



“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

The Fall of Man

Truth: Mankind is depraved by nature and sinful by choice.

Text: Romans 5:12-21

There is something dreadfully wrong with mankind. We are beset with a fatal spiritual malady. We are weak by Adam's choice and wicked by our own choice. God's verdict is, *“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”* (Romans 5:12).

We all share in the fall of the human race because our first parents sinned. *“By the offence of one (Adam) judgment came upon all men to condemnation”* (Romans 5:18). We can all share in man's restoration in Christ if we are born again by personal faith in Him. *“By the righteousness of one (Jesus Christ) the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life”* (Romans 5:18). We share as surely in the benefits of Christ's redemption as we share in the penalty for Adam's sin.

The lesson text is a comparison and contrast between Adam and Jesus. It examines their acts, the consequences of each act, and the effect it has on us. Read the verses of the lesson text as you read the comments. Ask God to teach you the truth as you study His Word.

I. TWO PENALTIES IMPOSED (Romans 5:12-14)

The problem began with Adam and Eve. Their daring rebellion against the known will of God brought two great penalties into human experience. One is the problem of indwelling sin and the other is the judgment of death because of sin.

A. The penalty of depravity and indwelling sin has been imposed upon all mankind.

1. One man sinned willfully and inexcusably against God so that “*by one man sin entered into the world*” (verse 12). Adam had no excuse for his sin. He was in an ideal environment where every delight was provided for him (Genesis 1:31). He was given a suitable companion to share with him the original joys of human love (Genesis 2:7, 21-25). He was given total freedom in life (Genesis 2:8-15) with but a single restriction (Genesis 2:16, 17). That one restriction was the place where sin entered human experience.

Genesis 3:1-6 describes the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve in four phases. (1) There was doubt concerning the word of God — “*Hath God said?*” (verse 1). (2) There was a denial of the word of God — “*Ye shall not surely die*” (verses 2-4). (3) There was a misrepresentation of the motive of God — “*God doth know . . . ye shall be as gods*” (verse 5). (4) There was a violation of the law of God — “*She . . . did eat . . . ; and he did eat*” (verse 6). The fateful deed was done.

Solemn judgments followed that fall. There was a break in harmony between the man and his wife, a break in fellowship with God, and a spirit of shame and guilt (Genesis 3:7-13). All of creation came under the curse of sin (Genesis 3:14-19). Behold how serious sin is!

2. All people suffer in sin because of the sin of one. “*All have sinned*” (verse 12). We have sinned actually and personally as a result of the corrupt nature inherited from Adam. And we have sinned by our own choice, just as Adam first sinned against God. Our sin is the consequence of Adam's sin and in imitation of his sin. We are not the helpless victims of another's failure; we have sinned by our own initiative and effort. We are as inexcusable as Adam.

B. The penalty of death was imposed by God upon all mankind as a result of sin (Romans 5:12-14).

1. The penalty of death is universal. “*Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*” (verse 12). The preposition upon in that verse means “through.” It indicates death has permeated and infected the whole human race. As a consequence, “*it is appointed unto men once to die*” (Hebrews 9:27). The appointment is so inevitable that no one can retain his spirit when time comes for him to die (Ecclesiastes 8:8).

2. The penalty of death is experienced even where there is no personal sin (verse 13). Infants and the mentally undeveloped have not sinned “*after the similitude of Adam's transgression.*” They are safe in grace. Where there is no knowledge of God's law in the Bible or in conscience (Romans 2:12-16), there is no personal guilt of sin. But the consequence of Adam's sin

(physical death) is suffered even where there is no personal guilt.

3. The penalty of death is executed where there is willful sin. The similitude of Adam's transgression is sin against God's known law. He sinned knowing full well that the act was forbidden by the clear statement of God. Such a sin is possible only when God's will is known (I John 3:4). Such a sin deserves the penalty of death, which it will certainly receive.

The penalties of sin and death have passed upon all persons who are descended from Adam. That includes you!

II. TWO MEN CONTRASTED (Romans 5:15-17)

Adam and Jesus are the two heads of the human race. Adam was a picture of Jesus. The apostle Paul writes of "*the first man Adam*" and "*the last Adam*" (I Corinthians 15:45-47) to set forth the contrast between them.

A. They are contrasted in the nature of their acts (verse 15). Adam did a deed of sin; Jesus did a deed of grace. Adam took a false step and went astray in rebellion against God. Jesus did a deed of righteousness and bore our sins to pay the penalty for them. God's grace is shown to be "*much more*" than man's sin by the work of Jesus (II Corinthians 8:9).

B. They are contrasted in the circumstances of their acts (verse 16). The one sin of Adam brought judgment upon the multitude of his descendants and produced myriads of sins through them. The one righteous act of Jesus brought forgiveness and justification unto life to multitudes who trust Him and forgave the myriads of sins they had committed.

