

When in Romans Do as the Righteous Do

*"I **DO** Know You From Adam"*

5:12-21

Paul and Jesus believed Adam and Eve were real people God created in the Garden of Eden and what they did has a lasting effect to the present day.

David Guzik wrote,

It is important to understand that the Adam and Eve account is not an optional passage to be accepted or rejected, or allegorized away. According to Paul's theme here in Romans 5, you can't take away Genesis 3 without taking away principles that lay the foundation for our salvation.

The importance of Adam being a real person is clearly seen in Romans five. You are regarded by God and treated by God based on the actions of another person who acted on your behalf. When your representative acted, God says that you acted. He says that you were "in" that person.

There are two, and only two, persons who acted on your behalf: Adam and Jesus.

- When Adam acted in disobedience in the Garden of Eden, he acted for you as your representative, and God says that you sinned.
- But, just the same way, when Jesus acted in obedience, He acted for you as your representative, and you can therefore, in Him, be declared righteous.

The second portion of Romans five contrasts what it means to be "in" Adam and "in" Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned -

"All sinned" when Adam sinned. By the way, guys, Adam is held responsible for the fall of humanity, not Eve. She was deceived; he sinned willfully.

It is true that you inherited a sin nature from Adam; it is also true that you commit individual sins. But, in addition to individual and inherited sin, God also **imputed** sin to you because Adam represented you. He sinned; you sinned.

Paul knew this would be hard to swallow, so he gives you proof that you sinned in Adam. The fact that all men die physically is his proof that, from God's perspective, all men sinned in Adam. He says that because you see "death spread to all men," to the whole human race, you must believe that God imputed Adam's sin to the whole race.

Here's another truth we glean from this. Since death is the wages of sin, and since everyone dies, *then everyone is a sinner!*

Romans 5:13 (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

Romans 5:14 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.

The law was not given until the time of Moses, yet all men from Adam to Moses were subject to death. What, then, was the reason for their deaths? The only possible conclusion you can reach is that the disobedience of Adam, which caused him ultimately to die, is imputed to all his descendants.

Adam was "a type of Him who was to come." In other words, just as Adam could represent you, so could someone else.

You can't help being in Adam; **but you can help staying in Adam!** Before you accuse God of being unfair, realize this: Just as God regards you in Adam, He can regard you in Christ! He sees Christ as your representative.

Those who are justified by faith gain much more than they ever lost in Adam.

A series of contrasts between being “in” Adam and “in” Jesus Christ are presented.

Romans 5:15 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.

Because of Adam’s “offense,” his sin in the Garden, “many died.” In fact, **all** “died” as we just saw in verse fourteen when it said “death reigned from Adam to Moses.”

By contrast, Jesus offers salvation as a gift through God’s grace which “abounded to many.”

The word “many” is being used in two different ways:

1. The first “many” refers to all those who are “in” Adam, which is every member of the human race.
2. The second “many” refers to all those who are “in” Jesus Christ. This is *not* the whole human race but, as is described in verse seventeen, “those who receive” Jesus Christ by faith.

Not all people will be saved. At the Cross of Jesus Christ an atonement for sin was made that is sufficient for “whosoever will believe.” Everyone is, therefore, *potentially* justifiable. But only those who “receive” Jesus are *actually* justified.

For those of you mulling over Calvinism, regarding the extent of Jesus’ work on the Cross at least one notable Calvinist, **John Calvin**, said this.

Paul makes grace common to *all men*, not because it in fact extends to all, but because it is *offered to all*. Although Christ *suffered for the sins of the world*, and is offered without distinction to *all men*, yet not all receive Him (CC, 8.117-18).

Romans 5:16 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.

God passed “the judgment” upon Adam after he sinned and the entire human race that he represented, and that sprung from him, was thereby condemned.

Adam’s “one offense” gave rise to all the “many offenses” his descendants commit. Nonetheless, by God’s grace those who receive the gift of God’s salvation are “justified” despite their “many offenses.”

Romans 5:17 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.)

“Death reigned through” Adam. It was (and is) a tyrant bringing every human being under its grip and into fear.

By contrast, those who “receive” the salvation offered by God through Jesus “reign in life.” In other words, you become a co-ruler in a new kingdom characterized by eternal life.

As I indicated earlier, you may not agree with the idea that you were “in” Adam when he sinned. But you certainly like the idea of being “in” Jesus Christ. If we aren’t made sinners by Adam, then it isn’t fair for us to be made righteous by Jesus.

If every man must stand for himself, without the representation of either Adam or Jesus, then we will all perish. None would be saved, because each of us sins and falls short of the glory of God. Only a sinless person acting on our behalf can save us, and it is fair for Him to act on our behalf because another man put us in this mess by acting on our behalf (Guzik).

Romans 5:18 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.

Adam's sin was the "one offense." The Cross of Jesus Christ is the "one... righteous act." As a result "the free gift came to all men."

Again we point out that not "all men" are saved at the Cross. But "the free gift" of salvation is available "to all men," and those who "receive" it by faith have the result of being justified.

Without making a choice you were represented by Adam in his offense. But the very nature of a "gift" is that it must be "received." As to being "in" Jesus, human beings *are* offered a choice. And if God gives you a choice then He also gives you free will to choose.

Romans 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

The same conclusion is stated in different words where Adam's act is called "disobedience" and the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ is called "obedience." As a result "the many" were "made" (literally, *stand constituted as*) "sinners."

In the second half of verse 19 "the many" means "those who receive." They are not simply declared righteous but they will be "made righteous." It's the same word used for made that means *stand constituted as*.

You are justified and then God begins to change you in the process the Bible calls sanctification. You start to *practice* what you already have by virtue of your *position* "in" Jesus.

Let me make a quick theological note. The idea of Adam and Jesus as two representatives of the human race is sometimes called Federal Theology. Adam and Jesus are sometimes referred to as Federal Heads. Under a federal system of government representatives are chosen and the representative speaks for the people. Adam speaks for those he represents, those "in" Adam, and Jesus speaks for His people, those "in" Jesus.

If you were a Jew, especially in first century Rome, you would wonder where the Law of Moses fit into all this discussion of salvation and sanctification. Paul takes up that topic in the final verses of the chapter.

Romans 5:20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,

Earlier we discussed the period of time between Adam and Moses, before God's law was fully given. Now Paul discusses history from Moses forward.

The Law of Moses gives definition to just how much we sin. When you see God's righteous standard, you see how Adam's one "offense" abounds.

But no matter how much sin abounds, God's "grace abounded much more."

Romans 5:21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

"Sin reigned in death," and does still, for those "in" Adam. Receive Jesus Christ by faith and "grace" will "reign through righteousness to eternal life."

Paul pictured "death" as a king that reigns over your life. The reign of death kills every hope, every dream, every joy with its brutal reality.

Paul pictured God's grace as a king that reigns over your life. The reign of grace is characterized by "righteousness." If grace is reigning, I will respect God's standard of "righteousness." I will love "righteousness." Grace does not result in license to sin. Quite the contrary. Grace isn't something that accommodates sin. It conquers sin by abounding when sin is present.

Thomas Benton Brooks is quoted saying,

Grace is no friend to sin; it is its sworn enemy. As heat is opposed to cold, and light to darkness, so grace is opposed to sin. Fire and water may as well agree in the same vessel as grace and sin in the same heart.

I can enjoy “eternal life” *right now*. Death and all its fears have no hold upon me. Like the apostle Paul I can say,

Philippians 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Philippians 1:22 But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.

Philippians 1:23 For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

Like the apostle Paul I can say,

2 Corinthians 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

2 Corinthians 4:18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

