

53. The Book of Romans 5:12a

Paul's Epistle to the Romans
A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier

(5-22-24)

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In our study in Romans, we have currently entered into the final section of the second major division of the book—a section that runs from 3:21-5:21. This section is dealing with the most important doctrine in the Christian faith—the doctrine of **'Justification'** (salvation).

We are currently in chapter 5 where Paul presents two categories that pertain to our justification—**'The Blessings of our Justification'**; **'The Basis for our Justification.'**

The Basis for Our Justification—5:12-21

Romans 5:12-21 serves as a bridge between the first part of the letter and the next three chapters:

- *It is linked with the first part by picking up the subjects of condemnation through Adam and justification through Christ, and by showing that the work of Christ far outweighs in blessing what the work of Adam did in misery and loss.*
- *It is linked with chapters 6–8 by moving from justification to sanctification, and from acts of sin to the root cause—our fallen sin nature.*

Romans 5:12a (NKJV)

¹² **Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world...**

"Therefore" connects what follows with what has just been declared—that as believers we have been reconciled to God by the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ (verse 8–11).

At this point, Paul anticipates that his readers would be thinking to themselves—*"How can one man's death bring salvation to the whole world?"*

The answer is—*"The same way one man's disobedience brought condemnation to the whole world."*

That is the context that Paul will be reasoning from.

In the case of Adam, it was **'through one man that sin entered into the world.'**

It is important to note that Paul does not say that sin *originated* with Adam—but that sin **'entered the world'** through Adam.

Sin originated with Satan, who *"has sinned from the beginning"* (1 John 3:8; Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28).

John doesn't specify *when* that beginning was—but it obviously was *before* the creation of Adam and Eve because they were tempted by Satan.

After God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden we read—

“The Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.’”
(Genesis 2:15–17)

After Eve was created from Adam and joined him in the garden as his wife—Satan tempted her to doubt and to disobey the command of God—which she did.

She, in turn, induced her husband to disobey which he did—and they both fell. But although Eve disobeyed first—the primary responsibility for sin entering the world was on Adam.

One author tells us why—

“Adam is portrayed in these verses as the ‘federal head’ or representative of all those who are in the old creation. Christ is presented as the Federal Head of all those who are in the new creation. A federal head acts for all those who are under him. For example, when the President of a country signs a bill into law, he is acting for all the citizens of that country.

Paul’s argument begins with the assertion that, through Adam, sin entered into the world. He does not speak of sins (plural), but of sin (singular). In this sense, ‘sin’ does not represent a particular unrighteous act but rather is a reference to the core problem from which all sin flows—the sin nature that he came to possess because of his first disobedience, that he then passed on to his descendants.”

That is what happened in Adam's case, and as a result of his sin—physical death entered the world:

Romans 5:12 (NKJV)

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—**

Death was passed down to all Adam's descendants because they had all sinned in him—and while it is true that all of Adam's descendants would go on to commit individual acts of sin—that is not what Paul has in mind here.

Paul's point is that—Adam's sin was a *representative act*—which means that all his posterity are reckoned as having sinned in him.

This is the same idea that Paul presents in Hebrews 7, when he makes the case that the priesthood of Melchizedek is greater than Levi because—Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek and when he did, Levi was still in his loins:

Hebrews 7:7–10 (NKJV)

⁷ Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. ⁸ Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. 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.

In other words, although Melchizedek lived many years before Levi, the father of the priestly tribe, was born, along with all other descendants of Abraham, Levi, by being in the seed in Abraham's loins, shared in the tithe paid to the ancient king.

In the same way (although with enormously greater consequences)—the sin of Adam was passed on to all of his descendants. When he sinned in the Garden of Eden, he sinned not only as a man but as man (Adam's name means "mankind").

When he and his wife, who were one flesh (Genesis 2:24), sinned against God, all of their descendants—that is, the entire human race (still in their loins) would share in that sin and the alienation from God and subjection to death that were its consequence.

Paul said to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15:22) *"In Adam all die"*—in other words, as far as guilt is concerned, every human being was present in the garden with Adam and shares in the sin he committed there.

One author had this to say on the subject of Adam's fall and how the effects of which were subsequently passed down to his descendants:

"God made men a procreative race, and when they procreate, they pass on to their children, and to their children's children, their own nature (physical, psychological, and spiritual).

Mankind is a single entity, constituting a divinely ordered solidarity. Adam represents the entire human race that is descended from him, no matter how many subgroups there may be. Therefore, when Adam sinned, all mankind sinned, and because his first sin transformed his inner nature, that now depraved nature was also transmitted to his posterity. Because he became spiritually polluted, all his descendants would be polluted in the same way. That pollution has, in fact, accumulated and intensified throughout the ages of human history. Instead of evolving, as humanists insist, man has devolved, degenerating into greater and greater sinfulness."

That's why Paul said to Timothy that, *"evil men grow worse and worse."* (2 Timothy 3:13)

When we come to this passage of Scripture, certain questions inevitably arise, such as—*"I don't think it's fair that I'm being held accountable for Adam's sin! If I were Adam I wouldn't have blown it, it isn't fair that I'm being held responsible for Adam blowing it!"*

Now before you say, *"That's not fair, I wouldn't have done what Adam did"*—one pastor put it well:

"Adam was our champion; he was hot off the press. He didn't have a sin nature, he didn't have any bad habits, he wasn't brought up in a dysfunctional family.

