

By Nature Children of Wrath
Ephesians 2:3

This phrase has led to much debate over whether children are guilty of sin. Here are some references to put the phrase in context.

1. In the same paragraph (verse 10), Paul also writes that we were "created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." However, one could take that to mean that, when we are forgiven, we are, at that time, re-created for good works.
2. In Isaiah 7, the prophet uses the phrase "at the time he knows to refuse evil and choose good," implying that there is a time before that knowledge. There is time before children know enough to make a choice.
3. Ezekiel, in his chapter 18, writes nearly an entire chapter to explain that each person is responsible for his or her own sin, and not for the sins of those who went before. Inherited sin is specifically denied.
4. Jesus, as recorded in John 9:41, announces that those who cannot understand are not guilty of sin.

From the mistaken belief that children were born guilty of sin, infant baptism began. But that is also a misunderstanding of baptism, a symbol of being washed of the past, or dying to self, etc. It is not a magical act, but a symbol. Since guilt for sin cannot be inherited and sin must be understood to produce guilt, children cannot need to be forgiven.

So, what does it mean to be "by nature children of wrath?" It describes the audience of this letter, those who had corrupted their nature by sin.

The Mystery
Ephesians 3:3

The mystery is no longer a mystery. It was revealed to the apostles and prophets of the first century. Usually, this mystery concerned the salvation of the Gentiles. In every case, the writer either has or is revealing the mystery.

Romans 11:25
Romans 16:25-26
1 Corinthians 2:7
1 Corinthians 15:51
Ephesians 1:9
Ephesians 3:3-9

Ephesians 5:32
Ephesians 6:19
Colossians 1:26-27
Colossians 2:2
Colossians 4:3
2 Thessalonians 2:7

1 Timothy 3:9
1 Timothy 3:16
Revelation 1:20
Revelation 10:7
Revelation 17:5-7