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# Paul's Epistle to the Romans

LESSON XI : THE ASSURANCE OF FINAL SALVATION / ORIGINAL SIN – CHAP 5 VERSES 12-21

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## INTRODUCTION

“In a passage that rivals 3:21-26 for theological importance, Paul paints with broad brush strokes a ‘bird’s-eye’ picture of the history of redemption. His canvas is human history, and the scope is universal. We hear nothing in this paragraph of ‘Jew’ and ‘Gentile’; both are subsumed under the larger category ‘human being.’ *The perspective is corporate rather than individual. All people, Paul teaches, stand in relationship to one of two men, whose actions determine the eternal destiny of all who belong to them. Either one ‘belongs to’ Adam and is under sentence of death because of his sin, or disobedience, or one belongs to Christ and is assured of eternal life because of his ‘righteous’ act, or obedience.* The actions of Adam and Christ, then, are similar in having ‘epochal’ significance. But they are not equal in power, for Christ’s act is able completely to overcome the effects of Adam’s. Anyone who ‘receives the gift’ that God offers in Christ finds security and joy in knowing that the reign of death has been completely and finally overcome by the reign of grace, righteousness, and eternal life (cf. vv. 17, 21). The power of Christ’s act of obedience to overcome Adam’s act of disobedience is the great theme of this paragraph. We must not so narrowly focus on what this passage has to say about sin that we fail to do justice to this theme. It emerges in the ‘just as ... so also’ comparisons that are the backbone of the paragraph’s structure (cf. vv. 12, 18, 19, 21); see also the ‘not as ... so is’ negative comparisons in vv. 15-17. In each case, Adam, his sin, and its consequences figure in the ‘just as’ or ‘not as’ clauses, while Christ, his act of righteousness, and its consequences occur in the ‘so also’ or ‘so is’ clauses. *The universal consequences of Adam’s sin are the assumption of Paul’s argument; the power of Christ’s act to cancel those consequences is its goal.*” [Moo, pg 314f]

**ASSURANCE OF FINAL SALVATION** — *“The main connection is with the teaching of assurance of final salvation in the immediately preceding paragraph (vv. 2b, 9-10). The passage shows why those who have been justified and reconciled can be so certain that they will be saved from wrath and share in ‘the glory of God’; it is because Christ’s act of obedience ensures eternal life for all those who are ‘in Christ.’”* [Moo, *Romans*, pg 316] *“Romans 5:12-21 has been usually regarded as the most difficult part of the New Testament.... The plain and obvious design of the passage is this, to show one of the benefits of the doctrine of justification by faith. The apostle had shown, (1) That that doctrine produced peace, Romans 5:1. (2) That it produces joy in the prospect of future glory, Romans 5:2. (3) That it sustained the soul in afflictions; (a) by the regular tendency of afflictions under the gospel, Romans 5:3,4; and (b) by the fact that the Holy Spirit was imparted to the believer. (4) That this doctrine rendered it certain that we should be saved, because Christ had died for us, Romans 5:6; because this was the highest expression of love, Romans 5:7,8; and because if we had been reconciled when thus alienated, we should be saved now that we are the friends of God, Romans 5:9,10. (5) That it led us to rejoice in God himself; produced joy in his presence, and in all his attributes. He now proceeds to show the bearing on that great mass of evil which had been introduced into the world by sin, and to prove that the benefits of the atonement were far greater than the evils which had been introduced by the acknowledged effects of the sin of Adam.... The design is to exalt our views of the work of Christ, and of the plan of justification through him, by comparing them with the evil consequences of the sin of our first father, and by showing that the blessings in question not only extend to the removal of these evils, but far beyond this, so that the grace of the gospel has not only abounded, but superabounded.”* [Barne’s *Notes on the Bible: Romans*]

**INTERRUPTED THOUGHT** — *This section is disjointed, with Paul beginning a thought in v. 12, digressing in vv. 13-17, and then returning to his original thought in vv. 18-21.* “From an inspection of verses 12, 18, 19, which contain the whole point and substance of the comparison, verses 13-17 are virtually a parenthesis; and verses 20, 21, contain two remarks, merely incidental to the discussion. Verses 12, 18, 19, must therefore contain the main idea of the passage. In the 12<sup>th</sup>, only one side of the comparison is stated; but in verses 18, 19, it is resumed and carried out: ‘As by the offense of one all are condemned, so by the righteousness of one all are justified.’ This, almost in the words of the apostle, is the simple meaning of verses 18, 19, and makes the point of the comparison and scope of the passage perfectly clear.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 142]

