

# The New and Better Adam

Romans 5:12-21

## Part 1

*Jesus can secure our justification because God appointed him to be a better representative than Adam.*<sup>1</sup>

A few weeks ago, I had the privilege of spending a couple days with my brother, David on a short trip in California. Sitting in the hotel that first night, we flipped on the TV and watched a show called Gold Rush. It was all about teams of men who used heavy equipment to dig gold out of the ground in hopes of becoming fabulously wealthy. Part of the appeal of the program is watching these men overcome seemingly insurmountable problems in their quest for gold.

The thing that kept my attention as I watched, however, was the fact that the more they dug, the more gold they discovered! Of course, getting it out of the ground was the hard part. But as long as they were able to dig, there seemed to be no end to the treasure they could find.

As I was studying Paul's letter to the Romans again this week, it occurred to me that those who work hard at digging gospel truth out of the sometimes dense paydirt of the inspired text of Scripture, become spiritually rich indeed. To be sure, sometimes the labor is difficult, and the obstacles seem daunting, but so long as the digging continues, the treasure seems to have no end.

From the beginning of the book of Romans, Paul has been helping us discover true spiritual gold with the prospect of making us fabulously wealthy in the riches of Christ.

Of course, we all understand the gospel in its most basic form, - *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."* This, my friends, is a spiritual gold nugget that turns paupers into kings and makes one greedy for more ever more - gospel gold. And those who dig with a heart to believe and obey, are never disappointed.

This morning, we are going to "stake our claim" (as it were) on Rom. 5:12-21. The work that lies before us is not going to be easy and it will probably take a couple weeks to sift through it all, but let's begin by standing together and to get the lay of the land.

Follow along, now, as I read this great text in your hearing.

<sup>12</sup> 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—

---

<sup>1</sup> Tom Pennington, Countryside Bible Church.

<sup>13</sup> for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. <sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup>

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

<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, <sup>21</sup> so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

He who has ears to hear,  
let him hear.

The reason my introduction was a bit top-heavy with emphasis on the difficulty of digging for treasure was because discovering what the author wants us to understand in this particular text is not easy. In fact, many commentators will tell you that these ten verses make up the most difficult passage to get your head around in Romans. (we'll talk about that next week).

Here is a passage full of contrasts. For example,

- Sin v. Righteousness
- Death v. Life
- Disobedience v. Obedience
- Trespass v. Free Gift

- Condemnation v. Justification
- Disobedience - Obedience
- Sin reigning in Death v. Grace reigning in righteousness.

Furthermore, this text reveals how sin came into the world.

- It makes a cryptic allusion to a “law” before the law of Moses.
- There is something here about Adam being a type of Christ.
- And the list goes on.

Other note-worthy features include the following observations:

- Paul repeatedly uses the word “ONE” in this passage.
- (15) One man’s trespass
- (15) One man Jesus Christ
- (16) One man’s sin
- (16) One Trespass
- (17) One man x 3
- (18) one trespass
- (18). One act

And there’s more! And when you gather it all in one place, you find yourself looking at a large mound of spiritual paydirt full of treasure. But panning it out is going to require some serious mental and spiritual labor. And that will be good for us.

Now before we begin picking through the details and identifying patterns to tie together, let me take a bit of a shortcut.

I want to give you somewhat of an overview of what Paul wants us to grasp.

As you know, he has belabored the point from the beginning of Romans that justification is by grace alone through faith alone apart from any contributing works on our behalf. He has taught us that sinners are saved NOT on the basis of their own works but by the work of Christ through his righteous life and atoning death on the cross in the place of all who believe.

The way that works is that God, in His grace, counts or reckons or imputes all of our sin to the account of Jesus Christ (which is why He died), and at the same time He counts, reckons or imputes all of Christ’s righteousness to our account.

What we have in this passage, then, is the Apostle Paul giving us the legal basis for our redemption. The idea that Christ's righteousness can be attributed to the account of undeserving sinners has been challenged from the earliest years of Christianity. In fact, to this day the Roman Catholic Church regards this a legal fiction. But Paul begs to differ.

As the apostle explains it in this passage, there are only two groups of people in the world. There are people who are united with Adam, and there are people who are united with Christ.

