



GENERATIONAL SIN POSITION PAPER

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“Generational sin” is a principle of life revealed, taught, and demonstrated throughout the Scriptures. Generational sin is defined as **“the inherited corruption and perversion of human nature that creates the propensity to sin in specific ways that one’s fathers and mothers sinned to the third and fourth generation.”**

SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR THE DOCTRINE OF GENERATIONAL SIN

The two primary passages,¹ which are direct quotes from the mouth of God, reveal and teach the reality of “the iniquity of the fathers” which is “visited on the children to the third and fourth generations”- often called “generational sin.”

Exodus 20:4-5² - “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, **visiting the iniquity of the fathers** on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me.”

Exodus 34:6-7 - Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; ⁷ who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, **visiting the iniquity of fathers** on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”

As God Himself spoke these words, it is important to understand the nature and substance of His statements. Exodus 20 concerns the Moral Law of God. The greater context is that, after saving His people Israel from slavery in Egypt, God established His covenant with His moral requirements as summarized in the Ten Commandments. The second commandment prohibits the primary sin of idolatry and here God speaks of the reality of generational sin. In relation to the covenant, it is vital to understand that the LORD keeps His covenant. To violate or break His covenant is contrary to His very nature. The declaration of the Moral Law of God is not an arbitrary creation by God but is based on the very nature of God.

Exodus 34 concerns the revelation of the glory of God in the very Name of God. This is evidenced by God’s answer to Moses’ prayer that the LORD would show him His glory. The LORD declares that He Himself will proclaim His Name, the Name of the LORD (Yahweh), to Moses (Exodus 33:18-19). The Name of God is the revelation of Who God is, the very nature of God. He will reveal His “goodness” (Exodus 33:19). When

1 Other passages of Scripture include Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 5:9; Jeremiah 32:18

2 All Scripture is quoted from the New American Standard Version Updated, 1995 (NASB95), unless otherwise noted.

God does this, He reveals the two primary attributes of His glorious and good nature - first, His love, mercy, and grace and, second, His justice. He first declares the goodness of His love and gives a primary example that He “forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin.” He then reveals His justice stating, “yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished,” and gives the example of “visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”

The Moral Law of God and the Name of God are eternal and unchangeable. They are not subject to the historic transition from Old to New Covenant with the effect that ceremonial and civil Old Testament laws no longer apply to God’s people who now live under the New Covenant³. Much less are they subject to ever changing human culture.

The nature and context of these statements by God concerning generational sin reveal a fundamental and unchanging principle of how God governs life in the world He created. The application of this truth to all people is expressly stated by God in Leviticus 18:25. Here, the LORD declares covenant laws for His people, specifically in the area of sexual sin, and speaks of the sins of the nations that defile them and the land in which they live. He says, “For the land has become defiled, therefore I have brought its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants.” The literal translation of “I have brought its punishments upon it” is “I **visit its iniquity** on it.” This reveals that the Moral Law of God, which is based upon God’s glorious nature, is a principle of God’s justice of which all people are subject. The generational sin of the people of a land will increase to make “the land” “sick” until it “spews” or “vomits” out those living in it. God warns His people in this passage that the same thing will happen to them if they continue to sin against Him as the nations have done.

This principle of God’s Moral Law and justice applying to all people is also revealed to Abraham, who at the time is still called Abram, in Genesis 15:16. The context is God is giving Abram the promise that his descendants would be enslaved for 400 years and then brought back to the land of promise. He says, “Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for **the iniquity** of the Amorite is not yet complete” (Genesis 15:16). There are two important principles of concerning generational sin. First, generational sin accumulates over the history of a people, nation or place, in this instance specifically to “the fourth generation.” Second, according to God’s own righteous justice, it will reach the point when it is “complete” or “full” at which time God’s judgment will come upon it. This is described above in terms of the land “spewing” or “vomiting” out those living in it.

Generational Sin is a fundamental principle of God’s sovereign justice and judgment of families, nations and empires throughout history. Just as the Law of Gravity is a fundamental principle that governs the physical realm of life, so Generational Sin is a fundamental principle that governs the spiritual and moral realm of life. All people, whether or not they are God’s people, whether they are non-Christian or Christian, are subject to these principles. Because of this, it is vital to understand and identify what constitutes generational sin.

THREE HEBREW WORDS USED IN SCRIPTURE IN RELATION TO SIN

Within the language of a particular culture, words have distinct meanings and connotations. For example, the Inuit (Eskimo) people of northern Canada have as many as fifty (50) words to distinguish different kinds of snow because snow is a significant aspect of their life and culture. In the Greek language, there are four (4) different words that delineate different kinds of love: *agape* characterizes “unconditional” love; *phileo* “brotherly” love; *eros* “physical or sexual” love; and, *storge* “family affection”. Note that all four Greek words are concerned with a sphere of love; however, *eros* love is quite different from *agape* love. Jesus said, “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love (*agape* - not *eros*) for one another” (John 13:35). While both *eros* and *agape* are Greek words that speak of love, to confuse the two would be a severe error!

3 See, for example, Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 7:12, 18-19; 8:5, 6, 13, 23-24; 10:1

Just as the Greek language uses different words to identify different kinds of love, the Hebrew language uses different words to identify and distinguish different aspects of the sphere of sin. As the word of God reveals, the Hebrew culture had a vital concern regarding our relationship with God, and because sin is what separates us from God, an accurate understanding of the nature of sin is essential to a full understanding of what harms our relationship to God. Therefore, in order to accurately identify the different aspects of sin, the Old Testament used three different Hebrew words to identify different aspects of sin, and these are transliterated into English are *peshah*, *chattah* and *awvone*⁴. These three words are used in four of the most significant passages in the Old Testament that deal with the subject of sin.

In **Exodus 34:6-7**, the passage in which God reveals His name to Moses, says, “Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; ⁷ who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity (*awvone*), transgression (*peshah*) and sin (*chattah*); yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting the iniquity (*awvone*), of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”

In **Leviticus 16:21**, which deals with God’s directions to the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, says, “Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities (*awvone*) of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions (*peshah*) in regard to all their sins (*chattah*).”

In **Psalms 51:1-2**, which is David’s confession of his sin, he refers to Exodus 34 and prays, “Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions (*peshah*). ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity (*awvone*) and cleanse me from my sin (*chattah*).”

And **Daniel 9:24**, which is a prophetic passage about the complete and finished work of atonement by the Messiah (9:25), says, “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression (*peshah*), to make an end of sin (*chattah*), to make atonement for iniquity (*awvone*), to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy *place*.”

It is vital to observe that these three words that deal with sin - *peshah*, *chattah*, and *awvone* - are used in the most significant contexts of Scripture - the Name of God, the Day of Atonement, confession of sin by David, and the complete atoning work of Christ. This demonstrates that they have distinct meanings regarding the sphere of sin. It would be the height of redundancy for God to use three different words that mean the same thing. To confuse them can and will lead to error in interpretation and understanding of the revelation of God in His word, which would then have detrimental consequences in our lives.

DEFINITIONS OF THE THREE HEBREW WORDS THAT IDENTIFY SIN

The key to the nature of generational sin is an understanding of the definition and nuances of the three Hebrew words that deal with the overall subject of sin⁵. These words are:

(a) “***peshah***” - This word is most often translated into English by the word “transgression.” The basic meaning is “rebellion” or “revolt.” When used in relation to God, it is what sin is at its root and origin, which is “rebellion” or “revolt” directed personally against God and fundamentally motivated by hatred and hostility toward God. This is what God states in the Second Commandment, “You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and

4 These words may be spelled differently. For example, *peshah* may be spelled *payshah*, *chattah* as *hattah* or *chattahah*, and *awvone* as *awon*. For purposes of reference to Strong’s Concordance, *peshah* is Hebrew #6588, *chattah* is Hebrew #2403, and *awvone* is Hebrew #5771.

5 Harris, Archer, Waltke; *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*; Moody Press, Chicago, 1980.

the fourth generations of those who hate Me” (Exodus 20:5).⁶ *Peshah* is manifested in outward actions that result in a breach of relationship between God and people. Because the English word “transgression” means the outward act of violation of a law, it does not fully communicate the root meaning of *peshah*.

Peshah originates in and proceeds forth from a heart that is personally hostile toward God and rebels against Him. In Isaiah 1:4, the LORD says, “Sons I have reared and brought up, but they have revolted (*peshah*) against Me.” In Ezekiel 2:3, the LORD says to the prophet, “Son of man, I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to a rebellious people who have rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed (*peshah*) against Me to this very day.” The root is the inward sinful attitude of the heart directed personally against God that proceeds forth in rebellion and is manifested in outward acts of transgression. It is a rejection of love for God that rejects loyalty and allegiance to His authority, will, and rule as expressed in His covenant and law (Isaiah 1:28; 48:8; 59:13; Jeremiah 2:8, 29; Hosea 8:1; 7:13; 14:9; Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6; 4:4; Zeph. 3:11). This thought is expressly stated in the New Testament in Romans 8:7, “the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*.” Conversely, Jesus said, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15). To be most precise, love of God is holy desire to do the will of God which is manifested in obedience to God, while sin is evil desire that rebels against God. Galatians 5:17, “For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.” The evil desire that proceeds from the flesh is *peshah*.

