

Romans

Romans Chapter Five

Romans 5:12-21

January 17, 2010

This is lesson number 24 in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

Title: “Adam”

We are studying the **Doctrine of Representation** which states that Adam and Christ were representative persons.

Two men in history:

The first Adam and the last Adam; the first man and the second Man.

1 Corinthians 15:45 And so it is written, “The **first man Adam** became a living being.” The **last Adam** became a life-giving spirit. 46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. 47 The **first man** was of the earth, made of dust; the **second Man** is the Lord from heaven.

What they each one did, Adam and Christ, has a profound effect on the people they represented. Whatever Adam did and whatever Christ did is imputed {charged} to those people they represented.

Every one of us, all of humankind, are either represented by Adam or by Christ:

You are either, by your natural birth, still “in Adam,”
or, by grace, you are “in Christ.”

In our last study we discussed “Eternal Justification” and this past week I read in a book loaned to me by Brother Gables, The Doctrine of Original Sin, 1884, by Robert W. Landis.

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On Eternal Justification.

“Thus the renewal of their nature is made to be consequent upon the imputation of righteousness, and to flow from their reconciliation to God, as though they could as the Antinomians likewise affirm, be reconciled to God before being renewed.

“And thus we are again brought to the conclusion, that either we are justified *anterior* to faith (and so must surrender the doctrine of justification by faith alone), or they justifying faith may be exercised by the unregenerate, and so renounce the Augustinian doctrine of depravity for the Pelagian scheme.

“Justification, therefore, before believing, is impossible. It exhibits a monster which the Bible cannot know—a justified unbeliever.

“If, as is alleged, the will to justify is justification, as the will to elect is election, it is certain that the will to create is creation; the will to sanctify, sanctification; the will to save, salvation; so that men were created, sanctified, saved, from eternity.

“If the elect were justified from eternity, in virtue of their being from eternity in Christ by covenant representation, it must follow, either they never were in Adam as a head of condemnation, or else they were condemned in Adam after their justification in Christ.”

The Doctrine of Original Sin, 1884, by Robert W. Landis, Page 267-8

Representation is easy to understand.

In the War on Terrorism, e.g., The Taliban Government of Afghanistan was represented by Osama bin Laden and they are paying the price for their support of this monster. The President of the United States was elected to represent the people of this country. The people of America will be held accountable for the actions of their representatives at all levels of government.

Now I know that this illustration of representation will not hold up for much comparison to Adam and Christ, but the **principle of representation** is what I am describing. You and I are directly involved the actions of another person. And so the **Doctrine of Representation** is what is at the heart 5:12-21.

Salvation is not simply a matter of being forgiven; it is much more. Salvation is a result of being “**in Christ;**” of being **represented** in Christ.

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Salvation is a matter of a change in our position before a holy God.
A redeemed person can say: “We were ‘in Adam;’ Now we are ‘in Christ.’ ”

Failure to understand this one thing: Failure to grasp the Doctrine of Representation leads serious error in understanding the atonement of Christ.

Now with that in mind, let’s read Romans 5:12-21 .

Exposition:

We have a “therefore” in Verse 12. My understanding is that verses 12-21 are explanatory of vs 9-11, especially as we are “in Christ.”

Last week we opened the “can of worms” as to the matter of how we are “in Christ.” There are two theories that try to answer the “how” and both of them have difficulties. One theory of representation is called “Realism,” i.e. all humans were really in Adam in seminal form. The other theory is called “Federalism,” or “Covenant,” i.e. all humans were under a covenant or a contract with Adam as their Federal Head.

There are volumes written making the arguments for or against these two theories. The best I can do is to give you what I believe to be the gist of both theories along with some of the concerns they each introduce.

Again quoting from:

The Doctrine of Original Sin, 1884, by Robert W. Landis
Rambach:

“The remote effect of the first sin is the introduction of sin and death in the world. Until then sin existed only with the fallen angels. But as Adam and Eve procreated offspring, so sin came also into the world; and they could communicate and impart to their children no other nature than that which is guilty and corrupt. We may learn from this that Adam sinned not only as an individual, but as the father of the human race. (Isa 43:27 *Thy first father hath sinned.*) Had he sinned only as an individual, his guilt would have been only personal; i.e., it would have remained in his own person. But inasmuch as he sinned as the father of mankind, so his guilt was hereditary, in which it was necessary that all should participate to whom he has imparted his fallen nature. And as in this way sin entered into the world, so death, as the wages of sin, followed in its wake; so that all the sons of Adam are guilty and sinners by nature, and likewise mortal.”

The Doctrine of Original Sin, 1884, by Robert W. Landis, Page 152

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Both Realism and Federalism assume Original Sin. Original Sin means that the first sin of Adam was the original sin of man and somehow the guilt and penalty incurred by Adam is charged to the human race.

