
The Contrasting Sides: Eternal Security

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Notes

b. the *foundation* of justification—vv. 12–21

A central point to keep in mind in studying this incredibly difficult text is that Paul's thought is distinctly **corporate** in nature. Moo explains:

"All people, Paul teaches, stand in relationship to one of two men, whose actions determine the eternal destiny of all who belong to them. Either one 'belongs to' Adam and is under sentence of death because of his sin (disobedience), or one belongs to Christ and is assured of eternal life because of His 'righteous' act (obedience). The actions of Adam and Christ, then, are similar in having epochal significance. But they are not equal in power, for Christ's act is able completely to overcome the effects of Adam's. Anyone who 'receives the gift' that God offers in Christ finds security and joy in knowing that the reign of death has been completely and finally overcome by the reign of grace, righteousness, and eternal life (cf. vv. 17, 21)" (326).

1) a crucial proposition—v. 12

There are 5 phrases in v. 12 that call for comment.

- (1) "**through one man**"—Adam was a historical figure. He had a mind, body, a spirit just as we do. He lived in space-time history just as we do, in a geographical location no less than you or I. Cf. 1 Tim. 2:13–15; Mt. 19:4; Mk. 10:6; 1 Cor. 15.
- (2) "**sin entered into the world**"—Lit., sin *invaded* the world. This does not mean Adam was the first sinner; Eve was. It does not mean that sin began its existence at that time in the Garden of Eden. Paul says sin *entered*, not that it began to be. Sin already existed as a result of Satan's rebellion. This text speaks of sin's inaugural

entry into the world of humanity. Sin, therefore, is portrayed as an *intruder*. It was not a constituent element in the original creation.

- (3) **“and death through sin”**—See Gen. 2:17; Ezek. 18:4; Rom. 6:23; Js. 1:15. Sin is the cause of death. Thus, death is a penal evil; it is punishment. Death was not inevitable for Adam and Eve. It was the punishment for rebellion.

Death in Scripture is three-fold: (a) Spiritual death (the alienation of the soul from God and the subsequent spiritual corruption of the whole person; cf. Eph. 2:1–2); (b) Physical death; and (c) the Second death (which is the perpetuation of spiritual death into eternity; eternal separation and alienation from God; cf. Rev. 2, 20). The remedy for spiritual death is regeneration or the new birth. The remedy for physical death is the bodily resurrection. There is no remedy for the second death. It is irremedial, irrevocable, and eternal.

- (4) **“so death spread to all men”**—Adam’s sin and its consequences did not stop with him. But why do all die? The answer is “because all sinned” ...

- (5) **“because all sinned”**—This difficult statement has been interpreted in a number of different ways. We will focus on the major views.

First, is the doctrine of *Pelagianism*. According to this view the only reason people die is because they themselves personally sin. It is true, of course, that we die because we sin. But this view argues that the only link or connection between Adam’s sin and us is that he *set a bad example* which we have unwisely followed. We each individually re-enact Adam’s transgression in our own experience.

There are several objections to this view. a) It is historically and experientially false: not all die because they voluntarily sin (e.g., infants). b) In vv. 15–19 Paul says 6 times that only **one** sin, the sin of Adam, is the cause of death. c) If all die because they are guilty of actual transgression, then they die because they sinned like Adam did. But v. 14 says some did *not* sin that way. d) This interpretation would destroy the analogy or parallel that Paul draws between Adam and Jesus in vv. 15–21. If this view were correct, Paul would be saying that since all men die personally because they sin personally so also men become righteous personally because they personally obey. But the point of these verses is that just as we died because of the sin of one, so also we live because of the obedience of one. e) Finally, “this interpretation fails to explain why it is that, as Paul makes clear, everyone does, in fact, sin. Surely there must be something inherent in being human that causes everyone, without exception, to decide to worship idols rather than the true God (cf. 1:22–23)” (Moo, 335).

Second, there is the doctrine called *Realism*. This view asserts that all of us, all of humanity, were present in Adam naturally, biologically, physically, seminally. It is from Adam and Eve that all have descended; thus it may be said that we were all in his loins. Thus, when Adam sinned, you were *really* present, being *in* Adam, and thus you participated in his transgression. When *he* partook of the fruit, *you* partook of the fruit. Augustine advocated this view based on his reading of 5:12 in the Latin translation of the NT. According to the latter, the final phrase of v. 12 is rendered, “*in whom* (a reference to Adam the “one man” of 12a) all sinned,” not “*because* all sinned.”

There are also problems with this view. a) How can we *act* before we *exist*? In other words, how can we personally and individually sin before we are individual persons? b) If this view were correct, would we not also be guilty of all Adam’s subsequent sins? c) Again, it is the sin of *one* man, not of all men in Adam, that accounts for death. d) Realism says that all die because all really sinned in Adam, but this again destroys the parallel in vv. 15–21. Surely it cannot be said that all live because all personally obeyed. We were not physically or seminally in Christ when he obeyed. The point of vv. 15–21 is that just as men are justified for a righteousness not their own, so also are they condemned for a sin not personally their own. Paul’s point is that death came by one man so that life might come by one man.