(b) “*chattah*” (The masculine noun is *chet*) - This word is most often translated into English by the word “sin” and is used frequently (580 times) in Old Testament Hebrew to speak of sin. The basic meaning is “to miss the mark, miss the way, anything that is less than that which is total, whole and complete” (Judges 20:16; Proverbs 19:2). When used in relation to God, it means a specific committed act that violates the law of God and/or an act that fails to observe and meet the standard for holy living that God requires. Leviticus 4:2 states, “Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘If a person sins (*chet*) unintentionally in any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, and commits any of them.’” It is very significant that this only states *chet* and not either of the other words that identify sin. This is because *chet* and *chattah* mean the specific act of sinning by violating the law of God. Then, also, Deuteronomy 9:16 states that Moses said to the people, “And I saw that you had indeed sinned (*chet*) against the LORD your God. You had made for yourselves a molten calf; you had turned aside quickly from the way which the LORD had commanded you.” The basic meaning is that it is an act that violates the law and commandment of God (Numbers 27:3; Deuteronomy 22:26; 24:16; 2 Kings 10:29; Psalm 103:10; Isaiah 38:17; Lamentations 1:8).

The Greek word *hamartia* connotes this idea of “missing the mark.” It is action that “falls short of the standard” and stated in Romans 3:23, “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” *Chattah* is behavior that misses the mark and falls short of the standard of righteousness in the Law of God.

(c) “*awvone*” - This word is most often translated into English by the word “iniquity.” The basic meaning is “to ruin, twist, warp, bend, distort, pervert, make crooked” (Job 33:27; Psalm 38:6; Isaiah 24:1; Lamentations 3:9). It is vital to understand that Scripture uses *awvone* with two distinct connotations or applications as follows:

(1) Corrupt Actions - One connotation of *awvone* is related to sinful actions that are crooked, twisted, bent, distorted, and perverted; therefore, corrupt. Leviticus 7:18, “So if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings should ever be eaten on the third day, he who offers it will not be accepted, and it will not be reckoned to his benefit. It shall be an offensive thing, and the person who eats of it will bear his own iniquity (*awvone*).” It is a perverted act to eat a sacrifice that has become spoiled and corrupted having been exposed for

6 See also Leviticus 26:21, 23, 27, 40.

three days. Leviticus 16:21, “Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities (*awvone*) of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions (*peshah*) in regard to all their sins (*chattah*).” The priest is to confess the corrupt and perverted actions of the people. And again Psalm 85:2, “You forgave the iniquity (*awvone*) of Your people; You covered all their sin.”

(2) Corrupt Nature - A second connotation of *awvone* is to identify the corruption and perversion of human nature that is punishment for sin that is committed. This theological principle is stated by David in Psalm 51:5 when, confessing his sin, he states, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity (*awvone*) and in sin (*chattah*) my mother conceived me.” Writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, David speaks of the corruption of his nature that took place in his mother’s womb. The legal ground for this was the sin (*chattah*) of Adam and the consequence was the corruption of his nature so that he was brought forth and born with *awvone*. Romans 5:12 and 19 explicitly speaks of this saying, “through one man, sin entered the world” and “through one man’s disobedience, the many were made sinners.” *Awvone*, which is the corruption of human nature, is the consequence and punishment for the sin of Adam.

Awvone is spoken of as the consequence and punishment for the specific sin of a person in various places. Genesis 4:13 says, “Cain said to the LORD, ‘My punishment (*awvone*) is too great to bear!’” In this context, because the word *awvone* connotes ‘punishment for sin,’ the NASB (also ESV) does not use the translate *awvone* as “iniquity” because the English word “iniquity” does not communicate the effect of punishment for sin. *Awvone* was the punishment for Cain’s sin. Leviticus 26:39 says, “So those of you who may be left will rot away because of their iniquity (*awvone*) in the lands of your enemies; and also because of the iniquities (*awvone*) of their forefathers they will rot away with them.” And Ezekiel 4:17 states, “and they will be appalled with one another and waste away in their iniquity (*awvone*).” The people literally “rot and waste away” because of their *awvone* as well as the *awvone* of their forefathers. In this context, *awvone* is the punishment for sin that results in the corruption and perversion of human nature.

Of the three Hebrew words that are consistently used in regard to sin, *awvone* is the word that God uses to reveal and teach the doctrine of generational sin. In Exodus 20:5, God declares, “for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity (*awvone*) of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me.” And Exodus 34:7, “He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting the iniquity (*awvone*) of the fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.” It is the connotation, meaning and application of *awvone* in the second sense (corruption and perversion of human nature which is the punishment for sin that is committed) that is always used.

The fundamental principle of generational sin (punishment of the children for the sin of the fathers with corruption and perversion of their nature) is demonstrated in the effect of the sin of Adam upon all of his descendants. The word of God reveals that out of the evil desire of rebellion (*peshah*) in his heart Adam sinned by violating the commandment of God (*chattah*), which then resulted in the judgment of God upon his descendants in the corruption and perversion of their nature (*awvone*). This principle is revealed in Leviticus 4:3 where, in speaking about the sin offering of the High (Anointed) Priest, it states, “if the anointed priest sins so as to bring guilt on the people.” The High Priest was the representative of the people before God and, for this reason, his own personal sin brought guilt upon all of the people he represented. Adam was the representative for the human race and his own personal sin brought guilt which resulted in the consequence of the corruption of his own nature and the nature of all who were born of him (Psalm 51:5). Again, Romans 5:12 reveals “through one man, sin entered the world” and Romans 5:19 declares “through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners.” This is theologically called the doctrine of “Original Sin” because Adam’s sin, which was historically the first and original, resulted in the fall of the human race into sin, which resulted in the sinful corruption of our nature, and from that sin all other sins originate. Original sin is generational sin in the ultimate sense because it is the visiting of the *awvone* of the first father upon all of his children.

Sometimes it is erroneously stated that the Lord Jesus Christ did not teach about generational sin. While not explicitly addressing the subject of generational sin, He affirmed the teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures saying, “Do not think I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17). This would include the Scriptural teaching about generational sin. Most significantly, Jesus explicitly spoke about generational sin on another occasion. Addressing the religious leaders who rejected Him, He declared that the reality of generational sin was operating and would come to fruition in His generation so that God’s judgment would be executed upon them. He said, “For this reason also the wisdom of God said, ‘I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute,⁵⁰ so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation,⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation” (Luke 11:49-51). Jesus not only speaks of the personal sin of those in His generation but of the accumulated generational sin over the centuries that would be charged against that generation. Thus, He explicitly affirmed the Scriptural teaching concerning generational sin.

PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE THOUGHT TO ANNUL GENERATIONAL SIN

While Christians believe in the doctrine of Original Sin, some Christians interpret and believe Scripture teaches that the principle of generational sin does not continue to operate as a principle of judgment by God for the specific sins of the fathers upon their children. They believe that at some point in history God annulled the principle of generational sin and therefore the principle no longer applies. However, when one understands the distinct meanings of the three Hebrew words as well as what God actually states in these passages, it can be seen that these verses do not teach that the principle of generational sin is annulled by God.

The following verses and passages are frequently interpreted to teach that the principle of generational sin has been annulled and no longer applies to people, and specifically God’s people.

(a) Deuteronomy 24:16 states, “Fathers shall not be put to death for *their* sons, nor shall sons be put to death for *their* fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin (*chattah*).” Because this passage speaks about the “sin” of a “son” and the sin of a “father,” some think this passage is speaking about generational sin and interpret it in a way which means the principle of generational sin cannot or no longer applies to God’s people. This interpretation, however, is in error and the passage is not speaking about generational sin for the following reasons:

First, and most importantly, the Hebrew word used in this context is *chattah* and not *awvone*. This passage is speaking of distinct outward acts and deeds that are a violation of the law of God. The use of *chattah* and not *awvone* demonstrate that the verse is not speaking about generational sin.

Second, the verse speaks of a son who has sinned (*chattah*) and that the son’s father is not to be put to death for the sin of his son. The principle of generational sin does not operate backward through the generations from a son to his father or parent. It only operates forward through the generations as punishment on children because of the sin of the parents.

Third, the verse speaks of sin (*chattah*) that is of the nature and category deserving capital punishment - “everyone shall be put to death for his own sin (*chattah*).” In the law of God, certain sins are designated as capital crimes while other sins can and are to be forgiven (Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 19:22). Because this verse states a law concerning the application of capital punishment for *chattah*, it is evident that this verse pertains to civil law and the execution of capital punishment by authorities for those who have committed a capital crime (Leviticus chapter 20). It specifically prohibits the capital punishment of a father or son for the capital crime of his son or father. This, in fact, was observed in the history of Israel. 2 Kings 14:6, in speaking of the capital punishment of those who murdered king Amaziah, states, “But the sons of the slayers he did not put to death, according to what is written in the book of the Law of Moses, as the LORD commanded, saying, “The fathers shall not be put to death for the sons, nor the sons be put to death for the fathers; but each shall be put to death

for his own sin” (also 2 Chronicles 25:4). While the punishment of generational sin by God upon the children is a punishment for sin, it is not capital punishment.