C. They are contrasted in the consequences of their acts (verse 17). Adam's sin brought a threefold consequence upon the human race. (1) All die in Adam (verse 15). (2) All enter condemnation in Adam (verse 16). (3) All are brought under the dominion of death as the consequence of sin (verse 17). Every consequence of Adam's sin is destructive to mankind.

Christ's atoning deed brought righteousness by which those who trust Him are acquitted from all guilt (verse 16) and reign in life because of Him (verse 17). Every consequence of His redemptive deed brings blessings and benefit to mankind.

We become joined to Adam and the problems of sin by the physical birth. We become joined to Jesus and the blessings of His atonement by spiritual birth. Birth into Adam's family makes one a human. Birth into God's family makes one a saint. That is why Jesus said, "*Ye must be born again*" (John 3:7).

III. TWO MEN COMPARED (Romans 5:18, 19)

Verses 18 and 19 summarize the teaching of verses 12-17. It is stated a second time for emphasis and clarity. Here is the heart of the Christian doctrine of man, sin, and salvation.

A. Each man performed one deed which had far-reaching effects on the human race. Adam's one act of trespass brought such a fall to man that he can never rescue himself. One man's trespass brought doom upon all.

Jesus' one act of obedience (called "one righteousness" in the Greek text) brought "*justification of life*" (verse 18). His one act was the redemptive deed of death and resurrection. He brought deliverance unto all.

B. Far-reaching consequences attend the deeds of Adam and Jesus (verse 19). Adam's one offense made many sinners. His act is called "*transgression*" (verse 14), "*offence*" (verses 15, 17, 18), and "*disobedience*" (verse 19). That is why its consequences were so serious.

Jesus' righteous act made many righteous. The text does not teach that all who fell in Adam are redeemed in Christ. All who are "in Adam" suffer the consequences of Adam's sin. All who are "in Christ" enjoy the benefits of Christ's obedience. One is in Adam by physical birth and in Christ by spiritual birth.

The difference Jesus makes is indicated by the phrases "*abundance of grace*" and "*gift of righteousness*" (verse 17). Grace is God's response to man's sin. Righteousness is God's response to man's failure. Both grace and righteousness are offered to guilty sinners without merit on their part. That is why the Bible says, "*Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*" (verse 20).

IV. TWO PURPOSES OF LAW (Romans 5:20, 21)

The law of God was given because of the sins of man. It "*was added because of transgressions*" (Galatians 3:19). Its purpose was to make men conscious of their wrongdoings and to reveal the existence and extent of sin. Paul wrote, "*The law entered, that the offence might abound*" (verse 20). That does not mean the law created sin, but that it revealed sin: "*that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful*" (Romans 7:13). That was the immediate purpose of the law.

The more remote purpose of the law was to direct people to Christ that grace might reign through righteousness (verse 21). "*Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. . . . For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*" (Galatians 3:24, 26).

The law showed mankind the perfect standard God sets. It required them to meet that standard. It was soon evident that humans could not live up to such a high and holy requirement. Therefore, God gave a system of sacrifices in the Old Testament period to atone for sins until the perfect sacrifice would be offered. The sacrifices were a sign of His grace.

All those sacrifices in the former dispensation were but pictures, symbols, and types. They could never take away sin (Hebrews 10:4). They never made perfect those who came to offer them (Hebrews 10:4). A better sacrifice had to be offered.

The law shut mankind up to Jesus Christ alone who could offer the once-for-all sacrifice which truly atoned for sin (Hebrews 10:10-14). *“He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world”* (I John 2:2). *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12).

Behold the grace of God! All through the passage grace stands in contrast to guilt and righteousness stands in contrast to sin. Grace is God's response to mankind's helplessness. Righteousness is God's response to mankind's failure. Grace explains how righteousness could be conferred upon the repenting sinner. Righteousness explains the goal and gift of grace.

The contrast must be taken one step further and applied to you. You are “in Adam” because you were born a human being. You had no choice or decision in that. You can be “in Christ” by repentance from sin and personal faith in Him as Savior. That is subject to your choice. *“Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying . . . , To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts”* (Hebrews 4:7). *“The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call”* (Acts 2:39).

1. What is the problem of the human race?
2. How did that problem arise?
3. How are you affected by Adam's sin?
4. How is Hebrews 9:27 related to Adam's sin in Eden?
5. Why are infants kept safe in grace?
6. What is the contrast between Adam and Jesus?
7. How is one “in Adam” and “in Christ”?
8. How is divine law related to Adam's sin?
9. What does it mean to be “justified by faith”?
10. What is the promise and the warning in Hebrews 4:7?