

Lesson Ten

(5:12-21)

TWO ACTS OF UNIVERSAL IMPORT

ORIGIN OF SIN AND DEATH AMONG MEN

12 Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned: —

Probably more books have been written about Romans than any other book of the New Testament, and the section of Romans to which we now turn has consumed more pages of those books than any other section of Romans and verse twelve alone, has evoked voluminous writings.

One act of Adam in the Garden of Eden introduced sin into the human race and one act of Christ at Calvary canceled out the results of Adam's sin. It is a very natural progression of thought which influences Paul to launch upon a discussion of the origin of sin among men. The universality of sin and justification from sin through faith in Christ has been argued at length. It is logical to follow such discussion with an explanation of the source and existence of sin. The universal experience of sin in

mankind is explained in Adam's sin. The author beautifully interweaves, through the use of analogy of Christ and Adam, the thought of justification from sin through Christ.

ANALOGY

<u>Adam</u>	<u>Christ</u>
Disobedient	Obedient
Self-indulgent	Self-sacrificial
Brought death and condemnation	Brought life and grace
One, unrepeatable sin involved	All sins from Adam until the end of time involved
Unconditionally passed to all men	Forgiveness of personal sin is involved

James Long writes humorously but with deadly meaning and accuracy, "Adam's apple was a start of something very unfortunate. Fellowship with God was damaged to the core." Though written in a humorous style, the central truth is surely sad. Sin and death entered the world by one man. These verses provide for many theologians a basic proof text for the doctrine of original sin, and Barclay says, "There is no passage in the New Testament which has had as much influence on theology as this passage." There are three assumptions made in connection with this passage, none of which this writer considers to be Biblical:

1. Calvinism (John Calvin, 1509-1564): All men are totally depraved until a miracle of God (prevenient grace) is performed to free them from depravity. This act of grace is performed by God for each individual arbitrarily on the basis of His own predestination of men. No freedom of human will is allowed.

2. Arminianism (Jacob Arminius, 1560-1609): God, through a universal act of grace removed the greater degree of Adamic depravity from all men. A direct act of God upon the nature of each person is required to relieve him of whatever measure of depravity which remains in him. This miracle is usually applied in the area of man's will which is said to be weak. Intellect, conscience, and emotions are frequently cited as being whole. Man has freedom of will to accept or reject Christ and salvation and is responsible for all his choices.

3. General: That the Holy Spirit works directly upon the spirit of man to offset whatever remnant of depravity remains in man. This suggested direct operation of the Holy Spirit may be an assist to the

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intellect or to the will. It is essential at conversion and will continue throughout one's Christian life.

Those who hold any one of the above assumptions teach that if a person is to be saved, a "divine assist" must be given to a man in addition to the divine directives of the Word of God which informs men how they are to be saved. "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16) can then be true only in some restricted or limited sense.

If any view that man is depraved as a direct result of Adam's sin is accepted along with the companion doctrine that God performs a miracle to correct that depravity apart from the normal Biblical concept of conversion there are interesting questions to answer:

1. Where does the Bible affirm that man is depraved, in one degree or another as a result of Adam's sin?

2. Where does the Bible affirm any act of grace performed by God directly upon man to remove Adamic depravity either in part or in whole?

3. "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation." In what way is the Gospel weak? Where does it fail?

4. If human will is miraculously corrected by God, why did Paul and John have problems? (Romans 7:15-20; I John 1:9)

5. Why doesn't the Godhead do a complete job on the nature of man so that he may wholly recover from the claimed effects of original sin?

6. Where is vice and virtue if a man does not possess sufficient will power to do what his free will chooses to do, but divine intervention must be relied upon?

7. If a miracle is performed by God to remove depravity and man is miraculously recreated (regenerated), could man undo that miracle of God and be lost?

8. Was Jesus born sinful? If we are so born and Jesus was not, how can He really represent us and what is the meaning of a passage like Hebrews 4:15?

