

Not Ashamed
(Week 14)
Romans 5:12-21
“A Tale of Two Adams”

Introduction

“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned. In fact, sin was in the world before The Law, but sin is not charged to a person’s account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam’s transgression. He is a type of the Coming One.”

Romans 5:12-14

It has often been called “the most difficult passage in the book of *Romans*”. And on the surface, it does seem confusing and convoluted. But, to fully understand ***Romans 5:12-21*** is to understand the very essence of the Christian faith and the necessity for salvation through the One Man Jesus Christ. For in this passage, we see the “tale of two Adams”, as it were; the first Adam bringing us death, and the second one offering us life.

There are many key words in this passage, and to recognize them is to have a more complete understanding of this text. The first of these is the little word “one”, which Paul uses eleven times in these ten verses. The second word that is crucial to the text is the word “reign”, which is used five times. Another word that is used in various forms is the word “gift”, which describes what God has offered to a people, who certainly do not deserve it.

If you were a Jew in Paul’s day, you believed that men were made acceptable to God, simply by obeying The Law of Moses. However, Paul has already made it abundantly clear that no one can be saved by their good works (***Chapters 3-4***). And, even it were were possible to be saved by doing good, no man can live perfectly according to the standards set forth in The Law. Therefore, all of mankind stands in condemnation before God, according to The Law.

So, of course, the next logical question for those of the Jewish faith to ask would be, “How can another man’s righteousness be sufficient to save others?” It is a legitimate question, and in this passage, Paul answers it to perfection. For just as all men are condemned through the sin of one man, Adam, all men can be saved by the righteousness of the one man, Jesus.

Paul says that Adam is a “type” of Christ (***vs. 14***). This is so very important for us to be able to understand this concept that he is putting forth. Adam was created as the very first of his kind. When God created the world, He gave Adam dominion over all the creatures of the earth (***Genesis 2:15, 19-20***). So, in fact, Adam was given reign over all of God’s creation. It was his “kingdom” to rule.

God also gave Adam a test. He was given one single commandment; he was not to eat of the fruit of the “tree of knowledge of good and evil” (***Genesis 2:17***). It was a test that Adam failed. This man, who was given dominion over all of God’s creation, failed miserably. And, sin entered the world as a result. This was not the origin of sin, for that belongs to Satan himself, but it is through Adam that sin entered into the world and death as a consequence. Because of Adam, all men die. Some may live longer than others, but the final result is the same. We all will spend time in a coffin, urn, or a sarcophagus. As a result of Adam’s transgression, we are all under the curse of death.

Christ, like Adam, has also been given the authority to reign. He is the ruler of “the new creation”, The Church (***2 Corinthians 5:17***). And, just as the one man (Adam) brought sin and death upon us all, the One Man, Jesus, can offer us righteousness and life! So you see, ***Romans 5:12-21*** is the tale of the “two Adams”, both have dominion over a creation, both are one of a kind. One brought death, and the other brought us life!

“So it is written, The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”
1 Corinthians 15:45

So you see, because of Adam, we all deserve death, but in Christ, we have been offered the gift of eternal life. So, now let us look verse-by-verse to the stark contrasts between the first and the last Adam, for it is a matter of life and death.

First Adam vs. Last Adam (Death/Life)

“But the gift is not like the trespass. For if by one man’s trespass the many died, how much more have the grace of God and the gift which comes through the grace of the One Man Jesus Christ overflowed to many.” **Romans 5:15**

Many people, even Christians have a difficult time grasping this reality, but the fact remains that because of Adam’s sin we all die. You see, Adam is the father of all mankind. That is why racism is so ridiculous, for we all descended from the very same place! When Adam rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden, he introduced sin into the world, and subsequently, into humanity as well. As the descendants of Adam’s race, we are born into sin. We inherited this within our very nature. For example, a person does not become a liar when they tell the first lie. They lie, because they were born with a deceitful heart to begin with. We sin, because it is in our very nature TO sin. As a result, all of us shall one day end up in a coffin. It’s just a matter of time really.

