

Introduction

The tension in this subject is created by the Doctrine of Total Depravity in general and the Doctrine Imputation in specific. In Romans 5:12-21 it is clearly and absolutely taught that man is born with Adam's sin imputed to him at conception. This sin entails both the resulting total depravity of the person as well as the just judgment of God upon this sin.

The question then is begged, "How can children who die young be saved?" This is a good question and before beginning the study I will freely admit that the answer is not absolutely clear. It is my belief, after a careful consideration of the passages presented by God in His Word that children who die young are indeed saved. Before beginning this study though it is important that we come to our conclusion in accordance with God's Word and not simply because of a personal moral objection. In so doing we will address some of the wrong ways to come to this conclusion.

1. **"It is not just"** – This of course is completely unacceptable. Everything God does is just. His justness is not decided by our emotional reaction but by the fact that He did it. If He acts then it is just. When our emotions collide with the actions of God then we must adjust our emotions. What we feel has absolutely no ramifications on the justness of God. If God sent all unborn and newly born children who die young to Hell because of Adam's imputed sin it would indeed be both good and just, because all of God's actions are good and just.
2. **"It is not fair because they did not have a chance to believe"** - This statement is erroneous on two counts. First it appeals to fairness. We do not want God to be fair. If God is fair we all go to Hell. Grace, receiving that which is not deserved, is in itself unfair. To receive eternal life not on the basis of works, is in itself unfair. The whole system of the Substitutionary Death of Christ is inherently unfair on two counts.
 - a. First it is supremely unfair to Christ who, after leading a perfect and sinless life on earth, unfairly pays for our sin by being judged by God on the cross for that which we did.
 - b. Secondly it is unfair with regards to man who unfairly goes to heaven without merit or reference to his works.
 - c. In all questions of Heaven, Hell and Salvation we do not want to discuss fairness. The only fair and equitable solution upon consideration of the sinless nature of Christ and the depravity of man, is that Jesus after living out his perfect life on earth, does not have to pay for our sins, returns to heaven to reign and then we all go to Hell – that is fair.
3. **"It is not fair because they did not have a chance to believe"** - We must remember that all mankind is justly under the condemnation of God. That we are born sinful, without hope, dead and with no chance. It is because of the Doctrines of Grace, Mercy and Election we have a chance, not because of any works or actions on our part. Whether a person enters an eternity in Hell at 6 months or at 60 years, that eternity is the same and unchanged. The tragedy is equal and the chances are the same no matter the age of the person who dies. Once we are

reconciled to the existence of Hell for all unbelievers, not on a bases of their works but rather on the basis of their position as apart from Christ, then we are reconciled to the Sovereignty of God in this area. 2

4. **“How could a loving God...?”** These lists go on and on. It is important therefore before we start to reconcile and embrace the nature of God. God is good, God is sovereign, God is loving and God is just. All that He does is characterized by these attributes. If we respond to any action of God in a critical, questioning or incredulous manner, that reflects on our sinful nature and not in any way upon God.
 - a. There are many actions of God which man responds to in a questioning manner. These questions on mans part in no way bring into question the nature of God, but rather reveal the nature of man. The creation of Hell, the commands to slaughter women, children and animals in the conquering of lands, the deaths of women and children and seemingly innocent bystanders in His judgments through famine, flood and other disasters, the fact that He does not reveal Himself so clearly and so overwhelmingly that all receive Him and come to Him for Salvation, there are these and more.
 - b. A good example is the Revelation of the Noah’s Ark in the Word of God. This has become over the years a pretty children’s story, but when one looks more closely it was a horrible event. All the animals died by drowning, all women died by drowning, all children died by drowning, all infants died by drowning, all the unborn died through eh drowning of their mothers, all special needs children died by drowning, all the babies, children and unborn in the entire world died by drowning, none had a chance, none were invited to the Ark, God simply let it rain and rain and rain till they all drowned. Yet we accept this as good, just and loving. We in fact make it one of the most universally told and loved children’s stories in the Bible, even though in this short stories more children died than at any other time in recorded history. In fact every single child on the face of the earth was drowned by God.
 - c. In the same way we must accept God’s decisions in all areas of life, death, Heaven and Hell as good, just and loving. It is the pagan, in response to the salvation message who demands, “How could a loving God...?” or “My God would never...?”. We must remember that these are pagan responses, not Christian. The Christian response is, “God is good and just, I am wicked, teach me that I might see, feel and respond with the mind of God and until I do teach me to trust God and God alone.”
5. **Trusting in the Sovereignty of God we now turn to the Word of God.** But before doing so, we must come to this conclusion. No matter what the Word of God says, we will not question the goodness of God nor His rights in this area. Should God say that He sends the unborn or small children who die young to Hell based upon the imputed sinful state of mankind then we accept that as good and just, in the same way we accept that He sends the Hindu, the Jew and the Humanist, who have devoted themselves to a life of good works, to Hell. The teenager, the young adult, the young married couple, the career man, the grandparent, the senior citizen and the aging great grandmother in the nursing home and the comatose octogenarian on life support ebbing out the last days of