- comparison between Adam and Christ began but not completed; v. 12
  - proof of Adam’s influence upon the race as stated in the previous verse; vv. 13, 14
  - differences between Adam as a type and Christ as the answer of the type; vv. 15-17
- continuance of initial comparison between Adam and Christ; vv. 18, 19
- additional explanation of the reason for the Mosaic law being given; vv. 20, 21

“Now it should be admitted that such a break in grammatical structure is in line with Paul’s style and personality. Yet it is not today, nor has it been in the past, an unusual style phenomenon. For example, a minister, making an announcement to his congregation, regarding a picnic, might start out as follows: ‘Since tomorrow we’ll all be attending the church picnic....’ He wishes to continue with, ‘We urge all to come early and to bring along food enough for your own family and, if possible, even something extra for poor people who may wish to join us.’ But before he can even say this he notices that his words about a church picnic tomorrow are being greeted with skepticism. So, instead, he continues as follows: ‘I notice that some of you are shaking your heads, thinking that there can be no picnic tomorrow. Let me therefore assure you that the early morning prediction about a storm heading our way has been canceled. A new forecast was conveyed to me just minutes before I ascended the pulpit. According to it,

the storm has changed its course and beautiful weather is expected for tomorrow. So we urge all to come early, etc.” [Hendriksen, *Romans*, pg 177]

## TODAY’S LESSON IN A NUTSHELL

“As the point to be illustrated is the justification of sinners on the ground of the righteousness of Christ, and the source of illustration is the fall of all men in Adam, the passage begins with a statement of this latter truth: ‘As on account of one man, death has passed on all men; so on account of one,’ etc., **ver. 12**. Before carrying out the comparison, however, the apostle stops to establish his position that all men are condemned on account of the sin of Adam. His proof is this: The infliction of a penalty implies the transgression of a law, since sin is not imputed where there is no law, **ver. 13**. All mankind are subject to death or penal evils; therefore all men are regarded as transgressors of a law, **ver. 13**. This law or covenant, which brings death on all men, is not the law of Moses, because multitudes died before that was given, **ver. 14**. Nor is it the law of nature written upon the heart, since multitudes die who have never violated even that law, **ver. 14**. Therefore, as neither of these laws is sufficiently extensive to embrace all the subjects of the penalty, we must conclude that men are subject to death on account of Adam; that is, it is for the offense of one that many die, **vers. 13, 14**. Adam is, therefore, a type of Christ. As to this important point, there is a striking analogy between the fall and redemption. We are condemned in Adam, and we are justified in Christ. But the cases are not completely parallel. In the first place, the former dispensation is much more mysterious than the latter; for if by the offense of one many die, MUCH MORE by the righteousness of one shall many live, **ver. 15**. In the second place, the benefits of the one dispensation far exceed the evils of the other. For the condemnation was for one offense; the justification is from many. Christ saves us from much more than the guilt of Adam’s sin, **ver. 16**. In the third place, Christ not only saves us from death, that is, not only frees us from the evils consequent on our own and Adam’s sin, but introduces us into a state of positive and eternal blessedness, **ver. 17**. Or this verse may be considered as an amplification of the sentiment of ver. 15. Having thus limited and illustrated the analogy between Adam and Christ, the apostle resumes and carries the comparison fully out: ‘THEREFORE, as on account of one man all men are condemned; so on account of one, all are justified,’ **ver. 18**. ‘For, as through the disobedience of one, many are regarded and treated as sinners; so through the righteousness of one many are regarded and treated as righteous,’ **ver. 19**. This then is the sense of the passage — men are condemned for the sin of one man, and justified for the righteousness of another. If men are thus justified by the obedience of Christ, for what purpose is the law? ‘It entered that sin might abound,’ i.e. that men might see how much it abounded; since by the law is the knowledge of sin. The law has its use, although men are not justified by their own obedience to it, **ver. 20**. As the law discloses, and even aggravates the dreadful triumphs of sin reigning, in union with death, over the human family, the gospel displays the far more effectual and extensive triumphs of grace through Jesus Christ our Lord, **ver. 21**.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 143f]

*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (for until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification. For if by one man’s offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification*

*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 — for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. 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. But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man’s sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. 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*

