

## The Lie of “Corporate (Systemic) Evil”, An Appeal to Covenant Responsibility (Duty)

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### Introduction

There is a YouTube video currently titled “Racism and Corporate Evil: A White Guy’s Perspective – Tim Keller” that is currently amassing views and being shared through Christian circles as many in the Church grapple with the current movements around perceived racism, injustice, police brutality, and the like in America.

Tim Keller is a highly respected teacher of the Christian faith, the author of 3 of The New York Times best selling books, and has no doubt been instrumental in the salvation and discipleship of millions, including my own. I have highly regarded his teachings over my years in the Christian faith, and have certainly gained knowledge and wisdom through what I have perceived largely as Biblically accurate teaching. For those unaware, he is currently walking through a new cancer diagnosis, to which my thoughts and prayers personally go out to him. If it would be His good will, may the Lord bless him and heal him.

In the aforementioned video, Mr. Keller uses several Bible passages as premise to arrive at several conclusions, such as:

- People as individuals are personally responsible and condemnable for sins of the race and culture that they’re in ( 2:08, 4:31, 7:14 )
- People as individuals are personally responsible and condemnable for sins that they did not commit by virtue of being a part of the human race (7:40)

*And, by way of his explicit statements and conclusions from his premises, he indirectly concludes:*

- White people are held responsible for their ancestors participation in slavery ( 4:31-5:25, 7:14 )

He then proceeds to preach implications, examples, and instruction on how to deal with these conclusions he arrives at. I would like to focus on one statement in particular that he makes:

*“You are responsible and you are condemned for what your ancestors Adam and Eve did. That is just by virtue of being in the entire human race you are responsible for things that you didn’t individually do. You are condemned for what they did.” - Tim Keller, 7:40 mins in*

Please take note of the use of the word “condemned”; the same word used by Jesus when He says to the women supposedly caught in adultery: “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.” (John 8:10). This statement of Mr. Keller’s is premised on the doctrine of federal headship found in Romans 5, as well as a passage in Joshua 7 and Daniel 9. Premised on these passages, Mr. Keller explicitly states that “... just by virtue of being in the entire human race you are responsible for things you didn’t individually do. You are condemned for what they did.” He is quite directly stating that you personally are responsible, and actually receive condemnation, for the specific sins of your ancestors by virtue of being associated with them as a human. By association as a human, he repeatedly states that he

means by culture and race. He explicitly raises the challenge that white people make to being told they are responsible for slavery ( 4:31 - 5:25 ), and by nature of his statements and conclusions implies that they are.

I believe, and would submit to you, that Mr. Keller has arrived at a false conclusion based on false premises, and I hope to be able to clearly articulate how this is so. One of the primary ways I submit that he arrives at his false conclusions is through the twisting of the doctrine of federal headship to mean something that it does not. However, I'd first like to examine the simple conclusions that he arrives at and test them against scripture before jumping to the premise of federal headship. So, for those whose minds jump to immediately justify his conclusion because of federal headship, please bear with me.

I do not believe his conclusion is Biblical, but for a moment, let's say that it is, and that you are personally responsible and are condemned for the sins of ancestors of the same race and culture. Even if this is so, any Gospel believing Christian knows that you are not in fact condemned for your sins if you have found Christ as your Lord and savior. You are forgiven, and, as aforementioned, you're commanded to "go, and from now on sin no more".

Mr. Keller does mention the Gospel and Christ as our federal head a time or two in this video, but he spends the bulk of the time arguing for Christian action on fighting matters of injustice and racism via, what I submit to you, ends up being a [legalistic appeal](#), and not based correctly on the appeal of the Gospel and obedience to God. I believe this quote from Wikipedia captures the definition of legalism well, saying: "the direct or indirect attachment of behaviors, disciplines, and practices to the belief in order to achieve salvation and right standing before God". Having listened to him preach about being saved by grace for years, and by his own mentioning of Christ as our federal head in his message, I'm certain he had no direct intention of preaching through such legalistic terms, especially not in regards to salvation. Nevertheless, I hope to clearly show how that is indeed how his message is structured, and what the dangerous implications of such false teachings are.

That said, let me say it now, and then hopefully prove to you, that if you believe in Jesus Christ as your savior, you are not condemned for your personal sins (or the sins of others), and the only correct appeal to be made for your fighting of injustice in this life is through the doctrine of "covenantal responsibility", also known as Christian "duty": not an appeal to your supposed guilt for the systems, culture, and race that you're apart of.

## **Breakdown**

Mr. Keller spends approximately the first 10 minutes of his message in the video using several Bible passages as premises to arrive at his conclusions of "corporate evil", "systemic evil", and our responsibility to fight them because of our own guilt and participation through our human association with those who have created them. The linchpin component of these conclusions is our supposed responsibility and condemnation for the injustice itself, as quoted previously. I'd first like to simply show how the Bible quite clearly stands against this statement, and then we'll dissect his premises and seek to expose the error in them.

Please consider the following verses (quoted from the ESV Bible):

Ezekiel 18:20 - “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.”

Deuteronomy 24:16 reads: “Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin.”

Genesis 18:22-26 - “22 So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the Lord. 23 Then Abraham drew near and said, “Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? 24 Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? 25 Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?” 26 And the Lord said, “If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake.””

Romans 1:32 - “Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.”

It does not require much cognitive effort to see the obvious in these verses; the righteous are not eternally punished, meaning held responsible or condemned, for the sins of the wicked, and each person is liable to judgment and eternal death for their own personal sin against God. Salvation in Christ is in fact a personal salvation; we are not saved because someone else in our culture, race, or family believed in Christ for their savior, as would be the parallel conclusion to be made using the line of thinking of “corporate evil”. It is our belief in Christ as our Lord and savior that occurs by the Spirit, by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-10), that we are saved, and it is for our personal sin that we need a savior.