6. **The Tragedy of death and particularly of dying young** – The fact is that we all die “young”. The Word of God teaches that we are a James 4:13-14 “14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.”

I. Age of Accountability:

There is no definite use of the phrase, “age of accountability” in the Word of God. This however does not make it an invalid term. Neither can you find the word, “Trinity” in the Word of God but we know it to be a very useful term to describe and summarize an indisputable doctrine. In the same way I feel that the concept of the Age of Accountability is addressed though the term is one coined by theologians and not given to us in the Word of God. There are a number of passages which point to the reality of their being an “Age of Accountability” as to the judgment of God.

A. Deuteronomy 1:39

39 'Moreover, your little ones who you said would become a prey, and your sons, who this day have no knowledge of good or evil, shall enter there, and I will give it to them, and they shall possess it.

1. This passage is one of Doctrinal Revelation in which God gives a teaching concerning the nature of small children as well as God’s response to this nature. It should remember that this is a crucial event in the Doctrinal typology of the Old Covenant, that being the transition from slavery in the Egypt to the giving of the land and Kingdom as promised to Israel.
2. In God’s judgment of the entire nation of Israel He differentiates between the adults and the “little ones” who, “have no knowledge of good or evil”.
3. These little ones “shall enter there”.
4. God then makes a differentiation in the consequences of sin between adults and children.
5. This is no small thing given the nature of the decision. It is not an inconsequential action being taken but rather the entering into the promised land from Egypt, a Biblical type of salvation and the kingdom of God.

B. Isaiah 7:15

Isa 7:15-16

15 "He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good.

16 "For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.

1. Again we have here a Doctrinal Revelation passage. In the context of God’s speaking to Israel through the prophet Isaiah some of the great Messianic prophecies are given. Specifically in the context of this passage is the Virgin birth of Christ.
2. In the context of these great Messianic Doctrinal Revelations God as well reveals to us something of the nature of small children.
3. He refers to what we call the Age of Accountability, that age when “He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good.”

4. Thus in this passage we have a second Doctrinal Revelation supporting the Age of Accountability, which is given to us in a great Messianic passage. 4

C. Jeremiah 19:4

Jeremiah 19:4-5

4 "Because they have forsaken Me and have made this an alien place and have burned sacrifices in it to other gods that neither they nor their forefathers nor the kings of Judah had ever known, and because they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent

5 and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it ever enter My mind;

1. This passage is the third Doctrinal Revelation concerning the Age of Accountability. It is given in the context of God's judgment of the nation of Israel for their sins and as such is of great consequence, in that all of God's dealings with Israel in terms of their history and judgments are types or pictures of God's dealing with mankind in general.
2. Here God speaks of small children, when killed by their pagan parents, as "the blood of the innocent".
3. Thus not just the children of the elect, but even the children of rebellious parents, doomed to the judgment of God, are deemed by God as "innocent" because of their age.
4. We know that God did not have to make this aside statement. In the conquering of the Canaan, in the Flood of the world, in the judgments on the land of Israel, in the slaughter of the first born of Egypt, God justly kills the young and the unborn time and time again. God could have judged Israel without reference to the small children being innocent, but He did not. God went out of His way to describe these children as innocent.

D. II Samuel 12:21-23

21 Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept; but when the child died, you arose and ate food."

22 And he said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows, the LORD may be gracious to me, that the child may live.'