Third, there is the doctrine known as *Federalism* or *Covenant representation*. In v. 12 Paul says all die because all sinned. But in vv. 15–19 Paul says all die because *Adam* sinned. In both statements Paul is saying the same thing. But how can it be that the sin of *one* man, Adam, is also the sin of *all* men? The answer is that there is some kind of union or solidarity between Adam and us. It can’t simply be a physical or natural union, as the realists contend. It must be a *legal* or *representative* union, i.e, a *covenant union*. God entered into covenant with Adam as representative head of the human race. God dealt with Adam as with all his posterity.

Thus, we became guilty of Adam’s sin and suffer its penalty, not because we personally committed a sin like Adam’s sin, as the Pelagians argue, nor because we sinned in Adam as our physical or biological root, but because Adam served in the capacity as covenant head of the human race. Similarly, we become righteous because of Christ’s obedience, and experience the life it brings, not because we personally obeyed, but because our covenant head, Jesus, obeyed. Read 1 Cor. 15:21ff.

Two men, two deeds, two destinies. Adam ruined us. Christ renewed us. As we are condemned for the sin of the first Adam, we are justified for the obedience of the last Adam. This is why Adam is called the *type* of Christ in v. 14. According to this view, God has not dealt with men as with a field of corn, each standing for himself, or as pebbles of sand on the shore, each person isolated and independent of all others. Rather he has dealt with men as with a tree, all the branches sharing a common root.

While the root remains healthy, the branches remain healthy. When the axe cuts and severs the root, all die.

The principal objection to this view is what appears to be the injustice of it. To hold all of the human race eternally accountable for the sin of one of its members *seems* morally inconceivable.

2) a conclusive proof—vv. 13–14

Here Paul's point is to demonstrate that personal death is not always the result of personal sin. He has in mind that period in OT history stretching from Adam to the Mosaic Law. During this period people certainly sinned. But in the absence of law, their sin was not imputed to them (v. 13). Nevertheless, *they died*. But why did they die, if God did not impute their sins against them? The answer would seem to be: they died because of the sin of another, someone who *had* indeed violated a divinely revealed law. That other person, of course, would be Adam.

Moreover, says Paul, death reigned even over those who did not sin like Adam did. In other words, there is a class of people who never sinned voluntarily and personally like Adam did, like the majority of the people during this period did, **but they still died!** Whom does he have in mind? Infants, no doubt. But if infants don't sin voluntarily and personally, why do they die? If death comes only as a penalty for sin, why do infants, who commit no sin, still die? It must be because of the sin of another. It must be that those who die in infancy, before they commit conscious, personal sin, die because of the sin of their representative head, Adam.

Addendum: An Alternative Interpretation of Romans 5:12–14

One of the principal issues in the interpretation of Romans 5 is Paul's statement that "death spread to all men *eph' ho pantas hemarton*" (5:12b), which I translated earlier as "because all sinned." On this reading, Paul's point would be that all men die because when Adam sinned they were reckoned by God to have sinned in him, their representative head.

An alternative reading has recently been proposed by Tom Schreiner, first in his commentary on Romans (Baker, 1998) and now in his *Paul: Apostle of God's Glory in Christ* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001). Schreiner contends that we should translate this enigmatic phrase as "upon the basis of which". The words *eph' ho* forge "a logical connection between two propositions," those propositions being the entrance into the world of "death" because of Adam's sin and the consequent sin of all men. Schreiner's point is that the sinning of all people is a consequence or result of that death which entered the world through Adam. He writes:

“As a result of Adam’s sin death entered the world and engulfed all people; all people enter the world alienated from God and spiritually dead by virtue of Adam’s sin. By virtue of entering the world in the state of death (i.e., separated from God), all human beings sin.... Our alienation and separation from God are due to Adam’s sin, and thus we sin as a result of being born into the world separated from God’s life” (*Romans*, 275–6).

Paul’s point is not that we sinned when Adam sinned, whether “seminally” or by virtue of his representative role, as a result of which we died spiritually. Rather, Adam’s sin brought spiritual death into the world, as a result of which death we sinned personally. The objection to this view is that Paul often argues that death is the result of sin whereas Schreiner is arguing here that sin is the result of death. The resolution of this problem, notes Schreiner, is not difficult:

“We should not opt for an either-or answer here. Paul does indeed claim that people die because of sin, but he also insists that they sin because they are dead (i.e., separated from God [and he points particularly to Eph. 2:1–3 as proof of this]). All human beings enter the world alienated from God, and as a result of this alienation they sin. It is also true that they will experience eschatological death if they sin” (*Romans*, 276–77).

