words like "all" and "the many" shows. Any attempt to exempt infants from Adamic guilt and from divine condemnation crashes into the stark reality of death: guilt and condemnation are just as universal as death is.

But that is not the end of the story. Romans 5:12-21 not only details the universality of sin, death, and condemnation, but also announces good news about the universality of Christ's work. When reading this passage, we have to remember that Paul is not talking *primarily* about acts of personal transgression (though he does touch on that topic). He aims to discuss the effect of Adamic sin, i.e., the sin of the human race. With respect to this universal guilt—whether we call it Adamic, original, imputed, or racial sin—Christ has accomplished an equally universal response.

This teaching is particularly apparent if we skip the parenthesis in verses 13-17 and read the main thought directly from verse 12 to verse 17. To paraphrase, the text says that sin entered the world through one human being, and death through sin; consequently death spread to all humans because all sinned. By the same token, as one transgression brought death to all humans, so one righteous act brought justification to all humans, for as through one human's (Adam's) disobedience the many were constituted sinners, by the obedience of one human (Christ) will many be made righteous.

Plenty of interpreters have tried to explain away the words "all" and "the many" that are applied to Christ's work. Some have understood these words to mean "all of the elect," or "all who are in Christ." Others have understood the justification to be merely potential and not actual. Limiting the effects of Christ' righteous act, however, works no better than limiting the consequences of Adam's sin. In both cases the ordinary meaning of the text is that one person's act accomplished something with respect to all human beings.

The text is not, however, teaching universalism, because it is not about condemnation for or justification from the guilt of individual transgressions. It is about the consequences of Adam's sin for the human race. In other words, by His "righteous act" (His death and resurrection), Christ has secured not only the provision, but also the application of justification to the entire human race *with respect to Adamic guilt*. God as judge no longer connects individual humans with the original sin of the race. He no longer condemns them for original sin.

In other words, nobody ever gets sent to hell because of Adam. The condemnation that all people deserve by virtue of their connection to Adam has

been replaced by a racial (not individual) justification that Christ secured. Just as the human race *as a race* participated in Adam's one sin, the entire human race *as a race* enjoys justification from racial guilt. Adamic guilt no longer stands as a barrier between any human and God.

That is why God can justly admit babies into heaven if they die. He does not simply overlook their original sin; rather, that sin has been dealt by Christ. This aspect of the atonement genuinely applies to all human beings. All people have been forgiven with respect to the sin of Adam. Infants are not only safe; they are born into a race that is actually justified from the guilt of Adam's sin.

None of the foregoing, however, implies that the imparted depravity of infants has been removed. Because they are still depraved, all people invariably commit acts of personal transgression when they become capable of moral choices. We are all still sinners, even if justified from Adamic guilt, and we all end up being condemned by our own sin. Each of us must still trust Christ to be forgiven for personal transgressions.

In sum, believing mothers and fathers who have lost infants to death can expect to see their children again. In God's mercy, the work of Christ has both provided and applied justification for Adamic guilt. God will not deny admittance to heaven for those who have died before reaching the point of personal moral agency. The Scriptures do indeed offer comfort to those who have had to bury their babies.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