23 "But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."

1. Having established a Doctrinal basis for the belief and teaching of an 'Age of Accountability we will now look at two Historical Revelations given to us by God of the application of this truth.
2. In this first passage God has declared that in judgment of David's sin with Bathsheba his child will not live. David's response has been to fast and pray in such a fervent manner that his servants despair even for his life. Yet when the child dies, David, rather than mourning gets up and resumes his schedule.
3. The explanation he gives is of great interest, "I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."
4. If David knew that his son was in Hell because of the sinful manner of his conception, his being born into sin both with the sin of Adam and that of his parents, he would take no comfort in his death, nor would he take

comfort in the fact that he too was going to Hell, if that is what this passage means.

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5. Rather this passage clearly teaches that David took great comfort in the fact that he would spend eternity with this small newly born child in Heaven. That David would “go to him”, e.g., join him in heaven. This does not refer to death, for if so it would not only be of no comfort to David, but the more commonly used phrase, “return to dust” or “return to the earth” or “sleep with the fathers” would be used. No, this passage refers to an joyful, expectant reunion in heaven which far overshadows the pain of separation through physical death.

E. I Kings 14:12 & 13

12 "Now you arise, go to your house. When your feet enter the city the child will die.

13 "And all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him, for he alone of Jeroboam's family shall come to the grave, because in him something good was found toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.

1. 1. In this second Historical Revelation of the application of the “Age of Accountability” as mentioned in the preceding Doctrinal passages we find an interesting situation.
2. The context of this passage is a great judgment which is to come upon Jerusalem and king Jeroboam as revealed by the prophet of God.
3. The death of this child is an act of mercy, that it might not suffer the degradations and terrors of the wars, famines and chaos which God is bringing upon this city.
4. Why shall this child be spared, why shall this child be mourned? “because in him something good was found toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam”
5. This is a statement in which God contrasts His view of the “good” found in the child versus the rest of the king's entire extended lineage.
6. Given the Doctrine of Imputation and Total Depravity we do not understand how this can be the case. God does not explain it, but simply states it as true. Provision was somehow made for the unborn and small children and we accept it at face value.

F. Conclusion

1. In Doctrinal Revelation passages God teaches an “Age of Accountability” in terms of His judgments. He teaches the concepts of innocence and separation of children from the judgments of both families and nations, be they the elect of pagan.
2. In the accompanying Historical Revelations of God we see the comfort which man is to take in the knowledge that the unborn and small children are in Heaven with God.

II. God's Special Ownership of Children

In both the Old and New Covenant God expresses His special ownership of children. That children are differentiated from those lost to God is of great doctrinal consequence. No where in my studies have I found passages where God specifically expresses that children are lost to Him nor have I found passages expressing God's just anger towards children, rather just the opposite – that children are His special possession and that He feels compassion and love in His special provision for children. This special ownership

A. Ezekiel 16:21

Ezek 16:21

21 "You slaughtered My children, and offered them up to idols by causing them to pass through the fire.

1. The death of these children is deemed especially heinous because of their ownership by God. "You slaughtered My children..."
2. This goes beyond the generic ownership of all creation or all mankind by God. If this were the case He would be expressing anger at all deaths. Rather than a generic anger, God expresses a specific anger at the abuse and treatment of "My children".

B. Matthew 18:12 – 14

Matt 18:12-14

12 "What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying?

13 "And if it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray.

14 "Thus it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.

1. Not only do the unborn and the small children belong to God but in addition to that He is specifically concerned with their salvation.
2. Notice the statement of Jesus, "it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish."

C. Luke 18:16

Luke 18:16

16 But Jesus called for them, saying, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

1. True, it may not be the will of God for them to perish, but perish they may due to the imputed sin of Adam. Just as it is the "will" of God that none perish but all come to repentance, yet some indeed do perish.
2. Yet the Word of God takes this ownership one step further, "the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."
3. Not only is it God's will but God has made provision.

D. Conclusion:

From these Doctrinal Revelations it is clear that...

1. The unborn and small children are viewed by God as His belonging to Him in a specific and personal way.
2. That as such, it is now His will that a single one of these little ones perish.
3. As a result of this God has made special provision, and in doing so includes the unborn and small children as being members of the kingdom of God.
4. Because of this we may take comfort that upon their death, the unborn and small children enter this heavenly kingdom of God as a result of their divine citizenship, which exists not on earth but in Heaven.