Fourth, the foundational principles of the interpretation of Scripture (hermeneutics) are (a) Scripture interprets Scripture and (b) each word and verse are interpreted in context. Deuteronomy 24:17 is a civil law legislating capital punishment for certain sins that deserve capital punishment. It is stated after the foundational revelations of God’s Moral Law in the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and His Name in Exodus 34. It is a misinterpretation of Scripture to think that God would state the principle of generational sin in these two foundational contexts and then, about 38 years later, annul it by a civil law which will pass away.

(b) Jeremiah 31:29-30 states, “In those days they will not say again, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’³⁰ But everyone will die for his own iniquity (*awvone*); each man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth will be set on edge.” While this verse does speak of “*awvone*” in the context of “fathers” and their “children,” and does affirm the continuing application of the principle of generational sin, it does not teach that generational sin will be annulled for the following reasons:

First, it is important to note that the statement quoted by the people is based on an understanding that the principle of generational sin is operating in their lives. It is not a denial of generational sin, but the acknowledgement of it. This, by the way, demonstrates that the people living centuries after Deuteronomy 24:17 was written by Moses understood that the principle of generational sin was being applied to them.

Second, the verse states that the people of God, who are identified as “the children,” are themselves sinning against God. They have and are committing *awvone*. In this context, *awvone* has the first sense of meaning, that it is an act that is corrupt and perverse - “everyone will die for his own iniquity (*awvone*).” This is clearly not punishment that is visited upon them by God but of their own corrupt behavior in sinning against God.

Third, it is evident that the people are suffering for sin. In the words of the proverb, their “teeth are set on edge.”

Fourth, the people are blaming their suffering on the generational sin of their fathers and not their own sin. This is the meaning of the proverb, “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” In other words, our father’s sinned and because of generational sin, we are suffering for it.

Fifth, the people are saying, our father’s sinned and we are suffering for it but we do not deserve to suffer for our father’s *awvone* because we are righteous. In effect, this is an accusation against God that He is unjust in allowing them to suffer. This is the root reason God specifically speaks to the people using this proverb.

Sixth, it is because of the accusation against God that He responds “each man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth will be set on edge,” meaning each person will suffer the consequences of their own sin, their own *awvone*, “everyone will die for his own iniquity (*awvone*).” God’s justice will righteously apply to everyone.

Seventh, God states, the punishment for their own *awvone*, their own corrupt and perverted actions, will be that “everyone will die.” The punishment of generational sin, which is the corruption and perversion of human nature, is not death. If it were, everyone would die and no one would continue living.

Eighth, because of God’s sovereign acts of judgment that will come about in the history of His people, they will learn that they cannot use the sin of the fathers as an excuse for their own sin or accuse God of injustice because of their suffering. As a consequence, “in those days” which will come, they will no longer use this proverb. What will take place is, not that the principle of generational sin will no longer be applied, but that the proverb will no longer be used.

(c) Ezekiel chapter 18 is another passage of Scripture that is sometimes interpreted to teach that God would at some time in the future nullify the principle of generational sin. It is a lengthy passage that quotes the

proverb stated in Jeremiah 31:29-30 and elaborates on it in great detail. The passage begins quoting the same proverb that was stated in Jeremiah 31:29-30. "Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ² 'What do you mean by using this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, 'The fathers eat the sour grapes, But the children's teeth are set on edge'? ³ 'As I live,' declares the Lord GOD, 'you are surely not going to use this proverb in Israel anymore. ⁴ Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins (*chattah*) will die'" (Ezekiel 18:1-4). Then the passage goes on to compare and contrast following generations and what will be the outcome of their lives. Verses 5-9 deals with a man who "is righteous and practices justice and righteousness" detailing his works of righteousness and concludes in verse 9 stating, "'if he walks in My statutes and My ordinances so as to deal faithfully - he is righteous *and* will surely live,' declares the LORD God." Then verses 10-13 deal with his "violent son" concluding with the rhetorical question and declaration, "...will he live? He will not live! He has committed all these abominations, he will surely be put to death; his blood will be on his own head." This is followed in verses 14-19 with a description of the son "who has observed all his father's sins (*chattah*) which he committed, and observing does not do likewise" (v.14) and concludes saying that because he walks in the ordinance and statutes of God "he will not die for his father's iniquity (*awvone*), he will surely live." The conclusion is in verse 20, "The person who sins (*chattah*) will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity (*awvone*), nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity (*awvone*); the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself."

The passage in Ezekiel is a lengthy and detailed elaboration of what was briefly dealt with in Jeremiah 31:29-30. It exposes the same excuse for their own sin and an accusation that God is not just as revealed in verse 25 and again in verse 29. Verse 25 says, "Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not right.' Hear now, O house of Israel! Is My way not right? Is it not your ways that are not right?" And verse 29, "But the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not right.' Are My ways not right, O house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are not right?" The depth of the problem of which God is dealing has called for the length with which God has had to address it in the whole chapter.

Because this passage is an elaboration of Jeremiah 31:29-30 the same reasons, as presented above, apply to this passage and do not annul the principle of generational sin. The proverb does speak of a "father" and a "son" and even a third generation "son" and does refer to *awvone*; however, it is clear that the passage is dealing with *chattah* which is the outward actions that violate the Law, "ordinances" and "statutes" of God. The *awvone* spoken of in this passage is used in the first sense of the word, which is a person's own corrupt and perverted behavior. Of significance is the detailing of the three generations of the "righteous man," his "violent son," and then the son who "observed all his father's sins" and does not commit them. This reveals even further insight into what constitutes the nature of generational sin, which is the second sense of *awvone*, that it is the propensity and inclination toward a specific sin and not the inevitability of committing that sin (see below).

While the verses and passage above are frequently interpreted to teach that generational sin is annulled, this is not what they actually teach. To the contrary, the principle of generational sin continues to operate as a means of judgment by God for the specific sins of the fathers and mothers upon their children.

(d) John 9:1-3 - While this passage is in the New Testament, which was written in Greek and not Hebrew, the passage is also frequently cited as annulling the principle of generational sin. It reads, "As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. ² And His disciples asked Him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?' ³ Jesus answered, 'It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.'"

Upon seeing a man who was born blind, Jesus' disciples asked why this man was born with this physical handicap, and then offered two possible causes. The first is whether the man himself sinned and, as a result, was born blind. This question was based on the commonly held understanding that a person could sin in the womb and a consequence of that sin could be a physical handicap. The second is whether this man's physical handicap

was the consequence of his parent's sin. Clearly, this is the principle of generational sin that the disciples, as well as the Jewish culture of Jesus' day understood to be operating in the lives of God's people.

It is significant to understand that both of these possibilities are based on Scriptural principle that sickness is connected to and can be a direct consequence of sin.⁷ Today a number believe this principle to be annulled due to their interpretation of Jesus' response which they believe would go something like this: "No, neither this man's sin nor his parent's sin have anything to do with his physical handicap because sickness is not connected to a person's sin and the principle of generational sin was annulled by God at some time in the past. The reason this man was born physically handicapped is the one and only reason that anybody and everybody is born physically handicapped or has sickness, and that is that God Himself has willed it so that His works would be displayed and He be glorified."⁸ Such an interpretation of Jesus' words actually asserts two things. First, there is only one reason for all sickness and physical handicap, and that is that God directly wills it to take place. The second is that God wills all sickness and physical handicap to display the "works of God" in them, which means they should all be healed. It is evident that this interpretation of Jesus' words is not correct and is intended solely to annul the principle that sickness is connected to and can be caused by sin.

It is vital to observe that Jesus' response actually affirms the reality of the disciple's two possibilities while revealing that there is a third possibility that can take place as a reason for physical illness or handicap. First, He said, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents." These words do not annul the principle that sickness is connected to sin, but affirm the reality of it. He says the disciple's possibilities can operate in the lives of people yet neither of these principles applies to the man that was born blind. Then he states the reason why this man was born blind, which is that it is an exception to the rule of the Scriptural principle that sickness is connected to and can be the consequence of sin. He says that God sovereignly permitted the man to be born blind with the greater purpose that He would be glorified by Jesus healing him.⁹

The Scriptural principle that sickness can be and is the consequence of sin was affirmed by Jesus in one of the most important healings that revealed Who He is, the healing of the paralytic who was brought to Jesus by his four friends (Matthew 9:2-8; Mark 2:2-12; Luke 5:18-26). The Scripture states that Jesus "said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven'" (Mark 2:5). Why would Jesus say this if the man's physical illness was not directly connected to and a consequence of his sins? The man was brought to Jesus so that He would heal him yet it is clear that Jesus understood this man's sickness was connected to his sin and that is why He forgave him. It is because Jesus forgave the man's sins that the scribes objected saying, "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mark 2:7). Jesus then makes the bold statement,

7 This principle is set forth vividly in the curses of the covenant that are listed in Deuteronomy 28:15ff that come as a consequence of sin. There are numerous examples of this in Scripture, such as Miriam in Numbers 12:10 and King Uzziah in 2 Chronicles 26:19, both suffering leprosy as direct punishment from God for their sin. In Psalm 32:3-5 David writes, "When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴ For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah. ⁵ I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"; and You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah."

