

## Through One Man – Romans 5:12-21

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *Difficult*

1. Anyone who's read the Bible knows there are passages that are difficult to understand.
2. Most of the Bible is pretty straight forward & doesn't present much trouble,
3. But some passages, specially in the letters of Paul are steep; a real challenge grasping.

#### B. *Today!*

1. The passage before us today is one of the hardest.
2. If you've read this before & it left you scratching your head, saying, "Huh?" don't feel bad.
3. Pastors, scholars & theologians all agree what we find here is tough.
4. As we dive in, want to say what we're about to look at won't yield an easy *take-home* application.
5. But it does answer one of the most common questions asked about the Gospel –
6. How does the death of *One* Man atone for the sins of *so many*?

### II. TEXT

#### A. V. 12

**Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned;**

1. In these 10 verses, Paul says the human race is represented by 2 great heads, Adam & Jesus.
  2. As he begins it seems he *intended* to say something like,  
**Just as through one man sin entered the world, so too through one man redemption came.**
  3. V. 18 makes it clear that's what Paul *meant*,
  4. But after penning just the first half, he *elaborates* on the *effect* of Adam's fateful decision to turn away from God.
  5. When Adam sinned, the door to evil opened & sin rushed in to *infect* all creation, including his descendants.
  6. The key to understanding what Paul meant is found in the last 3 words – "*because all sinned*".
    - a. "Sinned" is in the *aorist* tense, simple completed action in the past.
    - b. In other words, when Adam fell, because he was the *only man*; he was humanity.
    - c. We were in him both genetically & spiritually.
    - d. When he took that fruit from Eve & bit, we were there & sinned with him.
  7. This is where we get what's known as *the Doctrine of Original Sin*.
    - a. Original sin doesn't mean the *first* sin.
    - b. It refers to the *far-reaching result* of Adam's sin – all humanity was present in him so that when he fell, the race fell.
    - c. We carry that fallenness within us; we're *born* with a sin-nature,
    - d. Which every parent knows eventually manifests itself.
  8. Sin is like a computer virus passed on from computer to computer by the exchange of programs & data.
    - a. The virus attaches itself to the system & corrupts it.
    - b. So it is with sin, it's infected our core, our operating system, human nature.
  9. Genesis tells us while Adam was created in the image of God, after Adam sinned it says his children were born "in *his* image," which was now fallen.
  10. People aren't sinners because they sin, they sin because they're sinners.
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11. Many object to the Doctrine of Original Sin & say it isn't *fair* Adam's sin is counted as theirs.
    - a. We in the West pride ourselves on our *rugged individualism*.
    - b. We count it a *virtue* that each person is personally responsible for his/her decisions.
    - c. So the idea that we're responsible for Adam's failure bugs.
  12. In Hebrew, the word "Adam" means "humanity/mankind."
    - a. We were there in Adam, both genetically & spiritually, when he sinned.
    - b. As the first man, the choice *he made* is the choice *we made*.
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13. The story is told of an African slave named Jeremiah many years ago.
    - a. He served a wealthy family in England as their house servant.
    - b. Anna, the woman of the house was an abolitionist who pressed her husband to free their half dozen slaves.
    - c. Being a solid Christian, she shared the gospel with everyone she knew, including Jeremiah.
    - d. She told him how sin, death, & bondage had entered the world through Adam's Fall.
    - e. For many days after, Jeremiah was heard speaking to himself, *blaming* Adam for his woes.
    - f. "Oh Adam" he would say, "Why you gone & ate o' that tree? If I was in yo' place, I'd not done it."
    - g. After a couple weeks of this, Anna had an idea.
      - 1) She went to the store & bought a small, ornate, richly decorated wooden box.
      - 2) She put it on a table in the front sitting room & told Jeremiah while he could dust it, he was never to open it.
    - i. Over the next few days, whenever he made his way to that part of the house, she'd secretly watch from a distance.
      - 1) He often look at the box.
      - 2) Then he'd walk over & dust it, showing far more attention to it than the other pieces of furniture in the room. But he didn't open it. Not for a week.
      - 3) But each day he lingered over it a little longer. And sometimes his fingers would touch the latch.
      - 4) Finally, curiosity got the better of him, & he opened the box to find a note.
      - 5) Anna had taught him letters so Jeremiah recognized his name written on top.
      - 6) He picked up the note to read, "Dear Jeremiah, I asked you never to open this box. You've proven if you were in Adam's place, you would have done what he did. We *all* would."
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14. When Adam fell, we all fell with him.