So just think about this for a moment. Because of just one sin, everyone dies! This should give us a small glimpse into the absolute holiness of God. His standard of perfection, will not, nor cannot be compromised. One sin was all it took for all our fates to be sealed. The wrath of God was upon us all. This is our inheritance from Adam’s reign. It is a legacy of death. God had warned Adam that if he ate from the “Tree of knowledge of Good and Evil”, he would surely die. The devil had tricked Eve into believing otherwise, but he lied.

Throughout Adam’s genealogy you will find one common thread, everyone died. In fact, as you read through the history of Adam’s line, given in **Genesis Chapter 5**, one phrase repeats itself over and over again. That phrase being... “then he died.”

“So Adam’s life lasted 930 years; then he died. Seth was 105 years old when he fathered Enosh. Seth lived 807 years after he fathered Enosh, and he fathered other sons and daughters. So Seth’s life lasted 912 years; then he died.” **Genesis 5:5-8**

And the list continues, as each of the people who descended from Adam eventually... died. This is the physical death that one single sin brought into the world through the one man, Adam.

But not only did his one sin bring us physical death, but spiritual death as well. As a result of the fall, the spirit of mankind was no longer connected to the spirit of God. This is spiritual death. And with it comes total depravity. Mankind is not “evolving”, as the secular humanist would have us to believe, but rather, he is devolving. This is what happens when The Spirit of God is no longer actively engaging with and guiding the spirits of men.

And moreover, not only through Adam did we receive physical and spiritual death, but eternal death as well. For those who are not reconciled to God through Christ are condemned to be separated from God’s Spirit for eternity in a place of torment called hell. This is the inheritance we have automatically received through Adam’s transgression.

But wait... there is good news. Jesus Christ, the last Adam, died to give us life. Those who will believe upon His name shall be reconciled to God, and their spirits will be made alive and reconnected with the Spirit of The Living God, forever. And although the curse of Adam’s sin can be broken, in Christ, the eternal bond we receive can NEVER Be undone! God’s gracious gifts and His calling are irrevocable (**Romans 11:29**). So, through Adam, we inherited death, physical, spiritual, and eternal, but, in Christ, “the last Adam”, we receive everlasting life. Or as Paul would say,

“...how much more have the grace of God and the gift which comes through the grace of the One Man Jesus Christ overflowed to many.”

As we said last week, the phrase “*how much more*” in the Greek is similar to saying “*even better*”. Which is quite the understatement, considering the comparison of the two realities given here; while Adam gave us death, Jesus’ gift of grace (*Charisma* in the Greek, literally meaning “*grace gift*”) gives us **LIFE!**

First Adam vs. Last Adam (Condemnation/Justification)

“And the gift is not like the one man’s sin, because from one sin came the judgement, resulting in condemnation, but from many trespasses came the gift, resulting in justification.” **Romans 5:16**

This one is fairly simple. It means that while it only took one sin to condemn us to death, the blood of Christ has covered not only that sin, but the many sins that have taken place as a result! In other words, Adam’s one sin sentenced us to death, but God’s grace gift to us through Christ’s death covers a **multitude** of sins. So that, no matter what you have done, you can be forgiven and restored. God’s holiness will not tolerate even a single sin, but His grace found a way to place our multitude of sins upon His One and Only Son. Therefore, when we place our faith in Him... all is washed away and forgiven! We can now stand before a Holy God clothed in the Righteousness of His Son justified, meaning “just as if we never sinned”. We have been thoroughly washed clean by the blood of Jesus. This would be a really good place for what the old time preachers called a “shouting moment”!

First Adam vs. Last Adam (Reign in Death/Reign in Life)

“Since by the one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive the overflow of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through The One Man, Jesus Christ.” **Romans 5:17**

This is a really good one! Through one man’s sin, we received death and its dominion over us, but in Christ, we will reign with Him in life. What exactly does this mean? Let me explain. You see, when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, it certainly was not because they wanted to die. No, what they desired was exactly what the devil had promised them. He lied to them, telling them that if they ate the fruit of the tree, they would “***be like God***” (***Genesis 3:5***). So, this was the hope of Adam and Eve, to somehow become more like God. The tragic reality of it all was that their sin would do the exact opposite, take them further away from becoming like God. This is just the type of deceit that the devil is continually bringing into the world. He promises one thing, and what he gives is in fact the exact opposite. Rather than becoming closer to God, Adam and Eve were completely separated from Him.