The truths we see in these verses directly contradict the conclusions that Mr. Keller reaches; namely that *“... just by virtue of being in the entire human race you are responsible for things you didn't individually do. You are condemned for what they did.”* With such direct contradiction between Mr. Keller's conclusions and scripture, namely that the righteous are not responsible or condemned for the sins of others, then we must conclude that Mr. Keller's conclusion is false. If his conclusion is false, we must then question his premises as well, especially his use of Adam as our federal head, of which I submit the doctrine has been misunderstood and mis-applied. It should certainly be noted that the doctrine has several complexities that we'll lightly examine, but simply via the aforementioned verses we can see that Mr. Keller's definition and explanation of Adam as our federal head are not consistent with the rest of scripture, nor the implications that he submits come as a result. Therefore, the understanding and use of the doctrine that Mr. Keller puts forth must be incorrect.

Mr. Keller in his message says: “The whole structure of the Gospel is based on corporate responsibility. If you really want to go down all the way and say I am only responsible for what I have done and only I have done, there is no Gospel”. Given what I have just shown via scripture regarding personal responsibility for sin and belief, we in fact have here a complete perversion of the Gospel message by Mr. Keller. You can only in fact be condemned for your own personal sins. You are not responsible for the sins of others. “Corporate responsibility” is not a Biblical concept in the way that he attempts to define it. Yes, the Gospel is a message of personal salvation to those who will believe in Jesus as their savior and worship Him as Lord (Romans 10:9). This is why, as Jesus himself taught, all must find personal repentance from their sin in order to enter the kingdom (Matthew 4:17).

The logical flow of Mr. Keller's message is:

1. Based on the false conclusion of "corporate responsibility", we are all responsible and condemnable for the specific sins of the entire human race
2. From the conclusion of 1, we have a responsibility to fight the outcomes of these sins because we are a part of the structures and systems that results from them

This is the logical flow of legalism. In simpler terms, it is saying: "you have participated in these specific sins, and you are a part of them now by nature of the location and people group that you are a part of, so you must work to fight them". Mr. Keller is implicitly, and likely un-intentionally, adding work to your faith, effectively saying "You are guilty of sin by being associated with people of the same culture and race, so you must work to fight against the sinful outcomes if you are to call yourself a Christian". The Bible does not teach this; it teaches personal salvation in Christ through whom we are forgiven, given Christ's righteousness, and made holy by the Spirit, which, if truly at work in us, will result in personal obedience to God and loving of our neighbor by teaching them to be obedient to God. It is through this truth, that a Christian walk with God is marked by obedience to His commands, that we arrive at the doctrine of "covenantal responsibility", or Christian "duty". It is this doctrine that appropriately motivates a Christian to fight back evil in their place of work, school, etc.; it is this doctrine that is based freely in the grace of Christ and motivated through obedience to Him and His commands, not by association of guilt, responsibility, and condemnation for sins of ancestors of a culture or race.

I would submit the core fallacy of Mr. Keller's reasoning stems from the failure to recognize the context of the passages that he uses for premise; that is, that they are all addressing God's people whom He has a covenant with. He spends ample time arguing for "corporate evil" based on association with people groups and ancestors on the basis of skin color and culture, but that is not how the Bible addresses us. The Bible addresses us as God's covenant people with Him as our Father, and whom He disciplines in love (Hebrews 12). God does not distinguish race when He looks at His children: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." - Galatians 3:28-29.

From the moment we step into God's family we are brought into a covenant with Him; we are brought into that covenant by grace through faith, and if we truly have received the Spirit and joined the family then it necessitates evidence of works of the Spirit which sanctifies us, bringing us into the holiness of Christ and obedience to God's commands. It is through this work, and only this work, that we are given a responsibility to God and our neighbor to act with duty to push back the darkness of the world, and be the light and salt that we are called to be (Matthew 5:13-16).

The entire chapter of James 4 is an excellent passage to examine this concept. In it we see a list of worldly sins such as murder, the call to resist the devil, and the final nail in the coffin, in verse 17, which says:

"So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin."

So, if you know that murder is evil, that you're supposed to resist the devil, and that you're supposed to love your neighbor as you love yourself (Matthew 22:39), and you see your neighbor being attacked and you do not act, you are surely guilty of sin. It is because God has indeed called us into a covenant with

Him that we have the responsibility and duty to love our neighbors with God's law and to teach them to be obedient, thereby pushing back many forms of injustice and evil as we carry out our duty in our daily lives.

So, indeed as Mr. Keller states, albeit it through false premises, we do in fact have a responsibility to our neighbors and those around us. That responsibility, though, is rooted in our covenant relationship with God through Christ and our call to be obedient to Him and His commands; not because of some sense of sin or guilt for our participation in systems of the human race that are obviously always going to be broken by sin, because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Indeed, as Mr. Keller says in different terms, duty is currently a hard concept for westerners to grasp; not just the white ones that he paints a mark on in his message, but all westerners who think that they've done the right thing and been obedient to God when, instead of engaging and stopping people from being evil around them, they passively walk by a situation and think to themselves "How glad I am that I'm not like those people" (even though you once were before Christ saved you). In fact, how sinful it is that you stand by and allow your neighbors to continue in disobedience and harm one another.

