

The Christian Manual: Study 7, Romans 5:12-21

Romans Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA



Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible ask the questions and let the students answer. Where they cannot, you supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

Introduction: How are we to understand mankind?

Chapter 5:12-21 Two Men and their Impact

Section 1: Romans 5:12 Sin Enters

¹²Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

There are monumental moments that change everything. After those moments history bends and is irreparably altered. Think and you will know days where things happened that changed everything. The most significant bend in all of human history is when Adam, and in him all humanity, sinned against God and condemned the human race to an eternity separated from Him.

Everyone knows that people are not perfect. Humans are full of contradictions and sin. We know that sickness, old age, and death are not okay. When we face them for what they are, we know that this is not how things should be.

The question that haunts psychologist and sociologists is, “How did things get this way?” We cannot accept that this world as we find it is normal. If everything were normal, we would have no right to call murder and rape and infanticide wrong. But we know that this is not how things should be—that at one time the world was different, perfect, but it was changed. This is the message of the Bible. God created a perfect world and declared it good. It was the sin of Adam that altered everything and made creation less than what it was meant to be (read over Genesis 3).

There are many who treat Genesis 1-11 as a fairy tale. To them it is a nice story to be told to kids before bedtime, or bound in cartoonish picture books. But they are wrong. This is hard core truth. This is the explanation of the current estate of all reality. The brokenness all around us, and inside us, originates from the actions of Eve and Adam in Eden.

James W. Sire wrote of the fall, “. . . the image of man was defaced in all its aspects. In personality, man lost his capacity to know himself accurately and to determine his own course of action freely in response to his intelligence. His self-transcendence was impaired by the alienation he experienced in relation to God, for as man

turned from God, God let him go. And as man slipped from close fellowship with the ultimately transcendent one, so he lost his ability to stand over against the external universe, understand it, judge it accurately and thus make truly “free” decisions. Rather, he became more a servant to nature than to God.”¹

Section 2: What About Sin From Adam to Moses?

¹³To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone’s account where there is no law. ¹⁴Nevertheless, 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 is a pattern of the one to come.

Paul is not writing for himself. He is writing to a church and he anticipates some of the questions they will have to what he has said. One of the questions would be: “What about the time from Adam to Moses? There was no law then. Would about them?”

Paul points out that, although there was no law, the effects of sin are still present. The main effect is death. Adam sinned by breaking the command of God, the command not to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He disobeyed God and death became a reality to him. His descendants, however, didn’t receive

any such command from God—but they still died. Something was at work within them.

Some Bible scholars have differentiated between sin and sins. Sins are individual actions where we disobey God. Sin can be thought of as a genetic defect, passed on from Adam to all his descendants, bringing to them all separation from God (spiritual death) and separation from their bodies (physical death). So, in a way, we all sinned in Adam (we were all in him genetically), and all of mankind dies. We all pay the price for Adam’s choice to disobey God.

Paul ends the section with an amazing statement: Adam was the pattern for the one to come. He will go on to elaborate this in the next section.

I was once on an airplane coming back from a trip to Israel. I was seated next to a very nice Jewish woman. When she found I was a Christian, she asked, “How can you Christians believe that God could become a man?” I asked the woman, “Do you know what man is?” She asked me what I meant. I explained, “God made man in His own image. Everything that God was, every capacity He had in an infinite capacity, he put into man in a finite capacity. God is omnipresent, man is present. God is personal, man is personal. God is infinitely loving, man has the capacity to love, God is omniscient, man has the capacity for knowledge. Since man is made in God’s image, it is easy to believe that God could step into that image.” She asked me, “Where did you get this from?” I responded, “From your

¹ *The Universe Next Door*, pg. 36

book, the first book of Moses, Genesis.” This finally made sense to her. God could become man because man is like God.

Section 3: The Second Adam

¹⁵ But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, 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! ¹⁶ Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man’s sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. ¹⁷ 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!

¹⁸ Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. ¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ²¹ so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul begins by showing how the choice of Adam (bringing sin) and the choice of Jesus (bringing grace) are different.

