

Adam Got Us into This Mess; Christ Got Us Out

Romans 5:12-21

February 22nd, 2009



Have you ever gotten into trouble because of what someone else did? How did you feel about it when you didn't really do anything wrong? You knew the other person did something, but because of your association with them, you got into trouble too. At your core, you honestly did not feel like that was fair. But have you ever gotten out of trouble because of the actions of someone else? How did you feel when that happened? Did you ever stop to think that if it isn't fair for you to get into trouble because of the actions of someone else, then it really isn't fair to get out of trouble because of the actions of someone else?

Scripture

“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-- for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet 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. But 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. And 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. For 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. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For 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. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In the scholarly world, this group of verses is considered the most difficult to understand in the entire Bible. It amazed me when I read this statement. It was made by many scholars, not just one. Almost every commentary of Romans agrees. So as we approach these verses, we will attempt to study a large portion of Scripture, instead of the way we normally do. We want you to see them in their entirety.

I think you will see that what these verses teach is really simple. They will teach that Adam got us into this thing called sin, and Christ Jesus gets us out. I believe when you understand what Paul is doing, it is not as difficult to understand as some might think.

It is kind of like when Celisa and I built our house. We could not wait for the stage when the walls started going up and the rafters were put on, and then it was being decked and shingled. We really loved it when they began to hang sheetrock, and the hardwood floor went down, and the trim went on, and the cabinets were built. But that wasn't near as exciting as when we actually started moving furniture into the house. But before we ever got to that part, we had to go through what has to be the most boring thing about building a house, and that is watching the backhoe dig the dirt, the concrete truck pouring the footer, and the guys laying block. You see the cost for all of that and realize that no one will ever see those things. But you would not dare to pour money into the walls and floors and cabinets if you did not have a proper foundation.

It is kind of like the strong winds that came through the area a little while back. I was in Louisville in a camper at the Broadbent Arena. I am not exaggerating, there were a few times when the top of our camper would move at least a foot in each direction. I wished that I were back at home. When a 70 mph wind hits my house, it doesn't shake because it is on a strong foundation.

We have been getting a lot of doctrine laid on us in the first five chapters of Romans. Paul will finish this great doctrinal part of Romans that I call the foundation for the Christian life. So by the time we get to Romans 6 through the rest of the book, it will be glorious.

Paul has laid two strong foundations so far; the doctrine of sin and the doctrine of salvation. They are the key to everything that will be built for us as Christians.

Conclusion of the Doctrines of Sin and Salvation

In these verses, Paul will conclude his argument about sin as well as salvation. Paul is going to tell us exactly who is to blame for this mess, and who to give credit to for getting us out of it. Because of the diversity of interpretation in this passage of Scripture, I want you to pay careful attention to these verses. I do not want you to believe this because I say it is what it says. I want you to believe it because it is what the Bible says. I want to make sure you are building your life as a Christian on this foundation, so that when the winds of the world blow, you will not be blown over. I want you to remain standing.

Let's look at verse 12:

"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---"

It is important for you to know that this verse is called a subordinate clause. This means it is a minor thought. The reason he is introducing it is because he has a major thought coming. Normally in Greek, if you

introduce something with a subordinate clause, you immediately follow it up with the main clause and there is no problem. However, the hyphen at the end of the verse tells us that Paul got to thinking about something else and didn't tell us what the main clause is until much, much later in verse 18. This drives the scholarly world crazy and opens it up for misinterpretation. I think what Paul is doing here is very simple. He is not writing as an academian, he is writing as a pastor and apostle. He introduces a thought and then wants to make sure there is no way it can be misunderstood, so he will explain the subordinate clause before he gets to the main clause. Therefore, the reason I will not just teach on verse 12, but in the context of the whole paragraph, is because that is how Paul laid it out. If you do not study it that way, you will miss the point.

- **Sin Entered through Adam**

Paul tells us that sin entered the world through one man. We know that man is Adam. In Genesis 2, God told Adam he could eat of every tree of the garden but one. He told him if he ate of that tree he would die. Now remember, Adam did not live under Law, he lived under grace. What did Adam do? He ate. When he disobeyed God, sin came into the world.

At my house, many times when I come into the house, Celisa will say, "Shut the door! Were you raised in a barn?" She wants me to come in but she wants me to shut the door. She wants what is out to stay out and what is in to stay in. If it is cold outside, we want the cold out and the warmth in. Sometimes, if you open the door and let someone in, there is a danger that something else might come in after they do.

- **Death Entered through Sin**

That is the picture here. Adam opened the door and introduced sin into the world. When sin came into the world, death piggy-backed onto sin. So when that one trespass of Adam happened, not only did sin come into the world, but death came in also, through sin. And death spread to all men, because all sinned. If I were to take this verse out of context and look at it

just as it is, it could have two possible meanings. Now remember this is not the main thought of Paul. This is the minor thought.