9. In what way are we to become like little children if they come into this world under the blaze of God's wrath, being sinful?

It is surely true that all men have sinned and are sinners. It is equally true that all men are sinful, but the question is, "Were men born sinful or did they become sinful?" Does Paul affirm that all men come into the world possessing sinful nature? Is that what he means when he observes that the Ephesian Christians were "by nature children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3)? Some take it for granted that Paul meant they were born in that condition. But the word "nature" (*fusis*) is capable of at least four definitions. The definition which seems to best fit this Ephesians passage, in light of all the rest of the teaching of Scripture which bears

on an understanding of the nature of man, is that of Thayer: "A mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature." The following seems to be a reasonable presentation of alternatives as to the cause of men's sinful conditions:

1. Man is sinful because:

- a. God made man that way following Adam's sin?
- b. Adam's sin directly caused all to be depraved in some measure?
- c. The results of Adam's sin have been inherited indirectly in our nature (like father, like son). Is sin in the genes? Are there big sinners and little sinners? Does one inherit ability to sin as an athlete inherits athletic prowess?

2. Man is sinful "by nature" because:

- a. Human nature is something acquired, not inherited.
- b. Sinful nature is produced by Satan not by God.
- c. By long practice and habit man has become what he is, but not because of natal essence, nor as a result of some inherent quality.

The Scriptures have much to say about how the nature of man is corrupted and in reverse, how one develops a "divine nature." The Devil corrupts the mind of man (II Corinthians 11:2, 3). Were the Corinthians born with corrupt minds? Paul does not fear an inherent corrupt mind, but he is fearful that the Corinthians may respond as did the pure mind of Eve to the deception of the Devil and thus believe a lie rather than "the simplicity and purity that is toward Christ." The Devil blinds the eye of the mind (II Corinthians 4:4). "The god of this world that blinded the mind of the unbelieving." There is no suggestion that the blindness is an inherent condition which is universal. The blinding was done so that "the light of the gospel of . . . Christ" would not be seen. It is the Gospel which enlightens the mind and is "the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). The Devil uses every implement at his disposal to accomplish his ends: the "flesh" of man (see lesson 13), the surroundings of the world with its habitual sin; the attitudes of men such as selfishness, vanity, hostility, jealousy and greed; all forms of deception such as the human philosophy cited in Colossians 2:8.

It is man's responsibility to the best of his ability to avoid the devastating influence of the Devil who would corrupt his nature. Instead men should become "partakers of the divine nature" (II Peter 1:4). According to this passage, it is through God's "exceeding great promises" (written in His Word) that one partakes of divine nature and escapes "the corruption that is in the world." There is no suggestion here of an inherent corrupt nature which is miraculously changed by a direct act of God. Neither is there any hint that the "divine nature" is given by God at birth or that it is inherited from parents. The divine nature is

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acquired and man is responsible to acquire it. Divine nature comes as a result of being "begotten . . . through the Word of God" (I Peter 1:23). Men must "receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21; see also Luke 8:11, ff.). Jesus is quoted as saying, "No man can come unto me, except it be given unto him of the Father" (John 6:65). Verse 45 of that same chapter makes crystal clear what Jesus means by the words, "given unto him of the Father." "It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God. Everyone that hath heard from the Father and hath learned, cometh unto me." Man is responsible to hear, learn and respond positively to God's invitation to come to His Son for salvation.