8 It may be noted that some Christians would not interpret Jesus saying this on the grounds of their belief that it is never God's will for anyone to be sick, that God never wills the illness or handicap of anyone. Such a belief, however, is at odds with the explicit statement of Jesus that the reason he was born blind was "for the glory of God." In this regard, the very words of God spoken to Moses in Exodus 4:11 may be quoted: "The LORD said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes *him* mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?'"

9 The book of Job, and what happened to Job, is based on the Scriptural principle that sickness is connected to sin. This was the theological principle that Job's friends were operating on. Their error was that in certain cases, as with Job, God permits sickness for His greater glory. They were not rebuked for believing that sickness can be connected to sin, but that it is always and only connected to sin, and particularly in the life of Job. This principle is also demonstrated in the life of the Apostle Paul where he prayed three times for the Lord to deliver him from his "thorn in the flesh" but the Lord, in His sovereign wisdom, allowed it to remain for a greater purpose (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

“Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven’; or to say, ‘Get up and pick up your pallet, and walk’? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” - He said to the paralytic, ‘I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.’ (Mark 2:9-11). What is the theological principle underlying Jesus’ words to these scribes, “*But so that you may know the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins*”? The scribes understood and believed the same thing that Jesus’ disciples believed, that sickness is connected to and can be caused by sin. It is because of this that Jesus posed the question, “Which is easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven” or to say “Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk.” While forgiveness of sins is a reality that takes place in the invisible spiritual realm, physical healing takes place in the visible realm. An individual may or may not know that a person’s sins are forgiven, but they will know that a person is healed. Jesus said “Your sins are forgiven” and because the scribes understood and believed that sickness is connected to sin, Jesus healed the man (visible physical reality) demonstrating the man’s sins were forgiven and proving His authority to do so (invisible spiritual reality). Thus, the healing of the paralytic affirmed the Scriptural principle that sickness can be connected to sin.

This principle is also basic to directions concerning prayer for healing of the sick in the book of James, which was written after the New Covenant was inaugurated. James 5:14-16 directs the sick person to call the elders of the church to pray in faith and anoint him with oil for his healing. Verses 15 and 16 state, “and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.” Why is this stated if the Scriptural principle that sin can be and is connected to sin was annulled by Jesus in His words recorded in John 9:3? To the contrary, James words are in complete agreement with what Jesus said in John 9:3 as well as in the act of healing the paralytic. This can be seen by James words, “if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.” James affirms the reality of a person’s sickness being directly connected to his sin. It is for this reason he says, “Therefore confess your sins...and pray that you may be healed.” Through confession of sin, a person’s sin will be forgiven. This will then make the way for the prayer of faith for his healing to be effectual. This is what Jesus affirmed and demonstrated in the healing of the paralytic. However, James also affirms what Jesus said in John 9:3, that not all sickness is directly connected to sin, for he begins with the conditional word “if” - “if he has committed sins.”

As is seen from the words in James, Jesus’ response to His disciple’s question did not annul the Scriptural principle that sin is and can be connected to sickness but rather actually affirmed the reality of it. And one of the possibilities for physical illness is “the parents” sin, which is generational sin. Thus, Jesus’ words in John 9:3, far from annulling the principle of generational sin operating in the lives of people, actually affirms it.

(e) Galatians 3:13-14 - This is perhaps the foremost passage in the New Testament that is presented for the belief that generational sin has been annulled because it states, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us - for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.” These words are interpreted and applied to mean that when a person comes to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ the power of *all* curses are *automatically* broken, removed and no longer operate in the Christian’s life, and this would, therefore, include the curse of generational sin.

This interpretation and application of this verse is inaccurate because it confuses the critical distinction between justification and sanctification.¹⁰ Justification is the legal declaration that a person stands righteous before God, as opposed to a person being declared unrighteous and standing under the sentence of condemnation. The primary issue in Galatians is how a person is justified before God, whether it is on the basis of one’s own works according to the Law or through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ who actively fulfilled the righteous requirements of the Law and then died on the cross to make atonement for sin. Justification through faith alone in Christ is the one-time declaration of legal standing before God that saves a person from the penalty of sin, and justification is addressed in Galatians chapter 1 through 5:12. This verse is in the midst of Paul’s teaching on justification. Sanctification is the continual process in this life of the application of justification as the be-

10 See below, “Salvation from Generational Sin”

believer is being saved from the power of sin operating in their life. While the believer in Christ positionally died to sin (Romans 6:2) and has been “set free from the Law of sin” (Romans 8:2), sin still operates and manifests through the fallen nature called “the flesh” and so the believer is progressively sanctified as they “crucify the flesh” and “walk in the Spirit.” This is addressed in Galatians 5:13ff. As Galatians states, while the penalty of all sin is automatically dealt with by justification through faith alone in Christ so that the believer’s legal standing is righteous, the power of sin is not automatically dealt with and thus there is the necessity of sanctification. Generational sin is one aspect of sin being inherited sin. Just as the power of the generational sin inherited from Adam does not automatically cease to operate in the believer but continues in the flesh, so generational sin is not automatically dealt with. The power of sin operating in the believer’s life must be addressed through the process of sanctification.

The specific context of this passage is not sanctification but justification. It begins in verse 10 citing a specific curse of the Law that is relevant to the issue of justification, “For as many are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the Law, to perform them’” (Galatians 3:10). The quotation is from Deuteronomy chapter 27 and is most significant because it demonstrates that curses of the Law, and specifically the curses from this section of Deuteronomy, continue to operate in the present time, for if they did not the quotation would be meaningless. People who seek to be justified on the basis of their own works according to the Law yet do not do everything required by the Law have this specific curse operating in their lives. Paul then quotes two Old Testament verses demonstrating that justification is not on the basis of one’s own works but through faith: “Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, ‘The righteous man shall live by faith.’ However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, ‘He who practices them shall live by them.’” The argument is clearly about justification, not sanctification, and because no one can keep the Law in order to be justified, this specific curse of the Law is operating in their life. Paul then addresses the matter of this curse of the Law saying, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us - for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’ (v.13). Christ’s death pays the price to set us free from the curse of the Law that is specifically being identified which has to do with justification. When one comes to Christ this specific curse of the Law that deals with justification is automatically annulled.

While Christ’s death is the basis for redemption from all curses, all curses are not automatically annulled so that they do not operate in the believer’s life. The curse of death still operates, woman still have pain in childbirth, people still sweat and toil during work, and the power of sin still manifests through the flesh in the believer. It is a misapplication of the verse to infer that all curses for sin, including generational sin, are automatically annulled when a person becomes a believer. For this reason, beginning in Galatians 5:12, Paul addresses the matter of dealing with the power of sin and sanctification. It is through the process of sanctification that the power of sin and the curses that result from sin are dealt with in the believer’s life, and one category of sin is generational sin.

(f) I Corinthians 7:14 - This is another passage in the New Testament and is significant for a number of reasons in terms of the how the family unit stands in relationship to God. It is because of this that some may also interpret it as annulling generational sin. It says, “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.” It is the last statement, “otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy,” that some may misinterpret.

The key to understanding the passage is the meaning of the word “holy” and “sanctified” which is the same word in Greek and means “make holy”. Some may interpret this to mean “without sin.” The statement, “your children are holy,” would then mean they are “without sin” and, by implication, would mean that they are not subject to generational sin. However, this is not what holy means in this context, for at least two reasons. First, it is a fundamental principle of Scripture that all people, including children of believers, are conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5) and born with a fallen, sinful nature. Second, the passage states the unbelieving spouse is made

holy (“sanctified”) through the believing spouse. This does not mean that the unbeliever is made to be without sin, for it only through believing in the Lord Jesus Christ are a person’s sin(s) forgiven. For these reasons, the statement “your children...are holy” cannot be interpreted as annulling the principle of generational sin.

The word “holy” in this context is covenantal language. It is by reason of the legal ground of the covenant of marriage that the unbelieving spouse and their children are made “holy,” meaning that they are made a part of the covenant relationship God has with a believer. Having covenant relationship with God does not mean a person is saved. This is demonstrated in the history of Israel in which every person in the nation was in covenant relationship with God but most were not true believers and saved. They were holy in relationship to God by reason of His covenant, but not holy in regard to their sins being forgiven. For the unbelieving spouse as well as children, who may or may not be true believers, being made holy means they can receive the blessings of God’s promises to His covenant people. In effect, it states the complementary principle of blessing that comes through the legal ground of covenant. This, however, does not annul generational sin, for the children are still born with a fallen, sinful human nature.

GENERATIONAL SIN

What then is generational sin? Generational sin is defined as **“the inherited corruption and perversion of human nature that creates the propensity to sin in specific ways that one’s fathers and mothers sinned to the third and fourth generation.”** It is important to fully understand this definition and in order to do so each aspect will be singled out and followed by an explanation.

(a) **“the inherited”** - A fundamental law of creation is that organisms reproduce “according to their kind,” whether they are plant or animal life (Genesis 1:12, 24-25; 6:20). This means that organisms will reproduce according to their own specific and particular characteristics, qualities and traits that identify and distinguish them from everything else. This process is called “heredity.” Heredity is the process of inheritance, which is the transmission and passing on of attributes, qualities and characteristic to an “heir” which is the “offspring” or “seed” of that ancestor. The principle taking place with generational sin is that the *awvone* of the ancestors is transferred or passed on to the children. This process is identified as God “visiting” the *awvone* of the fathers upon the children” (Exodus 20:5; 34:7).