John Calvin had the following to say regarding Christian duty that I think captures it well:

"All men have, as Calvin noted, "the duties of humanity as regards the Sixth Commandment." If they do not seek to prevent injury, assault, or murder, they are themselves in part guilty of the offense committed. The unwillingness in many instances of witnesses to act in cases of assault or murder may mean no entanglement on earth, but it incurs fearful entanglement and guilt before God." - "The Liberty Book", Chapter 4, Reference 7

The doctrine of Church discipline is a prime example of this concept of covenantal responsibility as well; we all in the Church are called to love one another by addressing sin in the lives of each other (Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13). We of course must do this after first seeking to make sure our eyes are clear of logs (Matthew 7:5, Luke 6:42), so we must ourselves be walking well on the narrow road before we are able to pluck specs from brothers and sisters eyes, but, none-the-less, we are commanded and called to strive side by side in this manner. We have a responsibility to our brothers and sisters to try and help snatch them from the snares of Satan. If we know the right thing to do, and do not do it, for us it is sin. So, if we see a brother or sister in sin and are not ourselves disqualified to speak into their life on this sin, and yet fail to do so, for us it is in fact sin.

So, by nature of covenant responsibility, we have a duty to one another in Church to fight sin together, and if we fail to do so then we ourselves are in sin! Here we do see great evidence of a "shared" responsibility to one another within the community of the Church, and it does lead to our own personal sin against God when we fail to perform our duty that we know we have, thereby resulting in our own personal condemnation for not having done the right thing. Since we are also called to love our neighbors as ourselves, we also must perform our duty to push back evil against them as well, though obviously not from a context of Church discipline if they are not professing faith in Christ. God looks at us as a family united in Christ, and handles us as one according to the responsibility that we have to the family and our neighbors. He holds us responsible to act righteously towards this family and our neighbors while we are alive on earth, but He does not hold us accountable or responsible for the sins of our ancestors (neither in the Church or based on race or culture).

Hopefully it is quite clear to see how starkly contrasted this concept of Christian duty is to the preaching of what I submit is the complete logical fallacy of "corporate evil" or "systemic evil". Those ideas seek to weigh down the Church and saints with guilt for the sins of the rest of humanity, historical and present,

based on culture and race, which ultimately only leads us to a place of legalism, raising up “social justice warriors” believing it’s their job to interrogate authority and employers for signs of perceived injustice ( in fact, it is not: John 15:15 ), and a destructive appeal as to why we should care about injustice in the world. It is my hope and desire to believe that this, Christian duty, is what Mr. Keller is seeking and striving at through his message and work in this area, but unfortunately has done so not through a proper Gospel appeal consistent with the Word.

## Examining The Premises

In another YouTube sermon of Mr. Keller’s titled “A Reason for Living”, which, by-the-way, is one of my all time favorite messages of his, he makes the statement: “If you start with a premise and you come to false conclusions, why the heck won’t you conclude that the premise was wrong. Why not think about the premise?”. Now that it is hopefully clear as to how Mr. Keller’s conclusions of “corporate evil” are false, we can examine his premises to see where the falsehood, or mis-use of that which may be truth, has occurred.

For all of the passages we will examine, I would highly encourage your own personal examination of the text so that you’re able to see all of the details yourself. Paraphrasing and personal summaries of Bible passages is frequently a dangerous path, because it leaves the listener trusting that the teacher has handled it correctly. All teachers are capable of sin and error in their teaching; not many should become teachers because we will be judged with greater strictness (James 3:1-2, 1 Corinthians 3:13-15). I hope to remain humble and open the possibility of being in error myself; I hope the tone and tenor of this paper displays this to be true.

For the passage of Joshua 7, I would highly recommend reading this breakdown [here](#); I will be taking the same line of thinking, namely that we can’t make conclusions based on scripture that violate other passages of scripture, especially when they at first seem to contradict. If there appears to be a contradiction, then it is we who have misunderstood what is being taught. I believe the author of the cited article has properly handled the Word; they address several of the verses previously discussed to show Mr. Keller’s conclusion to be false, with one important additional verse and explanation, which comes from Numbers 14:18-19:

“ ‘The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.’ 19 Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now.”

At first this verse seems to contradict the verses from Deuteronomy and Ezekiel that we examined earlier, which say God doesn’t condemn sons for the sins of the father, “each will be put to death for his own sin”, and so on; as the author of the article shows, there is no contradiction. Rather, this verse clarifies for us the realities that we do see at work in the world, namely that our ancestors’ sins do certainly bring consequences to future generations. The very important distinction and qualifier between this truth and Mr. Keller’s doctrine of “corporate evil”, is that this truth does not violate the other passages that tell us current generations are not responsible or condemned for the sins of their ancestors. Rather, we see it clarified that God does in fact bring consequences to future generations for the sins of the current ones, though the future generations are not “responsible” or “condemned” for the sin. This ought to give all the more “fuel to the flame” that we ought to have for Christian duty; our actions in the present will certainly impact our children and their children’s children.

Nowhere do we see that current generations are made to feel liable, responsible, or accountable for their ancestors' sins. A child is not held responsible or condemned for his parents divorce, though his parents divorce will certainly have consequences on the child and the broader community. In this sense, the consequences that Numbers 14 tells us will be brought to future generations may be seen as temporal punishment of God's people for their sins. Since they are temporal they can only be regarded as discipline so that God's people will return to Him and holiness. For the child whose parents get divorced, it is through these consequences and a broken family structure that the child will see ample motivation to strive for obedience and adherence to the covenant of marriage if they acquire it as an adult. This may prove true for a person who is saved in Christ, or one who is not. It is by means of God's common grace that even an adult who does not know God may still learn of the consequences of divorce through their childhood and strive not to enter into it. None of this, however, is the same as being held responsible or condemnable for the sins of ancestors. It is made clear through this passage, and others we will examine, that our Church ancestors (and I stress "Church", God's people, not "humanity") certainly can bring the discipline of God down on our generations, which when properly examined, motivates us back into obedience to God and the fulfillment of our duties to our neighbors.