*because of this, even as through one man the sin did enter into the world, and through the sin the death; and thus to all men the death did pass through, for that all did sin; for till law sin was in the world: and sin is not reckoned when there is not law; but the death did reign from Adam till Moses, even upon those not having sinned in the likeness of Adam’s transgression, who is a type of him who is coming. But, not as the offence so also [is] the free gift; for if by the offence of the one the many did die, much more did the grace of God, and the free gift in grace of the one man Jesus Christ, abound to the many; and not as through one who did sin [is] the free gift, for the judgment indeed [is] of one to condemnation, but the gift [is] of many offences to a declaration of ‘Righteous,’ for if by the offence of the one the death did reign through the one, much more those, who the abundance of the grace and of the free gift of the righteousness are receiving, in life shall reign through the one — Jesus Christ. So, then, as through one offence to all men [it is] to condemnation, so also through one declaration of ‘Righteous’ [it is] to all men to justification of life; for as*

*of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.* (Rom 5:12-21 KJV)

*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. The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* (Rom 5:12-21 NIV)

*through the disobedience of the one man, the many were constituted sinners: so also through the obedience of the one, shall the many be constituted righteous. And law came in, that the offence might abound, and where the sin did abound, the grace did overabound, that even as the sin did reign in the death, so also the grace may reign, through righteousness, to life age-during, through Jesus Christ our Lord.* (Rom 5:12-21 Young's Literal Translation)

**V 12 — THE RELATION OF v. 12 WITH THE PRECEDING PARAGRAPH** — “The opening words of the paragraph, ‘because of this,’ suggest that what Paul is about to teach in 5:12-21 is the conclusion he is drawing from something he has argued earlier in the letter. But commentators disagree about what it is earlier in the letter that leads to the discussion of the contrasting ‘headships’ of Adam and Christ. The following options are all found in the literature: the argument of the epistle thus far (e.g., Godet, Dunn), the believer’s reconciliation (5:11) (e.g., Meyer, Morris, Cranfield), the central role of Christ in salvation (5:9-10) (e.g., Michel), the idea that we will be saved ‘in union’ with Christ (5:10) (e.g., Lloyd-Jones); or the certainty of final salvation (cf. 5:1-11) (e.g., Johnson). Of these, the last suggestion does most justice both to the contents of 5:1-11 and 12-21 and to the natural meaning of the phrase Paul uses. But we must question whether 5:12-21 reads most naturally as the conclusion of what Paul has already argued. The verses make better sense when viewed at the basis for what has just been said; specifically, based on content alone, 5:12-21 would seem to function very nicely as the ground, or reason, for the confidence in hope that Paul has stressed in 5:1-11. As linguistic justification for this reading, then, other commentators give ‘this’ a prospective force — ‘we boast (v. 11) because of this: that whatever we have lost in Adam we have gained in Christ’ (e.g., Griffith Thomas, Nygren) — or interpret the phrase as a very loose translation. But what seems the natural relationship between the two paragraphs can be maintained if we take ‘because of’ in the sense of a ‘final cause’ (e.g., ‘for the sake of’) and make the antecedent of ‘this’ the promise of final salvation (vv. 9-10). The phrase ‘because of this’ can function this way, and its suitability to the context leads us to adopt it as the most likely meaning here. *We would then paraphrase the transition at v. 12 as follows: ‘in order to accomplish this [namely, that God has promised to save all those who are justified and reconciled through Christ], there exists a life-giving union between Christ and his own that is similar to, but more powerful than, the death-producing union between Adam and all his own.’*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 316ff]

**UNFINISHED SENTENCE STRUCTURE** — As mentioned in the introduction, Paul seems to begin a thought in this verse but changes his train-of-thought prior to finishing his original thought. The sentence is a comparative sentence, beginning with ‘just as.’ The problem is, with that beginning, one would expect the completion of the comparison with ‘so also’ clause. No such closure exists in this nor the next verse. Therefore most commentators (all that I have studied) and translations teach that Paul begins his ‘just as — so also’ comparative sentence, then breaks away to do a bit of explaining, then picks the original comparative sentence back up again in vv. 18, 19. *“Most scholars therefore conclude that Paul starts a comparison in this verse that he does not (grammatically) finish (what grammarians call an anacolouthon[sic?]). Having introduced his comparison with reference to Adam and his sin, Paul becomes ‘sidetracked’ on this point and abandons the comparison, only to reintroduce and complete it later in the text. It is not until vv. 18-19 that the comparison is fully made, although vv. 15-17 hint at it.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 319]