15. The *proof* we would have done what he did is that we *ratify* his disobedient choice every time we sin.

16. Since the wages of sin are death, death has spread to all humanity.

17. This launches Paul on a parenthesis that lasts all the way thru v. 17.

### **B. Vs. 13-14**

<sup>13</sup>(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

<sup>14</sup>Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

1. By "the Law" Paul means the Law given by God to Moses at Sinai.
2. Up to that point, God wasn't keeping a record of *individual* sins.
3. Yet people died throughout this time, proving sin existed.
  - a. You read those early chapters of Genesis & you find the same record repeated again & again.
  - b. "So and so lived for so many years, had sons & daughters, and then he died."
4. So—*what sin* was it that ruled until the Law came? It was *Adam's* sin.

5. All the Law did was *identify* just how far & hard the human race has fallen.
6. For those who find the idea of Adam being a representative for the whole race hard to swallow, the last part of v. 14 provides the balance & helps explain *why* Adam *does* serve as our first head.
7. Because if Adam serves as our *first*, *another* can be the *last*.

### C. Vs. 15-17

**<sup>15</sup>But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. <sup>16</sup>And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. <sup>17</sup>For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)**

1. 2 representatives for humanity are presented: Adam & Christ.
    - a. Thru Adam comes sin & death.
    - b. Thru Christ comes grace & life.
  2. Theologians refer to this as *Federalism* –
    - a. 2 great representatives/heads stand for all humanity.
    - b. Each person must chose who will represent him/her before God, Adam or Christ.
      - 1) Adam *already represents all*—he's the *default* selection.
      - 2) We must *chose* Jesus as our *alternate* representative or we remain with the default.
  3. The same thing happens in politics.
    - a. Some people don't vote, yet *someone* is elected & will represent them whether they like it or not.
    - b. Those who don't vote can't complain about who gets elected.
  4. Because Adam was the first man, he's our default spiritual head.
  5. If you don't like the job he did in representing you, choose the other candidate = Jesus!
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6. There is a lot of disaffection with government today.
    - a. One of the comments you hear a lot is that in the upcoming Presidential election,
    - b. Even though the field of candidates for both parties is so broad, no one's truly *inspiring*.
  7. Approval ratings of Congress as a whole are abysmal.
  8. But when people are asked about their *specific officials*, they say they like them.
  9. In the same way, people don't like having Adam as their representative but they don't do anything about replacing him.
  10. Another representative stands ready to forgive & cleanse & heal & give eternal life, but they refuse Him.
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11. A question rises at this point that most ask at one time or another:  
 How can the death of ONE MAN save so many?  
 The answer is right here.
    - a. Through one, sin entered the world & infected all.
    - b. *So* → through One, sin *can be* abolished & salvation provided for all.
    - c. This is the way God has designed it.
    - d. Because God is *perfect*, we can be confident this is the best possible way for things to be.
  12. Instead of resisting our responsibility for *beginning IN Adam* –
  13. We can joyously receive the benefits of *ending IN Christ!*

#### D. Vs. 18-19

**<sup>18</sup>Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. <sup>19</sup>For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.**

1. Adam's willful decision to disobey God & eat of the forbidden fruit plunged all humanity into sin & death.
2. Jesus' submission to obey the Father by going to the Cross does more than just undo the effects of the Fall –
3. It lifts us into a privileged place even Adam did not enjoy – it opens wide to us the glory of eternal life in heaven.