PHYSICAL DEATH CANCELED FOR ALL UNCONDITIONALLY

18 So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. 19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous.

The close of verse twelve is punctuated by most translations in some way to show there is a break in progression of thought. The American Standard Version has both a colon and a dash. The dash indicates a break in thought and the colon suggests that the following verses contain additional information which pertains to that stated in verse twelve. So verses 13-17 are parenthetical and verses 12, 18, and 19 should be read together for natural and connected thought progression. It is obvious from what is said in verses 18, 19 that if Paul had finished stating his thoughts in verse twelve, it would read "for that all sinned:—" *in Adam*. "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners." The reason for the continuous results of this one sin is that when Adam sinned he was not just a man, he was mankind; the whole human race was in him; his act was an act of humanity. Our connection with Adam is absolute. We have no more choice in this matter than a child chooses a father. Hebrews 7:9, 10 expresses the same principle of the connection of a later generation of people with a person who has preceded them. Levi, who came four generations later than Abraham is said to have paid tithes to Melchizedek who was contemporary with Abraham. Through Abraham Levi paid tithes, because he was in the loins of Abraham. So in Adam all are "made to be sinners." No analogy from life is wholly comparable in scope to what is said in verse 19, but it is generally true that men are "made to be sinners" just like they are

made to be Italian, German, English, or Yellow, Black, or White. Our father Adam made us sinners. We made ourselves or allow ourselves to become sinful.

PHYSICAL DEATH

13 for until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come.

Death entered into the human race through sin and because we are sinners we will die. It is not because of personal sin that we die. If one could live an absolutely perfect life, he would die. "By the trespass of one the many died" (v. 15) and through "one disobedience," "death passed unto all men" (v. 12). God ordained that all men shall die (Hebrews 9:27). Verses 13, 14 show clearly that Paul is talking about physical death which came to all men as a result of Adam's sin. There was no law (Mosaic) and where no law exists it cannot be broken. No penalty can be exacted if there has been no breach of the law. Law and penalty are inseparable. How can one receive a ticket for speeding if there is no speed limit? So it was not what men were doing that caused them to die. Ethics or moral responsibilities were not involved. People just kept dying over that span of time from Adam to Moses. Why? Because physical death came to all through Adam's sin. No one ever sinned like Adam (v. 14). Who else, besides Adam, ever committed a sin that brought physical death to every other person of the human race? I Corinthians 15:22 states, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." The universal experience of death in Adam is physical just as the universal experience of resurrection in Christ is physical when all that are in the grave shall be raised. After the resurrection spiritual and eternal life shall be determined in the judgment. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). A man does not have to do one thing in order to be raised from the dead except to have lived and died. God in His justice sent His Son to unconditionally cancel out the effect of Adam's sin. Physical death will be overthrown when the Lord of life puts the last enemy, death, beneath his feet (I Corinthians 15:26).

SPIRITUAL DEATH CANCELED CONDITIONALLY

15 But not as the trespass, so also is the free gift. For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the

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gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many. 16 And not as through one that sinned so is the gift: for the judgment came of one unto condemnation, but the free gift came of many trespasses unto justification. 17 For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ.

We have met the phrase "much more" in verses 9, 10 and rejoiced in the blessings that are ours through Christ's life above and beyond those received through His death.

The heart cannot but leap with joy as it contemplates what is involved in the "much more" of verses 15 and 17. Not only has the death of our Lord canceled out the physical death which came through one sin of Adam, but in addition, His death is capable of canceling out all my personal sin so that I may not experience a second death (spiritual, Revelation 20:14). The major difference between the two cancellations is that the effect of Adam's sin is canceled unconditionally for all men. The effect of personal sin is canceled only upon the condition that one believes in Christ and accepts the provision which God has made for the removal of sin. This conditionality is wholly in keeping with Paul's previous contention that sinners are justified by grace, through faith. Paul adds in verse 17 that if death reigned because of Adam, then "much more" shall life be the controlling force because of Christ, for "where sin abounded grace did abound more exceedingly." (The King James Version uses "much more" again in verse 20 although the Greek (*pollō mallon*) which is translated "much more" in verses 9, 10, 15, 17 is not found in verse 20).