Those who are united with Adam will follow Adam to death and condemnation. Those who are united with Christ, will follow Him to eternal life.

We can imagine here that the saints in Rome were being challenged about this teaching. Perhaps at the core of the argument was the question, "Is there any O.T. president for imputed righteousness or imputed sinfulness?"

The answer is, Absolutely! Paul is not attempting to be innovative here. This is NOT a new doctrine. In fact, Paul's argument begins all the way back in the garden of Eden.

Now, we only have time to introduce Paul's topic here, but let's focus today on verse 12. Notice what Paul says.

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—

Now, I haven't given you an outline to follow this week, but let if I did the first point would be...

## I. The Definition of Imputation.

1. This passage is all about imputed sin through Adam and imputed righteousness through Christ. The basic meaning of "Imputation" is "to charge or to reckon something to one's account."<sup>2</sup>
2. As Christians, we need to understand this doctrine because it is essential to the gospel. No one is saved from the just and holy wrath of God apart from the imputation of Christ's

---

<sup>2</sup> Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Logos)

righteousness on our behalf. And frankly, there is NO place in the Bible where this doctrine is more clearly or profoundly manifest than here in Rom. 5

3. What Paul teaches us in verse 12 is that Adam's sin is reckoned, transferred, or imputed to our entire race -the human race. Do you know what that means? It means that the reason you sin is because you are a sinner. And that brings us to the second point:

## II. The Severity of Our Problem:

1. I think the reason Paul is taking us so deep into these theological truths is because we can only truly appreciate the glory of the Good News when we see it against the backdrop of God's righteous judgment.

2. Most people think of sin as something they do or have done. It's something that they probably shouldn't have done – something they should stop doing. In their hearts they truly believe that if they put their mind to it, they could stop sinning all together.

3. There is an interesting story about **Benjamin Franklin** that bears this out.

At one point in his life Franklin decided that attaining perfection required practicing 13 specific virtues consistently:

- temperance,
- silence,
- order,
- resolution,
- frugality,
- industry,
- sincerity,
- justice,
- moderation,
- cleanliness,
- tranquility,
- chastity,
- and humility.

I judged it would be well, (Franklin writes), "not to distract my attention by attempting the whole at once but to fix it in one of them at a time, and when I

should be master of that, then to proceed to another, and so on till I should have gone through' the thirteen."

To this end Franklin chose one virtue to master and began keeping a detailed scorecard to record his successes and failures.

Franklin's allegiance to [this endeavor] shines through this experiment. As he admits, he expected himself to know the good and be capable of doing good: "As I knew, or thought I knew, what was right and wrong, I did not see why I might not always do the one and avoid the other."

- Nevertheless, Franklin was forced to admit, he discovered almost immediately that he was in over his head: "I soon found I had undertaken a task of more difficulty than I had imagined. While my attention was taken up and care employed in guarding against one fault, I was often surprised by another ... Inclination was sometimes too strong for reason."<sup>3</sup>

4. You see, what Franklin didn't understand was the that we sin because we are sinners. Adam's sin had a catastrophic, ruinous effect upon the entire human race. Its consequences can hardly be over-estimated.

5. The reason there is war in Ukraine today is because of Adam's sin imputed to the entire human race. The reason marriage fall is due first not to the actual sins the couple perpetrate against one another (although that is surely apart of the equation), but because of the deeper **imputed sin** in the depths of our deepest heart. Every human baby comes into the world hard-wired to sin. Legon Duncan says we are "constitutionally sinful from birth.

6. When theologians talk about "**Original Sin**" they are not thinking about the original sin that took place in the Garden of Eden. Rather, they are thinking about the heart of sin that came into the world as a result of that original sin.

7. In other words, when Adam sinned. They are thinking of the corruption - the spiritual corruption that causes every man, woman, boy and girl to be born in a state of sin.

8. King David evidently understood this truth when in his prayer of repentance (Psa. 51) he said,

"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psa. 51:5).

---

<sup>3</sup> Jeff Baldwin, *The Deadliest Monster*, p. 109

9. So Paul says (v. 12),

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world and death through sin, do death spread to all men because all sinned.”

10. I don't have time to cover this whole verse this morning, but pay special attention to the last phrase, “death spread to all men because all sinned.”