- 1. The two events are contrasted by what they gave to mankind.** Whereas Adam brought death to all by his choice, Jesus brought grace, and the gift that comes with it, to all. What is the gift that comes with it? It would seem that Paul is talking about Jesus’ death for us on the cross here. This is the great gift—His life poured out for us.
- 2. The two events are also contrasted by their results.** Adam’s sin brought judgment and condemnation to mankind. Man, infused with sin, could no longer be as good as God. He could not be holy. He sinned and stood justly condemned before the Holy judge of all. But whereas one sin brought about this judgment, many sins were followed by the gift that brought justification.
- 3. The two events are contrasted by who will have authority.** In Adam, because of sin, death reigned (physical and spiritual). Everyone’s body died and their spirit was forever separated from God. Death had the last laugh. It was the unconquerable enemy to which all would eventually bow their knee. But in Christ this has all changed. Jesus overcame death through His resurrection. Even as we

inherited Adam's genetics, for we were all in him and come from him, so also now, by God's grace we are in Christ and Jesus' genetic make-up is ours. His resurrection is our resurrection. He reigns in life, and we do also, in Him. Whereas before death reigned over us in Adam, we now reign in life through Jesus Christ.

Paul continues by showing how Adam and Christ are alike.

1. Both came from one act.

It is hard to conceive of one act having such incredible ramifications on humanity. Because Adam sinned, he brought sin into all men. He now only condemned himself to death and condemnation, he condemned everyone. Even so, Jesus act, His death on the cross, also had ramifications for all humanity. All now can come to God and receive His righteousness as a free gift and be reconciled with God for all eternity. We could say that these were the two most important choices in all of history.

2. The one act had universal consequences.

Through the sin of Adam all men became condemned before God. Through the death of Jesus all men became righteous and free from condemnation.

3. The Law impacted them both.

The law of God, not just the Ten Commandments, but the whole revelation of God showing how man was intended by God to live in holiness, had an immediate effect on man. It exposed him for what he was—sinful. Now man had rules to break, and he broke them all the time. Man found he could not get away from his own selfishness. He could not be perfect. He could not be as holy as God. With the Law came an overwhelming rising tide of sin. But this tide was met with a tsunami of grace in Christ.

It is good for us to try to follow the way Paul connects the dots. In the last verses here he says that Grace reigns through righteousness. Because we have taken on the righteousness of Christ (not our own righteousness) grace (God's freely given gift) is now supreme. The purpose of this is to bring eternal life. This is not merely living forever, although it has no end. In the Greek this phrase means, the life of the age and refers to the life that will be ours in the age to come when we see God face-to-face. Those in Christ have this life now, in this age. We can approach God and know Him, which is eternal life (John 17:3). All of this has come through Jesus Who is the Christ and Lord. Christ means, "anointed one." In the Old Testament, there were three people who were anointed—prophets, priest, and kings. They had the Spirit, signified by the pouring of oil on them, or anointing. The Jewish people looked forward to the Anointed One of God who would reign over Israel—the Messiah. This leads to Paul's next designation; Jesus is Lord. He reigns over all. His name is above all names. Before Him all knees shall bow and declare Him the Lord:

“Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father.”

(Philippians 2:9-11).



WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

The story of mankind can be summed up in single choices made by two men.

Adam made a choice. God told him what to do and he chose to disobey. From this choice he acquired a genetic defect that he would pass down to all mankind. We call this genetic defect sin. It is the inability to live a holy life before God. Because of sin, all participated in acts of sin, but they did so unknowingly. They had no concept of holiness and knew right and wrong only through their conscience. So God gave the Law. It exposed sin for what it was and brought to man an overwhelming sense of his failure and shame before a holy God. The final result of Adam’s choice was death. God had told Adam that the day he ate of the forbidden fruit he would surely die. This death was physical and spiritual. Adam was cast from the garden and from God’s presence. His son, Able, was murdered by his brother, Cain. What it must have been like for Adam to see firsthand the consequences of his choice in his sons. Because of sin, death reigned supreme. Nothing could stop it. Nothing was as powerful.

That is, until Jesus made a different choice. Jesus chose to die on the cross for us. His death brought about a new reality. He took our place of condemnation and became our sacrifice, paying the price of our guilt before God’s holy judgment. Now, we are in Christ. His genetics are ours. His righteousness is ours. His holiness is ours. By grace, we reign supreme in life. We are now restored in our relationship with God and can commune with Him forever. In Adam we had all that was common to man; but now, in Christ, we have all that belongs to Him.



