

(Devotional #38) *What is The True Gospel? – The First Imputation:  
The Doctrine of Original Sin: Evidence from the New Testament*

<sup>12</sup>Just as **through one man** sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men – because all sinned ... <sup>18</sup>so then as through **one transgression** there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through **one act of righteousness** there resulted justification of life to all men – **Romans 5:12 ... 18**

For as **in Adam** all die, so also **in Christ**, all will be made alive – **1 Corinthians 15:22**

In our last lesson, we looked at Genesis 2:15-17 and 3:4-7 and discovered there the Old Testament assertion that when Adam sinned, the guilt of his transgression was imputed ... *or credited (in a negative sense) ...* to Eve, and subsequently to all their progeny: the human race. We used the metaphor of **'death row'** to describe the current state of the human race due to the single transgression of Adam. We used the phrase **'original sin'** to refer to the passing (*or imputation*) of the consequence of sin, which God described as *'death,'* to all who are *'in Adam.'*

God views every man and woman either as **'in Adam'** or **'in Christ.'** There are no other options. One way to understand original sin is to realize that every descendant of Adam is born **'in Adam.'** We do not have to do anything beyond *'being conceived'* to be born *'in Adam.'* This is what David meant when he wrote: **"Behold, I was brought forth (born) in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me"** – **Psalm 51:5.**

Notice, there is no mention of any *personal sin(s)* David (*or you and I*) committed. **The Doctrine of Original Sin** only involves **a single transgression** committed by Adam millennia ago. **Only one sin is in view.** Now this does not diminish the severity of the millions of sins the human race has committed since then – any one of which would condemn a man; it only asserts that before any other sins were committed, **the human race stood condemned already<sup>1</sup>.** This fact alone should put an end to the idea that we can earn our way off of *spiritual death row* on which we were born. Personal sins aside, human merit is not going to accomplish anything. If there is a remedy to **our lostness,** God must be the one to put that remedy *enforce.*

It is faddish these days to preach and sing of Jesus as *'my best friend.'* But a man on death row does not need *'a best friend'* – he needs a lawyer. And likewise, a person born *'in Adam,'* does not need *'a sidekick,'* he needs a savior.

Reinhold Niebuhr, a man not known for his conservatism, understood the current state of the human race. In his book, **KINGDOM OF GOD IN AMERICA,** Niebuhr wrote: **"Christian people have begun to put their trust in a God without wrath, who brings men without sin into a Kingdom without judgment, through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross<sup>2</sup>."**

Today we turn our attention to the New Testament, where in Romans 5:12-19, the Apostle Paul inscribes the primary New Testament text for the Doctrine of Original Sin. **PLEASE PAUSE HERE AND READ ROMANS 5:12-19.**

The Apostle Peter commented, on Paul's writings by saying, **"Some of Paul's texts are hard to understand<sup>3</sup>."** I think Peter may have been thinking about Romans 5:12-19 when he wrote that sentence. This passage seems ambiguous because **verses 13-17** are parenthetical; **verse 18<sup>A</sup>** restates the central idea of **verse 12,** and then **verse 18<sup>B</sup>** completes the thought introduced back in **verse 12.** *Whew!* That is why in the opening Scripture citation at the top of page one, I typed

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<sup>1</sup> Notice after the famous John 3:16 verse, in John 3:18, Jesus says, "Whoever believes in him (Jesus) is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands **CONDEMNED ALREADY** because he has not believed in the name of God's one-and-only Son.

<sup>2</sup> *Kingdom of God in America,* by Reinhold Niebuhr, Page 193.

<sup>3</sup> See 2 Peter 3:16

three dots (...) between verses 12 and 18. Reading verse 12 and then skipping to verse 18<sup>B</sup> is a simple way of isolating the main idea of the passage, and it gives continuity to Paul's main idea:

*(5:12) Therefore, just as through ONE MAN (ADAM) sin entered into the world, and death spread to ALL MEN (the Human Race) —*

*(5:18<sup>B</sup>) Even so through ONE ACT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (Christ's Death on the Cross) there resulted Justification of life for all men.*

Let's analyze the text: "**Through one man.**" What is in view here is the action of ONE MAN. What took place in the Garden of Eden was *a test* and it was *ONE MAN* who was tested and *ONLY ONE MAN*. Eve was not tested; you and I were not tested; *only Adam was tested*.