The reality of the transfer of sin from a person to someone or something else is an essential theological and ontological¹¹ principle. It is essential to the reality of substitutionary sacrifice in which something dies in the place of the worshipper to make atonement for their sin. The principle of the transfer of sin to the substitutionary sacrifice was expressed in the directions for the sacrifices in Leviticus by the worshipper who was to lay their hand on the sacrifice (Leviticus 1:4; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33). The principle of the transfer of sin to a substitute was essential to the annual sacrifice on the Day of Atonement when the High Priest was to “lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness” (Leviticus 16:21). The words, “he shall lay them on the head of the goat” demonstrate that through the act of the High Priest, who represented the people by laying both his hands on the head of the goat, the sin of the people was transferred to the goat and would be “sent away into the wilderness.” This is not mythological or metaphorical of something that remains a “mystery” but the actual transfer of sins to the substitute.

This principle of the transfer of the sin of an individual and a people to someone else who becomes the substitutionary sacrifice is the most basic and critical theological and ontological principle of the salvation of all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The term that theologians most often use of this reality is “imputation.” Imputation is the legal as well as actual transfer of the sin of a person to Christ Who died in their place. “Impu-

11 “ontological” means “having to do with being, existence and reality.” “Ontological principle” means it is a principle of what is, what exists, and what is real by reason that God created it and it exists, is, and is real.

tation” is critical to both the transfer of the sin of the believer to Christ as well as the transfer of the righteousness of Christ to the believer. Through faith, and faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ, the sins of the ungodly sinner were transferred to Christ Who died as a propitiation for their sins and they receive the free gift of Christ’s righteousness which is transferred to them by which they are justified, or declared to be righteous before God (Romans 3:22-28; 5:5). While the substitutionary sacrifices in the Old Testament were temporary and could not permanently make atonement for sin (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 10:1-4), the one sacrifice of Christ paid for and secured redemption for His people because their sins were actually and truly transferred and imputed to Him and He died for them (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 7:27; 9:12).

In the revelation of Scripture, as well as virtually every culture, heredity involves two distinct aspects, and these two things apply to generational sin. First there is the legal authority by which the inheritance is given. Second, there is the actual the transfer, passing on or “visiting” of the inheritance to the heir. These two aspects of inheritance apply to generational sin as follows:

(1) The Legal Authority: Curse - The first aspect of an inheritance is the legal authority by or on which the inheritance is given. In the language of the Bible, “to inherit something” means “to come into possession of it.” For example, the people of God “inherited” the “promised land” by coming into possession of it. An inheritance can be either good or evil. An inheritance that is good is a life-giving benefit in one aspect of life or another, and for this reason is identified as a “blessing.” An inheritance that is evil or bad takes away life by bringing death to a person in one aspect or another of their existence. This is identified as a “curse.” Thus, a person, family or nation can come into possession of a life-giving blessing that benefits them or a curse that brings evil in some way. This is seen in the numerous passages in Scripture that speak of blessings and curses, foremost being Genesis 1:28; 3:16-19; 12:3, Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28.

While that which is inherited is identified as a “blessing” or “curse,” these same words are used to identify the legal authority or “ground” that is the basis on which the “blessing” or “curse” is inherited. The legal authority or ground of a blessing may or may not be given based on actions. For example, the blessings at the beginning of creation were given because of God’s love and goodness toward His creation (Genesis 1:22: 28). And, of course, the blessing of salvation comes to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ by grace. Blessings are also a consequence of actions, more specifically obedience to God (Genesis 22:16-17; Leviticus 26:3-13; Deuteronomy 28:1-14). The legal authority and ground of a curse comes as a consequence of actions, specifically as a punishment for actions that are disobedient to God (Genesis 3:14-19; Leviticus 26:14-43; Deuteronomy 28:15-68). Generational sin is inherited on the legal authority and ground of a curse that is released and established in the lives of the children to the third and fourth generations as a consequence of the sin of the ancestor.

There are different means by which the legal authority and ground of an inheritance can be established, such as a spoken word through which an inheritance is bequeathed, or a written legal instrument or document called a “will.” In Scripture, we see both of these means used by God to create the legal basis on which blessings and curses are released and established. At the beginning of creation, God released and established blessings through and on the basis of His spoken word (Genesis 1:22, 28). We see this also in the blessings given to the Patriarchs in which God spoke to them on many different occasions. God also released and established blessings on the basis of the written Law of the Covenant established through Moses (Deuteronomy 30:15-20).

From the very beginning of human history, curses have been released and established in the human race. After Adam and Eve sinned, God released and established curses upon and in the human race as a consequence of their sin. The basic principle of a curse is the consequence of sin brings death (Genesis 2:17; 3:19; Romans 5:12). The Scripture shows that the curse of death involves many aspects of human existence, i.e. spiritual death in relationship with God (first and foremost), social death in relationships with people, psychological death in relationship to one’s own person, environmental death, physical death, and ultimately eternal death with complete separation from God and all His blessings. Genesis also shows us curses that are oriented and directed in specific ways i.e. childbirth will be painful and difficult, the earth will grow “thorns and thistles”, work will be

“by the sweat of your face”(Genesis 3:16-19). The legal authority of these specific curses is the spoken word of God that He pronounced as a consequence of the sin of Adam and Eve. All these curses continue to operate in the lives of all people in the human race whether one is a Christian or not.

Critical to understanding curses is that there are specific curses for specific sins and these continue operate in the lives of people. This was declared and written in the Law of the Old Covenant (Deuteronomy 27:15-26; 28:15-68). As stated above, the Apostle Paul, writing in the book of Galatians, states that the curse of the Law continues in the New Covenant age, which began with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He states, “For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them’” (Galatians 3:10). This statement, written to the church in Galatia, would be meaningless and without application if “the curse of the Law” did not continue into the New Covenant age. The Apostle goes on to state further that “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us - for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’” (Galatians 3:13). This statement would also be meaningless and without application if the curse of the Law did not continue into the New Covenant age, and it is for that reason that Christ redeems from that curse everyone who by grace believes in Him. The point of these statements in Galatians is that unless a person personally believes and receives the provision of the salvation that Christ provided, they will continue to live their lives under the curse of the Law, which means such a curse continues into the New Covenant age.

Just as the curse of death and other specific curses continue on in the human race, so does the curse of generational sin. Generational sin is inherited on the basis of the legal authority and ground of a curse that is the consequence of the sin of the ancestor. The fact that the declaration of generational sin was given in the context of the revelation of God’s name which is the revelation of His nature, shows that the curse of generational sin is not arbitrary but is based on the very nature of God. Being based on God’s very nature, it was established on the basis of the spoken and written word of God.

(2) That which is inherited: Corruption - The second aspect of an inheritance is that which a person comes to possess. In the case of generational sin, that which is inherited is the corruption of nature. This is the meaning of the Hebrew word *awvone* when used in the second sense of the word, that it is the corruption and perversion of human nature that is the consequence of sin. When a person sins, it not only makes a person guilty before God which is one’s legal standing, but causes one to become unclean from the pollution of the sin.¹² Scripture states that it is the “*awvone* (iniquity) of the fathers that is visited upon the children” (Exodus 20:5; 34:7). The “visitation” of the *awvone* of the fathers is based on the guilt and is the consequence of the guilt. This “visitation” is manifested not merely in legal standing, but also in the corruption of the person. In every place the principle of generational sin is stated, it is *awvone* that is “visited” upon the children and of which God causes the children to inherit.

(b) “corruption and perversion of human nature” - The Hebrew word *awvone* used in the second sense is always used to identify generational sin. The basic meaning of *awvone* is “to ruin, twist, warp, bend, distort, pervert, make crooked.” This is what happens as a result of generational sin as “visited” upon the children.

Biological science has identified that the traits of an ancestor are transmitted to its descendants or seed through the molecular process and mechanism of the DNA of the genes (units of heredity). Within the gene, a molecule of DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) contains the code of instructions for the development and function-

¹² The concept of two distinct aspects of the nature of sin (the legal violation of the law of God bringing guilt and the consequence of its effect on the person who sinned) is stated in Leviticus 5:2-3 where a person touches that which is unclean. The act of touching something unclean is a violation of the law and makes one guilty. Then, as a consequence, there is the contamination from the pollution of the unclean thing that makes him unclean. This distinction is also visually demonstrated in the Altar of Burnt (Whole) Offering, where the blood was poured to receive forgiveness of sin, and the Laver, where the priests washed to be cleansed from the pollution caused by the sin so they would then be able to approach God’s manifest presence in the Tent of Meeting.

ing and the particular aspects of the organism. DNA is not unchangeable and static but can and does change over the generations. This change does not naturally take place across the lines of a species or kind¹³ (Genesis 1:11, 21; 6:19) but it does take place within the distinguishing lines and borders of a species. For example, a horse is the identifiable species of a horse, and not a bird or fish, and can change and transition to become a particular breed of horse that then reproduces according to that breed. Through heredity, specific and various traits, qualities and characteristics that distinguish a particular breed of horse will accumulate along the genetic lines so that it will take over that particular breed while it will breed out other traits, qualities and characteristics. For example, a “thoroughbred” racehorse, which is bred to win a horse race, will be different from a Clydesdale horse, which is bred to pull a heavily loaded wagon. This principle is true for all organisms.

