

Notes: Rom. 5:12-21  
Through One Man

<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>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 (plural) 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.

Through Adam's sin, condemnation and death entered the human race.

Through Christ's obedience, justification and life were won for God's people.

Sermon Goal: to understand that as Adam's sin devastated the physical and spiritual condition of the entire human race so Christ's obedience brought righteousness to the elect people of God.

Application Goal: to rejoice exceedingly if you have found yourself in Christ, or if not, to run as fast as you can to the Lord Jesus Christ and plead for his mercy to save you and wash away your sins in his blood.,

**Sermon Text:**

This sermon is called, "Through one man." We are going to see that this is the theme of this passage: that one man, that is Adam, the first man, brought about something catechistic and devastating in the human race but another man brought about something just as radically

cosmic, but in the opposite direction – he brought blessing and goodness by his rich grace, he brought cleansing and salvation and righteousness to a guilty people – this was Jesus Christ our Lord.

Before we dive into this passage, I should note that Paul uses very careful and precise language, as he always does, but here it is as if he is a perfect mathematician, writing out his mathematical formula in exactly coordinated phrases:

*(Handout which each listener received: )*

***Some Key words in Romans 5:12-21***

“Through” (i.e., by means of, because of)

v.12 – [sin came] “through” one man

v. 12 – “death through sin”

v.15 – [if many died] “through one man’s trespass”

v. 17 – [death reigned] “through that one man”

[those who receive ...grace and...righteousness reign in life through the one man  
Jesus Christ.

“The” (singular, one in particular):

v. 14 – “the transgression of Adam”

v. 15 – “the free gift”

v. 15 – “the trespass”

“That” (the one already mentioned, the one in view)

v. 15 – “that one man Jesus Christ”

v.16 – “that one man’s sin” (note: “sin” is singular - it was that one sin of Adam’s)

v.17 – “death reigned through that one man”

Sin or sinned:

v.12 “sin came into the world”

v. 12 “death through sin”

v. 12 “all sinned”

v. 13 – “sin indeed was in the world”

v. 13 – “sin is not counted where there is no law”

v. 14 – “whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam”

One:

v. 12 “one man” [Adam]

v. 14 “the one who was to come”

v. 15 “one man’s trespass”

v. 15 “one man Jesus Christ”

v. 16 “one man’s sin”

- v. 16 “one trespass brought condemnation”
- v. 17 – “one man’s trespass
- v. 17 – “death reigned through that one man”
- v. 17 – “the one man Jesus Christ”
- v. 18 – “one trespass led to condemnation for all men”
- v. 18 – “one act of righteousness....”
- v.19 – “the one man’s disobedience”
- v. 19 – “the one man’s obedience”

Death:

- v. 12 – “death through sin”

Much more:

- v. 15 – “much more have the grace of God...”
- v.17 – “death reigned...much more ...the abundance of grace ...through Jesus”

Reign:

- v. 14 “death reigned from Adam to Moses”
- v. 17 – “death reigned through that one man”  
     “reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.”

So both good and evil came through something or somebody.

All these things are so crucial in the teaching of this passage.

The understanding we need to get ahold of here is that this passage is comparing and contrasting two men in the history of the world: Adam and Christ – and we’re going to see how their actions effected either the whole human race or at least a part of it, as those who have faith in Christ.

### **I. 12-14 - Death came upon the human race because of the one man Adam’s sin.**

Sin is not explained, as to why it came into the world. Only that it came.

It came through one man.

A. Sin’s effect was devastating – it brought death

Death not just to Adam, but to all men.

Meaning of “*all sinned.*”

The focus is not on the fact that all people sin; they have their individual sins; that is true.

The focus here is not that they died because they committed individual sins.

The meaning here is that when Adam sinned, the whole human race became immediately guilty of sin.

Why did death spread to all men? – it was because they sinned in Adam.

What Adam did affected all his descendants. God ordained that he was the head of the human race and what he did had fundamental consequences in all who came after him.

IL – this is true not just here as we consider these great theological matters but it is true in everyday life.