III. The reoccurring phrase, “better to die young”

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We now approach this subject a little more indirectly, from the back door, so to speak. The argument being that if the unborn and children who die young enter Hell, then the analogy will never be used, “better to die young”, because this would have meant certain entrance into Hell. Rather those experiencing severe trials would cry out, “at least I did not die young”, in other words, no matter how severe my trial, it is as nothing compared with an eternity in Hell. This however is not the case as revealed in the following Doctrinal Revelations.

A. Job 3:11 – 13

Job 3:11-13

11 "Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire?
12 "Why did the knees receive me, and why the breasts, that I should suck?
13 "For now I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept then, I would have been at rest,

1. In this passage we find Job, the supreme example in the Word of God of suffering. We know from the account of Job's suffering that in all his sufferings he did not sin with his mouth. In the context of this truth we find two important statements by Job.
2. First: "Why did I not die at birth..." for Job, the death of the unborn or small child is far superior than the suffering he was experiencing. We must realize, that no matter how much we suffer here on earth, it is a drop in the bucket compared to Hell. Job would have never said, "Yet, I may rejoice, that I did not die at birth..."

B. Ecclesiastes 6:3

Eccl 6:3-4

3 If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, however many they be, but his soul is not satisfied with good things, and he does not even have a proper burial, then I say, "Better the miscarriage than he,

4 for it comes in futility and goes into obscurity; and its name is covered in obscurity.

1. In Ecclesiastes we have an even more generic passage, one which is not linked to any specific circumstance or individual.
2. Again we have the statement, "Better the miscarriage than he..."
3. If the fate of the unborn were to spend eternity in Hell, God the Holy Spirit would not compare the fate of anyone as worse than Hell.
4. The fact that a miscarriage is better than the futility that goes with obscurity is evidence that the unborn child enters the care of God and is in better condition than any living man.

C. Conclusion:

If small children and the unborn, upon death enter Hell, their condition would not be viewed as better than any experience here on earth no matter how difficult. If small children and the unborn, upon death enter Hell, then those experiencing trials here on earth would not cry out for and envy their death. The Bible clearly teaches that to die young is better than to suffer, and from this we may confidently infer that to die young is to be in the comfort of the heavenly Father as opposed to the trials being experienced by those who live to adulthood here on earth.

IV. There Are Many Aspects of Grace Which We Do Not Fully Understand But Accept

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The nature of our salvation is at the same time, simple enough for a child to understand yet simultaneously so deep and intricate that we can spend a life time in the study of the great doctrines of salvation. In recognizing this we accept that there are many aspects of Christ's work on the cross and the gift of eternity by God that we simply do not understand. To name but a few...

A. Angels

1. Pre-existed the fall. Some angels fell before the fall of man, becoming demons. Sin therefore pre-existed the fall of man without affecting creation as a whole.
2. With the fall of man, all creation fell, yet Angels were somehow preserved from the fall. They continued as perfect beings after the fall, are saved, yet not by Christ
3. We do not understand how sin can be isolated to angels and not spread to creation, how angels were protected from the fall of man and the rest of creation nor how angels can be eternal and not destroyed with the rest of creation, yet not covered by the blood of Christ. We do not understand this yet we accept this as true.

B. Those who died before Christ

1. There are many men and women in Heaven who died before the blood of Christ was shed on the cross.
2. These men and women went to heaven when they died.
3. They did not suffer in Hell until the work of Christ on the cross.
4. None of these men or women "accepted Christ" as we understand it in the New Covenant, yet all were saved.
5. We do not understand how this works but accept it as true.

C. Those who die after Christ

1. There are many men and women in Heaven who have lived and died since Christ's blood was shed on the cross.
2. Christ paid the penalty for the sins of these men and women and their sins were placed on Christ on the cross even though at the time they had not only never sinned but were not even to be born, some for over a thousand years.
3. Yet their sins were placed on Christ and He paid the penalty of their sin.
4. We do not know how this works but we accept it as true.