If Schreiner is correct, what is the meaning of vv. 13–14? Contrary to the view explained earlier, Paul is not suggesting that people between Adam and Moses died solely because of Adam’s sin and not because of their own personal rebellion. Romans 2:12 makes this clear, for there Paul asserts that “those who sin without the law perish without the law.” Schreiner explains:

“It would be inconsistent for Paul to assert in Romans 2:12 that Gentiles without the law perish because they transgress the unwritten law and then to say in Romans 5:13–14 that sin is not charged to the account of those without the Mosaic law. Moreover, Paul was well aware of the early chapters of Genesis in which the world was destroyed by a flood and those building the tower of Babel were judged. Such punishments would be indefensible if judgment was only valid after the law of Moses was disseminated. The judgment of the flood generation and Babel fits with the Pauline principle that those who sin without the law will perish without the law (Rom. 2:12)” (*Paul: Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ*, 147).

What, then, does Paul mean in 5:13 when he says that “sin is not imputed when there is no law”? He does not mean that people aren’t punished for their personal sin simply because the law of Moses had not yet been given. His point is simply that sin committed before the Mosaic law is not *technically* reckoned as sin. In other words, “there was not a technical register of sin; sin was present, just like heat and cold are present whether we have a thermometer or not. But one could not, in a sense, *measure* sin before the giving of the law” (*Paul*, 148). It’s true that people between Adam and Moses didn’t sin like Adam did in that they did not violate a revealed commandment. But this doesn’t mean they weren’t held

accountable by God for their actions. It simply means their sin couldn't be measured as sin without the violation of written commandments.

Paul's point, then, is that death reigns or exercises its power over people even if no explicit and divinely encoded law exists, for even in the absence of the law sin is still sin and will be punished. Once that written law is revealed the seriousness of sin increases "in the sense that the sin is now more defiant and rebellious in character" (*Romans*, 279; cf. Paul's statement to this effect in Rom. 7:7–11).

Two observations are in order, neither of which is a critique of Schreiner. First, if Schreiner is correct, the sinful plight of the human race is *still* traceable to Adam and his sin. Whether we die spiritually because we are reckoned to have sinned in Adam or we sin personally because of the spiritual death that came from Adam's sin, the fact remains that it is "by the transgression of the one [Adam] [that] the many died" (5:15). Second, if Schreiner is correct, he has provided a helpful way of understanding Romans 5:12–14, but not one that is any more successful than the earlier view in addressing the ethical dilemma of how the human race can find itself sinful, not ultimately because of personal, conscious sin, but because of the sin of another, Adam.

3) a contrasting parallel—vv. 15–21

Observe the parallels (and ethical contrasts) between Adam and Christ:

- v. 15—the offence of one brought death; the obedience of one brought the free gift of grace;
- v. 16—one sinned, bringing condemnation; one obeyed, bringing justification;
- v. 17—through one offence death reigns; through one act of obedience life reigns;
- v. 18—the offence of one brings judgment; the righteousness of one brings justification;
- v. 19—by virtue of one man's disobedience men are made sinners; by virtue of one man's obedience men are made righteous;
- v. 21—through Adam sin reigned unto death; through Christ righteousness reigns unto life.

Before objecting to the doctrine of covenant or representative headship, remember this: ***only if Adam represents you in the Garden can Jesus represent you on Golgotha.*** It was on the cross that Jesus served as your representative head: his obedience to the law, his righteousness, his suffering the penalty of the law, were all the acts of a covenant head acting in the stead and on behalf of his people. If Adam stood for you in the garden, Christ may also hang for you on the cross.

If you insist on standing your own probation before God, instead of submitting to the covenant representation of Adam, you must also stand on your own in regard to

righteousness. And how do you think you will fare? In other words, if you fall individually and by your own doing, you must be saved individually and by your own doing.

One final comment regarding v. 18. Adam's act has brought condemnation to all men. Must we not also conclude, as this verse seems to assert, that Christ's act has brought justification and life for all men? In other words, does this verse teach the doctrine of **salvific universalism**? Moo's answer is helpful:

"Paul's point is not so much that the groups affected by Christ and Adam, respectively, are coextensive, but that Christ affects those who are His just as certainly as Adam does those who are his. When we ask who belongs to, or is 'in', Adam and Christ, respectively, Paul makes his answer clear: every person, without exception, is 'in Adam' (cf. vv. 12d-14); but only those who 'receive the gift' (v. 17; 'those who believe,' according to Rom. 1:16-5:11) are 'in Christ.' That *pas* [all] does not always mean 'every single human being' is clear from many passages; it is often clearly limited in context (e.g., Rom. 8:32; 12:17, 18; 14:2; 16:19), so this suggestion has no linguistic barrier. In the present verse, the scope of ["all men"] in the two parts of the verse is distinguished in the context. Paul makes it clear, both by his silence and by the logic of vv. 12-14, that there is no limitation whatsoever on the number of those who are involved in Adam's sin. The deliberate wording of v. 17, along with the persistent stress on faith as the means of achieving righteousness in 1:16-4:25, makes equally clear that only certain people derive the benefits from Christ's act of righteousness" (357).¹

Original sin (5:12)

What is original sin? How does it affect us? How are we to understand it? What are the problems connected with it?