- **1. All Sinned**

The first possibility is that death came to all men because all men sin. Adam sinned and sin comes into the world as a power. When sin came into the world, death followed sin. Now, death has three primary effects in the Bible: spiritual, physical, and eternal. After death comes into the world, it spreads to all men, because all sinned. "*All sinned*" could simply mean that all men sin. I think every Christian agrees that when Adam was created and sinned, every person who has ever been born from Adam receives a nature to sin. Therefore, this could be teaching that spiritual death spreads to all men, so when you sin, you die spiritually.

The problem with this is that "*all sinned*" is an aorist tense, which is punctiliar action; action which has been completed in the past. Our problem is that Adam sinned and then sin enters the world as a power. Then spiritual death follows sin, and it spreads to all men, because all sinned. This is in the past, at the same time...that changes this possibility. It changes it because we all sinned when Adam sinned. Do you see the difference?

Some in the Church teach that man was born like Adam was created, morally neutral. He had the ability to sin or not to sin. I do not believe that God put Adam in the garden with any nature or propensity toward sin. He had a choice to sin or not to sin, and he chose to sin. When he chose to sin, he died spiritually. So, is the Bible teaching that man, because he was born in Adam, was born spiritually neutral and doesn't spiritually die until he chooses to sin? That is what many people believe. You are born spiritually alive and you are not accountable for your sin until you come to that age to know right from wrong. When you get to that age and sin, then you die spiritually. Therefore, you are a sinner and spiritually dead because of your own actions.

- **2. All Sinned**

The other possibility is that when Adam sinned, spiritual death came into the world and was affected upon all of Adam's children. So when Adam sinned, even though we were not literally there, we sinned with Adam. Therefore, when we are born, we are born in sin. We were born a sinner. We are born already spiritually separated from God.

- **Born as Sinners**

These possibilities are opposite sides. It is important because you have to understand whether your children become sinners when they sin, or whether they sin because they are sinners. They sin because they are sinners. Why are they sinners? They are born sinners, but not because of what they did; they are born sinners because of what another did. That other is Adam.

In this church, we teach that mankind became sinners the moment Adam sinned. So when we were born sinners, it was not because of anything we were going to do, it was because of what Adam did. What Adam did in the Garden of Eden affected every one of his children.

You may be thinking that this doesn't sound fair. I have thought this many times. This doesn't sound right! But remember, this isn't the main clause or thought. This is the minor thought, and it makes us mad. So, why has Paul been talking about salvation from chapter 3:21 to 5:11, and then starts talking about sin again in verse 12? It is because he is concluding his doctrine of sin and salvation, or condemnation and justification.

You see, he has just been teaching that the way we get out of sin is through Jesus. He has been teaching that we are made right based on the work of another and not ours. So, is it fair for you to get out of trouble based on the work of another? Why do you think we have so many different denominations? Half of them believe you have to get yourself out of trouble. You do need a little help from Christ. He had to die, but basically, you do the rest. They look at grace churches and wonder how we

can preach that we are not saved by what we do, but by the work of another and all we have to do is receive what He did? On a human level, that sounds like heresy! Do you see what Paul is doing? He is anticipating humanistic thinking. He is saying that you did not get into this mess on your own. Whew! I can blame Adam for being a sinner! That's right, you can blame Adam because the Bible teaches that when he sinned, God constituted you a sinner. Based on that truth, it makes God just in getting you out of this mess without you doing anything either!

Let me illustrate, though this will not be adequate. We took a vacation and went to the National Farm Machinery Show in Louisville, KY. The main reason we go is for the championship tractor pull. We were coming home after the tractor pull and I called Mrs. Abbey. When she picked up the phone I said, "I am ready for you to congratulate me!" She said, "I am not going to congratulate you." I said, "Abbey, we won the National Farm Championship tractor pull in Louisville, KY, I am a national champion! You are not even going to congratulate me?" She said, "I am still mad." I said, "When are you going to congratulate me?" She said, "It will take me a day or two to get over this." Is that not horrible? I won the National Farm Championship tractor pull, and she wouldn't congratulate me! She wouldn't congratulate me because she lost. You see, on Saturday night, Never Satisfied, Ryan's Toy 2, and El Niño won national championships. They are Case International tractors. They are red. And they beat River Rat, Taking Care of Business, and Turn Me Loose. Those are John Deere tractors. They are green. I am a Case International guy, and I associate with red. Abbey Kelly is a John Deere girl, and she associates with green. So when John Deere lost, she lost. When Case International won, I won! I won by association. We see this every day. When your sports team wins, you feel like you won, right?