Humankind was originally created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27). After the fall of Adam into sin, a change and corruption of human nature entered into the nature of the human race. This change was then inherited by Adam’s descendants so that Adam became the father of a son “in his own likeness, according to his image” (Genesis 5:3). The distinguishing qualities, characteristics and traits of Adam were inherited by his children; thus, they were human beings created in the image of God having inherited a fallen, sinful nature (Genesis 9:6).

The theological principle that sin is inherited through the process of being “visited,” transmitted or passed on to one’s descendants or seed is fundamental to the revelation of God concerning the nature of human beings since the fall of Adam into sin. The Scripture is clear that our fallen, sinful nature is inherited from Adam. Adam was the federal head and representative of the human race, and the entire human race was “in him.” His personal choice to rebel (*peshah*) and sin against God’s revealed commandment (*chattah*) was representative for all human beings and was the cause for all his descendants to inherit a fallen, corrupted, sinful nature (*awvone*). His personal sin became the legal authority and ground of the curse that is the covenantal basis for the punishment of sin to be inherited by all of his descendants. The word of God reveals that it was “through one man sin entered the world” (Romans 5:12) and “through the one man’s disobedience, the many were made sinners.” And I Corinthians 15:22 says, “in Adam, all die” meaning that all of Adam’s descendants inherit the consequences and effects of his sin. Therefore, we are born spiritually separated from God with a fallen and corrupted nature which the Bible identifies as “flesh” (Romans 7:14; 8:6-8; Galatians 5:16-21). This will eventually result in physical death and then eternal separation from God, which is “the second death” (Revelation 20:6, 14). This is the consequence and effect of the sin that has been inherited by all because of the original sin of Adam.

It is this same legal principle on which and by which generational sin is “visited” upon “the children.” The sinful actions of a father and mother become the legal ground and curse by which sin is inherited by their descendants.

(c) “that creates the propensity to sin” - Propensity is a predisposition and inclination. Generational sin is the *awvone* in human nature that creates the propensity to sin, which is to be distinguished from the inevitability of sinning. It is from this corruption and perversion of human nature that sinful desires originate. The Scripture speaks of these evil desires as the “desires of the flesh” (Galatians 5:17; see also Romans 6:12; 7:8; 7:14-24; Ephesians 2:3; 4:22). It is these evil desires that originate from the sinful nature that motivates people to sin by rebelling against God and His will, Law and commandments (*peshah*). Scripture speaks of this as “presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness” (Romans 6:13). When one “presents the members” of their body to sin, they act according to that sinful desire, which is *chattah*, or the act of violating the Law of God.

When this Scripture speaks of “the members of your body” it does not mean just the physical body, but also the mind/soul and heart. Ephesians 2:3 speaks of fallen human beings who live “in the lusts (desires) of the

13 Creatures do not naturally change or “mutate” across the lines and boundaries of a kind of species. However, a hybrid can be intentionally created.

flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind.” It is lust or evil desire that proceeds from the power of sin in the fallen human nature (Romans 7:14-21) that is the corrupting power in and upon human nature. Ephesians 4:22 describes human nature as “the old self (man) which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit (or deceitful desires).” Also, 2 Peter 1:4 speaks of “the corruption that is in the world by lust.”

The fact that the sinful, evil desires of the flesh come forth from the mind and heart and manifests in the acts of the body is evident from the teaching of Scripture. Jesus said, “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness” (Mark 7:21-23). And Galatian 5:19-21 states, “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these.” Thus, “presenting the members of one’s body to sin” includes both the attitude and dispositions of the heart and mind and as well as the actions expressed through the body.

Generational sin creates the propensity to sin by acting according to the evil desire to sin. Having the inclination toward evil desire, however, does not mean that one will necessarily and inevitably “present the members of their body” to that sin. This is key to understanding the nature of generational sin. The propensity to sin does not mean the inevitability and necessity to sin. This can be seen, for example, in Ezekiel chapter 18 which detailed the three generations of the “righteous man,” his “violent son,” and then the son who “observed all his father’s sins” and does not commit them. While the second generation son was “violent,” his son was not, thus demonstrating that sinning by acting violently was not necessarily inevitable. This son choose not to sin (*chattah*) as his father had (Ezekiel 18:14).

Perhaps one of the best examples of this is alcoholism in a family line. A person can have an alcoholic parent and inherit the generational sin of alcoholism. This propensity and inclination would be inherited as a genetic inclination or propensity. This would be manifested by their human nature being corrupted and perverted so that the sinful, evil desire to abuse alcohol arises within them. As a consequence, this person has a choice. They may choose to live according to that sinful desire and propensity and continue in the generational sin, or they may choose to not act according to that propensity to sin. A person who knows they have alcoholism in their family line because one or both of their parents were alcoholic may desire not to become an alcoholic and thus address this propensity and weakness by never taking a drink of alcohol. Or, a person may “present” themselves to that desire and continue in the generational sin. This illustrates the fact that generational sin is the propensity to sin and not the inevitability to sin.

(d) “in specific ways that one’s fathers and mothers sinned” - Specific sin committed by ancestors and inherited by their children is the nature of generational sin. This principle of life is observable in medicine. Typically, when a person visits a physician for the first time, they are required to fill out a form that has a list of numerous physical problems, diseases, and/or mental illnesses (i.e. depression, suicide, alcoholism, etc.) and they are to identify which, if any, of their parent and/or family member(s) had these ailments. Medical science has observed that specific ailments of a parent can be or are inherited by the children. If someone is coping with a specific ailment, whether physical or mental, this may be something that has been in the family line. While medical science identifies and names the ailment according to their own discipline(s), what is often taking place in a person is the effect of generational sin.

It is significant that the Scriptures speak of generational sin specifically as “the *awvone* of the fathers.” It does not explicitly state “the *awvone* of the fathers and the mothers.” The fact that Scripture only states “the fathers” could be interpreted as meaning that “the fathers” is a generic term which should include “both fathers and mothers.” This may be appealing to the postmodern way of thinking which has the worldview that is both anti-patriarchal (meaning opposed to the belief in fathers, as well as males being the head of their households) and egalitarian (meaning the equality of the males and females in every area of life), and in many ways, these concepts can and should be applied (Galatians 3:28).

There is, however, a very important theological reasons for the Scripture stating only “the fathers.” First, if it had said both fathers and mothers, then the Lord Jesus Christ would have inherited the generational sin coming through the family line of his mother and thus would have been born with a human nature corrupted and defiled by sin. But Jesus did not inherit a human nature that was *in any way* corrupted by sin. The Scripture is emphatic about this. Romans 8:3 states that His incarnation was “in the likeness of sinful flesh.” I Corinthians 5:21 says, He “knew no sin.” Hebrews 4:15 states He lived “without sin.” Hebrews 7:26 says, He was and is “holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners.” In the language of Leviticus, He was “without defect” (Leviticus 1:3; 21:17, *et al*). It is for this reason that He acted as the High Priest who did not have to first make an offering of atonement for his own sins (Hebrews 9:7) and “offered Himself without blemish to God” (Hebrews 9:14). If the human nature of Jesus was in any way corrupted and defiled by sin, He could not have been able to be the sinless substitutionary sacrifice Who made atonement for the sins of His people.

There is another critical theological reason why the Scriptures state only “the fathers.” The Word clearly says that all are “made sinners’ through and because of the sin of Adam, the father of the human race. Romans 5:12-19 states that it was through the sin of Adam, not Adam and Eve, that “sin entered into the world” (5:12), and human beings “were made sinners” (5:19). It is evident that sin and a sinful human nature is inherited through the sin of “the father” Adam, and not also through the mother. Once again, if sin and a sin corrupted human nature was inherited through the mother, Jesus would have inherited the generational sin of his mother causing Him to have a human nature corrupted by sin.

The question can then be asked, “Why is generational sin being defined as being “the inherited corruption and perversion of human nature that creates the propensity to sin in specific ways that one’s fathers and mothers’?” The theological reason and legal ground for this is, when a male and female conceive a child, they become “one flesh.” This is true of those who are married (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5) as well as of those who are not married. I Corinthians 6:16 states, “Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, “The two shall become one flesh.” It is on the theological principle and legal ground of the father and mother being “one flesh” that the generational sin of the mother comes through the father to the children.¹⁴ The father of the human nature Jesus was God, being conceived in the virgin womb of Mary through the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). For this reason, He did not inherit any generational sin to corrupt his human nature.

(e) “to the third and fourth generation” - This is explicitly stated by God that He visits the *awvone* of the fathers on “the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations” (Exodus 34:7). Because the generational sin will be passed down the family line for four generations, it means that the potential for a person inheriting generational sin will come, at a minimum, from 30 different people (2 parents, 4 grandparents, 8, great grandparents, and 16 great, great grandparents). Because of the principle of the legal ground of “one flesh,” this number will increase in different ways. One is through remarriage, whether it comes because a spouse dies or because of divorce and remarriage. The other is by becoming “one flesh” with another to whom they are not married (I Corinthians 6:16). By becoming “one flesh” in these ways, “the door is opened” for the generational sin to “infect the gene pool.” Thus, a person may inherit generational sin from a large number of people going back four generations.

