

Sample Summary of Romans 5:12–21

STRUCTURE

1. (5:12–14) **Fallen Humanity:** Before you received reconciliation through Jesus, death reigned over you as one “in Adam” condemned in God’s sight.
 - a. (5:12a) The **historical origin** of death’s dominion: When one man (Adam) disobeyed, sin came into the world and, through sin, death.
 - b. (5:12b–14a) The **power** of death’s dominion: Death spread to all humanity, each of whom is accounted a sinner even if they do not have access to God’s revealed law.
 - c. (5:14b) The **purpose** of death’s dominion: God shows his sovereign, redemptive purposes by establishing Adam as a “type” of Jesus.

2. (5:15–21) **Redeemed Humanity:** Now that you have received reconciliation through Jesus, you reign in life through him as one “in the New Adam” justified in God’s sight.
 - a. (5:15) The **historical origin** of righteousness’s dominion: When one man (Jesus Christ; the antitype) gave the free gift of righteousness, grace abounded for many.
 - b. (5:16–19) The **power** of righteousness’s dominion: Through Jesus’s one act of righteousness, life-giving justification is brought to the many through the superabundance of God’s grace and Jesus’s gracious free gift—much more powerfully than death was brought to the many through Adam.
 - c. (5:20–21) The **purpose** of righteousness’s dominion: God shows his sovereign, purposes in causing his grace in Christ to triumph over sin and death so that all those united to Christ will receive righteousness and eternal life ... (6:1–23) *which transforms believers by freeing us from slavery to sin, for slavery to righteousness that leads to sanctification in this age, even while indwelling sin (flesh) remains and must be resisted.*

The TRIUMPH OF GOD’S GRACE in Christ Jesus, Our Lord

UNIFYING THEME

Through Jesus Christ’s obedient act of righteousness, especially in sacrificially dying on the cross for hostile sinners as our substitute, all who receive his free gift of righteousness are delivered from the reign of sin and death that came through Adam’s transgression so that we may reign in life through Christ, fully justified in God’s sight with the certain hope of eternal life in Christ.

AUTHOR’S AIM

Paul aims to keep assuring believers of our certain reconciliation with God and hope of future salvation on judgment day by instructing us about how the death of the one (Jesus) can result in life for the many (believers).

Romans 5:12–21 | A Strange and Spectacular Calculus

In Romans 5:1–11, Paul celebrates the benefits of justification in our present reconciliation and hope of future salvation on judgment day: “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (5:10–11).

But how can the past death of one man, Jesus, bring these present and future results for many, namely, for everyone who believes in him? How does that math work?

In the context of Romans 5, how is Adam “a **TYPE** of the one who was to come”?

The one (who serves as head) performs an action with results for **the many**: imputation via “federal headship.”

Comparison (historical man; God-ordained head/representative; one action bringing results for the many)

Contrast (specific action; results of action: their essence and extent)

FALLEN HUMANITY (all “in Adam” under reign of sin & death)

One man (Adam; “a type of the one who was to come”)

One act: One trespass (One act of disobedience to God’s revealed command)

Result: Sin enters world

Verdict of condemnation; death enters the world through sin (Sin reigns in death, both spiritual & physical; the whole world “under sin” by nature)

Imputation: Death spread to all humanity because **THE MANY** were made sinners (*Imputed sin: all human beings counted as sinners “in Adam,” regardless of whether their sin was like Adam’s as a transgression of God’s revealed law, because he is humanity’s appointed head/representative*)

REDEEMED HUMANITY (all “in Christ” reign in life through him)

One man (New/Last Adam: Jesus Christ; the “antitype”)

One act: One act of righteousness (Free gift: Jesus’s gracious obedience to his Father, especially in his sacrificial death for hostile sinners)

Result: God’s (super)abounding grace & the free gift of righteousness

Verdict of justification, brought through the receiving free gift of righteousness (Believers reign in life through Jesus; grace reigns through righteousness)

*Escalated abounding in the results of Christ’s action relative to the results of Adam’s action; God’s work of grace in Christ is **more powerful** than the work of sin and death!*

Imputation: Justification & eternal life given through Jesus Christ to all who receive the free gift because **THE MANY** will be made righteous (*Imputed righteousness: all believers are counted righteous and given eternal life “in Christ” despite our many sins and deserved condemnation because he is our appointed head/representative*)

Jesus’s “passive” righteousness (substitutionary death)

Jesus’s “active” righteousness (life of obedience)

Responding to Romans 5:12–21

1. Everyone: To which humanity do you belong? That is, are you under death’s reign or are you reigning in life through Christ? **Before God, are you standing “in Adam” or “in Christ”?**
2. Believers: To what extent are you walking in newness of life, as one who is dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6)?

Choose one area of your life. Imagine what it could look like in that area for you to embrace more fully the newness of life you’ve received through Christ. **What is one concrete action you can/will take this evening toward that end?**