A widespread and common misconception about original sin is that it refers to the original transgression committed by Adam and Eve, namely the first sin. But, in fact, original sin refers to the result of the first sin, not the first sin itself. Original sin is not a specific sin, a particular act of disobedience; it has to do with the nature of mankind. The Bible tells us that our nature is fallen, that not only do we sin, but we are pervaded by sin, that is, our natures are corrupt. Jesus put it this way: a bad tree brings forth corrupt fruit. It is not that we are sinful because we sin, but rather that we sin because we are sinful. The activity of sin flows out of a sinful nature, a fallen nature, a heart that is out of sync with

¹ Storms, S. (2016). [Biblical Studies: Romans](#) (Ro 5:12-21). Edmond, OK: Sam Storms.

God. Man is fallen in the depths of his being, and he has a basic disposition towards sin rather than towards righteousness.

That raises all kinds of difficult theological problems. Since I am born with the sin nature, how could God possibly hold me responsible for committing actual sins?

The Bible makes it very clear that sin entered into the race through one man, by the fall of Adam. Adam was created with no disposition towards evil; yet in some mysterious way, Adam himself commits a sin. God didn't cause the fall of Adam, but once Adam chose to sin, God's punishment was to allow Adam to deteriorate into a fallen moral condition, which moral condition is then transmitted to all future descendants.

There are widely diverse theories of how original sin is implicated in our lives. Here are some of the most significant.

One view is called 'Realism' and is based partly on philosophical speculation and partly on inferences drawn from biblical passages. The basic thesis of Realism is this: God is righteous and would never hold a person responsible for something that somebody else did. How can this square with the doctrine of original sin? The Realists agree that the Bible teaches that we all sinned in Adam, and that the Fall is a result of what took place in the Garden of Eden. So it would seem to the Realist, on the surface at least, that God does in fact perpetrate an injustice, that God does hold future generations responsible for something that Adam did. But the Realists' argument is this: the only way God could do that justly would be if somehow we were actually there, involved with Adam in his sin. In other words, this view involves a kind of spiritual pre-existence, whereby our souls were all present in Adam, and so we were really there. Hence, when we were born in this world, we were born with souls already tainted and corrupted centuries ago in the Garden of Eden.

The biblical argument for this is drawn from the Book of Hebrews (chapter 7) where the author gives a lengthy discourse on the superiority of Christ's priesthood. He argues for the superiority of the priesthood of Melchizedec over the priesthood of Levi by saying that Levi paid tithes to Melchizedec while he was still in the loins of his father Abraham. Now how are we to understand that verse? The Realists do it the same way they treat the Fall: that Levi somehow pre-existed within Abraham, and when Abraham paid the tithe, Levi was paying it too. They say that just as you can have a real action of a future generation, as in Hebrews, so you can have it back in time, as in the Garden of Eden. The way to understand the Fall is to realise that we were there in the loins of Adam, just as Levi was in the loins of Abraham. We sinned with Adam, that is why we fell with Adam, and so there's no injustice on God's part.

Another view which has been very popular in modern days is that the whole story of the Fall in Genesis is only a parable illustrating the universal propensity of mankind to sin. To err is human and Adam simply did what we all do. Every individual is born basically

neutral, but then inevitably manifests sinful behaviour by choosing the way Adam did. That sounds good because it exonerates God from the charge of holding future generations responsible.

But it raises other problems, some biblical and some philosophical. The biblical problems are obvious: that's not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that we in fact fell in Adam and that Adam was a real historical person.

But beyond that dispute about the historicity of Adam or whether we interpret the story of Adam and Eve as simply a parable of human actions, we have to ask the question that the great theologian, Jonathan Edwards, asked. He said, Let's suppose for a moment that everybody was born neutral, with no disposition either for sin or against sin. Certainly you would expect that a certain percentage, perhaps 50% of those born in the state of neutrality, would live their lives, make the right choices and not choose sin. You would expect 50% to sin and 50% not to sin. So you would expect half the human race to be sinless, while the other half might be fallen. But even if we don't want to push it to a percentage level of 50-50, certainly if every human being was born sinless, we would expect some people, at least 1% or half of one percent or 100 people, or whatever, who would make it through life without succumbing to the temptation of sin.

Some have answered that by saying, The reason why people are drawn to sin, and why sin is so popular, is because sin is imposed upon us by society. 'We live in a fallen society, in a fallen civilisation and the impact of that civilisation upon me as an individual is so overwhelming that it will overthrow that 50% chance not to sin.' But we have to ask the question, 'How did this civilisation get so universally corrupt in the first place?' We cannot account for it other than the fact that it is built in.