We do not accept the idea of Imitation, i.e. that humans are born innocent and eventually imitate the sin of Adam. Nor do we accept the notion of “Infection,” that humans have a tendency to sin.

The fact is that every human, 100%, of the human race, are born in a state of guilt with a depraved nature and without exception willfully sin. Now Jesus of Nazareth was not merely human but He was divine and human. Born of a virgin, He did not have the sin of Adam imputed to Him and He lived His life without sin.

So we start with Original Sin and the question of how that sin is passed on to the human race.

Realism:

The strongest argument for Realism is found in Hebrew 7.

Hebrews 7:9-10

9 Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, ¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

NKJV

This argues that we were in Adam in seminal form and when Adam sinned the human race sinned with him. If Levi paid tithes through Abraham then the human race sinned through Adam.

One more reference to The Doctrine of Original Sin, 1884,
by Robert W. Landis; from the section on Delitzsch's theory.

“On these grounds I am free to confess that I cannot escape from the doctrine, however mysterious of a generic unity in man as the true basis of the representative economy in the covenant of works. The human race is not an aggregate of separate and independent Adams, but constitutes an organic whole, with a common life springing from a common ground. There is an unity in the whole species; there is a point in which all the individuals meet, and through which they are all modified and conditioned. There is in man, what we may call a common nature. That common nature is not a mere generalization of logic, but a substantive reality. It is the ground of all individual existence and conditions-the type of its development.

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The parental relation expresses, but does not constitute it; propagates, but does not create it. In birth, there is the manifestation of the individual from a nature basis, which existed before. Birth consequently, does not absolutely begin, but only individualizes humanity. As, then, descent from Adam is the exponent of a potential existence in him, as it is the revelation of the fact in relation to the nature, which is individualized in a given case, it constitutes lawful and just ground for federal representation. God can deal with the natural as a covenant head, because the natural proceeds upon an union which justifies the moral.”

“But it may be asked, do you mean to say that each individual will actually express itself in the prevarication of Adam—that each man individually ate of the forbidden fruit? As individuals, certainly not; as individuals, none of us then existed. In our separate and distinct capacity, his sin was no more ours than our sins are his. But as the race, which was then realized in him, as it is now realized in all its individuals, his act was ours. How the individual is related to the genus, how the genus contains it, and how the individual is evolved from it, are questions, which I am utterly unable to solve; but their mystery is no prejudice to their truth. Our moral convictions demand that we should predicate such an unity of mankind; and though a great mystery itself, it seems to clear up other mysteries, which are pitch darkness without it.”

The Doctrine of Original Sin, 1884, by Robert W. Landis, Page 508

A problem arises in the matter of the soul of man. Is the soul material in nature in that it transmigrates from parents to children? Is the soul of man a continuity from Adam or is the soul of each human a creation of God?

Another concern raised by Realism is why are we charged only with the first sin of the first man and not all of Adam’s sins and all of the sins of all of our ancestors? Yet the Bible is clear that the human race is charged with the one sin of the one man Adam.

Then a really tough concern is the human nature of Jesus of Nazareth. If our sinful nature is derived from our parents by a physical process it is impossible to avoid the human nature of Jesus through Mary.

The virgin birth does not completely solve this concern because Mary was human. Please be assured that I stand on the virgin birth and sinlessness of Jesus of Nazareth.

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The Roman Catholic tries to answer this dilemma with the doctrine of Immaculate Conception, i.e. Mary was sinless. That only moves the problem back one generation; they don't tell us how Mary was born without sin. As Lorraine Boettner says, "That only moves the problem back one generation."

The **Federalism** or Covenant theory says that God made a covenant or contract with Adam. The proponents of this theory say that even though the Bible does not specifically state that God made a covenant with Adam that all of the elements of a covenant are present: Terms and conditions and rewards and punishments. The only text that gives support to a covenant made with Adam is in Hosea.

Hosea 6:7

"But like men they transgressed the covenant;
There they dealt treacherously with Me. NKJV

The word translated "man" is also the word for "Adam."

OT:120

[OT:120](#) אָדָם 'adam (aw-dawm'); from [OT:119](#); ruddy i.e. a human being (an individual or the species, mankind, etc.):

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Federalism takes care of the problem of all of the sins of all of our ancestors but it too raises some concerns.

The main concern with Federalism is that it is not based on a clear statement of Scripture.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes: "Well, again, if you are interested in my opinion, I must admit that I find it very difficult to be entirely on one side or the other. There is a great deal, as I have said before, about the doctrine of seminal identity which appeals to me. We cannot avoid that explicit statement in Hebrews 7:10, and it does seem to me that if it is a fair argument there, it is a fair argument here. At the same time, I admit that there are great difficulties about that doctrine of seminal identity to which I have already referred and there are aspects about the second Adam as our federal representative which greatly appeal to me. I dislike compromise but I do not quite see why, in a sense, we cannot adopt both views."