It is important to note too, that it's not just direct consequences of sin, as in, if someone is murdered then clearly a life is lost and the impact is felt, but also there is actually a divine, providential curse that goes along with the disobedience. As was brought to my knowledge through "The Liberty Book", in Deuteronomy 28 we read the following from passages titled "Blessings for Obedience" and "Curses for Disobedience":

"And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. 2 And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God. 3 Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. 4 Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. 5 Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. 6 Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out."

...

"15 "But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. 16 Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field. 17 Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. 18 Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. 19 Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out."

Alarm bells may be ringing in your head screaming "Prosperity Gospel! Prosperity Gospel!", but upon honest examination we can see that is not indeed the case. The prosperity Gospel teaches a "work" of faith; that is that by having faith and showing good works we will earn material blessings and favor from God. The prosperity Gospel is clearly a distortion of this passage in Deuteronomy. By being God's people we have already found His favor; by believing in Christ you have been given righteousness, are made holy, and have already received God's favor by grace. You do not earn it; nor does your behavior earn any part of your salvation or mean you'll get what you want in this life. This passage in Deuteronomy does in fact teach a temporal blessing or curse from God on His people based on the state of their hearts towards Him, which is where our obedience stems from. If God's people are walking in disobedience

towards Him, His hand of discipline will be strong against them as we see with Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem in Lamentations. If, however, God's people are obedient to Him, then they will indeed find His favor and blessings as He sees fit.

One may be quick to dismiss these passages, citing that this is Old Testament theology and that we have Christ now, so the law has been fulfilled. However, Christ himself counters this when he says:

“... not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished” - Matthew 5:17-18.

While Christ's coming and resurrection certainly did usher in many changes, especially the abolishing of the ceremonial laws for atonement for sin that God's people were under, it did not change anything regarding God's character or covenants with His people. Since Christ has now come, we don't say “God might flood the earth again like with Noah!”; no, He made a covenant with us and He keeps it. In Ephesians 2:14-15, it is made quite clear that the abolished law was that of the “ordinances”:

“For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ...”.

Be not mistaken, God still rightly handles His people with blessing or curse due to their sin in this life, though they are saved eternally. It is through this discipline that He chastens His children and teaches them the fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11).

This passage in Joshua 7 is in fact an excellent example of this covenantal promise of blessings and curses playing out for God's people. Achan sins and steals some devoted items, reaping God's anger against all of Israel (Joshua 7:1). Because of Achan's sin, curse came to all of Israel. More curse comes in verses 4-5 when 36 of Israel's men are killed in battle. In verses 8-15, the Lord explains that their failure against their enemies has been ordained because of Achan's sin! It is made clear right here that physical death may be one of the consequences of curse for the sins of God's people, though eternally they who are of the Lord are still saved eternally, nor had they themselves committed a capital offense (a civil infraction of the law punishable by death). Let me repeat that; temporal death may be brought on people as consequence for the sins of others, even though said person is saved eternally and seen as righteous, nor themselves necessarily being guilty of any sin deserving a capital punishment. So while we may be disciplined and the object of a curse in this life due to the sins and actions of members of our community, even potentially resulting in our death, we are not eternally held responsible or accountable for them, nor would we even have been guilty and liable to punishment by death in a civil court for any sin we may have committed. In this passage, the Lord commands those who have sinned to be found, and through the exposing of Achan, Israel is restored to the Lord's favor and blessings! As the author of the cited article notes, while Achan's family is punished with him, it does not imply their own eternal guilt before God because of his sin, rather, they are punished too as part of the consequence and curse for his sin.

It is interesting to note that God does punish the family unit in this particular case. The “neighbors” or friends of Achan are not punished with him, only his family. Biblically speaking, the family unit is the smallest institution of discipleship ordained by God, and in the New Testament it is clarified that the male is the spiritual head of the family unit (1 Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 5:22-23). God passes the consequences of the parent's sin on to the rest of the family only, and in fact in this passage, “sons and daughters” is specifically clarified (Joshua 7:24). This clarification aligns well with the verse from Numbers

regarding consequences being passed on to children. God specifically tells Joshua to search for the sinner by calling every “household” forward, again clarifying to us the importance of the family unit by addressing households as the smallest divisible group of His people in this scenario.

I do not see it made clear that Achan’s wife was a part of these consequences, or that she was in fact even alive or with them; however, verses 14-15 clarify the Lord’s prescription of punishment: “And he who is taken with the devoted things shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, ...”. The Bible clarifies for us that a man and women are joined as one through marriage, and that they are viewed as belonging to one another (Genesis 2:24, 1 Corinthians 7:4). Therefore, if she was alive and with them, she would have been burned too for having belonged to Achan. There is also probably more to be said about wives and husbands “belonging” to one another through the tenth commandment (the idea given to me [here](#)), but I will digress from this point for the sake of continuing on with our examination of other premises.