Some philosophers have argued that the reason why sin is universal, is that the failure to be perfect is something built in to our being finite. If that's the case, then sin is merely an expression of our finitude, and the fact that God made us finite would again raise the serious problem that God is holding man responsible for doing that which comes naturally. So it doesn't solve the problem.

The classical Protestant answer is usually defined by what is called 'federalism'. Adam was our representative, he was the federal head of mankind. God put him on probation and he was on probation not only for himself, but for the race. Now one might say, 'Wait a minute, that's not fair. Now you are going to say that I am held responsible for something that Adam did.'

There is only one time in all of human history when we have been perfectly, accurately represented, and we did not choose our own representative. God chose our representative for us. Adam was the perfect choice for you and for me. God holds me accountable for what Adam did, because Adam did in fact truly, perfectly and infallibly represent me. He was my

candidate. I did not choose him; God did. But again, if we suppose that when God chose Adam to represent us, that his choice was malicious or foolish, fallible or inaccurate, what are we saying about God? When we make those kinds of complaints and register those kinds of protests, we are proving how accurate the choice was, because when we assail the integrity of God in making the selection for us, we are revealing our own falleness.

The Scriptures tell us that God appointed one man to represent us, that he perfectly represented us and hence we are held responsible. Notice that the way in which original sin comes upon me is through representation and through the imputation of Adam's guilt to me. There are Christians who object to that, and I want to speak to them.

If you are objecting on the grounds that the principles of representation and imputation are wrong in and of themselves, then you must realise that you have just taken away the ground basis for your salvation. It is only by representation that you are saved, and only by imputation that you are redeemed. If it is right for God to save a man on the basis of another man's work, it is also all right for God to punish us on the basis of another man's work.

Adam acted for me far more capably than any human being that I might select on my own. Because Adam sinned, we all suffer the consequences of sin. Because Adam sinned, sin came into the world, and with that sin came death. Because Adam died, I am under the death sentence of God. I will be executed in this world. Yes, I will live for ever, I will be raised from the dead, but I must pass through the vale of death because I am a child of Adam. It is because I am a child of Christ that the sting of that death will be removed and that I will be raised again to eternal life.

Victory over death (5:12-21)

Paul introduces one of the consequences of Adam's fall in verse 12: **Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin ...**, that is, the instrumental means by which death was introduced into the world was sin. Death was a consequence of sin; it was not built into creation. It comes as a punishment upon the human race for the infection and pollution of sin that is passed on to us through Adam.

One of the problems we have in the Christian faith is the impact that Greek philosophy has made over the centuries on Christian theology. Many times you have heard the concept of the immortality of the soul. Well, in the Greek view of things, man is made of body and soul. There is a physical aspect to man and there is a spiritual aspect to man. But in Greek philosophy the soul is innately, intrinsically, irrevocably and immutably indestructible; the soul is the part of man that is eternal. It will never perish because it cannot perish, it is incapable of disintegration. So the Greeks believed in an immortal soul.

Doesn't the Christian faith believe in immortality too? Yes, but it is an acquired immortality. Let me explain that. The Bible tells us that we are born mortal. We are like a seed that is sown in mortality, but will be raised in immortality. In creation, God made man with the capacity for dying, body and soul. Man's nature was every moment dependent for its life on the sustaining power of God. The question of whether or not that human being (Adam) would continue to live indefinitely, or have his life terminated by death, was centred on the question of obedience. If he had passed the test of obedience he would have become immortal, as we shall be in heaven. But the punishment for sin was the curse of death, and that curse has come upon the whole world.

Remember that in the Garden of Eden the penalty for sin was death 'that day' (Gen. 2:17). Since Adam and Eve did not die a physical death on that very day, some have interpreted Scripture to mean that they experienced spiritual death. On this interpretation, punishment for sin is spiritual death, but physical death is a natural dimension to our humanity. But that is not what the Bible teaches. Indeed, God exercised his prerogative of mercy and grace by not imposing the full measure of the penalty for sin which was instantaneous death. He did instantly impose spiritual death and he also imposed the penalty of physical death, but that was delayed so that man was given a few years to live in this world before he had to suffer the punishment for his sin.

How do we know that every human being is a sinner? Well we know it because every human being eventually dies: **and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law** (verses 12, 13). When does the law begin? It is commonplace for many to assume that the law of God began on Mount Sinai, when God gave the tablets of stone to Moses. But Paul asks a very interesting and a very penetrating theological question: How could there be sin if there wasn't any law, because where there is no law there can be no transgression? Sin, by definition, is a violation of God's law. If there isn't any law, there can't be any sin. And if there can't be any sin, as the logical progression goes, there can't be any death. But death has reigned from Adam: **Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come** (verse 14). The only rational explanation, if there was death all that time, is that there had to be sin from Adam to Moses. What else does it mean? It means there had to be law.

