

HUMPTY DUMPTY

Romans 5:12-21

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Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall;
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall!
All the king's horses
And all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

For most of us, this is a very familiar nursery rhyme. But did you know that no one knows who wrote it or from whence it came? Also, isn't it interesting that when most of us think about this nursery rhyme, we picture Humpty Dumpty as being an egg. But nothing here indicates that the author had an egg-like figure in mind. I would like to suggest another picture as to what the author might have had in mind when he wrote of Humpty Dumpty. Humpty was not an egg-like person, but rather he represents the fall of humankind or maybe just the fall or crash or shatter of an individual's life after having made a wrong decision or after an uncontrollable event in life.

Humankind or the life of an individual sat on a wall, and due to sin, fell; and no one since that Fall has been able to put us back together again--that is, until Jesus Christ. I believe that the point of this nursery rhyme was to communicate the truth that all of us human beings are broken; and on our own or even with the best therapist or the best that modern medicine has to offer, we can't be completely put back together again. Similarly, this is the message that comes from our passage of study from the book of **Romans** this morning.

Romans 5:12-21 pictures two men. The first is Adam, whose failure to obey God led to the Fall, the destruction of the entire human race that was once sitting upon a wall of innocence. This Adam, this Humpty Dumpty, fell to such a great depth that no one was able to deliver him from his fractured state. However, when the second man came into the world, the second Adam, Jesus Christ, He offered to put all of us back together again.

Before we look closely at our passage, let's take a moment to review the context.

ROMANS 1-5

The Fall		The Human Race beyond the Fall	
The Judgment of the Human race		Potential Justification for some	
1:1	3:20	3:21	5:21

The first five chapters of Romans break into two major sections. In the first three chapters, Paul deals with the judgment of the human race caused by the Fall. In the next section, where we find ourselves this morning, **Romans 3:21-5:21**, Paul explains the possibility for some of the human race beyond the Fall to put their trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. The key subject of this section is justification, and how God made it possible for us to be not just forgiven by God, but made permanently right and fully pleasing, acceptable, and approved of before God. Because of what Jesus did on the cross for us, never again do we have to fear God's wrath or rejection. Some summarize the first section of **Romans** with the word Sin or Problem. This second section is summarized by the word Salvation or Solution.

As we look at our passage this morning, there is an underlying question that Paul attempts to address. That question is this: "How could what one man, Adam, did at one time in history have such an absolutely detrimental effect on all people forever?" Or, to be put another way, "Why am I being held captive to the failure of another person's sinful choices?" In order to answer these questions, Paul here chooses to compare and contrast the first Adam with one who is sometimes called The Second Adam, Jesus Christ. From **verse 12** to the end of the chapter, Paul is going to show us the greatness of Jesus Christ's works on our behalf, by comparing and contrasting them with the effects of Adam's sin upon the human race. Understanding the differences between the works of Christ and the works of Adam quite naturally fosters praise in our hearts toward God for what Jesus accomplished for those who have put their trust in Him as their Savior. Furthermore, it sets the stage for why the reader should continue reading in **Romans** to discover how the life of a Christian here on earth has potentially changed forever because of what Jesus did almost 2000 years ago.

Our section of scripture falls into three identifiable points on your outlines. Allow me to give you those three points: In **verses 12-14**, Paul shows us the condition to which every human being is born in the first Adam. Then, in **verses 15-17**, we will see the potential for those who are born again in the second Adam. Then, in **verses 18-21**, Paul makes some concluding comments about the first and second Adam.

Please grab your Bibles and follow along as I read, beginning with **Romans 5:12**.

¹²Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—¹³for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴Yet 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.

¹⁵But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.

¹⁶And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ¹⁷For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the

free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

¹⁸Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹For 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. ²⁰Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Before we begin our study, I want to share an observation about this passage. According to Dr. Lewis Johnson, my late Greek professor at Dallas Seminary known as one of the finest Greek scholars to have lived during past three generations, this passage of the New Testament is the most challenging and most difficult in all of the New Testament to correctly understand and interpret, because of all of the complex theology involved. It contains so much theology, that one could fall into the trap of looking at all of the details but lose sight of the overall point of what this section is trying to communicate. So, our goal this morning is to maintain the bigger picture while looking at some of the particulars.

I can predict ahead of time that there will be many questions that will come to your minds that, in this venue, we won't be able to address. It would be a great passage of Scripture to mine in a Sunday school class setting, but even then you would not be able to solve all of its riddles. I think some of our questions will ultimately have to wait until we get to heaven for answers.

