

The major difficulty with this solution is that not all men have the gospel presented to them, nor have all men come into contact with the revelation of Christ in Scripture. If the nonelect were precondemned on this basis, how then could those who have never heard of Christ be precondemned? It is of course possible from this consideration to move directly to a position in which all those who have never heard the gospel are included among the elect (which would have curious implications for missions or for evangelism in general); or to move more indirectly to a position which includes the following steps: (1) prevenient grace is bestowed upon all men; (2) God knows which men would accept Christ if given the opportunity; (3) God makes certain that all who would accept Christ are given opportunity to hear the gospel; (4) God precondemns those whom He foreknows will reject the gospel and those whom He foreknows would reject it if they were presented with it. In the latter position responsibility (blameworthiness) for fallen man's rejection of Christ would certainly seem to be fixed; but the problem of depravity and the problem of a precise definition of, and scriptural basis for, prevenient grace still remain to be resolved.

[2] Can man's responsibility for his sinfulness (and thus his precondemnation) be fixed on the basis of man's foreseen attitudes, thoughts, words, and actions?

The major question in this view is this: How do man's attitudes, thoughts, words, and actions relate to human depravity? Is there a vital connection which cannot be ignored in any attempt to fix responsibility?

In Matt. 7:17-18 Jesus says, "Even so every good tree bears good fruit; but the rotten tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor a rotten tree produce good fruit." And in Luke 6:43-45 He says, "For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit; nor on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart."

Now it is to be affirmed that fallen men are responsible for their sinful attitudes, thoughts, words, and actions. Responsibility in that sense is not affected by the abovementioned connection. The issue here is that of the connection between what a man does and what a man is, between human conduct and human character, between man's sinful actions and man's sinful nature. And the resolution of this issue is simply that a man does what he is. That is, men act, not contrary to, but in accordance with, their nature.

If therefore, when a fallen man acts, he acts in accordance with his sinful nature, and thus produces sinful actions; then the question of fixing responsibility has only been partially answered when we say that fallen men are responsible for their sinful attitudes, thoughts, words, and actions. Blameworthiness for their precondemnation must have a broader and more ultimate basis.