

## The Life and Theology of Paul: Sin, Part 2

In the previous lesson, Paul exposed the universal problem of sin—first among the Gentiles and then the Jews—demonstrating that all people stand guilty before God. But in Romans 5, he shifts the lens from individual transgressions to the root of the human condition. Why are all people sinners? Why are we condemned before a holy God? The apostle traces it back to one man: Adam. In this lesson, Paul teaches that humanity is not just guilty by personal choice, but also by representation. Adam, the first man, stood as our federal head. His failure in the garden became our ruin. And yet, that dark backdrop sets the stage for the light of the gospel. Just as we were united with Adam in sin, we can be united with Christ in righteousness. This profound truth forms the very foundation of our hope in salvation.

### SCRIPTURE READING

Romans 5:12–21

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand Adam as the first man and representative head of humanity
2. To recognize that we are counted guilty of Adam's sin through his representative role
3. To grasp our hopeless condition in Adam—and our only hope in Christ

“It was by one man's sin that we all fell through the first Adam. Does anyone object to the justice of that? I pray you, do not object to what is your only hope. ... As I fell by another, I can rise by another; as my ruin was caused by the first man, Adam, my restoration can be brought about by the second Man, the Lord from heaven.”

— *Charles Spurgeon*

### Adam's Fall, Our Ruin, and the Hope of a Second Man

Paul continues unfolding the gospel by tracing humanity's sin problem back to its source: Adam. In Romans 5:12–21, Adam is presented not just as the first man, but as the representative of all mankind. When he sinned, his guilt and condemnation became ours. This doctrine of federal headship means we are born into a condition of spiritual death—not because we individually chose it first, but because we were in Adam when he fell.

This may seem unfair until we consider its redemptive counterpart: the obedience of Christ. Just as Adam's sin is imputed to all who are in him, Christ's righteousness is imputed to all who are in Him by faith. Paul paints a stunning contrast: Adam's trespass brings condemnation, while

Christ's obedience brings justification. Adam's failure brought death, while Christ's righteousness gives life.

Far from being abstract theology, this truth helps us see our deepest need. We are not simply people who occasionally do wrong—we are people born in sin, spiritually dead, and incapable of rescuing ourselves. The law only reveals our guilt more clearly. But where sin increased, grace overflowed through the Second Adam. Jesus did what Adam failed to do: He obeyed perfectly. And because of that, the door to righteousness has been opened for all who believe.

Ultimately, this section of Romans invites us to understand not only our personal sin, but our solidarity in Adam—and the hope of being transferred into Christ. What divides us in the world—race, culture, background—pales in comparison to what unites us in sin and what can unite us in grace. The gospel is for all, because the fall affected all, and Christ's righteousness is sufficient for all who come to Him.

## **BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- 1. Paul teaches that we are guilty not only because of what we do but because of who represents us. How does understanding Adam as our federal head deepen your understanding of the human condition?**
- 2. Many people reject the idea of inherited guilt. How would you explain the fairness and beauty of this doctrine in light of Romans 5:18–19 and the hope of representation in Christ?**
- 3. Read Romans 5:15–17. What are some of the ways Paul shows that Christ's work is greater than Adam's failure? How does this give you assurance in your salvation?**
- 4. How does this passage help you see humanity more clearly—not just in terms of cultural or personal differences, but in terms of our shared condition in Adam and our shared hope in Christ?**
- 5. In your own life, where do you see the evidence of being “in Adam” (e.g., tendencies toward sin, brokenness, death)? How does Romans 5 encourage you to place your full trust in your union with Christ?**