Paul has already expressed in the second chapter of Romans that, in addition to the special revelation of the written law of God at Sinai, God has written his law in the hearts of all men (2:14, 15). There is a natural law and every human being is, to some degree, aware of right and wrong. God has not left this planet in mute silence with respect to human moral responsibility. The consciousness and awareness of this can be distorted through cultural rules and regulations, but there is still a built-in sense of righteousness that every

human being knows. Men didn't commit the same sin that Adam did, but if death reigned over them, it is clear that they were involved in sin.

Paul draws the very important contrast between the work of the first Adam and the work of the Second Adam in verse 15: **But the gift is not like the trespass.** There are parallels and there are differences.

For if the many died by the trespass of the one man. He is saying that because of the offence of one man, many are dead. In fact not just many, but all are exposed to death; **how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!** Here we have the idea that there is a parallel of imputation and representation. Our salvation rests upon this. It is through the first Adam that we are plunged into the ruin, by representation and imputation; by the Second Adam we are redeemed through representation and imputation. Jesus Christ represented me on the cross. On that cross, Jesus Christ paid the penalty for my sin. And not only was my sin imputed to him, but his righteousness was imputed to me.

Although there is a parallel, Jesus and Adam were not equals. What Adam did was destructive; what Jesus does is redemptive. Not only that, the grace of God has overflowed to *many*. Jesus didn't just save a few, he saved many. He hasn't saved everybody, but the imputation of his righteousness has been given by grace to many people. Death is something we earned; salvation is something that we receive as a gift. You cannot earn it or buy it. Paul uses the word 'gift' in the next verse: **Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ** (verses 16, 17). Paul is saying that the power and impact of the Second Adam is much greater than the impact of the first Adam. The impact of Adam has been awful, it has put men in misery, in ruin. But the solution is infinitely greater, because Christ has abounded in winning eternal life for men. We have to go through a travail of tears for our threescore and ten years on this planet and still have to go through the valley of the shadow of death. But what is that compared to the eternity of felicity and joy and happiness without pain, without sorrow, without tears, which Christ has won for us in his role as the Second Adam?

Through the work of Christ, through his obedience and his righteousness, we are made alive and are brought into eternal life. He repeats and summarises this in verses 18 and 19: **Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.** It sounds as if Paul is saying that through Adam's sin, the whole world comes

under condemnation; and that through Christ's righteousness the whole world will be saved. But this has to be understood in the light of everything else the apostle Paul says in this epistle. Beforehand, he has made it very clear that not everybody experiences salvation.

The law was added so that the trespass might increase (verse 20). Paul is speaking of the law of Moses, and this is a difficult verse because it does seem to be saying that God's purpose in giving the law was to make sin worse. Paul elsewhere describes more than one purpose behind the law, but obviously what he is saying here is that sin, by the presence of law, is shown to be sin. Law doesn't, in and of itself, create sin; it is the evil disposition of our hearts that creates sin, not the law. What the law does is define and condemn it and reveal it for what it is—sin.

But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (verses 20, 21). There is a greater measure of grace in this world than there is of sin and of evil. Think about the implications of that. Suppose God removed his grace—what would happen? In fact, some understand Paul's teaching in 2 Thessalonians, when he talks about the emergence of the Antichrist and the end of the world, as referring to such a scenario. If things are bad now, just imagine what this world would be like if God's common grace were removed. We have no conception of the capacity for evil and wickedness that dwells in the human heart. I am not talking about hardened criminals in Death Row, I am talking about your heart and my heart. There is virtually no heinous act which I am intrinsically incapable of committing. And I am speaking as a Christian. What sin is there that Christians haven't committed, unless it be the sin against the Holy Spirit? Christians have committed murder, Christians have committed adultery, Christians steal, Christians lie, Christians start wars, Christians have abortions. They do all kinds of unspeakable wicked things. Even the presence of regeneration and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit does not totally remove sin. The righteousness of Christ is God's gracious way of bringing eternal life to all who believe in him as Lord.²

(5:12–14) We come now to the consideration of a passage (5:12–21) which reaches back to 3:18–20 where the subject of the total depravity of the race is discussed, and includes in its scope the section, 3:21–5:11, where justification is dealt with. Paul shows in this passage that sin and death come from the First Adam, and righteousness and life from the Second Adam.

“World” here is *kosmos* (κ ο σ μ ο ς), the human race, the same word used in John 3:16 of the world of sinners. Sin originated with the angel Lucifer, who in rebelling against God

² Sproul, R. C. (1994). [*The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans*](#) (pp. 100–109). Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications.

contracted a sinful nature. Adam in his disobedience was the channel through which sin entered the human race. Through sin, death entered the race, physical and spiritual. The literal Greek which follows is, "And thus into all men death came throughout." That is, when death entered the race, it went throughout the race, affecting everyone. The reason why death affects all, Paul says, is that all sinned. Here Adam is looked upon as the federal head of the race, and that when he sinned, all of humanity sinned in him. It is Adam's initial sin that constituted him a sinner in which all human beings participated, and which brings death upon all. In other words, we are sinners, not because we have committed acts of sin, but because Adam sinned.

