

# ADAM AND CHRIST: THE TWO FOCAL POINTS OF HISTORY ROMANS 05:12–21

## *Introduction*

This passage deals with two of the focal points of human history. It deals with Adam and Christ, the two chief representatives and figureheads of the human race. It tells how sin and death entered the world and how Jesus Christ counteracted sin and death.

- I. The entrance of sin and death through Adam (vv. 12-14).
- II. The counteraction, the reversal of sin and death by Christ (vv. 15-18).
- III. Conclusion (vv. 19-21).

## **I. *Romans 05:12–14 Sin and Death Enters the World***

The entrance of sin and death into the world through Adam.

1. The fact is very simply stated: sin and death entered the world through one man, Adam. God had said:

*Gen 2:17* “But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

*Ezek 18:4* For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son — both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.

*Ezek 18:20* The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him.

Adam sinned and corrupted himself; therefore, he died.

2. Adam’s nature of sin and death was and still is spread and passed on to all men. His corruptible nature was spread and passed on to his children and on down through history to all men. It is a well known fact that the child inherits the nature of his parents. Therefore, if the parent’s nature is bent toward sin and is corruptible, so will the child’s nature be. Nature is like an *infectious blood line*: whatever the nature is, it is passed on down to the next generation.

Now note a significant fact: a man is not condemned to death because of Adam’s sin. Scripture clearly says this: “Death came to all men, because all sinned” (v. 12). A man dies because of his own sins, not because of his father’s sins. Every man is personally responsible to God.

*Rom 3:23* For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

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**Rom 6:23** *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**Gal 3:22** *But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.*

**1 John 1:8** *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

**1 John 5:19** *We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*

**1 Kng 8:46** *“When they sin against you — for there is no one who does not sin — and you become angry with them and give them over to the enemy, who takes them captive to his own land, far away or near.”*

**Psa 14:3** *All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.*

**Psa 53:3** *Everyone has turned away, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.*

**Prov 20:9** *Who can say, “I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin”?*

**Isa 53:6** *We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

**Isa 64:6** *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

3. The proof that we inherit Adam’s nature is that sin and death existed even before the law (v. 13). The law of God does charge men with sin; it does show men that they are sinful and condemned to die. But *something* caused men to sin and die before the law was ever given to Moses in a written form. The people before Moses were not charged with sin by the law, for they did not have the law in a permanent and written form. What was it then that was causing the people between Adam and Moses to sin and die? It was nature, the sinful, corruptible nature of man, the nature that every child inherited from his father; and the process began with Adam. Adam was the first man created by God, and he was the first to sin and become corruptible and bear the punishment of death.

**Gen 3:19** *“By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”*

**Job 21:26** *Side by side they lie in the dust, and worms cover them both.*

**Psa 49:6-9** *Those who trust in their wealth and boast of their great riches? No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him — the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough — that he should live on forever and not see decay.*

**Psa 104:29** *When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.*

**Eccl 3:20** *All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return.*

**Eccl 12:7** *And the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.*

**John 11:39** *“Take away the stone,” he said. “But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days.”*

**Acts 13:36** *For when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed.*

4. The importance of Adam is critical. He was “a pattern [type, picture] of the one to come,” that is, of Christ. Adam and Christ are pictured as the two pivotal points of human history, as the two *figureheads* or *representatives* of the human race (see 1 Cor. 15:20-28, 45-49). Adam stands at the head of the human race, as *the first* to bring sin and death to man: “Your first father sinned” (Isa. 43:27). Christ stands at the head of the human race...
- as the first to live a sinless and perfect life, securing a perfect righteousness.
  - as the first to conquer death by literally arising from the dead.

Now note the difference between Adam and Christ. Adam became a “living being,” Christ a “quickenings, life-giving spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45). What man needs and has always needed is a “quickenings, life-giving spirit,” a spirit that has the power to infuse life into his soul, life that is both abundant and eternal.