Let's begin looking at the condition in which every human being is born, "**in Adam.**" Verse 12 reads, "**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.**"

Notice this word "**sin.**" The term refers not so much to a specific wrong action of Adam, but rather to the driving force behind our chronic human tendency to do evil. Even though we were made in the image of God and, thusly, can do some good, at our core we are more evil than good. In fact, the Bible has a term to describe this driving force to sin or do evil. In the next couple of chapters, Paul will call this chronic sinful tendency "**the flesh.**"

From the beginning of creation, we humans were made up of a body, soul (personality, gifts, and abilities), and spirit (that which enables us to do something no other creature on earth can do--carry on an intimate relationship with God).

As a result of the Fall, sin and the flesh infected our entire person. Our bodies would experience deterioration, disease, and eventual death. Because sin infected our souls, selfishness and seeking after self-glory would rule in our hearts, resulting in our relationships with others breaking down. And because of sin, we spiritually "**died**" or became separated from God from that point on. Although we still have a spirit, God's spirit no longer dwelled in Adam and all who followed after him.

Paul further explains to us here that one man, Adam, who had this sinful or fleshly drivenness, passed this fleshly drive onto all of his descendants. This is similar to a mother addicted to heroin impacting the future of her baby.

The apostle Paul tells us in **Ephesians 2:1-2** that we were so spiritually dead and born totally incapable of resolving our sin problem, that we are left in the hopeless condition of never being able to regain the type of intimate personal relationship with God that both Adam and Eve once had. Paul writes, "**¹And you [Christians before you were saved] were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in 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.**" In other words, as sinners, we were totally helpless,

like a dead man, to do anything to change our spiritual condition before God. We were lost, doomed to be damned.

At this point, the following push back comes to the front: “Wait a minute! This doesn’t sound fair to me! God is punishing me for Adam’s sin! Why should Adam’s rebellion against God be pinned on anyone else but Adam? He did it, not me. He caused my situation of being spiritually dead. Why should I be blamed or be held responsible for his actions?” People who argue this way don’t understand the very nature of our humanity.

We think of ourselves as individuals quite separate from other people. Our modern tendency is the “me, me, me” of our own individualism. We want to reject the concept that we are all tied together. We think and live as though it is every man for himself. But that is not how God created us. From the very beginning we were all connected, even before we were yet born. Our very identity includes the reality of our very common corporate nature. We are not simply individuals. If we are going to be healthy humans, we must learn to live in community, not in isolation. Understanding this is key to understanding who we are as individuals. You were never created to live and act as an island unto yourself. Everything you do will affect someone else. Furthermore, to be an emotionally fulfilled and healthy person, you need to be connected to others. That is how God created us to live.

Even the Hebrew name for Adam attests to this fact. His name literally means humankind. It is a generic term that refers to a greater group of people. To the Jew, Adam was correctly understood to be not just a mere individual or representative of the human race, he was the human race. Hence, when we read the phrase “**in Adam**,” we see it refers to the human race. Whatever would become of the human race, it started off with what Adam chose to become. Whatever Adam did, mankind, including all of the individual human beings yet to be born in the future, somehow participated in and thus were personally responsible for it. That’s exactly what is behind the last three words of **verse 12**, “**because all sinned.**” The verb tense used there is in the past tense and describes that somehow, even though we weren’t even born yet, we were inextricably tied to and participated with Adam in what he did. In other words, we actually are responsible for sinning with Adam when Adam sinned.

Now, I will be the first person to tell you that I don't fully understand how all of this works, any more than I understand a computer or how the arguments about predestination and free will come together. But what I have witnessed is that this is true.

However, I have learned it is not necessary for us to explain or understand how it is possible that we sinned with Adam when we were yet to be born. Why? Because Paul wrote and explained to us back in **Romans 2** that God will not judge people upon the basis of our joint venture with Adam's sin. Instead God, the perfect and fair judge, will judge us on the basis of our inability to live up to our own moral standards. And as we came to understand in our study of **Romans 2**, all of us have violated our own personal moral laws. None of us have been able to keep our own moral codes, even when we change them so that we think we can better obey them. Hence, we are found guilty for our own personal wrong choices when we have violated our own consciences. Forget what Adam did. In the end, the issue of **Romans 5:12** and how we sinned with Adam is a moot point. We are guilty of sin and spiritually dead by the violating of our own moral codes.

Now this truth is the bad news. But there is also some good news, a flip side to this coin of being found guilty based on the work of another. The good news is what the rest of this chapter is all about. It will be teaching us that even though we don't deserve it, if we choose to stand on the accomplishments of Jesus Christ's work on the cross, the second Adam's work on our behalf of dying for our sins, then we can be forever forgiven, accepted, approved, and deeply loved by God. We can be made spiritually alive again based on the work of another, Jesus Christ, the second Adam.

Through choosing to trust in Christ's work on the cross as being enough to forgive us of our sin and to reconcile us to God, one is "**born again**," made spiritually alive and reunited with God. But this being born again resulting in salvation is not automatic. It is a matter of the individual's choice, just as it was Adam's choice to sin against God.