CONNECT: Icebreaker

One of the biggest questions a person can ask is, Who Am I?

There are many who will try to hand us an identity. Much of American society is dedicated to define us as consumers. We are what we buy. Our identity is defined by what we own. If we have certain clothes, phones, technology, cars, etc. we are considered important. Without these, we are considered of little value. There are others who define us by our accomplishments. We are what we do. If we have done great things, then we must be great. There are those who define us by our looks. If we are pretty or handsome, according to what is fashionable, then we are valuable. Only when we have the right build, the right bone structure, the right skin, are we important.

God completely overturns this by what He gives us in Christ. Christians are part of a new human race. Whereas we were born in Adam, and subject to the sin and condemnation of Adam, we are now born again in Christ and have His righteousness. We are a new humanity, a new human species. We are born from God's seed and are of the lineage of Christ. Now, none of this comes from us, so we can't boast or brag about it. We are not so cool that God gave us salvation. We all received everything in Christ by faith as a free gift from God. But, we can never minimize what this means. We are God's kids. We are part of the divine family. Nothing that happens in this life can compare to that. When others define us according to their limited worldly views, we reject their views and understand ourselves as being adopted into the greatest family ever. We are princess and princesses of heaven. (1 Peter 2:9).



WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Section 1 Romans 5:12

This section is about two choices that affected all of history. The first was the choice of Adam to disobey God's command. The consequence of Adam's sin was that death entered the world. And death came to all because all sinned. This one act of Adam has separated all men and women from God and, ultimately, from physical life.

Section 2 Romans 5:13-14

Even though there was no Law between Adam and Moses, death continued to reign. Sin had its effect, even without the Law.

Section 3 Romans 5:15-21

Adam is a type of Jesus. In other words, they have many things in common. Although the choice of Adam and the choice of Christ gave us different things (death versus life), different results (condemnation versus righteousness), and different authority (death versus us ruling), they also have many similarities.

They both came as a result of one act. The one act of Adam and the one act of Jesus both had universal consequences. They both relate to the law, the race of Adam seeing their condemnation and the race of Christ meets the Law with grace.

Adam was the father of the race of men and through him all men became sinful, for all were in him when he sinned. In the same way, Christ is the source of a new race who are in Him and righteous.



HOW DOES IT APPLY?

All the people you know are either of Christ, born of God, forgiven, with His righteousness by grace through faith, or are of Adam, sinful and condemned. These are the only two categories of mankind that matter. It doesn't matter if people are rich or good looking or funny. The only thing that matters is what humanity you belong to.

There will be a day when all history ends. In that day, God will judge all men and women. He will ask only one question: To which humanity did you belong? Those in the humanity of Jesus, who walk in this earth as a child of God, he will invite into His paradise for all eternity. To those in the bloodline of Adam, who must stand on their own righteousness, He will send away from Himself for all eternity.

How does this reality affect the way you look at the unsaved in your Oikos? Can you look at the unsaved in your family and realize that they need to hear about Jesus and his offer of salvation—that this is their only hope? What about your unsaved friends? They also need to hear about Jesus and His free gift of salvation.

Ron Johnson wrote, “The apostolic church used the interlocking social systems of common kinship, community, and interest as the backbone for communicating the gospel.”²

We must continue in prayer for those God has strategically placed in our lives. We must ask the Spirit to provide opportunities to share His wonderful gift with them. We must learn the gospel well and be able to share it with authority.

² *Oikos: A Practical Approach to Family Evangelism*, pg. 16.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Section 1 Read Romans 5:12

1. What is the significance of Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden? How has this affected the human race? What has this done to us personally?

Section 2 Read Romans 5:13-14

1. How would you use this section of Scripture to answer someone who says that people are only sinners when they disobey the Law of God? Were those before the Law affected by sin?

Section 3 Read Romans 5:15-21

1. How are Jesus and Adam different?
2. How are Jesus and Adam similar?
3. What does it mean to be a member of the race of Adam?
4. What does it mean to be a member of the race of Christ?
5. How does being a member of the race of Christ affect our feelings about our lives and our identities? How does it affect our sense of worth? How does it affect our understanding of our ultimate destiny? How does it affect our understanding of history?
6. How do we walk in this new understanding of who we are in Christ and not accept the many other teachings that come to us from the world?