DISCERNING GENERATIONAL SIN

Discernment is critical to identifying generational sin for there are a number of things that may be the cause of the affliction and/or corruption of a person’s nature. It may be physical, psychological or spiritual, with generational sin being only one of them. Causes other than generational sin may be:

14 Conception was created by God to take place through the act of physical union which demonstrates the male and female are “one flesh.” With modern medical science, conception can now take place apart from this physical act. However, the theological principle of “one flesh” remains the legal basis and ground for inheriting the generational sin of both the father and the mother.

(a) Direct demonic attack upon a person because the individual “opened the door” and gave access to the spirit to afflict them.

(b) Demonic attack that is not the result of a person’s sin but because God providentially permits it for His own sovereign purpose. This is what happened with Job (Job 1:10-12; 2:6) and Paul (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).

(c) Sickness and illness that is completely physical and due to any number of causes, such as one’s abuse of their own body, “catching” a communicable disease, digesting toxins, receiving an illness from an outside cause such as malaria from a mosquito, or chemical imbalances of any kind.

(d) Psychological reasons

(e) God providentially is not allowing blessings to come for His sovereign purpose and reasons, such as Abraham and Sarah not being able to conceive until God’s appointed time (Genesis 18:10; Romans 9:9).

The fundamental principle to discerning generational sin is that “a tree is known by its fruit” (Matthew 12:33). The fruit is connected to the root, and it is the root that must be discerned. The fruit, however, will lead to the root.

There are any number of generational sins that may inherited. Frequently occurring generational sins are:¹⁵

Abandonment	Abuse: emotional, physical, mental, sexual	Addictions	Anger, rage
Control	Emotional Dependency	Fear - all kinds	Idolatry
Manipulation	Money extremes: greed, poverty	Not caring for children	Parental inversion
Physical Infirmities of any kind	Possessiveness	Pride	Rebellion
Rejection, Insecurity	Religious bondage, cults	Sexual sin and perversion	Unbelief
Unworthiness, low self-esteem	Violence	Witchcraft, occult, Satanism	

This is merely a list of frequently occurring manifestations of generational sin. It can also be observed that some effects of generational sin may be seasonal. This may due to idolatrous worship or witchcraft of the ancestors during a certain season of the year. The effects of generational sin can be seen through out the Scriptures in places that speak of curses for sin such as Leviticus 26:14-46 and Deuteronomy 28:15-68.

SALVATION FROM GENERATIONAL SIN

The Bible reveals that there are three fundamental and interrelated aspects of the work of God in saving His people from the consequences of their sins. These are:

(1) Justification - Justification is salvation from the penalty of sin. It is salvation from the consequences of what a person has done (Romans 1:18-5:21), which is death or eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23). Justification is the once-for-all legal declaration by God, acting as the Sovereign Judge, that, through faith alone

15 The list is taken from *Restoring the Foundations*, Chester and Betsy Klystra, p.125

in the Lord Jesus Christ a person is declared to be righteous (justified) before Him and given the gift of eternal life. In the act of justification, the sins of the person are forgiven and the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ is imputed (transferred, credited) to them. The result of justification is (a) the legal standing of the person before God is “no condemnation” (Romans 8:1) (b) no charge can be brought against them which will condemn them to hell or separate them from the love of God (Romans 8:31-19), and (c) being in Christ, they are “positionally” dead to sin and alive to God (Romans 6:1-11; Galatians 2:20).

There is a distinction between “acceptance of a person” and “approval of their works or deeds.” Justification is the legal basis on which a person is accepted by God as His child. However, all children of God in this world continue to sin and, therefore, God will not approve of those sinful actions (I John 2:1-2). This means two things. There is the continual need to confess our sins in order to be forgiven (I John 1:9). This is the specific application of justification to specific sins. Then there is the continual need to be transformed in our nature so that we do not continue to live under and according to the power of those specific sins, thus, the need for sanctification.

(2) Sanctification - Sanctification is salvation from the power of sin. Whereas justification concerns the legal standing of the believer which saves a person from the evil fruit of *what they have done*, sanctification is the salvation of a person from the evil root of *what they are in their fallen, sinful nature, the flesh* (Romans 6:1-8:39). Sanctification (which means to “become holy”) is a continual process of the application of salvation to the believer that comes from being born again or regenerated by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3; Titus 3:5). They no longer live in and according to the power and evil desires of the flesh but live in and according to the desire and power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 7:5-6; 8:2; Galatians 5:16-25). It is the transformation from what a person is in Adam to what they are in Christ, to become like Christ (Romans 8:29; 12:2). This takes place by putting to death the works of the flesh, crucifying and dying to the evil sinful desire of the flesh, and living in and according to the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 6:12-14; Galatians 5:23).

(3) Glorification - Glorification is salvation from the presence of sin. This will take place at the resurrection. It is the completion of the work of salvation from sin and its consequences in the life of a believer (Romans 8:17-23, 31).

Salvation from generational sin is based on justification and applied to a person in the process of sanctification. There is first the taking away of the legal ground of the curse by forgiveness of sin and then the transformation of the believer’s nature by the power of the Holy Spirit to become like Christ. Salvation from generational sin is not instantaneous or automatic at the time of justification for a believer is not instantly and completely sanctified when they are born of the Spirit. It is the continuous application of the work of salvation to the believer’s life. While every analogy has its limitations, there are three from the Old Testament Scriptures that are illustrative of this process.

(a) The people of Israel taking possession of the Promised Land - By a sovereign act of God, the people of Israel were given legal authority or the right to take possession of the land that God promised to give them. However, they had to take possession of it. In order to take possession, they had to actually go into the land trusting God’s promises and power to defeat their enemies, which is what all the people who died in the wilderness did not do. Then going into the land, they had to overcome their enemies by conquering the walled cities that were in the land. The conquering of the cities was not instantaneous or automatic but something that was a process whereby each enemy and each walled city had to be attacked and defeated. Although the people of God had the legal right and authority to the land, if they did not defeat those enemies by the power of God, the enemies would remain in the land, which is what happened.

By analogy, salvation from generational sin is not something that happens instantaneously or automatically when a person becomes a believer in Christ and is justified. The process of sanctification must take place in the believer’s nature whereby they are transformed to no longer live under the rule of sin and power of specific sins.

This is like the walled cities that must be individually attacked and overcome. First, the curse of generational sin must be broken which comes by confession and forgiveness of the sin. This gives the legal authority and right to be delivered from the corruption of generational sin. For this to take place, a person must attack and conquer the power of the corruption of their nature by the power of the Holy Spirit to be transformed to become like Christ.

(b) The priests drawing near to the manifest presence of God in the Tabernacle/Temple - The Scriptures reveal that in order for the priests to enter the holy place of the Tabernacle/Temple, two things had to take place. The first was that forgiveness of sin had to be received. This took place at the Altar of Burnt (Whole) Offering when the blood of the substitute was poured out to break the curse and legal ground of sin. The second was the priest had to be cleansed from the pollution of sin. This took place at the Bronze Laver where the priest washed before he entered the holy place.

By analogy, the curse of generational sin must first be broken by confession and forgiveness of the sin. Then the pollution of generational sin resulting from the corruption of one's nature must be cleansed. I John 1:9 refers to both of these when it states, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous (just) to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The distinction is made between forgiveness, which deals with the guilt and curse of sin, and cleansing, which deals with the pollution and corruption of sin. The referenced Scripture does not speak about forgiveness and cleansing as a once-for-all time event when the believer comes to saving faith in Christ; rather, it is something that the believer is to do each time one becomes conscious of their specific sins as the Holy Spirit convicts them.

(c) The Sin Offering and the Day of Atonement - The third analogy from the Old Testament Scripture is expressed in the book of Leviticus by two different offerings to take away the sins of a person. These two offerings were the Sin (Purification) Offering (Leviticus 4-5:13) and the offering made by the High Priest on the annual Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). The offering on the Day of Atonement was a yearly general offering made for the sins of the people. The Sin Offering was made for specific sins committed by a person. Leviticus 5:2-3 speaks of sins that make a person "unclean" that are "hidden" from that person yet the person is guilty. When he becomes aware of his sin, he is to confess this specific sin (Leviticus 5:5) and then make a Sin Offering in order to be forgiven (Leviticus 5:10). This illustrates (a) that specific sin makes a person guilty, (b) that specific sin can be hidden from a person and the person will be subject to the consequences of the guilt of that sin, and (c) that the specific sin must be addressed for the person to be forgiven and cleansed from it.

By analogy, when a person comes to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in general on the basis of justification, their sins are forgiven like that on the Day of Atonement. However, specific sin, such as generational sin, must be specifically addressed, which is the whole matter of sanctification. Most often, generational sin is initially "hidden" from a person and, by the grace of God through the Holy Spirit, they become aware of it. Becoming aware of it, they must address it so they can be forgiven and cleansed from that specific sin.