Paul continues to elaborate in **verse 13**. He says, "**For sin indeed was in the world before the law was given**, [that's the Ten Commandments and God's instruction for moral and upright living] **but sin is not counted where there is no law.**" To be "**counted**" is the theological word imputed. It means to be

charged to one's personal account. In other words, since the Law, or The Ten Commandments, came long after Adam, those who never heard of the Law, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, are not going to be held accountable as individuals for violating the Law. They were not judged by the Law. The sins that will be counted against them and others will be sins of failure to live up to their own code of ethics, their own God-given conscience. Based upon their failure to live up to their own moral law, they are separated from God, and unless they have a rescuer, a Savior who can save them from their sin, they are without hope of spending eternal life with God.

This is what Paul has in mind when he writes in **verse 14**, “**Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses.**” (Moses represents the chronological mark in history for when the Law came). But then Paul goes even one step further. He says, “**Even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.**”

In other words, the people who lived between Adam and Moses who didn't even sin like Adam did are still subject to death, because they sinned in other ways.

So what does Paul mean when he says that “**death reigned?**” To “**reign**” means to be in total control. When we sin, a type of death takes control of our lives. It reigns. For example, a person can lose any real hope that they will break a sinful habit or an addiction that has controlled their lives for years. People feel enslaved by compulsive, self-destructive, ruinous behavior. They may want to stop and try to stop, but it is only a matter of time before they fail again. Ever since the Fall, even though we may have been alive physically, death reigned in our hearts.

Death reigning is also used to describe the absence of life, not just the cessation of life. Death refers to emptiness, loneliness, misery, depression, boredom, and restlessness, because we were not in fellowship with God. Although physically alive, death reigns in us. We live lives wrapped up in anguish and fear. Life itself seems to be barren. There is nothing worthwhile to look forward to. You may be looking forward to marriage, but then what? You may be looking forward to having kids, but then what? You may be looking forward to retirement, but then what? What are you going to do once you are there? When we are spiritually dead, we are not looking forward with

any specific purpose in mind. That is a form of death reigning. It is an emptiness of purpose.

But the good news is we don't have to stay that way. Look at the end of **verse 14** which says, “**Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.**” He is saying that there is another nature that we can be associated with, a “**type**” or pattern of human being like Adam who came after Adam that we can identify with, should we choose to, and that is Jesus Christ. Adam is a kind of picture of Christ, and yet there is a great difference between the two.

Now, before we look at these next verses, which deal with this great difference of who we are in Christ as contrasted against who we were in Adam, I want us to start building on this chart that contrasts the differences between what happened to us in Adam and what happens to us in Christ. What we have seen so far in **verses 12-14** is the results of our being born in Adam.

We have seen:

IN ADAM	IN CHRIST
Verse 12 Sin(cause) Death (affect)	
Verses 12,18 all sinned; sin reigned	
Verse 14 Death reigned (all died)	

Now, let's look at the potential for those who are born again in the Second Adam, as it is spelled out for us in **verses 15-17**. Paul writes, “**But the free gift is not like the transgression.**”

What is this “**gift**” that Paul is talking about? It's the gift that every human being is looking for. This same word was mentioned first back in **Romans 3:24**, and up to this point, it is the only other place this term “**gift**” is used in **Romans**. Paul says there that it is the gift of being justified, made fully approved of, and accepted by God on the basis of Christ's work on the cross on our behalf. When we trust Christ, we are “**born again**”. At that moment we become eternally alive in Christ as Adam was before he sinned. We are no

longer separated from God. By nature, a gift is not something that can be earned. It can only be received. This gift is received by faith alone. What Jesus did on the cross was enough to make us alive again to God and reconciled to Him.

Paul tells us here that this gift of God’s approval or welcoming home is not like the “trespass” or transgression. We read in **verse 17**:

¹⁷For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. ¹⁸Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

Now those are a lot of words. What do they mean? Maybe this chart will help.

IN ADAM	IN CHRIST
Verse 15 transgression > many died	Verses 15, 21 free gift > many live (implied here, but stated in verse 21)
one > many	one > many
Verses 16, 18 one sin > judgment > condemnation to all	Verses 16, 18 many sins > free gift > justification to all (who put their trust in Christ. Verse 18 says all, but implied is all who trust Christ.)
Verse 17 death reigns	Verse 17 Life reigns for the ones who receive Him

By “**life reigns**,” the scriptures mean that life takes on richness, fulfillment, excitement, and a supernatural power that enables us to conquer habits and sinful patterns that we have tried to break for years. In addition, reigning means that our life, regardless of its challenges, will always be purposeful. There will be meaning, even after the death of a loved one. A recent widow friend of mine expressed this beautifully in a card she sent us, after having suddenly lost her husband in death several months ago. She said, “I am no longer a widow, but a window through which others see the Lord’s unfailing love.” That’s what reigning in life is all about!