I used to experience it once a month or so **driving into downtown** Dallas on the I-30 freeway. One car runs out of gas, or one careless driver causes an accident, and traffic is stopped for a mile or two behind the accident. What that one careless driver did affected 100's of people that morning. Some were late to work. A few may have missed their plane at the airport.

The good or bad things a person does affects everyone around them.

Certain **dictators and tyrants** who ruled certain nations have caused untold suffering on innocent people. We see that in our world right now.

On the other hand, men of courage and principles have inspired others to a higher level of humanity. During the war years **Winston Churchill** exhorted his nation: "*Never, never, never give up.*"

- B. In verse 13 Paul is explained that before the Mosaic law was given some 2,500 years after Adam, there was still sin in the world. We read in Gen. 6:5, over 1,600 years after Adam:

*<sup>5</sup> The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

So from Adam to Noah and on to Moses, people were sinning right and left. What does Paul mean when he says in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of verse 1 that "sin is not counted where there is no law?" He means that technically the Mosaic law had not yet been given, so the sinning people were not guilty of breaking those written laws. But they were guilty of sin because they were breaking the law that was in their inner consciences. They knew, for example, that stealing another person's possessions was wrong, yet they did it anyway.

V. 14 But in verse 14 Paul explains that everyone who ever lived during that time all died. And God told Adam and Eve in the garden that if they disobeyed him and ate from the forbidden tree they would die.

So all these 1,000's of people after Adam and before the Mosaic law died. They died not because they committed the same sin that Adam committed – there was no forbidden tree for them to avoid – but they all sinned in their own individual ways.

We know they sinned, for one, because they all died. God said, "if you sin, you die." They died, so they had to have sinned.

V. 14 – Notice that verse 14 says that "death reigned." Death was king, death held sway over every person. People could try to avoid death, to eat healthy and avoid hazardous situations, but death always won in the end. Remember Paul tell us in 1 Cor. 15:26 that the "last enemy to be destroyed is death." Death is our great enemy.

At the end of v. 14 Paul states that Adam was a type of the one to come. A "type" here means he had certain characteristics that were true of him that were also true "the one who was to come" – which is Jesus. In other words, there are some things characteristic of Adam that were also characteristic of Jesus. Let me summarize this commonality which we will be looking at as we study this passage: It is that what he did affected a great number of people: the same is true of Jesus. But there is a great difference in how they affected people and Paul begins to talk about that in the next paragraph, v. 15-17.  
*What we see there is*

## **II. 15-17 – The massive way the actions of these two individual men affected humanity differently.**

**v. 15 – Many died through the one man Adam's trespass.** To "trespass" means to cross over a forbidden boundary, to break God's law.

Adam's sin not only caused him to die, but cause many others to die. And it was just one trespass that did it. He ate from the one tree God told him not to eat of.

But look what happened when God entered the picture with grace – that is, with undeserved favor. God gave a "free gift" through one man, the man was Jesus Christ, and this gracious gift abounded for many, for many people.

God was not stingy with his grace, but he poured it out lavishly upon many people.

Paul goes on to say that what Christ did is not like the result of Adam's sin. Adam's sin was judged by God and brought condemnation upon the whole human race, the context here is "many." It's one man's sin, one man's trespass – this brought legal guilt on him and as, we'll see, on all humanity.

But look what happened when Christ acts. Look at v. 16, the last part: "but the free gift following many trespass brought justification." See the great difference: one sin of one man brought physical and spiritual disaster on the whole human race. Yet by contrast the "many trespasses (at the end of v. 16) of many people did not end in disaster because of the free gift of God's grace in Christ brought justification.

The millions of sins of millions of people was overcome and conquered by the free gift of God's grace. Just one sin of Adam brought condemnation and death upon humanity: death reigned over humanity: people were enslaved by death and the fear of death. Death always won, it was a cruel tyrant. Every human who's every lived falls under its power.

But not so with Christ: Christ brings justification. Guilt and condemnation before the holy and righteous God are removed by Christ. His shed blood on the cross is the payment that removes his people's guilt. Adam's failure, his disobedience brought disaster on everyone; Jesus' righteous life and sacrifice on the cross changed everything for those who are in Christ.

In verse 17 Paul uses this comparison word, "much more." On the one hand we see the absolute failure of the first Adam to please and obey God. But to the extent that Adam failed, in the opposite direction, Jesus triumphed.