In the 2020 summer Olympics held in Tokyo Japan, America sent our best power-lifting team. Our guys were incredibly strong, they had trained for years lifting weights, but sadly they didn't take the gold. Yet which of us would say, "They didn't beat me, if I had been there, I would have done better!" That would be absurd. If we send over our champions and they are defeated, we all lose because they are our best.

Adam was the best humanity had to offer—and he got beat in the Garden of Eden. He not only represented us, when Adam sinned, we all sinned, because we were all "in Adam," in his loins, and so we also were guilty of sinning against God. (Rom. 5:19)"

Again, Adam was the best chance the human race had—he was perfect—he had no sin nature—and he still blew it! If the best of us didn't cut it and failed that means the rest of us born *with* a sin nature would not have done any better.

Warren Wiersbe—

"Skeptics sometimes ask, 'Was it fair for God to condemn the whole world just because of one man's disobedience?' The answer, of course, is that it was not only fair; but it was also wise and gracious. To begin with, if God had tested each human being individually, the result would have been the same: disobedience. But even more important, by condemning the human race through one man (Adam), God was then able to save the human race through one Man (Jesus Christ)!"

Is it fair that we're being held responsible for Adam's sin? —Yes, it is but God is giving you an opportunity to escape the penalty of Adam's disobedience—

“Oh, you preachers make me sick!” a fellow said to a witnessing Christian on the train one day. The Christian assured him he was not a preacher. “I don't care what you are. You Christians are always talking about a man going to hell because Adam sinned.” “No,” the Christian said, “you need not go to hell because Adam sinned. You will go to hell because you refuse the remedy provided for Adam's sin. Don't keep complaining about something that has absolutely been taken care of. If you go to hell, you will go over the broken body of Jesus Christ, who died to keep you out.”

So once again, although Eve disobeyed first, the primary responsibility for the sin that brought the fall of man was Adam's.

First of all, because it was to him that God had directly given the command—and second, because he had headship over Eve and should have insisted on their mutual obedience to God rather than allow her to lead him into disobedience.

Now let me just say that—I don't think Adam (and Eve) really understood the full effects his sin would have on all his descendants—on the whole human race.

The Bible tells us that when Adam disobeyed God and sin entered into his life—it generated a *constitutional* change in his nature, from innocence to sinfulness—an innate sinfulness that would be transmitted to every one of his descendants.

One scholar put it this way—

“The Jews understood well the idea of corporate identity. They never thought of themselves as isolated individuals. They thought of themselves as part of a tribe, a part of a family, a part of a nation. They looked at all other races in the same way. What one of them did affect all the others, and what the others did affected him in a way that is difficult for us today in our culture to understand.

It was on that basis that God frequently punished or blessed an entire tribe, city, or nation because of what a few, or even just one, of its members did. It was on the basis of that principle that God held all Israel accountable and eventually destroyed Achan's family along with him because of that one man's disobedience in keeping for himself some of the booty from Jericho (see Joshua 7:1–26).”

Romans 5:12 (NKJV)

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—

Adam was the door through which sin entered the world—and sin was the door through which death entered the world.

At this point, let me digress for a minute by having you turn to Genesis 1 and let's look at the creation of the earth—

Genesis 1:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens [i.e. 'outer space'] and the earth. ²The earth was without form, and void...

From Genesis 1:2 a theory has developed known as the “Gap Theory”.

The Gap Theory is the belief that between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2 there is a gap of time where Satan rebelled against God and was judged by the Lord—including his domain (earth) which was also judged and destroyed as well.

They point out that the Hebrew in verse 2 translated *“and the earth was without form and void”* is ‘tohu waw bohu’ which is often connected with judgment in the Old Testament. Based on that, they claim Genesis 1:1-2 should actually be translated—*“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth—and the earth became ruined and desolate.”*

Again, they say, this speaks of a divine cataclysmic judgment from God upon the earth for Satan’s rebellion which left it in a chaotic and ruined condition.

They point to Isaiah 45:18—

Isaiah 45:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ For thus says the LORD, Who created the heavens, Who is God, Who formed the earth and made it, Who has established it, Who did not create it in vain, Who formed it to be inhabited...

The word **‘vain’** is the Hebrew word ‘tohu’ which is the same Hebrew word used in Genesis 1:2 for ‘void.’

So they claim that God is saying in Isaiah 45:18 that He didn’t create the world in vain (‘void’, ‘tohu waw bohu’)—ruined and desolate—He created it fully formed and functional ready to be inhabited.

I bring this up, not to convince you that the Gap Theory is true—but to make an important point.

Most “Gap Theory” proponents claim that in this gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 is where all the fossils came from and the extreme age of the earth (they deny the 6 literal days of creation for the ‘day/age theory’.)

➔ Listen for further explanation on this.

But even if the Gap Theory was true (and it might be)—it can’t be used to explain the extinction of dinosaurs and the fossil record.

The Bible says clearly that death came into the world through Adam’s sin (Romans 5:12), and since fossils are the result of death—they could not have happened *before* Adam’s time.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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