But is it possible for Christians to still experience a death-like existence even though they are saved? Yes, and we will see why beginning next week. But for now, Paul is telling us that we have power in Christ to reign in life in spite of our losses and injustices suffered.

The bottom line of this contrast between what happened to us in Adam and what happens to us in Christ is that what we lost in Adam after the Fall, we have regained in Jesus, plus much more, as we will see later in **Romans**.

In **verses 18-21**, Paul concludes this section by summarizing some of the points he had already brought up. He writes, “**So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.**” Understand that justification for all men is not automatic for all people. It is only received by those who put their trust in Christ’s finished work on the cross.

Verse 19, “**For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.**”

Verse 18 One act > many made sinners	Verse 18 one act > many made righteous = saints
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Notice, we are not just declared righteous right now by God. But Paul says, speaking of when a person trusts Christ as Savior, we are immediately made righteous. As far as God is concerned, you are holy, a saint. There is nothing

we can do to improve or lessen our status before God based on our successes or failures as Christians. Our approval and acceptance before God will always rest upon what Jesus did for us on the cross.

In **verses 20-21**, Paul briefly deals with the place of the Law in this matter. **“And the Law came in that the transgression might increase.”** In other words, the Law wasn’t given to stop sin, but to reveal that willful sin will continue, no matter how hard the person **“in Adam”** tries not to sin. God gave us the Law to force us to see our own wrongness, so that we would be convinced of our need for a Savior, someone who could transform our lives and help us become the person that both we and God wants us to become.

Paul continues:

But where sin increased [our knowledge of it in our own lives], **grace** [God’s forgiveness and complete approval and acceptance in Christ] **abounded all the more, that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Again, we have a contrast here. As sin increases, it magnifies even more the contrast of one whose life has been truly changed because Jesus has invaded their being. In turn, this will cause others to praise God for the work He has done in this person’s life.

Verses 20-21 Sin increases	Verses 20-21 Grace increases
Verses 20-21 Sin reigns in death	Verses 20-21 Grace reigns for eternity

There are a couple of applications to consider in the days ahead as you reflect upon Paul’s words. The first is that you cannot help being in Adam; but you

can help from staying in Adam. You don't have to keep on living an empty life. You can experience a new beginning. In fact, this is why Jesus insisted in **John 3:7** that “**you must be born again**” if you are ever going to truly be transformed from the inside out and be assured of passing from spiritual death into spiritual life with the end result of spending eternity with the One who loves you the most, the very One who created you, Jesus Christ.

A second conclusion is that that which characterized Christ's life was His total dependence upon God the Father. In contrast to this is Adam, who lived his life independently of God. He chose to believe Satan's lie that he didn't need to depend upon the Lord. It led to his ruin.

Your identity, how you see yourself and the power you depend upon to live life a certain way, all finds its origin in your nature being aligned with either Jesus Christ or Adam. Who you understand yourself to be will determine the way you live. If you picture yourself to be an out-of-control sinner still in Adam, you will live in defeat. But if you see yourself as a child of God, a saint in Christ, with His living His life through you, you will live confidently.

With whom are you aligned or identified? Are you aligned with Adam who depended solely upon himself and lived his life as though God didn't really exist? If so, how's that working for you? Paul says you are experiencing much “**death**” right now.

Or are you aligned with Jesus, Who lived His life dependent upon the Father and the Father's will. If you are, you are finding new life, new purpose, and you are changing from the inside out.

Your life must be identified with either Adam or Christ. With whom do you identify?

God has given us a tremendous solution to Humpty Dumpty's dilemma, hasn't He? When we discovered our brokenness and failure and inadequacy to live life as God hoped we would, when we discovered our helplessness to get back up on the wall in one piece, God sent us Jesus.

Allow me to close with Charles Swindoll's updated version of Humpty Dumpty. He writes:

Jesus Christ came to our wall;
Jesus Christ died for our fall,
So that regardless of death
And in spite of our sin,
Through grace, He puts us together again.

[Swindoll taped sermon on **Romans 5:12-21.**]

If you want to experience the new birth and be transferred from living in Adam to living in Christ, it is simple. All you have to do is admit to the truth that you are presently in Adam, that you are a sinner who has maybe known about God, but for the most part, has lived as though He doesn't exist or have a real role to play in your life. After admitting that to God simply, by faith, ask Jesus Christ to come into your life as your Savior and Lord, to control your life and make you the person He wants you to be; and he will do it. From that point on, you are in Christ. You are born again. And from that point forward, all you need to do is get into His Word and discover what your rights and privileges are as a child of God. Get to know Him!