The Doctrine of Imputation

We are either associated with the man Adam, or we are associated with the Man Christ. If you are associated with Adam, you are a sinner. You

didn't become a sinner because of anything you did. You became a sinner because of what he did. He blew it in the Garden of Eden and when he blew it, you died spiritually. You were condemned and became a slave of sin. Death began to reign over you.

- **Guilt by Association**

Is that what the Bible teaches? Let's look at verse 15:

"But 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."

For those who have been taught that you do not die spiritually until you sin, who died when Adam sinned? Was it him, or many? It says many died for one man's trespass. If your sin causes you to die spiritually, the Bible wouldn't say this. Adam's sin affected others, and it is many.

Verses 16 and 17 say:

"And 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. For 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."

Man becomes a slave and has spiritual death reigning over him.

Verse 18 says:

"Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men."

All are condemned! Not because of what they do, but because of what the one man did. One man did something and it affected all men.

Verse 19 says:

"For 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."

This is called the doctrine of imputation. Adam sinned, and God imputed his sin to all of his children. The moment Adam sinned, every person that would ever be physically born, was born spiritually dead. We are condemned, spiritually separated from God, and born as a slave to sin. This is what the Bible teaches. No one can help being born a sinner. You are a sinner because of what someone else did. It is humbling to know that I am guilty because I am associated with Adam. Remember, this is the minor clause, the subordinate clause. The only reason Paul is telling us this now is because he is also telling us something much more important, which is how to get out of this mess we are in. We get out of it through the one man, Christ.

Verse 14 says:

"...even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come."

The Bible tells us that Adam is a type of Christ. In other words, as Adam's action affected all of humanity, Christ's actions affect all of humanity.

Then, verse 15 says:

"...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."

Adam brought us spiritual death and Christ brings us *"the grace of God and the free gift of grace."*

Verse 16 says:

"...For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification."

Adam sinned once, judgment followed, and all man is condemned. All of humanity's trespasses piled up and Christ stepped in and died for man's sin. His obedience brought justification.

- **Innocent by Association**

Verse 17 says:

"...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."

If you are a believer, when you were associated with Adam, spiritual death reigned over you. You were dead to God and alive to sin. You were a slave to sin. But if you are associated with Jesus Christ, then you "*reign in life.*" I have been in the Church all of my life and have never heard this said! The moment I received the grace of God and am made right with Him, I became a believer-king! I am not just a priest; I am royalty, I am a king, and I have been set free from sin! I take back the life that I lost in Adam and get it back in Christ. I am no longer a servant or a slave to sin, I reign with God! Don't look at my life and classify me as a sinner. Look at my life and classify me as royalty. This is glorious!

Verse 18 says:

"...so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men."

This is talking about Christ.

Verse 19 says:

"...so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."

Why is God just and fair to justify me based on the work of Christ? It is because it is the only way out of this mess. Adam got man into this mess, and Christ gets man out of it. If you do not like the doctrine of Adam's sin making your children and grandchildren sinners, then you cannot think it is fair for God to make them righteous in Christ either. If you were raised to believe that you are born ok with God and do not spiritually die until you

come to a certain age, then you are saying that Adam didn't get you into this mess. You are saying you got yourself into it. If you believe that what you did constituted you a sinner, then you believe that what you do determines who you are. If you got yourself into this mess, then the only just thing would be for you to do something to get yourself out of it. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot get yourself into this mess and have someone else get you out of it. The only way someone else can get you out of this mess is if someone else got you into it. That is why God is just to justify you and make you right with Him.

This is so important, because if salvation had been you doing something to make yourself right with God, you would live your life trying to earn His salvation. Your whole focus in life would be on you and what you do. You would be looking at yourself all of the time. You would be doing what you are doing for you. When you realize that salvation is God justifying you based only on what He has done, it frees you to take your eye off of yourself and put your eye on Christ. When you put your eye on Christ, He is not your aid or helper, He is your life. It builds up a heart of gratitude and thankfulness. It builds a heart that wants to serve the King of kings and Lord of lords. It causes you to want to lay your life down for His glory because you know that life is not about you; life is about Him.

I am thankful for the doctrine of imputation. It is the only way we can get out of this life called sin. We are associated with Adam by our birth and we are associated with Christ by rebirth. Physical birth gets you into Adam and spiritual birth gets you out of Adam and into Christ. You can only be associated with one of these two men, not both. You are either in Adam or you are in Christ. You are either un-right, condemned, dead, a sinner, and on the road to hell; or you are completely in Christ, alive, right with God, a saint of God, and reigning right now as a king. Are you in Adam or in Christ?