11. So here is the question. When Adam took a bite of that forbidden fruit, who took the bite. Are you ready for this? You did. Paul says, “death spread to all men because all sinned. Notice, he didn't say all sin (present tense). No. When Adam ate the fruit, you ate fruit! This is how imputation works. God reckoned, counted, imputed Adam's sin to your account.

12. Of course there is a difference between Imputed Sin and Actual sin.

- “Actual sin” is when you personally and actually transgress God's command.
- But imputed sin (original sin) is sufficient grounds for God to justly condemn you the whole world.

13. Now, to help you see that this is really what Paul is saying, let me point you to six scriptures in this context that support this truth.

- V. 15. “The many died because of the trespass of the one man.
- V. 16. The result of the one man's sin
- 16b “The judgment followed one man
- 17 By the trespass of the one man death reigned by the one man
- V. 18. The result of the one trespass is condemnation for all men
- 19. Through the disobedience of one man the many were made sinners.

14. All of this tells us that your problem with sin is far deeper than it appears. Your problem is NOT merely that you commit actual sins once in a while, but that you are a sinner by nature AND you are actually complicit with Adam in his sin in the Garden of Eden.

15. Our response to this should be, O. that explains why I can't save myself by being good, or doing better. What I need is a miracle! I need someone not only to pay for my sins, but someone who has the authority to reverse, rescue, and replace what I received by virtue of being born a son or daughter of Adam.

16. Your problem is that you are a sinner by nature AND you are actually complicit with Adam in his sin in the Garden of Eden.

- a. Our response to this should be, O. that explains why I can't save myself by being good, or making myself a little better. What I need is a miracle! I need someone not only to pay for my sins, but someone who has the authority to reverse, rescue, and replace what I received by virtue of being born a human.

17. Now, I know what you're going to say. You're going to say That's Not \_\_\_\_ Fair. Why should someone else's actions and decisions affect me. This never happens in the real world!? But that's not true. It happens all the time and you are impacted by it in a thousand different ways. Let me offer a few examples:

- I have a friend who grew up in Siberia. How did he end up living in Cyberia? Well, his grandfather was a Russian Baptist pastor and during the years of communism he was arrested for preaching, and sent to a gulag. His family followed him to make sure he was cared for... and they never left.
- When I got sick last year, I signed a document that gave power of attorney which gave her legal authority to make all decisions about our home, finances, and practically everything else.
- The U.S. Government us a Representative Republic. That means, when we vote to send someone to Washington, it is understood that they will make decisions on our behalf. And like it or not, those decisions are legally binding.

18. So, what we learn here in Rom. 5 is that God made Adam our federal head, representative head over all mankind. So, when he rebelled against God, you rebelled against God and have suffered the consequences ever since.

19. You see, Paul wants us to understand just how bad our predicament/ problem really is. Your problem is not something that can be resolved by cleaning up your act a little bit. it's not something that can be fixed by trying harder or resolving to be a better human being. It is far worse than that.

20 .You may say, "Well I have never heard of this, I don't like it and I don't want it. But O my friend. Consider this. The reason Paul is teaching you the bad news about Adam, your condemning representative head is so that you will love all the more Jesus your saving representative Head.

21. And if we reject the idea of Adam being our representative head unto condemnation, we will have no grounds for believing that Jesus is our representative head unto eternal life.



22. You see, Jesus is our new and better Adam come to save the hell-bound man. He is infinitely superior to Adam. Consider this:

- The first Adam was made from the earth, but the Last Adam (Christ) came from heaven (1 Cor. 15:47).
- The first Adam was the king of the old creation (Gen. 1:26–27), while the New Adam is King-Priest over the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).
- The first Adam was tested in a perfect garden and disobeyed God, while the Last Adam was tested in a terrible wilderness and obeyed God; and in the Garden of Gethsemane, He surrendered His will to God.
- The disobedience of the first Adam brought sin, condemnation, and death upon the human race, but the obedience of the Last Adam brought righteousness, salvation, and life to all who will believe.
- Through the first Adam, death and sin reign in this world (vv. 14, 17, 21); but through the Last Adam – The New and Better Adam - grace reigns (v. 21) and believers can “reign in life” (v. 17).

*Jesus can secure our justification because God appointed him to be a better representative than Adam.*