Hopefully through this deep inspection it is now clearly seen that this passage in fact in no way justifies the idea of “corporate evil” as Mr. Keller defined it, which is to say that we are held responsible and condemned for the sins of our ancestors, and he specifies this to be based on race and humanity, not based on belonging to God’s family. When this passage in Joshua 7 is considered with the rest of scripture, it is seen to be just and in accordance with God’s law and covenant with His people. He doesn’t hold accountable the righteous to the sins of the wicked; he deals with everyone according to their own sin. However, our personal sin will absolutely reap direct, providential, temporal consequences and curses on the rest of God’s people we are associated with. Therefore we ought to be keenly concerned about our personal sin for the sake of our relation with God and our neighbors.

It is due to that fact that we believe in God and worship Him that we are dealt with in love according to our obedience or disobedience as the Church, not according to the actions of people with the same skin color or from the same cultural context. Nowhere in the Bible, and certainly not in the passages cited by Mr. Keller, do we see God saying something like “Hey family, these people over here with the same skin color of you have committed some sin against me, and because they have the same skin color as you I hold you responsible.” Nor do we see God saying something like: “Hey family, the nations of the Amorites and Hittites who live nearby and have some of the same secular customs (“culture”) as you are living in some sin, so you’re guilty for their sin”. The righteous are not punished because of the wicked.

What we do see regularly and consistently through the entire Bible is God treating His family, His Church, His covenant people, His nation of His kingdom on earth, with consistent disciplining in love for their disobedience to Him, and likewise blessing from Him as they are obedient. And, be not mistaken, if the Church is indeed in sin because of a failure to do its duty for its neighbors when true justice does need to be stood for and evil stopped in its tracks, then it would be Biblical to expect a curse from the Lord unless we repent and act. However, also be cautioned, that the Church must also be sure to discern in truth what Biblical justice is (Leviticus 19:15); it is no justice at all if many gains are won through movements championing unjust actions and groups that partner with evil (Proverbs 16:8).

Now having this truth under our belt, examining the passage of Daniel 9 is made all the more clear as well. Let’s examine the particular set of verses in this passage that Mr. Keller is referring to. Though he himself does not read them in his message, he says something to the effect of “we see Daniel repenting and accepting responsibility for the sins of his ancestors!”:

“3 Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. 4 I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession, saying, “O Lord,

the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, 5 we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. 6 We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. 7 To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. 8 To us, O Lord, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. 9 To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him 10 and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. 11 All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. **And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him.** 12 **He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us,[a] by bringing upon us a great calamity.** For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem. 13 As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of the Lord our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth. 14 Therefore the Lord has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the Lord our God is righteous in all the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice. 15 And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly. 16 “O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us. 17 Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord,[b] make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate.”

The verses and sections that I have underlined and emboldened shed quite a bit of light on what is actually happening in this passage; namely that Daniel is acknowledging the exact covenant and oath of blessings or curses that God set upon his people based on their obedience, or lack thereof. Daniel is certainly acknowledging the sinfulness of the people of Israel, and includes himself when he says “we”, but nowhere do we see him claim responsibility for the sins of the other family members. Rather, he is addressing God knowing of the oath and covenant that they are all under to Him as His family, and Daniel is seeking mercy on the entire nation from the curse that the sins of some have brought on them all. Stated clearly several times, we see him appealing to God for “mercy” for the sins and transgressions of God’s people (kings, princes, fathers), which have led to calamity under their oath with God. Also, again, we do not see Daniel appealing for mercy from, or accepting responsibility for, the sins of people of the same race or a similar culture as him. He is not assuming responsibility or feeling condemned for the sins of all of humanity; rather he is lamenting the sins of God’s people. It is only the people of the Church that can bring consequence of a providential curse onto the community, not wicked and lawless humans that do not know God.

When it comes to slavery, racism, and perceived “systemic evil” in the world, and especially America, God’s people have in fact largely played a role of righteousness in this regard. It was the puritans who’s faith and Biblical knowledge formed the basis for the U.S. Constitution, that which guarantees all men and women the rights to Liberty and life that is given to them by God being created in His image, and through

which the injustice of slavery was indeed enabled to be brought to end. Martin Luther King actually cited the Declaration of Independence, which lays out these rights, in his “I Have A Dream” speech. It is in fact the Christian community that has paved the way for the equality and justice that has been enabled socially in our country.

So do not be mistaken; God’s people will certainly reap the consequences of His curse over our ancestors’ sins, the “ancestors” being referred to are those of the Church, not a race or culture. Even though there may be curses active because of the sins of our Church ancestors, God also loves to show mercy to those who repent and turn to Him again as we see in Daniel’s appeal.

Now, for the matter of the doctrine of “federal headship”, which gets its roots from Romans 5. Given that the doctrine involves several other doctrinal considerations such as “original sin”, the “peccability of Christ”, the virgin birth, and a host of other considerations, I will not be swimming fully to the depths of this doctrine. I would highly recommend reading this article [here](#), which does a good job of raising many of the considerations to be given to the matter. First, I will reiterate our conclusions from earlier that the understanding of this doctrine from Mr. Keller is clearly in conflict with the rest of scripture, and then I will state what I believe to be the correct understanding with some support from scripture. I will leave it to the reader to do their homework on the doctrine and work through its challenges, but for the sake of the arguments being made here, I do not believe this is even necessary. Since we have shown Mr. Keller’s conclusion to be false, and we have now shown the other 2 premises to have been handled with error as well, we are left with only one premise that could possibly support the conclusion correctly. Therefore, it would necessitate that if somehow Mr. Keller’s conclusion was going to be correct, it would have to be supported fully by this one premise. However, since we have shown his conclusion false, therefore so must be his premise that is built on “federal headship”.

Romans 5, verses 12-14,19 say:

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— 13 for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. ... For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”.