D. Conclusion:

1. Just as we do not fully understand the spiritual economy of angels.
2. Just as we do not fully understand the spiritual economy concerning the salvation of those who died before the blood of Christ was shed for payment of their sin.
3. Just as we do not fully understand the spiritual economy of how sins which have not been committed by those who lived after Christ can be placed on Christ on the cross, that they might be saved.
4. In the same way we do not understand the economy of the salvation of the unborn and small children who die young. God has evidently made spiritual provision for these children, just as he did the angels and as he did for those who died before and after Christ.

5. Those who question this provision based upon the “justness” of God have no more ground to stand upon than those who are repelled at the thought 9 of God drowning all those children in the flood because of the “justness” of God. God is not just because we think of Him in those terms. God is Just because that is one of His Self-existent, Immutable, Transcendent attributes. If God does it, then it is Just. We look to the Word of God to understand the Just nature of God, not to our emotional reactions.

V. Children who die young and the unborn are saved.

These have not reached the age of accountability in the judgment of God. They are not held accountable for knowing good or evil and as such are held as innocent in the eyes of God. God claims special ownership of these children, calling them His own possession without reference to their parent’s spiritual state. He does not wish for any of them to perish and as such enrolls them as citizens in the kingdom of God. The saints of old recognized this truth and often would cry out that it is better to die as a baby and enter the kingdom and care of the heavenly Father than to experience the difficulties of life. We do not understand the provision made for these children on the cross any more than we understand the provision made for Angles at the fall of Satan, nor of those who lived thousands of years before or after the blood of Christ was shed on the cross, yet we accept it. No matter our personal feelings concerning the justness of God, in the final analysis, our feelings of His justness are meaningless and have no ramifications on His Eternal, Self-existent, Transcendent Attributes. All that matters is the Word of God and from these passages it seems clear that children who die young and the unborn are God’s special possession and as such are saved. God in His foreknowledge knew who these children would be and placed their sins on Christ on the cross so as to make provision for their eternal salvation.

What About Unborn Babies And Those Who Die Young (or the mentally undeveloped)

Introduction:

- A. The Bible does not specifically cover this topic.
- B. There is a problem with my answer – the Doctrine of Imputation
- C. I believe these are saved. If you do not, I know of no good purpose served in championing your belief to those who have lost babies. God is still good, just and right either way
- D. There are many aspects of eternal nature and salvation which transcend our temporal abilities to understand the workings of God.
 - 1. Angels
 - 2. The Word of God
 - 3. Those who predate the sacrifice of Christ
 - 4. Those who postdate the life of Christ

I. The Judgement of David II Samuel 12: 1 - 23

- A. What did the servants find inconsistent about David's behavior?
- B. II Samuel 12:23 "But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."

II. The "age of accountability"

- A. Though this term is never used in the Bible, the Law seems to allude to the concept.
 - 1. Deuteronomy 1:39 'Moreover, your little ones who you said would become a prey, and your sons, who this day have no knowledge of good or evil, shall enter there, and I will give it to them, and they shall possess it.
 - 2. 1KI 14:12 & 13 "Now you arise, go to your house. When your feet enter the city the child will die. And all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him, for he alone of Jeroboam's family shall come to the grave, because in him something good was found toward the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.

III. The Way In Which The Death Of Babies Is Used In Scripture

- A. JOB 3:11 – 13 "Why did I not die at birth, Come forth from the womb and expire? Why did the knees receive me, And why the breasts, that I should suck? For now I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept then, I would have been at rest,"
- B. ECC 6:3 If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, however many they be, but his soul is not satisfied with good things, and he does not even have a proper burial, then I say, "Better the miscarriage than he,
- C. II Samuel 12:23 "But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."

IV. God's Eternal Plan For The Unborn And For Babies

- A. PSA 139:16 Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Thy book they were all written, The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.

- B. MAT 18:12 – 14 "What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go 1 and search for the one that is straying? And if it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. Thus it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish."
- C. LUK 18:16 But Jesus called for them, saying, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

THEME: Those Who Die Young

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: II Samuel 12: 14 - 23

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Deuteronomy 1:39; I Kings 14:12 & 13

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Psalm 139:16

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

THEME: Those Who Die Young

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Matthew 18:12 - 14

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Luke 18:16

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Psalm 136:2 & 26

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?