And look at the effect on the many who come to Christ: they receive righteousness, that is, they are justified in the holy courtroom of God. All their guilt and condemnation is removed. They are free, they are clean, they are washed. God no longer looks on their sin, but on the righteousness of Christ that they are clothed with. And they receive as a gift this perfect righteousness, this legal standing before God, this status before God.

And all this blessing comes through a person; it is not just a legal transaction, but it is a personal experience. It is through Christ's great work in his incarnation of his death for sin on the cross and his resurrection from the dead on the third day. It was "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." Heb. 12:2

Verse 17 actually talks about two men, does it not? First, there is "that one man" through whom death reigned – Adam, of course. But there is another man, Jesus Christ – and his effect on the world was totally the opposite on those who receive the "abundance of grace and free gift of righteousness." But all these curses and blessings are the results of two men in the history of the world – the first man, Adam and some 4,000 or so years later the Messiah Jesus Christ. As Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:47 - <sup>47</sup> *The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.*

Of course, this is the key to the great difference between the two men: Adam was made of the dust, fully human, but subject to temptation and sin. Yet Jesus was sent from heaven as the Lord of glory clothed in humanity – fully man yet also fully God. So Christ had the power, the ability to bring great physical and spiritual blessings on humanity.

Were the human race to be left to the fate of what Adam did and what Adam caused, we would all be lost and without hope, in captivity to sin and death and judgment. But the great merciful God and Creator, the heavenly Father, sent his Son to reverse the effects of Adam's fall. God had to intervene or there was no hope for humanity. But he

did intervene and intervene most decisively and powerfully. What Adam lost; Christ regained. Paradise was lost in Adam, but re-secured and established in Christ.

And all this leads to eternal life. Look at the contrast: once they were under the tyranny of death – subject to the will and power of death. But in Christ the text says they “might reign” [v. 21] – they have been given reigning authority and all this leads also to life – escape forever from the clutches of death. And all this is not just some legal transaction but it is through, as ver. 21 says, Jesus Christ our Lord. To him belongs the glory for bringing all this about, this great deliverance from sin and death and condemnation.

What is happening in the lives of those who come to Christ? As verse 17 says, they have received an “abundance of grace” – not a thimble full, not a glass full, but an ocean full of grace.  
his “gift of righteousness”

**III. 18-21 - J. Stott - The similarity of Adam and Christ is that “the one act of the one man determined the destiny of many.” P. 156**

Let’s look at the actions of Adam:

v.18 – his one trespass led to condemnation of all men.

Now this truth is a hard pill to swallow for most of us. Many will say, “that’s not fair for Adam’s one trespass to bring the whole human race under the condemnation and judgment of God. “

But before you complain too much, look at what the rest of ver. 18 says, “so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.”

You say you did not deserve to be guilty of Adam’s sin...well, okay, then I guess it would not be fair either for you to be credited with Christ’s one act of righteousness which leads to you being justified before the holy God for you sinful heart, your sinful actions, your condemnation. You didn’t do anything to earn “life” for yourself – you who were under the sentence of guilt and the reign and power of death. Why should you be privileged to gain righteous standing before God, the removal of all your sins, and the bestowal of eternal life when you did nothing to earn or deserve or merit all this? Christ Jesus is the only one in the whole history of the universe who could gain this kind of favor for you.

Well, I don’t think you would turn down his offer of grace, would you? Would you say, “oh no, I didn’t do anything to merit all these blessings. All I’ve done is live my life with a selfish mindset, a bent to do what I wanted to do, regardless of what God or his Word may say. So, dear God, just keep this salvation and deliverance and righteousness offered me in Christ’s saving work. I don’t deserve it, I don’t merit it – just keep it!

So you see , this whole principle of imputation, that is of crediting or accounting something to a person that he or she didn't earn or deserve goes both ways. It credits us or applies to us both Adam's sin and guilt, and yet, if we have faith in Christ, it credits to us his righteousness – the righteousness he has because he is the eternal Son of God and he maintained that absolute righteousness in his incarnate state as Jesus of Nazareth. Just as the Father spoke from heaven at Jesus' baptism and said of his Son, "in you I am well pleased," so he looks at each of us who been drawn by grace to lay down our lives before Jesus as our Lord and Savior, and he says to each of us, "in you I am well pleased!"