Key to understanding this passage are the words regarding sin being in the world before the law was given. Death clearly reigned from Adam to Moses, but God’s law wasn’t revealed to His people until it was brought to Moses through the 10 commandments. So, people’s personal sins could not be explicitly counted against them because the law had not been given to expose the sin (Romans 5:20). Yet, death reigned through these early humans, and death entered the world through sin, so, these early humans were still guilty and condemned for sin even though it could not be formally counted against them through the law. Does this then support Mr. Keller’s conclusion that we are all condemned for Adam’s specific sin in the garden, and that “corporate evil” is a reality, and through it they all died? Let’s look at some other verses:

Ephesians 2:1-3 - “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our

flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were **by nature children of wrath**, like the rest of mankind."

Genesis 8:21 - "And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done."

James 1:13-15 - "Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. 14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then **desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin,** and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."

The doctrine of federal headship, as supported through Romans 5, and in being consistent with these verses cited, teaches how all men are born "dead in trespasses and sins", are **by nature** "sons of disobedience", are "evil from his youth", and from birth only know how to "carry out the desires of the body and the mind", for which "desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death." It is through Adam as your federal head in the garden, the chosen representative for the human race, that we are all born completely hardened in our hearts and only knowing how to fulfill our desires that give birth to sin and then death. This was true of all humans since the fall of Adam & Even in the garden, and therefore even though a personal count of sin could not be established before the law was given, every human was still born dead in their sin and desire because of Adam's sin and his representation and our federal head. Romans 5:18 makes this very clear - "Therefore, as one trespass **led** to condemnation for all men,..." It says one trespass "led" to condemnation for all men, not "all men are condemned for one man's trespass"; condemnation is brought to each man through their own birth into disobedience as a result of Adam, not condemnation for Adam's specific sins.

This understanding of federal headship remains consistent with the plethora of verses that we have now examined that state: we are personally condemnable for our own sins, not responsible for and condemnable for the sins of ancestors, and that we are born dead in our sin and desire which is what results in our own death. It was through Adam's disobedience that we were all made into sons of disobedience, our own personal disobedience that warrants the wrath, anger, and justice of God. It is then through Christ's own obedience and righteousness which is credited to us IF, and ONLY IF, we are born of the Spirit and made to be alive in Him, that we are made personally righteous before God with Christ as our federal head. Since we are born of the flesh first, we receive to our account that which Adam chose, sin nature, and when we are born of the Spirit we receive to our account the righteousness of Christ, which came by His perfect obedience to the Father.

Let's quickly re-examine Mr. Keller's original conclusion:

*"You are responsible and you are condemned for what your ancestors Adam and Eve did. That is just by virtue of being in the entire human race you are responsible for things that you didn't individually do. You are condemned for what they did."*

If, as I have hope to have shown, that we are not in fact "condemned for what they did", but rather we were all made condemnable through being born into the sin nature that was indeed brought to us through Adam & Eve's choosing of sin (a subtle difference but with massive implications), then Mr. Keller's use of federal headship as a premise for this conclusion is erroneous.

There is also a simple thought experiment that we can perform based on Mr. Keller's conclusions to test their validity. If it is indeed simply "just by virtue of being in the entire human race" that you "are responsible for things you didn't individually do", then, at its logical extent, we must also necessitate that Jesus Christ himself be held responsible and condemnable for the actions of the human race, because he was indeed born a human being. Hebrews 4:14-15 says:

"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."

By Mr. Keller's argument, because Jesus was born a human, we must then necessitate that He should have been condemned and held responsible for humanity's sins as well, even though He had no personal sin. Obviously this is incorrect, and only through a false understanding of federal headship could we try to justify Mr. Keller's statement by arguing that somehow Christ was different in his "humanness" to make him not subject to Mr. Keller's exact words, that is "just by virtue of being in the entire human race ...". In order to be our savior and substitute, Jesus in fact was born a human being. Yes, miraculously by the Spirit, and thereby not "dead in sin" and under the federal headship of Adam, but rather as the new federal head for all who believe in Him for salvation

## **In Conclusion**

The western Church is currently experiencing a great divide over topics like Black Lives Matter, the tearing down of statues over perception of racism, the call to dismantle law enforcement and other systems and structures because of their supposed roots in racism, critical race theory, and ultimately cultural Marxism that is invading the Church; I submit such a divide is clearly attributable, in part, to the far reaching implications of false teachings such as I have endeavoured to show in this examination of Mr. Keller's message. Especially given Mr. Keller's sphere of influence and recognized expertise on Gospel teaching, such false teachings, if truly false as I believe to have shown, warrant cause for alarm. I have first hand seen the evidence that such teachings, which label guilt on the Church for the sins of ancestors of the human race based on skin color and culture, feed the flames of divide in the western Church over the aforementioned topics. It is incredibly divisive to the Church and to our country to be teaching such a doctrine of "corporate evil", and one that, as I believe to have shown, ultimately led Mr. Keller himself to pervert the Gospel by claiming it is corporate and not personal.