**Rom 5:14** *Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.*

**Rom 5:18-19** *Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.*

**1 Cor 15:21-22** *For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.*

**1 Cor 15:45-49** *So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being;” the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.*

Scripture says that sin is the *cause of death*, and that Adam was the cause of sin. He was the author of apostasy. Whatever theories may say, one thing is clear: *Adam was the cause of sin in the very same way in which Christ is the cause of righteousness.*

- a. Note v. 13. Since Adam, sin has been universal. But sin was not charged (that is, personal guilt) against a person because there was no law. There has to be a law for there to be a charge.
- b. Note v. 14. Nevertheless, death was still the judgment and experience of man. Why? Why did man die if he was not charged with personal sin? Because Adam was the figurehead and the representative man for all who would be born with his nature. What does this mean? He sinned, took on a corruptible nature; therefore, he died (Rom. 5:12f). So death was *passed on and spread* to all men because all inherited the corruptible nature of Adam (Rom. 5:12f).

Some argue that this is unjust — to be condemned to die because the father of the human race, Adam, sinned. But the argument is not familiar with the facts, for the truth is, the way to eternal life is now clearer and much more positive. God has now made a greater provision for life and salvation. This is clearly seen in three facts.

- => A man now has a clearer choice than Adam had. A man can now live forever by simply choosing to take Christ into his life, and the positive choice of choosing Christ is greater and has more pull than Adam's choice. Adam was to remain incorruptible if he did not eat of the fruit of the tree. Note his choice was a negative command and it had no pull and no power to enable him to obey. Man's choice today is positive. Adam was *forbidden to do something*. We are instructed *to do something* — a positive command. These two facts, the fuller and clearer revelation in Christ and the stronger pull of the positive, show that every man has an equal chance at immortality; and in reality, man today has more of a chance than Adam had, more than an equal chance.
- => There is no human life apart from being born to corruptible human beings. It is a matter of being born and privileged with life or not being born and never having the privilege of life. In order to have the privilege of living, a person has to be born of corruptible parents.
- => The way of salvation and the way for man to live forever is now much clearer. Man could never know the love of God apart from being born into a corruptible world and experiencing the love of God demonstrated in Christ Jesus. Therefore, the birth of a person, his entrance into the world, is the greatest imaginable blessing. Being born into this depraved and corruptible world is the only way a person can ever know the love of God and experience eternal life with God.

*Eph 2:7 In order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

**John 3:3** *In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."*

**2 Pet 1:4** *Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

## ROMANS 05:12 SIN AND DEATH

*Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.*

### **Romans 05:12**

Adam sinned and corrupted himself; therefore, he died. Why is there such an awful penalty for sin? Is not death an awful price to pay for sin? Such questions overlook the awfulness and seriousness of sin. Sin is the most heinous, vulgar, uncouth, abominable, outrageous, shocking and hateful thing that can exist. Two things show the evil nature of sin.

1. Sin is the ultimate thing that can be done against God. Sin is *disobeying God* and *rebelling against God*. Sin acts against God, fights and struggles against God. Sin goes against all that God is. Sin is insurrection against God; it is the crime of high treason against God. To turn away from the Supreme Being of the universe is to commit the *ultimate offense* (disobedience), and the ultimate offense deserves the ultimate judgment: death. (Keep in mind the glorious love of God. The only way to truly see the love of God is to see man committing the ultimate offense against God [disobeying Him] and having to bear the ultimate punishment of death. Seeing this is the only way a man can see how God paid the ultimate price in giving His Son to die *for us*. His love is the supreme love, the love that sacrificed the greatest thing in all the world, that gave His Son to die for sinners. (See Rom. 5:6-11.)
2. Sin cost God the ultimate price, the supreme sacrifice of His Son. God, being God, is perfect love. As perfect love He is bound to prove His love by providing a way for man to be forgiven his sin and to be saved. And the way chosen to save man had to be the perfect salvation, the perfect expression of His love.

**John 15:13** *"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."*

But note, Christ did not give His life just for friends. He went well beyond; He loved perfectly: He gave His life for those who were powerless, for the ungodly, the sinners, the enemies of God (Rom. 5:6, 8, 10).