Now Paul proceeds to explain and demonstrate this. Until the law was given, that is, during the period between Adam and Moses, sin was in the world. But sin is not put to the account of the person when there is no law. Yet, death reigned as king from the time of Adam to that of Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam's transgression. Since death comes by means of sin, and those living between Adam and Moses had no sins charged to their account by reason of the non-existence of the written law, and yet in spite of that, died, logic leads us to conclude that their death came by reason of Adam's sin and that they sinned in him, their federal head. Adam is spoken of as "the figure of Him who was to come." "Figure" is *typos* (τ υ π ο ς), used in a doctrinal sense of a type, a person or thing prefiguring a future (Messianic) person or thing; in this sense Adam is called a type of Jesus Christ, each of the two having exercised a preeminent influence upon the human race (the former destructive, the latter, saving) (Thayer).

Translation. Wherefore, as through the intermediate agency of one man the aforementioned sin into the world entered, and through this sin, death; and thus into and throughout all mankind death entered, because all sinned. For until law, sin was in the world, but sin is not put to one's account, there being no law. But death reigned as king from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin in the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the One who is to come.

(5:15) "Offense" is *paraptōma* (π α ρ α π τ ω μ α), "a falling alongside, a deviation from the right path." Adam's original sin was the violation of the known will of God. "Free gift" is *charisma* (χ α ρ ι σ μ α), "a gift of grace, a favor which one receives without merit of his own," referring here to the gift of eternal life. Paul is here introducing a contrast. The one act of obedience is not like the free gift. The word "one" is preceded by the article. It is the transgression of the one, Adam. This one transgression resulted in the physical and spiritual death of all. The word "one" before "man" is preceded by the article. It is "the one Man."

Vincent comments, "Some explain of the quality of the cause and effect: that as the fall of Adam caused vast evil, the work of the far greater Christ shall *much more* cause great results of good. This is true, but the argument seems to turn rather on the question of

certainty. “The character of God is such, from a Christian point of view, that the comparison gives a much more certain basis of belief, in what is gained through the second Adam, than in the certainties of sin and death through the first Adam’ (Schaff and Riddle).”

Translation. But not as the transgression, thus also is the gratuitous favor. For since by the transgression of the one the many died, much more the grace of God and the gratuitous gift by grace which is of the one Man, Jesus Christ, to the many will abound.

(5:16) The contrast here is that of source. Out of the source of one sin, Adam’s, God’s judgment fell, resulting in the condemnation of all. Out of a source of many transgressions, as an occasion for the display of God’s grace, the free gift of salvation came, resulting in justification.

Translation. And not as through one who sinned, was the gift, for the judgment was out of one (transgression) as a source, resulting in condemnation. But the gratuitous gift was out of many transgressions as a source, resulting in justification.

(5:17) Vincent says that the emphatic point of the comparison is in the word “reigned.” “The effect of the second Adam cannot fall behind that of the first. If death reigned, there must also be a reign of life.”

Translation. For in view of the fact that by means of the transgression of the one, death reigned as king through that one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness in life will reign as kings through the One, Jesus Christ.

(5:18) “Offense” is paraptōma (παρὰ πτωμα), “transgression.” The Greek reads: “So then, therefore, as through one transgression, to all men.” The preposition eis (εἰς) often shows result. A translator is not bound to duplicate the exact parts of speech found in the original when a Greek idiom would when brought over into the second language, cause misunderstanding. Here the absence of the verb must be taken care of. The translation can therefore read, “So then, therefore, as through one act of transgression, to all men there resulted condemnation.”

“Righteousness” is *dikaiōma* (δικαίωμα), “a righteous act or deed,” here, that righteous act of our Lord in satisfying the demands of the law which mankind broke. “Justification” is *dikaiōsis* (δικαίωσις), “the act of God declaring men free from guilt and acceptable to Him” (Thayer). The same authority explains, “unto acquittal, which brings with it the bestowment of life.” The words “of life” are genitive of description in the Greek text, describing the quality of the righteousness bestowed upon man. It is a righteousness which is connected with the impartation of spiritual life. In itself, this

righteous standing is a purely legal matter and does not impart life nor change character. But it is accompanied by the life that God is, imparted to the believing sinner in regeneration.

Translation. So then, therefore, as through one act of transgression to all men there resulted condemnation, thus, also, through one act of righteousness, to all men there resulted a righteous standing that had to do with life.