Enter Jesus Christ. He makes good on a promise that the devil had no power to keep. I imagine, as He reclined at the table with His disciples that night before He went to the cross, He was in essence saying to the devil “watch this”:

“...Jesus took the bread, blessed it and broke it, gave it to His disciples, and said, ‘Take and eat it; this is My body.’” **Matthew 26:26**

Adam and Eve ate the fruit, so that they would be like God. But, when we partake of Christ, His Spirit comes to live within us, and we shall be transformed into the very image of Christ. Did you catch that? Everything that Adam and Eve had desired has been fulfilled through Christ. We will be remade in His image and shall reign forever in righteousness with Him! It is **He** Who is making us like God. Not only are we clothed in His righteousness, but we are being sanctified to become as He is! So, although Adam’s failed attempt to become like God brought us death, Christ has made it possible for us to reign in life, taking His very nature within ourselves.

First Adam vs. Last Adam (Many Sinners/Many Righteous)

“So then, as through one trespass there is condemnation for everyone, so also through one righteous act there is justification leading to life for everyone. For just as through one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”

Romans 5:18-19

More good news! By trusting in Christ, we have been enabled to live for Christ. He has made us righteous, and as such, we have the inward desire to follow Him. Adam’s sin left mankind in complete apathy toward God, but, thanks to Jesus, we have not only been declared righteous, we strive to live in a manner that is pleasing to Him. In short, we don’t try to follow the rules to make God love us. We obey His Word, because He has placed His Spirit within us, giving us the will and desire to do so. Show me a Christian who does not long to be like Christ, and I will show you someone who’s never really encountered Christ.

Adam’s sin brought about many sinners, but thanks to the “last Adam”, many are striving for righteousness through Him. Then Holy Spirit has made our spirits alive, and where we once longed to live in sin, we now long to live in holiness. A child of God cannot live in sin, for sinfulness has become vile to him. His spirit is now alive in Christ.

“We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as others were also. But God, Who is rich in mercy, because of His great love that He had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace!”

Ephesians 2:3-5

First Adam vs. Last Adam (Condemned by The Law/Saved by Grace)

“The Law came along to multiply the trespass. But where sin multiplied, grace multiplied even more so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace will reign through righteousness resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our LORD.”

Romans 5:20-21

The Law of Moses was never intended to save. It was given to show God’s perfect standard, as well as, to convict those who had transgressed. Every single descendant of Adam has transgressed against The Law, and as such, are deserving of death. There are no exceptions. Even before the Law of Moses was given at Sinai, the people had sinned against it. They were just formally charged with their transgressions, when The Law came (**vs. 13**). The simple truth is... we have all been found guilty.

Christ, the last Adam, has provided a way for us to be saved from the punishment that we deserve. Mankind is under the sentence of death, but, in Christ, we are offered a pardon. We did nothing to deserve this incredible gift of grace, but the offer is there for us all nonetheless. It all comes down to this one simple decision: Remain with those who are of Adam’s heritage and die, or come to Christ, the last Adam... and live! The choice is yours, but when you take a hard look at where we shall all end up, a coffin... then it’s not really a hard decision to make. Choose life, and although your body will die physically, you will not experience the spiritual, nor eternal death, that awaits those of Adam’s race. Christ has died and rose again, so that you can be adopted into the family of God. The salvation that He offers to you is permanent. The curse of Adam can be reversed, but the gift and calling of God is eternal. The choice is yours. Or as Moses would say:

“I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Choose life....” Deuteronomy 30:19

Choose Jesus, the Last Adam... and LIVE.
And all of the chosen of God say... TRUTH!!!