He was not pleased when the sin and guilt of our first father, Adam, was credited to our personal account in heaven, but when he poured out abundant, super-abundant grace from heaven upon our poor, helpless souls, floundering in the cesspool of Adam's sin and our own sins added to that – something radical happened in the accounting book of heaven. We were transferred from the guilty column to the righteous column.

Then we could imagine a stamp being placed next to our name which says, "permanent, never to be altered." And then what happens? You sin against God, you break a commandment of Christ.

So the devil, the accuser of the brethren, goes before the heavenly Judge and says, "Look at that sinner that your Son died and rose for. He is nothing but a backsliding, ungrateful rebel. Why don't you just send him to hell where he deserves to go."

But God may answer the devil, as Martin Luther did when the devil accused him of still being a sinner... Martin said to the devil, "Yes, I sinned. I am guilty. I disobeyed Christ, but this same Christ died on Calvary's cross to pay the ransom price for my sins, he died to change my status in heaven's accounting book, and I now belong to him, for time and eternity and nothing can erase my name out of the righteous column of all God's beloved people. Go away, Satan, for I am a child of God, a forgiven child of God, a beloved child of God. Not one drop of Christ's blood, shed for my sins, will ever be wasted. It is powerful to save me and keep me saved.

*<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. 1 John 1:9-10*

And verse 7 says, *<sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*



God is just to forgive our sins because they've already been paid for by Christ Jesus. We cannot pay for them; we cannot add to Christ's great work. It is true, "once saved, always saved" because of the permanency and effectiveness of Christ's redemptive work.

If you have a birth certificate saying you were born in such a such a town on such a such a date, you cannot change that. It is a fact of history that cannot be reversed. So it is that Christ's work on Calvary's cross, his resurrection from the dead on the third day, is an indelible act in human history be the one man Christ Jesus in order to undo the condemnation brought about by the one man Adam. You can't change history, and you can't change, cancel or lessen the effectiveness and permanence of Christ's salvation which he won for his people. So, rejoice, child of God, that what Christ did for you was not a fly by night afterthought, but he planned to do this before the creation of the world, he set his love on you before the creation of the universe, and at just the right time in human history he bore your sins as he hung on a Roman cross outside of Jerusalem in the spring of about 34 AD. When he died and rose your old sinful nature died in him and your account of guilty before God was changed to righteous, to justified. Record closed and sealed forever, for all eternity.

Your and my situation before the Judge of the universe was dire indeed; it was absolutely helpless. We were condemned forever to hell to suffer justly for our sins.

But Jesus' coming, his life, death, resurrection, ascension to the Father's right hand – changed all this. Our status, our standing before God was changed forever. Yes, we still sin, but no sin has the power to cancel what Christ did for us on the cross.

The more we realize our safe and secure our position is before God, the more grateful we become and the more determined to live for the glory of him who died and rose in our behalf.

Yes, we were guilty of the one man's one sin, that disobedience, that rebellion when Adam ate of the forbidden fruit.

But then Christ Jesus came on the scene, he came into the world, and the mighty Son of God performed a holy, cosmic act when he carried the sins of his people on Calvary's cross and suffered the punishment, the hell that his people deserved. When he gave up his last breath, we can imagine a stamp falling on the front page of the Book of Life, listing all God's people rescued by Christ from all the ages, and the stamp reads, "Paid in full; no reversal allowed."

Are you in Christ today? If so, you have cause for unending joy. You have strength and encouragement for holy living. You have motivation for dedicated service. Christ was

loyal to the will of the Father in suffering and dying for the children of God; we should likewise be faithful and loyal to him. Can we rightly do otherwise?

If you're not in Christ, you should run to him immediately. Waste not another moment. Confess him as your Lord and Savior. Receive his salvation, rest in him, and live for his glory, by his grace, all the days of your life.

And you will receive a rich welcome into his kingdom when he comes again to receive you unto himself.

*Concluding Prayer*

By Jeff Gregory  
Good Shepherd Community Church  
Dallas, TX  
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