I submit that such false teachings lead the Church to contributing fuel to the fire of an envious and covetous culture that is currently steeped in the "equity" ideals at the root of cultural Marxism, and which mislead saints into thinking they are fighting for justice when, in fact, they are destroying the meaning of true justice; that is, justice which is "impartial" to race or social class as Leviticus 19:15 states. It is the envious, covetous ideals and the false morality of "equity", with a lens of racial disparity, that have many in the Church supporting the culture that looks to what it's neighbors have and says "tear the system down because I do not have what they have!"; these ideals are at the root of the movement regarding reparations and restitution for the ills of slavery of our human ancestors. It is those ideals, accompanied with the false sense of justice, steeped in the idea of "corporate" guilt, that leads the Church to be going the way of the world on baseless and false claims of "systemic evil" and "systemic injustice", instead of advocating properly for Christian duty. I believe it can be clearly seen and Biblically exposed that the real evil and injustice is largely the result of a lawless and Godless society, and a Church body which is being built up with wood, hay, and straw of the ideals "equity" applied to materialism, race, and culture, instead

of the gold, silver, and precious stones of God's perfect law of Liberty (James 1:25), truly equitable justice (Leviticus 19:15), and Christian duty. I would submit that it is for these reasons that many in the Church know not their own duty, or what real justice is, and that our systems and institutions, which are simply a collection of people, are not functioning well.

I believe the evidence of this can be quite clearly seen in Mr. Keller's example of the Christian businessman who sees an un-equitable outcome for a particular race in his business, and curtails the entire business model to guarantee a "fair" outcome to all. The appeal of this example and plea certainly strums the strings of the heart, doesn't it? A desire to enable all to acquire that which they desire at the same cost as those around them; This sounds holy, this sounds like it must be from God, right? I submit that what we actually see exemplified is the false morality of "equity", and the seeds of communism/ socialism/ Marxism.

Mr. Keller ends up arguing that unequal outcomes for people in a free and voluntary society are somehow unjust. In this example of black women buying cars and paying more than white men, he submits that it is evil that this is occurring. He submits that it is immoral that black women routinely paid more for a car at the particular dealership that this was occurring at, and labels this racism. What is not acknowledged or recognized is that those transactions were all voluntary. No one forced those women to buy the cars or pay the price that they did; they completed a voluntary transaction and were willing to pay the price for the car that they arrived at with the salesman. Mr. Keller acknowledges that the salesmen in the business weren't even aware that the supposed injustice was happening, which I would submit to you is because the outcome is not a matter of "justice" or immoral.

In such an analysis and assessment as Mr. Keller gives, God's law of Liberty has been trampled and has been replaced with a lens of "equity" regarding materialism and race. Worst of all, guilt and "racism" has been attributed as the causality for the disparity in outcome when in fact, as Mr. Keller said, there was no evidence of racism in the individuals completing the transactions. Voluntary value discovery and exchange occurs between two parties at Liberty to assign the value and transact. What bible passage or doctrine teaches us that it is evil and immoral for a business transaction to occur voluntarily, in which two parties consent to a transaction at an agreed upon price for a good or service? More than this, what scripture teaches that God commands all to have equitable outcomes in comparison to their neighbors for actions that they are voluntarily partaking in and responsible for committing? More so than that, where are we Biblically able to define racism as anything more than hate in one's heart towards someone else of a different skin color than you? I submit that you will not find any such passages in the Bible.

The Bible does not stretch racism to mean more than it means, nor should we. It is not "racist" that a particular race does not have what another race has, or is not able to obtain it through the same means. It is no matter of injustice that, in a voluntary society and systems, some people decide to accept responsibility and make decisions to purchase goods and services at different prices than others. At the core of the issue is the ideal of "equity" vs Liberty. One is Biblical, one is not. "Equity" is a law of "positivism"; it can never be fully satisfied or achieved. The choice of "equity" or Liberty for our personal relationships, institutions, businesses, and governance has far reaching implications; they are two different world views, and only one is Biblical: Liberty. When "equity" is prescribed, it results in enslavement of the people and oppression of God's law of Liberty (James 1:25). Not only that, it is unobtainable because it is rooted in "positivism", not negative/ positive law. Liberty can be guarded easily by negative law and a righteous, impartial justice system; all of the factors that could result in "inequity" can never be counted or controlled. I wonder if the car salesman also travels to all of the suppliers that make the car parts in foreign countries to make sure their labor conditions, wages, and lifestyles are

equitable to his customers too? Virtue signaling with “equal” pricing on products made by people living in “inequity” is a bit hypocritical, no?

I would cite the command to glean fields that God gave in Leviticus 22:23 as a primary example of how equitable outcome is not a Biblical command of God. God did not say: “And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. You shall gather your gleanings, equally divide them, and be certain that they are distributed evenly to every poor man and sojourner across the land, especially so that every race receives a proportional and equal amount: I am the Lord your God.” No, what he simply said in the place of the underlined text was: “You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner”. God calls His people to be charitable; He does not mandate them to create equitable outcomes for all. He does not deem an un-equitable outcome of materialism as unjust or immoral; He certainly does demand equity in regards to justice (violation of moral law), though He shows grace and mercy too, and therefore so do we.

God does hate unjust units of measure or scales (Proverbs 11:1, 20:10, others), especially in regards to justice of the law, which is referring to the way in which something is measured (aka currency, measuring units/ devices, or “scales of justice”) and whether or not the units of measure are honest (as in does the scale give a false reading, has the person using it read falsely or weighed unfairly, does the dollar represent value evenly and honestly (it does not, but I’ll digress), has a measure been frauded, etc.). If in a voluntary haggling exchange, a grocer agrees to take 3 dollars for 5 apples instead of 4 dollars, no dishonest unit of measurement or scale has been used. A dollar is still a dollar (generally speaking, \*wink wink\* @ the Federal Reserve), and the original “market” assessment of the price of 5 apples was 4 dollars; the grocer has just voluntarily accepted less profit, possibly even a loss, for whatever reason they decided.