**an-a-co-lu-thon** (än-ə-kə-lōō'-thŏn) noun: a want of grammatical sequence or coherence in a sentence; an instance of a change of construction in a sentence so that the latter part does not syntactically correspond with the first part. [Late Latin, from Late Greek anakolouthon, inconsistency in logic, from Greek, neuter of anakolouthos, inconsistent : an-, not; + akolouthos, following]

**SIN PERSONIFIED** — Paul personifies sin throughout this section (5:12-8:13). *Over 65% of all of Paul’s usage of the Greek word for sin (ἁμαρτία, hamartia) is used in this section (42 of the 64 times used by Paul) and always in the singular. It reigns (5:20; 6:13,14), can be obeyed (6:16,17), pays wages (6:23), seizes opportunity (7:8,11), deceives and kills (7:11,13).* “Through this personification, Paul shows that individual acts of sin constitute a principle, or ‘network,’ of sin that is so pervasive and dominant that the person’s destiny is determined by those actions. In the present instance, then, the ‘sin’ that enters the world is more than an individual sin; it is the bridgehead that paves the way for ‘sinning’ as a condition of humanity.” [Moo, pg 319]

**THE ROLE OF ADAM IN INTRODUCING SIN AND JEWISH TRADITION** — *“The fact that Paul attributes to Adam this sin is significant since he certainly knows from Genesis that the woman, Eve, sinned first (cf. 2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2:14). Already we see that Adam is being given a status in salvation history that is not tied only to temporal priority. Paul’s claim that ‘sin came into the world through one man’ would have been nothing new to anyone who knew his or her OT or Jewish tradition. Nor would his second assertion in this verse: ‘and through sin death [came into the world]. For the unbreakable connection between sin and death, made clear in Gen 2-3, was a staple of Jewish theology.’*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 319f]

**DEATH IS A PENAL EVIL** — Death might refer to physical death only since it seems to have this meaning in v. 14, but vv. 16, 18 also refer to condemnation. Therefore *Paul probably has in mind all that death entails: the physical separation of the soul from the body as well as the soul's permanent separation from God, or eternal death.* “Sin was the cause of death; not the mere occasional cause, not the efficient cause, but the ground or reason of its infliction. *This passage, therefore, teaches that death is a penal evil, and not a consequence of the original constitution of man.* Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:40-50, appears to teach a contrary doctrine, for he there says that Adam’s body, as formed from the earth, was earthy, and therefore corruptible. It was flesh and blood, which cannot inherit the kingdom of God. It must be changed, so that this corruptible put on in corruption, before we can be fitted for immortality. These representations, however, are not inconsistent. It is clear, from Genesis 2:17; 3:19, that had Adam never sinned, he would never have died; but it does not follow that he would never have been changed. Paul says of believers, *‘we shall not all die, but we shall all be changed,’* 1 Corinthians 15:51. The penal character of death, therefore, which is so prominently presented in Scripture, or that death in the case of every moral creature is assumed to be evidence of sin, is perfectly consistent with what the apostle says of the *σῶμα ψυχικόν* (*sōma psuchikon*, the natural body), and of its unsuitableness for an immortal existence. It is plain that *θάνατος* (*thanatos* = death) here includes the idea of natural death, as it does in the original threatening made to our first parents. In neither case, however, is this its whole meaning.... That the death here spoken of includes all penal evil, death spiritual and eternal, as well as the dissolution of the body, is evident, (1) From the consideration that it is said to be the consequence of sin. It must, therefore, mean that death which the Scriptures elsewhere speak of as the consequence and punishment of transgression. (2) Because this is the common and favorite term with the sacred writers, from first to last, for the penal consequences of sin. Genesis 2:17, *‘In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,’* i.e. thou shalt become subject to the punishment due to sin; Ezekiel 18:4, *‘The soul that sinneth, it shall die;’* Romans 6:23, *‘The wages of sin is death;’* chap. 8:13, *‘If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.’* Such passages are altogether too numerous to be quoted, or even referred to; see as further examples, Romans 1:32; 7:5; James 1:15; Revelation 20:14, etc. (3) From the constant opposition between the terms *life* and *death*, throughout the Scriptures; the former standing for the rewards of the righteous, the latter for the punishment of the wicked. Thus, in Genesis 2:17, life was promised to our first parents as the reward of obedience; and death threatened as the punishment of disobedience. See Deuteronomy 30:15, *‘I have set before thee life and death;’* Jeremiah 21:8; Proverbs 11:19; Psalms 36:9; Matthew 25:46; John 3:15; 2 Corinthians 2:16, etc. (4) From the opposition in this passage between the life which is by Christ, and the death which is by Adam, vers. 15, 17, 21, *‘Sin reigns unto death, grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.’* As, however, *natural death is a part, and the most obvious part of the penal evils of sin, it no doubt was prominent in the apostle’s mind, as appears from vers. 13, 14. Death, therefore, in this passage, means the evil, and any evil which is inflicted in punishment of sin.* [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 147f]