**Rom 5:8** *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Sin cost God the ultimate price, the supreme sacrifice, even the death of His own Son.

Sin is the most serious and awful thing a person can do against God. It is the ultimate offense against God and it costs the ultimate price, even the supreme sacrifice of God's dear Son. It is for these two reasons that sin deserves the ultimate penalty of death.

***Isa 53:5** But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

***Isa 53:12** Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

***Rom 5:6** You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.*

***1 Cor 15:3** For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.*

***2 Cor 5:2** Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling.*

***2 Cor 5:15** And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

***Gal 1:14** I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.*

***Titus 2:14** Who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

***Heb 9:28** So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*

***1 Pet 2:24** He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

***1 Pet 3:18** For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.*

***1 John 3:5** But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.*

***1 Jn 3:16** This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. □*

## ROMANS 05:12 SIN AND DEATH

Physical, spiritual and eternal death would be involved here. Sin is universal, so death is universal — all embracing. (See *Death*, Heb. 9:27.) □

### II. *Romans 05:15–18 Reversal of Sin and Death*

The counteraction — the reversal — of sin and death by Christ. Jesus Christ has counteracted and reversed what Adam did. He has made it possible for man to live righteously and to conquer death. Note the descriptive contrast between what Adam did and what God did through Christ.

1. Adam's sin brought death; God's gift brought righteousness. The gift is righteousness (see v. 17). God's gift of righteousness differs entirely from the sin of Adam. Adam sinned and brought sin and death to "many" (to the human race). But Adam was only one man and God is far greater than one mere man, even if that man has influenced the whole human race. God was able to do "*much more*" good than Adam was able to do bad. In fact, God *has done* "much more." He has counteracted and reversed all the bad Adam did.
  - a. God has showered the grace of God, His glorious favour and care and love, upon man. (See *Grace*, Tit. 2:11-15).

*Eph 2:4-9* But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.

*Titus 3:7* So that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

- b. God has made the gift of God (righteousness) available to man.

*Rom 4:24-25* But also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness — for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

*2 Cor 5:21* God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

God's grace and gift have overflowed to many. But note: it all comes through One Man, Jesus Christ, God's very own Son.

*Titus 3:4-6* But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved

*us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour.*

2. Adam's sin brought condemnation; God's gift brought justification. God's gift differs entirely from what Adam did. Adam doomed the human race, but God's gift justifies the human race. And note how glorious God's justification is: when Adam sinned, his one sin was judged and brought condemnation to men; but what God did is so glorious, it explodes the human mind.

⇒ God's gift not only dealt with Adam's trespasses and condemnation, it dealt with "many" trespasses. God's gift of righteousness justifies us from *all our trespasses*, not only from Adam's one trespass. God's gift justifies us from all the corruption we have inherited from our fathers and from all the corruption of human nature — all the sins we have committed with our own hands.

The man who truly trusts Christ is justified from all things, from all sin and corruption and condemnation...

- inherited from our fathers (Adam).
- committed and caused by our own sinful behaviour.

**Acts 13:39** *Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.*

**Rom 5:1** *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**Gal 3:6** *Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

3. Adam's sin brought the reign of death; God's gift brought the reign of life. Adam sinned and brought the reign of death upon all men. But Adam was only one man, one mere man. No matter what he did, God was able to counteract it and do more, for He is greater; and He is able to do anything.

God has done more, much more. They who "receive" God's grace and God's gift of righteousness will "reign in life." The term "reign in life" means to dwell and rule in eternal life. But note, the source of righteousness is Jesus Christ (see *Justification*, Rom. 4:22; Rom. 5:1).

**Thought 1.** Note two glorious truths.

- 1) Believers "reign in life" while on this earth. They receive the abundance of God's grace.
  - a) There is the gift of a full, abundant life.

**John 10:10** *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*



b) There is having all you need, all sufficiency in all things.

**2 Cor 9:8** *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*

c) There is great power.