<u>Adam</u>		<u>Christ</u>
Results are unconditional and universal for the non-personal sin of Adam, I Corinthians 5:22	R I S U R R I C I O N	Benefits are conditional for personal sin, Romans 3:22, 23
One sin involved		Many sins involved
Reign of sin and death, Romans 5:17, 21		Reign of righteousness and life, Romans 5:17, 21

AN EPILOGUE

20 And the law came in besides, that the trespass might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly:

21 that, as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Verses 20, 21 form an epilogue and are incidental to the main argument of this section. Paul's argument stands complete at the end of verse 19, but he adds that the law was given "that the trespass might abound." A child knows that the law with its commands, "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not" was not given to sponsor sin. The law was given to assist in the recognition of sin, so that an awareness of sin might increase in the minds of men. But Christ came with a super-abundance of grace to offset the knowledge of sin and the condemnation it brings. Sin and death cannot maintain the upperhand but righteousness and life are victorious.

Summarizing the thoughts of this lesson it may be said that every individual of the human race was made to be a sinner; each was so constituted unconditionally. This is not to say, however, that one is born sinful in essence or that he comes into this world as a baby with a sinful nature. Rather we may understand our relationship to Adam in the same way our relationship to Christ is understood. A man who becomes a Christian recognizes that he is "made to be righteous" because he is in Christ. The Christian is not righteous in essence, but he receives the righteousness which comes to him through one righteous act of Christ at Calvary. Like Abraham, he is counted to be righteous while in truth, he is still a sinner (1 John 1:8, 9). In reality I did not die personally at Calvary. Only ideally and mystically through faith and in spiritual union with Christ can I say, "I have been crucified with Christ" and benefit from Christ's death. He is my spiritual Head and representative, and I am a sinner saved by grace. So also was my previous relationship with Adam as my physical head and representative before I became a Christian. Through his representative act, I was constituted a sinner, but I did not partake of his sinfulness in essence any more than I received in essence the righteousness of Jesus when I became a Christian.

In the judgment I will not have to answer for the sin of Adam. I was not in Eden, and I did not personally sin there. I am not guilty of Adam's sin, and though I am a sinner because I am of Adam's race, I am not sinful because of his sin. I became sinful because I sinned and "fell short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Romans 3:23 and Romans 5:12 *should not* be understood to say the same thing; 3:23 speaks of personal sin for which each sinner has responsibility; 5:12 refers to impersonal sin for which no man other than Adam has personal responsibility.

Without any conditions whatsoever Christ canceled out the result

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of Adam's sin to the human race which is physical death. The worst sinner you can think of will be raised from the dead. But, thank God, there is "much more." God's grace is greater than the sins of all men who will meet the condition of faith in Christ, including all that the word "faith" involves.

READER'S REVIEW:

1. What are the two acts of universal import discussed in this lesson?
2. Why is it logical for Paul to introduce discussion about the origin of sin at this point in Romans?
3. Which verse of Chapter Five is said to be a "proof text" for the doctrine of original sin and total depravity?
4. State concisely the three main assumptions based on this section of Romans, all of which the author rejects, as being unbiblical.
5. What is it that the author holds to be absolutely essential for one to be saved if any one of the above three assumptions you have just written are accepted as true?
6. What are some pertinent questions which may be asked of one who holds that man's nature is miraculously changed by a direct act of God at conversion?
7. What is the difference in the two following statements: all men are sinful; all men are sinners?
8. Write, in your own words, a definition of "nature" which is harmonious with Thayer's definition of the nature of man.
9. How does man become a partaker of the "divine nature"?
10. How does one become the possessor of a corrupt nature?
11. What is involved in the punctuation at the close of verse twelve and how does the punctuation bear on the interpretation of that verse.
12. What is the proof that the death of which Paul speaks directly in verse twelve is physical?
13. In what sense is Adam the representative of the whole human race with respect to sin?
14. What Biblical example of this kind of representation is cited from the book of Hebrews?
15. To what degree is Christ the representative of the whole human race with respect to righteousness?
16. What is the distinct difference in meaning of the content of Romans 3:23 and 5:12?
17. What is involved in the "much more" of verses 15-17?
18. Why are verses 20, 21 called an epilogue?
19. Write a concise summary statement of the content of verses 20 and 21.
20. In two columns reproduce from memory all the comparisons and contrasts made between Adam and Christ in this chapter.