

Romans Session 67
"and death through sin"
"death spread to all men, because all sinned"

Romans 5:12 (NASB)

¹² Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

Paul has been talking about how through one man sin entered the world, and that was to show the saints at Rome the reasonableness of Salvation by one man. He was endeavoring to show them how what one man does always affects those around them and those who descend from them.

The ancient Jews understood well the idea of corporate identity. They never thought of themselves as isolated personalities or as a mass of separate individuals who happened to have the same bloodline as their families and fellow Jews.

They looked at all races in the same way.

A given Canaanite or Edomite or Egyptian was inextricably connected to all others of his race.

What one of them did affected all the others, and what the others did affected him in a way that is difficult for modern individual oriented man to comprehend.

It was on that basis that God frequently punished or bless an entire tribe, city, or nation because of what few, or even just one, of its members did.

It was in light of that principle that Abraham asked the Lord to spare Sodom if only a few righteous people could be found there. (*Gen. 18:22-23*)

It was also on the basis, of that principle, that God held all Israel accountable and eventually destroyed Achan's family along with him because of one man's disobedience in keeping for himself some of the booty from Jericho (*Josh. 7:1-26*)

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 or mankind. When he and his wife, who were one flesh, sinned against God, all of their descendants, that is, the entire human race in their loins would share in that sin and the alienation from God and subjection to death that were its consequence.

As far as guilt is concerned, every human being was present in the garden with Adam and shares in the sin he committed there.

The fact that Adam and Eve not only were actual historical figures but were the original human beings from whom all others have descended is absolutely, critical to Paul's argument here and is critical to the efficacy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

If a historical Adam did not represent all mankind in sinfulness, a historical Christ could not represent all mankind in righteousness. If all men did not fall with the first Adam, all men could not be saved by Christ, the second and last Adam.

1 Corinthians 15:20-22 (NASB)

²⁰ *But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.*

²¹ *For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.*

²² *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.*

DEATH ENTERED THE WORLD THROUGH SIN

Romans 5:12B (NASB)

¹² *"and death through sin"*

The second element of Paul's argument is that, because sin entered the world through one man, so also **death**, the consequence of sin, entered the world **through** that one man's **sin**.

God **did not** create Adam as a mortal being, that is, as subject to death.

And He explicitly warned Adam that disobedience by eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil would make him subject to death;

Genesis 2:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ *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 will surely die."*

And so, contrary to Satan's lie;

Genesis 3:4 (NASB)

⁴ *The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!*

That indeed was the fate that Adam suffered for his disobedience.

Even before sin existed, God had ordained that its wages would be death;

Romans 6:23 (NASB)

²³ *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Ezekiel 18:4 (NASB)

⁴ *"Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die.*

Death is the unfailing fruit of the poison that entered Adam's heart and the heart of every one of his descendants.

Even tiny babies can die, not because they have committed sins but because they have a sin nature, the ultimate consequence of which is death.

A person does not become a sinner by committing sins but rather commits sins because he is by nature a sinner.

A person does not become a liar when he tells a lie; he tells a lie because his heart is already deceitful.

A person does not become a murderer when he kills someone; he kills because his heart is already murderous.

Matthew 15:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ *"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.*

Sin brings several kinds of **death** to men. Death is separation, and Adam's first death was spiritual separation from God, which Adam experienced immediately after his disobedience.

Paul reminded the Ephesian believers;

Ephesians 2:1-2 (NASB)

¹ *And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,*

² *in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.*

The unsaved are:

Ephesians 4:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ *being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;*

The unregenerate are very much alive to the world, but they are dead to God and to the things of God. A second, and obvious kind of death that sin brings is *physical*, separation from fellow human beings. Although Adam did not immediately lose his physical life, he became subject to physical death the moment he sinned.

A third kind of death that sin brings is **eternal**, an immeasurably worse extension of the first. Referred to in the Scripture as the second death.

Revelation 21:8 (NASB)

⁸ *"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*

This death not only brings eternal separation from God but also eternal torment in hell.

The unbeliever has reason to fear all three deaths.

Spiritual death prevents his earthly happiness;

Physical death will bring an end to opportunity for salvation;

Eternal death will bring everlasting punishment.

But no kind of death should be feared by believers.

They are saved permanently by Christ from spiritual and eternal death, and the physical death will usher them into His divine presence.

For believers Christ, has removed the fear of death;

Hebrews 2:14-15 (NASB)

¹⁴ *Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,*

¹⁵ *and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.*

DEATH SPREAD TO ALL MEN BECAUSE ALL SINNED

, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

The third part of Paul's argument is that **death** was transmitted to **all men**, without exception. No human being has ever escaped death.

Enoch and Elijah, who escaped physical and eternal death, nevertheless were spiritually dead before they trusted in the Lord.

Even Jesus died, not because of His own sin but because of the world's sin that He vicariously took upon Himself. And when He took sin upon Himself, He also took upon Himself sin's penalty.

Sinned translates a Greek aorist tense, indicating that at one point in time **all men sinned**.

That, of course, was the time that Adam first sinned.

His sin became mankind's sin, because **all** mankind was in his loins.

Men have learned to identify certain physical and mental characteristics in human genes, but we will never discover a way to identify the spiritual depravity that has been transmitted from generation to generation throughout man's history. We know of that legacy only through the revelation of God's Word.

Now notice Paul does not attempt to make his explanation wholly understandable to his readers, and he himself did not claim to have full comprehension of the significance of what the Lord revealed to and through him.

He simply declared that Adam's sin was transmitted to **all** his posterity because that truth was revealed to him by God.

Natural human depravity is not the result but the cause of man's sinful acts.

The infant does not have to be taught to disobey or be selfish.

It is born that way. A young child does not have to be taught to lie or steal. Those are natural to his fallen nature, and he will express them as a matter of course unless prevented.

Psalm 51:5 (NASB)

⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.

This condition was not unique to David, and in another Psalm, he testified that;

Psalm 58:3 (NASB)

³ The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth.

Jeremiah declared that;

Jeremiah 17:9 (NASB)

⁹ "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?"

Eliphaz asked Job rhetorically;

Job 15:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ *"What is man, that he should be pure, Or he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?"*

Every person who is not spiritually reborn through Christ is a child of Satan. Jesus said;

John 3:3 (NASB)

³ *Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

And because of that;

John 8:44 (NASB)

⁴⁴ *"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."*

Now some object to the idea that they sinned in Adam, arguing that they not only were not there but did not even exist when he sinned.

But by the same token, we were not physically at the crucifixion when Christ died, but as believers we willingly accept the truth that, by faith, we died with Him.

We did not literally enter the grave with Christ and were not literally resurrected with Him, but by faith we are accounted to have been buried and raised with Him.

If the principle were not true that **all sinned** in Adam, it would be impossible to make the point that all can be made righteous in Christ.

That is the truth Paul makes explicit later in this letter;

Romans 5:15-19 (NASB)

¹⁵ *But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.*

¹⁶ *The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification.*

¹⁷ *For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*

¹⁸ *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.*

¹⁹ *For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.*

In his first letter to the Corinthians he said;

1 Corinthians 15:22 (NASB)

²² *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.*

We are not through with this yet, so we will continue this next time.