(*THROUGH ONE MAN*) "**Sin entered into the world and death through sin.**" Now this is not a statement regarding the origin of sin. Sin already existed in the angelic realm, having originated previously in Lucifer (*Ezekiel 28:15; see also Isaiah 14:12-15*). This is a comment regarding how sin entered the human race. *We also are told, the result of this sin by the one man is death ...* and not only Adam's death, but the text goes on to read, "**And so death passed to ALL MEN because ALL SINNED.**"

At first glance, "**because ALL SINNED**" seems to say, '*all men die because all men have committed personal sins at some time in their lives*' ... but this is **NOT** the meaning of the phrase. The verb '**sinned**' (ἀμαρτάνω – pronounced 'hamartano') – is written in the Aorist tense, which means this event – **this sin (this single act) – took place AT A SPECIFIC POINT IN TIME<sup>4</sup> in the past**; therefore, **IT CANNOT REFER TO PERSONAL SINS (that occur in a linear fashion over time)**. *The text does NOT read, "for all HAVE SINNED" or "all men ARE SINNERS," or anything similar ... it says, "ALL MEN SINNED" (AT THE SAME MOMENT IN TIME and as A COMPLETED ACT).*

In verses 16 and 18, we are told that the judgment, viz., **DEATH**, arose from **ONE TRANSGRESSION**. Now think about this – **ONE SINGLE TRANSGRESSION, COMMITTED BY ONE MAN, at ONE SPECIFIC MOMENT IN TIME**. This cannot refer to anything other than judgment that is based on the single transgression committed by Adam in Genesis 3:6.

- This judgment has nothing to do with Eve or her deception.
- It has nothing to do with any other sin Adam committed of which there were many.
- And it has nothing to do with any sin you or I commit, as egregious as they may be.

Judgment came upon the human race as a result of one thing and one thing only: Adam's single transgression. At least ten times (*in various ways*) in verses 12-19, reference is made to **ONE TRANSGRESSION** committed by **ONE MAN**. So, the condemnation that passed to **ALL MEN** came about by **ONE SIN** committed by **ONE MAN, ADAM**.

Now certainly Adam sinned more than one time ... (*'post-Fall-Adam' sinned thousands of times just as you and I do*) ... but none of those other sins – **NOT ONE OF THEM** – affects you or me in any way. It was only the one ... Adam failed with regard to the one that counted, and when that happened, **God imputed that single transgression to Eve AND to all the posterity of Adam, and we all came under condemnation as a result of it – "IN ADAM ALL DIE."**

The human race as a whole is condemned before Almighty God, apart from any personal sins you or I have committed, because (*to personalize it*) every human being is born under the condem-

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<sup>4</sup> In the Greek language, the action of a verb is either (1) **LINEAR**, i.e., taking place over a period of time, or (2) **PUNCTILIAR**, i.e., taking place at a specific point in time, The Aorist tense depicts punctiliar action. In this case, '**because all sinned**' is **a single act that took place in the past, at a specific moment in time**. As such, it cannot refer to 'a lifestyle' but rather 'to a specific act' that took place once, in the past, at a specific moment in time, namely, Adam's sin.

nation of Adam's sin. ***This is our starting point.*** We are born on death row. Nothing else need happen for a man to stand guilty at the Great White Throne Judgment<sup>5</sup> and be condemned to the Lake of Fire ... this was our lot when we came into the world. And if a man does not understand this, he never will understand the extent of God's infinite grace. That man will come up with every possible way of misunderstanding God's Plan of Salvation, for that man does not understand his own dilemma.

Over the course of human history, there have been two men, who have stood as ***REPRESENTATIVES<sup>6</sup> OF THE HUMAN RACE: ADAM and JESUS.*** This is why Jesus is referred to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:45 as, ***"THE LAST (or 'the SECOND') ADAM."*** Both represented us in critical acts that set a course – of condemnation (*Adam's sin*) or salvation (*the cross*) for every member of the human race. There is one course that leads to forgiveness and reconciliation, and there is another that leads to condemnation. We are born, apart from any acts we have done (*whether good or evil*), on the path to condemnation (*'in Adam'*); therefore, the eternal destiny of every man rests on his decision regarding Jesus Christ, for only through Christ's death on the cross does God place those formerly *'in Adam,'* into union with Jesus (*'in Christ'*).

***NOW THERE IS FURTHER SUPPORT FOR THIS:***

Romans 5:13 reads – ***"For until the Law (was given), sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law."*** This verse puts forth additional support for Adam being our representative. It puts in play a principle, viz., that ***'sin is not imputed apart from law.'*** For example, if there is no law establishing a speed limit, you cannot speed ... you can drive too fast, but you cannot be held legally guilty of speeding if there is no speed limit established by law.

Paul's first mention of Law in this verse refers to the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law was given to Moses sometime around the 15<sup>th</sup> Century B.C., while the single commandment (*also a law*) was given to Adam in the Garden of Eden ... ***SO*** ... there was a period of time between Adam and Moses, when there were no specific, divine laws given to mankind as there were to Adam and then subsequently to Moses. It was during this interval that ***'sin was not imputed apart from law,'*** yet even though this is the case, still ... sin was in the world.