**IN THIS WAY** — Opinions differ but the majority of commentators believe this draws a comparison between the manner in which death came to everyone (through sin) and the manner in which death spread to everyone (also through sin). This forms a neatly balanced chiasm:

- A sin produces (12a)
  - B death (12b)
  - B’ all die (12c)
- A’ because all sin (12d)

**ORIGINAL SIN** — “[T]he fact that Paul in this verse asserts the universality of sin (v. 12d) after mentioning the responsibility of Adam in unleashing sin in the world forces us to ask the question: *What is the relationship between Adam’s sin and ours? Or, to put it another way, why do all people, without exception, sin? This question is made even more insistent by Paul’s focus on the sin of Adam as the reason for universal condemnation in vv. 18-19. How is it that the sin of Adam led to the condemnation of all people? These questions force us to look more carefully at just what Paul means in v. 12d when he asserts that ‘all sinned.’*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 323] *For our purposes, we will delay that discussion for the appendix.*

**DEATH, SALVATION AND INFANTS** — Most of the commentators made some reference to infants in relation to death and salvation somewhere through their comments on this paragraph. Illustrative of this is Robert Haldane: “If death came through sin, then all who die are sinners. This proves ... that infants are sinners in Adam. Death is the wages of sin. It is the dark badge of man’s alienation from God, the standing evidence that he is by nature separated from the Fountain of Life, and allied to corruption. If infants did not participate in the guilt of Adam’s sin, they would not experience death, disease, or misery, until they become themselves actual transgressors. ‘Who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?’ Job 4:7.” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 207f] *At this point we must confess little in scripture is given concerning this topic. We cannot be exhaustive at this point but allow this much to be said: the commentators have a point when they state infants bear the guilt of Adam because death is a judicial penalty, and infants are subject to death as much as adults. But it is also the near-universal belief of Christianity that all infants who die are accepted by God through the merits of Christ* (the only exception of which I am aware is the Roman Catholic teaching that unbaptized babies go to limbo, not eternal punishment yet not heaven. Catholics believe infant “baptism” removes the guilt of original sin). NOTE: the Early Church rejoiced when infants died, believing they entered heaven directly without enduring the pain and sin of earth.

**V 13 — PARATHETICAL SECTION** — As mentioned in the introduction, Paul shifts his focus after making his initial statement in v. 12. “Paul has already within v. 12 begun to disrupt his comparison between Adam and Christ with a series of ‘run-

on' clauses; now, he abandons his sentence altogether. (English verses signal this abandonment of the sentence with a dash at the end of v. 12.) *Paul apparently thinks that something he has said in v. 12 requires immediate elaboration in a kind of 'aside.'*" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 329] This break in Paul's thinking is the substance of vv. 13-17.

**PAUL'S INTERRUPTING THOUGHT** — The sense of Paul's interruption appears to be as follows: *Paul makes the assertion of universal sin and death in v 12. But to the Jewish mind, there can be no sin (and therefore no death) apart from the law. Paul therefore makes it clear that even without the law both sin (v. 13) and death (v. 14) were present and powerful.* "Since this teaching could suggest that people can be penalized for their sins only if they are 'under the law,' Paul insists that, on the contrary, death reigned even over those who did not sin by violating a specific law of God. In vv. 13-14, then, Paul is reasserting the universality of death in the face of an objection to the effect that his own emphasis on the law as bringing wrath (4:15) would imply the absence of death in the absence of torah." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 332] "These verses are connected by *for* with ver. 12, as introducing the proof of the declaration that death had passed on all men, on account of one man. The proof is this: the infliction of penal evils implies the violation of law; the violation of the law of Moses will not account for the universality of death, because men died before that law was given. *Neither is the violation of the law of nature sufficient to explain the fact that all men are subject to death, because even those die who have never broken that law. As, therefore, death supposes transgression, and neither the law of Moses nor the law of nature embraces all the victims of death, it follows that men are subject to penal evils on account of the sin of Adam. It is for the offense of one that many die.*" [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 155f]