**Eph 3:20** *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.*

d) There is the supply of all needs.

**Phil 4:19** *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

e) There is a rich welcome, an abundant entrance into heaven.

**2 Pet 1:11** *And you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

f) There is abundant satisfaction.

**Psa 36:8** *They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights.*

2) Believers will “reign in life” throughout all eternity.

**John 3:16** *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

**John 5:24** *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*

**Luke 19:17** *“‘Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’”*

**Luke 22:28-29** *“You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me.”*

**1 Cor 6:2-3** *Do you not know that the saints will judge [govern, rule, manage] the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!*

4. Adam’s sin brought condemnation to all men; God’s gift brought justification of life upon all men. This is simply a summary of what has already been said.

=> “The result of one trespass [Adam] was condemnation for all men.”

=> “The result of one act of righteousness [Jesus Christ] was justification that brings life for all men.”

**Rom 6:23** *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**Rom 8:32** *He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*

**2 Cor 9:15** *Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!*

**Eph 2:8** *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.*

### III. **Romans 05:19–21** *Justification, Righteousness, Law*

The conclusion is one of the most instructive and striking passages in all of Scripture. It includes three points.

1. Adam's disobedience made many (all men, v. 12, 18) sinners, but Christ's obedience made many righteous. Jesus Christ lived a sinless life; He never sinned, never displeased God — not even once. He was perfectly righteous, *securing the Ideal Righteousness*.

Since His righteousness is *the Ideal Righteousness*, it can stand for the righteousness of all men, and that is exactly what happens. When a man believes in Jesus Christ, God takes that man's belief and counts it as righteousness. God lets the *Ideal Righteousness* of Jesus Christ cover the man because the man *believes and honours* His Son, Jesus Christ.

Any man who will so honour God's Son by believing and trusting Him, God will honour by counting his faith as the righteousness of Christ. It is that simple and that profound: "By the obedience of Jesus Christ many will be made righteous." But note, a person must truly believe — he must have the kind of belief that really trusts Jesus Christ, that really casts his life upon Christ, that casts all that he is and has upon Christ and His keeping.

**Heb 2:10** *In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.*

**Heb 5:9** *And, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.*

**Heb 7:25-26** *Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*

2. The law was given to point out and magnify sin, but God's grace was so much greater. If righteousness is by Jesus Christ, then why did God give us the law? What is the purpose of the law? Very simply. "The law was added [to the world] so that the trespass might increase." The law was given...
  - to point out and magnify sin.

- to make men more aware of sin.
- to give men a greater knowledge of sin.
- to stir more conviction over sin.
- to increase the fact and awareness of sin more and more.
- to make men more responsible for their sin.

**Rom 3:20** *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.*

**Gal 3:19** *What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator.*

**Gal 3:24** *So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.*

But note the glorious truth about the grace of God: wherever sin increases, the grace of God increases even more. God's grace is far more effective and powerful than any sin or sins, no matter how magnified. God's grace can forgive any man, no matter how great a sinner.

**Eph 1:7** *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.*

**Eph 2:7** *In order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

**1 Tim 1:14-15** *The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst.*

3. Sin reigned in death, but God's grace reigns to eternal life.
  - a. By Adam, sin *reigns*, triumphs, holds authority and leads to death.

**Rom 5:12** *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.*

**Prov 11:19** *The truly righteous man attains life, but he who pursues evil goes to his death.*

**Ezek 18:4** *For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son — both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.*

**Ezek 18:20** *The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him.*

- b. By God, grace reigns, triumphs, holds authority, and leads to eternal life. (See *Life*, Jn. 1:4; *Life in Jesus Christ*, Jn. 10:10; *Eternal Life*, Jn. 17:2-3.)

**John 1:4** *In him was life, and that life was the light of men.*

**John 11:25-26** *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

**John 14:6** *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

**2 Tim 1:10** *But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

**1 John 1:2** *The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.*

**1 John 5:12** *"He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."*

But note the source: eternal life comes only through the righteousness of "Jesus Christ our Lord." ■