Now look at Romans 5:14 – ***"Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses (there is that time interval) even over those who had not sinned in THE LIKENESS OF THE OFFENSE OF ADAM."*** During this period of time (*from Adam to Moses*) when there was no divine law, and when sin was not imputed because there was no law, ***STILL DEATH REIGNED.*** Why? How? And what does, ***'those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam'*** mean?

Well, in what way did Adam sin? He sinned by breaking a divine law ... so there was a law Adam was commanded to obey that he broke. (*It is 'law-breaking' that redefines a 'sin' as a 'transgression,' for 'transgressor' is a legal term<sup>7</sup> that means, 'law-breaker.'*) So ***'in the likeness of Adam'*** means, ***'transgressing by breaking a divine law.'*** Yet, between Adam and Moses, there was no such law to break, so men could not be legally guilty of sins they committed during a time when there was no law to break. In other words, they could not sin after the manner and likeness of Adam. ***Yet, the same penalty – DEATH – reigned over all men, even those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam.*** Now Paul is careful to explain that *'sin, as a moral*

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<sup>5</sup> The Great White Throne Judgment is the final judgment of those, whose names are not written in the Book of Life. See Revelation 20:11-15.

<sup>6</sup> The theological term for this 'representation' is 'Federal Headship,' but for the sake of clarity, the term 'representative' will be used throughout this lesson.

<sup>7</sup> Sin is a moral issue, a 'falling short' of a righteous standard; a transgression is a legal issue on the basis of which guilt is determined.

failure, was in the world even in the absence of law' ... but guilt for that moral failure was not imputed apart from law. **What WAS IMPUTED was ADAM'S ORIGINAL TRANSGRESSION.**

So, in a time when there was no divinely ordained law, when men could not sin after the likeness of Adam, when sin – though in the world – was not imputed, **EVEN THEN MEN DIED**. Why then did they die? It was because **ADAM'S ORIGINAL SIN** had been imputed to these people so that death was able to reign over them, even though the guilt for their own personal sins was not imputed during the time before the Mosaic Law. *Whew!*

Romans 5:15-17 is worthy of our attention, for after so much bad news, there is good news. God has given us a gift that is **GREATER** than the judgment that came as a result of the imputation of Adam's sin. Adam's transgression resulted in death to all men, but the free gift through Christ results both in (1) the cancellation of Adam's sin, and (2) forgiveness of the personal sins committed by anyone who puts his faith in Christ alone as his Savior.

Romans 5:18-19 sums up Paul's major idea: ***'One Transgression committed by One Man resulted in death passing upon all men, but through the obedience of One Man, the Second Adam – Jesus Christ – many will be made righteous.'*** Just as Adam was our representative and brought judgment on us because of his disobedience, so also Christ is the believer's representative, and through **HIS OBEDIENCE**, we are made righteous ... and both of these things are accomplished by means of imputation, and are based solely on the actions of our representatives.

***I Want to Close with a Few Words about FAIRNESS:***

The man who senses unfairness in the idea that Adam stood as his representative in the Garden of Eden and failed, has but one alternative: he must stand for himself as his own representative. So, let me ask you: ***Could you have done better? Would you have been obedient in the same situation as Adam? Would you have had the spiritual strength to resist Satan in the Garden?***

***The man who believes God's plan is unfair, has stepped away from the principle of substitution, and in so doing, he has chosen to stand for himself.*** And in that case, Christ no longer stands for him as his substitute in redemption. So that man who claims God's plan is unfair must be prepared to stand alone in the battle against Satan ... and consequently, at the final judgment ... and under no circumstances can he afford to fail – **NOT – EVEN – ONCE!**

Now, God knew Adam would fail. He knew it in eternity past before there was a world. And He already knew if man were to prevail against Satan, God Himself would have to become a man in order to defeat Satan on man's behalf<sup>8</sup>.

You see, far from being unfair, God's plan shows a degree of **WISDOM** to which no man could ever attain. Adam failed when he ate from the forbidden tree; Christ succeeded by dying on another tree – the cross – at a place called Calvary. In God's infinite wisdom, Adam stood as your representative ... and failed; but Jesus (*the Second Adam*) stands in victory as your representative ... and **His** victory can be your victory.

In closing, consider the last two verses of the chapter:

***The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that ... as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord – Romans 5:20-21***

So the first great imputation is accrediting the sin of Adam to the human race; next week we will tackle the second great imputation: the imputation of the sins of the world to Jesus on the cross.

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<sup>8</sup> In John 1:14, the apostle writes, "and the WORD became flesh and dwelled among us."