Obviously I have opened a can of worms with these concluding remarks, but it is the same can of worms that has been opened in our western culture. We are currently seeing many, many Christians, pastors, and churches going the way of the world on matters of “social justice”, justifying crowds of the wicked, lawless, and marching around with self-righteous torches and pitchforks to hunt out perceived workers of injustice in the world. I say “perceived” repeatedly because, as I hope to have shown in this writing, many in the Church have little understanding of what true, impartial justice is, the implications of God’s perfect law of Liberty, and unfortunately it seems that many leaders in the Church are shepherding their flocks into these ideals. If what I have endeavoured to show is true, and that we now have leaders in the Church prescribing some of the fundamentals of marxism, socialism, and communist ideals, all supposedly on the grounds of scripture, but are in fact prescribing the exact oppressive forces that result in true injustice and oppression of Liberty, then I would propose we all ought to be reverently fearful and lifting up prayers for mercy, repentance, and obedience to duty as Daniel did for the people of God in his time.

I would like to quickly state now, that in no way am advocating against the charity, mercy, grace, generosity, selflessness, and sacrifice that ought to richly flow from a vibrant Christian community rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In fact, when looking simply at the way in which the Lord commands His Church to be, we do see many commands that look to be “socialistic” (not counting our possessions or own, selling them to give to the poor, counting it joy to give up property because of persecutions, etc.). We should of course desire to have compassion for the poor and desire they be shown mercy; of course we ought to want to help a black woman get a better price for her car. However, we ought not advocate for a reduction in Liberty and for judgement of people by race and not their character, exactly what Martin Luther King advocated against. We are hypocrites if we simultaneously believe and teach that we are responsible for our actions (in obedience to God and therefore duty to man), and that we should be

judged for our character, not our skin color, and then turn around and say “people of a different skin color are receiving different outcomes in this system of Liberty! Down with Liberty, promote “equity!”. Liberty is God’s law (James 1:25), not ours. By being so distracted with “equity”, many in the Church are actively participating in the destruction of Liberty.

The aforementioned commands to generosity, etc, are God’s commands to His Church; a Church that was made to operate and live under His perfect law of Liberty, and which is supposed to fight for and administer justice with equity. God commands His Church to be the force of social good in the world, being wildly and sacrificially generous; He does not command it from the government nor was the government instituted to play the role of the Church, nor does He command the Church to be concerned with “equity” in any sense of materialism. It is very possible that a lack of such aforementioned qualities in some of the western Church is in part to blame for why cultural Marxism and the ideals of “equity”, contextualized by race and materialism, have taken such a rise in our culture; though, I stress “in part”. Certainly it is also for a lack of duty on standing for truth, mishandling of the Word in regards to equity, justice, and Liberty, a cowardly Church body (thanks in part to Christian Pietism, a topic for another day), and of course simply the desire and will of the Lord.

Our country that has indeed historically been regarded as the greatest to live in on earth, and was so because of its Christian population, allegiance to God, and pursuit of obedience to his commands. Knowing now about the blessing or curse that will befall a the Church based on their obedience to God’s commands, it indeed seems clear to see that, given our current breakdown of social order in America, we are at least partially receiving the results of a curse for our disobedience to God’s law. I, and others, would especially submit that this curse is from our lack of duty to our brothers, sisters, and neighbors to bring them into obedience to God and understanding of Liberty (the Gospel and civil) and duty.

There is so much left to be said regarding these matters, but for the sake of staying somewhat grounded to our original scope of Mr. Keller’s remarks, I will refrain from saying any more. I do sincerely hope that I have led us to a much more accurate and appropriate Biblical understanding of many of the topics that Mr. Keller raises in the cited video of his, as well as many of the implications to ponder. It is for the sake of the Church and our ability to worship God in Spirit and truth (John 4:23) that I have labored to bring forth this examination of Mr. Keller’s video. I do hope that my words and the tone expressed through them has not been found to be arrogant or haughty in any way; I sincerely desire to walk in humility and consider others more important than myself as I labor in these ways; I also hope that Mr. Keller will find repentance from these teachings and publicly turn to the proper doctrines of Liberty and Christian Duty.

Indeed, there are many greater than I who have labored to equip the Church with truth and wisdom to handle such topics in our modern times. It is through some of their writings that I felt equipped to deconstruct Mr. Keller’s message, hopefully with accuracy; one of which is deserving of special credit, “The Liberty Book”, by John Bona and Don Schanzenbach. I would implore you to purchase a copy of their book for study and meditation. It seems to me the Lord has blessed them in their writing and knowledge of the Christian faith, especially as it relates to the founding of our country and how the Church ought to interact with its neighbors, whether in the United States of America or elsewhere. It is through this book that I myself have been made aware of several of the topics discussed herein, and been able to discover what I sincerely believe is the road back to a free and peaceable society, the very conclusion of The Liberty Book and the Bible: repentance and worship of God through Christ in obedience to all He has commanded, and teaching our neighbors to do the same through our duty given by Christ.

I would also highly, highly recommend purchasing a copy of Matt Walsh's book, "Church of Cowards". I believe Mr. Walsh does an excellent job of highlighting many of the deficiencies and errors of the western Church that may well be contributing factors to the possible curse of God that it seems we have sowed for ourselves in this country: both from breaking of God's commandments, as well as our failure in duty to hold others to them.

Knowing what we do now, I hope we all can strive forward with more encouragement in our Christian duties as we engage the world in these troubled times, even as we are met with the persecution that is guaranteed for those who seek to live a Godly life (1 Timothy 3:12). While they may at first seem scary and give reason for fear, we are in fact able to engage them with bravery, courage, and action (duty), because the God who loves us has promised that He will be with us and, by the power of His Spirit, that we will do greater works than even He:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it." - John 14:12 -14