(5:19) *“Disobedience” is parakoē (παροκαοη). This is one of the nine words for sin in the New Testament. It describes the nature of Adam’s first act of sin, the one act that plunged the entire race into sin with its accompanying degradation and misery. The word is made up of akouō (ἀκ ο υ ω), “to hear,” and para (πα ρ α), “alongside,” the compound word meaning, “to hear alongside.” Trench says, “Parakoē (Π α ρ α κ ο η) is in its strictest sense a failing to hear or a hearing amiss, the notion of active disobedience which follows on this inattentive or careless hearing, being superinduced upon the word; or, it may be, the sin being regarded as already committed in the failing to listen when God is speaking.... It need hardly be observed how continually in the o.t., disobedience is described as a refusing to hear (Jer. 11:10, 35:17); and it appears literally as such at Acts 7:57.” “Obedience” is hupokoē (ὕ π ο κ ο η), made up of akouō (ἀκ ο υ ω), “to hear,” and hupo (ὕ π ο), “under,” literally “to hear under.” The idea is that of a willing listening to authority. Thayer defines it; “obedience, compliance, submission.” The obedience here on the part of the Lord Jesus is spoken of in Hebrews 10:7, where He is quoted as saying to God the Father, “Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do thy will, O God.” The Father’s will was the Cross for the Son. “Made” in both occurrences is kathistēmi (κα θ ι σ τ η μ ι), “to set, place, put, to appoint one to administer an office, to constitute.” The Greek word for “make” is poieō (π ο ι ε ω), which refers to a mechanical operation such as that of making a spear out of wood and iron. It refers to the act of changing a certain material object so as to fit it for a certain purpose. Kathistēmi (Κ α θ ι σ τ η μ ι) has in it more than that. By the one act of Adam in disobeying God, the human race was constituted sinful, and this by the judicial act of God. Likewise, by the one act of obedience of the Lord Jesus, all who believe are constituted righteous, and this by the judicial act of God.*

Translation. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were constituted sinners, thus also through the obedience of the One, the many will be constituted righteous.

(5:20) *There is no article before “law.” Law as a method of divine dealing entered. “Entered” is pareisēthen (πα ρ ε ι σ η λ θ ε ν). Elthon (Ἐ λ θ ο ν) means “to come,” eis (εἰς) “into,” and para (πα ρ α), “alongside,” thus, “entered alongside.” Vincent says, “Now that the parallel between Adam and Christ is closed, the question arises as to the position and office of the law. How did it stand related to Adam and Christ? Paul replies that it came in alongside of the sin. ‘It was taken up into the divine plan or arrangement, and made*

*an occasion for the abounding of grace in the opening of the new way of justification and life' (Dwight). Denney explains, "The comparison between Adam and Christ is closed. But in the middle between the two stood the law' (Meyer). Paul must refer to it in such a way as to indicate the place it holds in the order of Providence, and especially to show that it does not frustrate, but further, the end contemplated in the work of Christ ... Sin entered into the world; the Law entered into the situation thus created as an accessory or subordinate thing; it has not the decisive significance in history which the objective power of sin has." "Offense" is *paraptōma* (παρὰ πτωμα) (transgression). "Abound" is *pleonazō* (πλεονάζω), "to increase, be augmented." Denney says, "The offense is multiplied because the law, encountering the flesh, evokes its natural antagonism to God, and so stimulates it into disobedience ... As the offense multiplied, the need of redemption, and the sense of that need were intensified." Vincent explains, "Not primarily of the greater consciousness and acknowledgment, but of the increase of actual transgression. The other thought, however, may be included." "Did much more abound" is *hyperperisseuō* (ὑπερπερισεύω). The simple verb means "to be over and above a certain number or measure," thus, "to superabound." The prefixed preposition means "above." Thus, Paul says, "Where sin increased (*pleonazō* (πλεονάζω)), grace superabounded, and then some on top of that."*

Denney says that the word for sin, *hamartia* (ἁμαρτία) seems used here, not *paraptōma* (παρὰ πτωμα), because more proper to express the sum total of evil, made up of repeated acts of disobedience to the law.

Translation. Moreover, law entered in alongside, in order that the transgression might be augmented. But where the sin was augmented, the grace superabounded with more added to that.

*(5:21) The A.V., says "sin reigned unto death." "Reigned" is *basileuō* (βασίλευω), "to reign as king." Here sin is personified, and refers to a nature, the totally depraved nature of the unsaved person, That reigns as an absolute monarch in his being. "Unto death" is *en toi thanatoi* (ἐν τοῖς θανάτοις), "in the sphere of death." Alford says that death is that in and by which the reign of sin is exercised and shown. Grace is supplied in superabundance in order that it might reign as king through righteousness, resulting in eternal life, and this eternal life in its application to the believing sinner is made possible through the Lord Jesus' work on the Cross.*

Translation. In order that just as the aforementioned sin reigned as king in the sphere of death, thus also the aforementioned grace might reign as king

through righteousness, resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
³

³ Wuest, K. S. (1997). [*Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader*](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 84–89). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.