#### E. Vs. 20-21

**<sup>20</sup>Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, <sup>21</sup>so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

1. Paul jumps from the Garden of Eden & the Fall to Mt. Sinai & the giving of the Law.
2. As he's made clear in the previous chapters, the law was *not* given to *make* us righteous.
  - a. It came to *reveal* sin & diagnose our true spiritual condition.
  - b. Only then would we recognize our need & seek a Savior.
3. The more law, the more sin is revealed; so Paul says, "Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more."
  - a. There was no Greek word strong enough to describe the abundance of grace God gives us in Christ, so Paul made up a word.
  - b. "Abounded much more" is literally *super-abounded* in Greek.
  - c. God is not about to be outdone by sin.
  - d. Where sin rears its ugly head, God's grace is able to attack, disarm, & obliterate it.
  - e. God's grace is so incredible, it's even able to turn what the devil means for destruction, to good.
  - f. God's grace is a spiritual lodestone that transmutes the dark lead of sin into the bright gold of redemption.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. Much More

1. As we end today, I don't want to miss something important here.
2. In v. 18 Paul says –  
**Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.**
3. Paul is NOT teaching *universalism*, that everyone will be saved.
4. He's quite clear in other passages it's *only* those who place their faith in Christ who are saved.
5. What he means here is that the work of Christ is *sufficient* to atone for the sins of the entire human race for all of history.
  - a. This will be part of the great tragedy for those who perish –
  - b. They will realize there was plenty forgiveness available to them but they *rejected* it.
6. Then, in vs. 15 & 17, Paul says Christ gives *much more to us* than Adam lost *for us*.
7. Grace doesn't just erase the ledger & put us *back to square one* with God.
8. It lifts us into a relationship with Him that's nearer & dearer than *even Adam had before the Fall*.

### **B. Guilt**

1. As much as some people take offense at the Doctrine of Original Sin, *guilt* is a universal problem.
2. All over the world, men & women have struggled with the awareness they fall short of even their *own* ideas of right & wrong.
3. **Historically**, people have tried to deal with guilt in 1 of 2 ways.
  - a. **Religion** provides a means of doing good works to *compensate* for wrong.
  - b. **Psychology** tries to erase guilt by *lowering the moral bar* & redefining right & wrong.
4. But neither really works.
5. There's only one way to deal with guilt – the forgiveness God offers in Christ.

### **C. Maha Kumbh Mela**

1. One of the holiest days on the Hindu calendar comes every 12 years; Maha Kumbh Mela.
  - a. All caste distinctions are set aside as millions of Hindus gather at the convergence of the Ganges & Yamuna Rivers in India to sacrifice to their gods.
  - b. They afflict themselves with all kinds of pains & torments, thinking these will earn their favor.
    - 1) They lie on beds of nails, walk on hot coals & broken glass.
    - 2) Some thrust long knives through their tongues, others stare at the sun.
  - c. Their holy books promise salvation to those who bath in the River during the festival.
  - e. They shave their entire bodies & throw the hair into the water, believing every hair earns them a million years in heaven.
2. Dr. Jacob Chamberlain was a missionary to India.
  - a. He went to Maha Kumbh Mela to preach the Gospel to the Hindu pilgrims gathered there.
  - b. He met a man who'd crawled many miles on his knees & elbows to the sacred site.
  - c. Slipping into the water he hoped to rid his soul of the guilt that tormented him.
  - d. But when he emerged there was no difference; the same guilt haunted him.
  - e. As he turned for home, he heard Chamberlain tell a group of pilgrims the wonderful story of grace & how Christ died to rescue the needy.
  - f. The man cried out, "Oh, that's what I need! Forgiveness and peace!"
  - g. Dr. Chamberlain led him to faith in Jesus & the man's relief was instantaneous..
3. **Religion** is not the *answer*.  
**Philosophy** is not the *solution*.  
**Psychology** is not *key*.  
**Jesus is.**