HOW TO BE SAVED FROM GENERATIONAL SIN

While there is no place in Scripture that a specific "recipe" is given for salvation from sin and its consequences, and in particular salvation and deliverance from generational sin, the principles are stated in Scripture.

(1) Confess the generational sin of your fathers and mothers

Confession of sin is a fundamental principle and prerequisite for forgiveness of and cleansing from sin. Proverbs 28:13 states, "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion." Confession is also conditional as written in I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous (just) to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." As is self-evident from the passage, this cannot be speaking about a once-for-all-time" confession that a person makes upon professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a continual process that deals with specific sins. If specific forgiveness is to take place one is to confess their specific sin. When one becomes aware of their specific sin they

are to confess it. An example is David in Psalm 32:5 where he states, “I acknowledged my sin (*chattah*) to You, and my iniquity (*awvone*) I did not hide; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions (*peshah*) to the LORD ‘; and You forgave the guilt (*awvone*) of my sin (*chattah*).” It was after confessing his sin that he was forgiven.

The Bible shows us that the sins we are to confess are not only our own personal sin but also the generational sin of our family line. This is revealed in the book of Leviticus, which sets forth the foundational Biblical principles for forgiveness and cleansing from sin. Leviticus reveals that confession of sin is a prerequisite to forgiveness and cleansing from sin. Of significance is only three times is the act of confession of sin stated in the book of Leviticus and these three occurrences deal with three different kinds or categories of sin that must be confessed in order to bring forgiveness.

(a) Specific sins - The first category is confession of sin for specific sins committed by an individual. This is stated in Leviticus 5:5, which is the first time in Scripture that confession of sin is explicitly stated. The context is that specific sin would make a person guilty before God and would require a Sin Offering (Leviticus 4-5:13). It is the worshipper who is to personally confess the specific sin that made him guilty before God. It states, “So it shall be when he becomes guilty in one of these, that he shall confess that in which he has sinned (*chet*)” (Leviticus 5:5). The worshipper is to confess his specific sin that violated the Law of God before making the offering that would bring forgiveness of his sin (Leviticus 5:10).

(b) Sin in general - The second category of confession is of sin in general, the sin of the covenant people of God, which was to take place on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). Leviticus 16:21 states, “Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities (*awvone*) of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions (*peshah*) in regard to all their sins (*chattah*); and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send *it* away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness.” On this day, the High Priest, acting as representative of the people, confesses in general the *awvone* of the people, along with their *peshah* and *chattah*.

(c) Generational sin - The third category in Leviticus of confession required for forgiveness of sin is for generational sin. This is explicitly stated in Leviticus 26:40 which speaks of “the iniquity (*awvone*) of their forefathers” (Leviticus 26:40). The context is the culmination of the curses of the covenant that ultimately resulted in the nation being cast out of the holy land and taken into captivity in the land of their enemies. It deals with the remedy required by God to be forgiven of generational sins that resulted in the curses of the covenant coming upon the people. It states, “If they confess their iniquity (*awvone*) and the iniquity (*awvone*) of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me - ⁴¹ I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies - or if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity (*awvone*), ⁴² then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land” (Leviticus 26:40-42). These words state the fundamental covenant principle that, in order to be restored to enjoy and live in the blessings of the covenant, confession of “their *awvone*” and “the *awvone* of their “forefathers” must take place, which is confession of generational sin.

The fact that confession for generational sin is a distinct category of sin that was required to be confessed in order to be forgiven demonstrates that generational sin, “the *awvone* of forefathers,” is a reality that must be specifically addressed because it is a specific kind and category of sin. While a person who comes to saving faith in Christ is justified and receives forgiveness for their sin (by analogy in the general sense as on the Day of Atonement), the process of sanctification takes place as they continue to confess their own personal specific sins (by analogy illustrated in the Sin Offering) and the specific sin of “the *awvone* of their forefathers.”

One of the most significant examples of this is in the life of Daniel (Daniel 9:16). The context is that Daniel was one of the most righteous and godly people who ever lived, being called “highly esteemed” by God three times (Daniel 9:23; 10:11, 19). He was among the first of the people of Israel to be taken out of the Prom-

ised Land into captivity in Babylon, which was the fulfillment of the curses of the covenant recorded in Leviticus 26. After reading in the prophet Jeremiah that the captivity would be seventy years (Daniel 9:2; Jeremiah 25:11-12), he says, “So I gave my attention to the LORD God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. ⁴ I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said...” (Daniel 9:3-4). The following verse show that Daniel prayed and confessed, not merely his faith in the covenant promises of God, but his own sin and the generational sin of his people. He said, “And now, O Lord our God, who have brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and have made a name for Yourself, as it is this day - we have sinned, we have been wicked. ¹⁶ O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins (*chattah*) and the iniquities (*awvone*) of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all those around us” (Daniel 9:15-16). Daniel specifically confessed his own sins (*chattah*) and “the *awvone* of our fathers,” which included the generational sin of his own family line. While Daniel was personally righteous and had confessed his own personal sin, he nevertheless understood that he had to confess the generational sin of his family line to be forgiven - why? Because of the requirements God stated in Leviticus 26:40 – in order to be fully restored, confession of the *awvone* of his forefathers must take place. Because the nature of generational sin is specific, it is vital to, as best as possible, confess the specific generational sin of one’s family line.

(2) Repent and ask for forgiveness on the basis of the blood of Jesus

Because generational sin is the corruption of our human nature, it is critical to repent of the sin. This deals with the heart intention and commitment to turn away from the sin to live in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Forgiveness of sin addresses and deals with the legal ground of the guilt of sin and the curse that allows sin to continue in the life of a person. For the guilt and curse of the sin to be released, the sin must be forgiven. Because generational sin is specific sin, the specific sin of the curse that is the legal ground for generational sin needs to be forgiven.

(3) Verbally break the power of the generational sin

Often spiritual things are confirmed and made real through the spoken word; therefore, we must personally “take the offensive” to attack and break the power of the curse of generational sin through our spoken words. Just as a person may ask someone to forgive them of a sin they committed against them, the person can forgive them in their heart, which is essential to forgiveness (Matthew 18:35), yet, it is vital to verbally declare, confirm, and make it real by the spoken word, “I forgive you.” In a similar way, by speaking a word verbally break the power of generational sin.

It should also be noted that it is important to verbally address evil spirits that may have had legal ground to access the person’s life because of generational sin.

(4) Identify with your true identity in Christ

Generational sin is the corruption of our nature and is, in essence, an aspect of the flesh. Freedom from the power of sin working in the flesh comes first by understanding, identifying, and reckoning ourselves to be dead to sin and alive in Christ (Romans 6:1-11; Galatians 2:20). Romans 6:11 states, “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” A critical aspect of this freedom is to be transformed in our minds according to the truth of God’s word so that we can learn how to discern and recognize the will of God, act upon it to become more like Christ, and thus prove ourselves good and acceptable in God’s sight (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 5:10; Hebrews 5:14).

(5) Be filled with the Spirit

The power to live in obedience to Christ and not according to the fallen nature is the Holy Spirit. Romans

8:2 states “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.” We are to live in, by and according to the Holy Spirit and not the flesh. In order to do this, we must “be filled with the Spirit,” as Ephesians 5:18 states, which means to appropriate by faith the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit into our lives.

(6) Walk in the Spirit and do not let sin reign in you

The power of the fallen nature and generational sin operates and manifests through deceitful desires and thoughts (Ephesians 2:3; 4:22). To live in the Spirit, we must not yield to the evil desires of the flesh but walk in and according to the Spirit (Romans 6:12-14; 8:13; Galatians 5:16-25).

PRAYER FOR HEALING AND DELIVERANCE FROM GENERATIONAL SIN

The following is simply a model prayer that can be used for healing and deliverance from generational sin.

My Father in heaven, I pray to You in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is my Lord and Savior. I believe and confess that Jesus died to make atonement for all of my sins and rose from the dead, and is now ascended, exalted and enthroned at Your right hand in heaven. Because of this, He has all authority in heaven and earth, and the authority to forgive me and my family line of generational sins.

I thank You that the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ in shedding His blood on the cross is the basis on which all my sins can be forgiven. I stand before You having no condemnation because I am justified, having been declared righteous through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I pray now and confess the specific generational sins of my fathers and mothers to the third and fourth generations.

Name the specific sins, such as adultery, or rejection, or idolatry because of participation in the Freemasons, whatever the Holy Spirit brings to the light.

On the basis of the blood of Jesus, I ask that you would forgive me for sinning against You in these ways. I ask that You would forgive my fathers, mothers and all in my family line who have sinned against You in this way.

Because You have forgiven me and my family line of this sin, I now break the curse and the power of it in my life and in my family line.

I now reckon myself dead to this sin because my true identity in Christ is that I have died to sin and am alive in Christ.

I ask you to fill me with the Holy Spirit so that I will not walk in this sin and will walk in obedience to You.

Thank You, Father, for your grace and salvation freely given to me; thank You, Lord Jesus, for Your blood shed so that I could be saved from the penalty, power and presence of sin; thank You, Holy Spirit, for the blessing of Your life-giving presence and power. To God be the glory both now and forever. Amen.