God the Father, God the Son, Crossway Books, 1996, page 196

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For what it is worth E. W. Johnson takes the Realistic view in his series on “Imputation.” In my understanding the argument by Mr. Johnson for Realism derives from his strong argument against a covenant made with Adam.

Mr. Johnson uses the comparison of a contract and law. Law can only be imposed where there is authority. God as our Creator has all authority and has the right to impose law upon Adam.

For my part, and you will have to make your own choice, I agree with Lloyd-Jones and believe that some combination of both theories are at work.

So now that we have solved the question of how original sin is passed along we can go into the passage itself.

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Romans 5:12.

Now let’s consider the term “**just as...**” “**as**” means a comparison.

An “as” in a comparison is followed by an “even so.”

We might say, “Just as you sow, so shall you reap.”
As you sow wheat, so you shall reap wheat.

We use comparisons in arithmetic:

A is to B **as** C is to D to express a proportion or a ratio.

$$\begin{array}{ccc} A & C & \text{grace} & \text{mercy} \\ \text{--} & = & \text{-----} & = & \text{-----} \\ B & D & \text{guilt} & \text{misery} \end{array}$$

There are things about the one thing that compares with the other thing.

Paul here is making a comparison of Adam and Christ. There are some things about the first Adam that should be compared with things about the last Adam - Christ. But he stops, as it were, in mid-sentence and begins to explain himself more specifically. The translators have indicated this with parenthesis or a dash at the end of verse 12.

He doesn’t pick up the “even so” comparison until verse 18.

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People who use computers do this all of the time: While you are working on one task, you open another “window,” then when you finish that new task, you close that window and continue with what you were dealing with before.

So Paul, “opened a window” at the end of verse 12 and when he gets to the end of verse 17, he will close it.

The “and thus” in verse 12 is not a comparison, it is a continuation of the same thought. The “even so” comes in verse 18.

The reason Paul “opened a window” at the end of verse 12 is to explain the phrase in verse 12: “... *and thus death spread to all men, for all sinned.*”

When did the “all sinned” occur?

It is true that every one of us who live long enough to have rational thoughts will sin deliberately. What we do, in our thoughts and deeds, are indeed “sins.”

Now I am going to do what Paul did at the end of verse 12 and “open a window” - interrupt one line of thought to deal with an error that is commonly believed.

Have you ever heard of the “**Age of Accountability?**”

According to this belief, before a person reaches a certain age, they are not “accountable” for sin. Some assign a specific number of years, e.g., 12 or 13 years old. By this belief, then, a child who lies to his or her parents, is not actually accountable for the sin of lying. Underlying this error is that the “little darlings” are not guilty and thus not condemned, thus denying depravity and original sin.

The so-called “age of accountability” is simply a false doctrine.

About 35 years ago I had a discussion with a Christian friend about the so-called “age of accountability.” He insisted that it was in the Bible and that he could show it to me. I’m still waiting.

Let’s close this “age of accountability” window and return to verse 12:

“*Just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, ...*”

Sin was not in the world in the beginning. “*Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.*” {Genesis 1:31}

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The origin of sin is a mystery. The Bible tells us how sin entered into the human race, through the one sin of the one man.

But how did sin originate after Genesis 1:31?

Somehow, Day Star, a glorious creature of God, was overcome with the pride of his beauty and tried to take God's place.

Day Star is Lucifer who is Satan and the devil.

Isaiah 14:

12 How you are fallen from heaven,

O Lucifer, son of the morning!

How you are cut down to the ground,

You who weakened the nations!

13 For you have said in your heart:

I will ascend into heaven,

I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;

I will also sit on the mount of the congregation

On the farthest sides of the north;

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,

I will be like the Most High.'

15 Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol,

To the lowest depths of the Pit.

It is my belief that Lucifer upon learning that God would make man a little lower than the angels and that the angelic hosts would be subject to man that Lucifer's pride caused him to rebel against his Creator.

While we don't know much about the origin of sin itself, we do know how we human creatures became sinners.

“Just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, for all sinned.”

According to verse 12, those represented by Adam – “all sinned.”

Now here is where I must trust the Greek scholars. The “all sinned,” is in a verb tense that we do not have in English. The Greek verb is in the **aorist** tense which means an action completed in the past, once and forever. The aorist tense is more complicated than that, but that is the idea; an action completed in the past, once and forever.

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The same tense is used to express justification. The person who is justified by God has received the verdict of “not guilty”, and justification is “once and forever!”

So according to this phrase, “because all sinned,” when Adam sinned, everyone whom Adam represented, sinned in Adam.

That is the **Doctrine of Representation**. We “**all sinned**” in Adam.