**BEFORE THE LAW** — prior to the giving of the Mosaic law

**SIN IS NOT IMPUTED WHERE THERE IS NO LAW** — not in the absolute sense because obviously sin was charged to those between Adam and Moses, for there was death present which is the wages of sin (6:23). Paul is probably referring to the greater degree of responsibility for and punishment of sin when there is a positive law given (cp. 4:15; 7:7-12; Gal 3:19; 1 Cor 15:56). Those who follow a similar approach include Lloyd-Jones, Cranfield, Griffith Thomas. "*Sin is correlative of law. If there is no law, there can be no sin, as Paul had already taught, 4:15. But if there is no sin without law, there can be no imputation of sin. As, however, sin was imputed, as sin was in the world, as men were sinners, and were so regarded and treated before the law of Moses, it follows that there must be some more comprehensive law in relation to which men were sinners, and in virtue of which they were so regarded and treated. The principle here advanced, and on which the apostle's argument rests is, that the infliction of penal evil implies the violation of law. If men were sinners, and were treated as such before the law of Moses, it is certain that there is some other law, for the violation of which sin was imputed to them.*" [Hodge, *Romans*, pg ] "Many are greatly in error in the interpretation of this expression, understanding it as if before the giving of the law sin existed, but was not imputed; but if sin exists, it must be reckoned sin. It means that sin does not exist where there is no law. The conclusion, therefore, is, that as sin is not reckoned where there is no law, and as sin was reckoned, or as it existed, before the law of Moses, therefore there was law before the law of Moses. The passage may be thus paraphrased: — 'For sin existed among men from Adam to Moses, as well as afterwards. Yet there is no sin where there is no law. There were, then, both sin and law before the giving of the law of Moses.' The law before Moses is that which God had promulgated, besides the law written in the heart, which makes all men accountable." [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 210]

**v 14 — DEATH REIGNED** — Paul's point in this initial digression is to show there was still sin to be accounted for prior to the law of Moses. *His argument is that people died even prior to the Mosaic law, therefore sin was being charged to those people. "That is, men were subject to death before the law of Moses was given, and consequently not on account of violating it. There must be some other ground, therefore, of their exposure to death."* [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 160] "From the time when God gave one revealed law to Adam, to the time when another revealed Law was given to Moses. *This was a period of 2500 years; no inconsiderable portion of the history of the world.* Whether people were regarded and treated as sinners then, was a very material inquiry in the argument of the apostle. The fact that they died is alleged by him as full proof that they were sinners; and that sin had therefore scattered extensive and appalling woes among people." [Barne's *Notes on the Bible: Romans*] "'Death' refers clearly to physical death, but not to physical death alone; as in v. 12, spiritual death, condemnation, is also involved. By using the image of death 'reigning,' Paul emphasizes that death was both universal and inescapable." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 333]

**DID NOT SIN AFTER THE SIMILITUDE OF ADAM** — *Paul uses this to describe those who lived between Adam and Moses: those who lived without an audible, literal commandment to obey (Adam) nor did they have a clear, written law handed down from God (Moses). These were "law-less" people in that sense, those who lived according to the light given to them: verbal tradition and the light of conscience (Rom 1:18-32). They therefore did not sin in the manner of Adam who had a clear direct command by which he was to obey. "After the similitude ...* In the same way; in like manner. The expression 'after the similitude' is an Hebraism, denoting in like manner, or as. The difference between their case and that of Adam was plainly that Adam had a revealed and positive law. They had not. They had only the law of nature, or of tradition. The giving of a law to Adam, and again to the world by Moses, were two great epochs between which no such event had occurred. The race wandered without revelation." [Barne's *Notes on the Bible: Romans*]

**A TYPE OF THE ONE TO COME** — "The word 'type' denotes those OT persons, institutions, or events that have a divinely intended function of prefiguring the eschatological age inaugurated by Christ — hence the word 'typology.' *It is in this sense that Adam is a 'type' of Christ; the universal impact of his one act prefigures the universal impact of Christ's act.* 'The one to come' may reflect the contemporary Jewish designation of the Messiah as 'the coming one,' and the future tense is probably used

because Paul is viewing Christ's work from the perspective of Adam.... τύπος (tupos) *means originally the impression made by striking something, and comes, thereby, to designate a form, pattern, or example. Paul uses the word in 1 Cor 10:6 to designate the OT people of God as 'types' for the Corinthian believers.*" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 334]

**v 15 — THE TYPOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ADAM AND CHRIST** — In vv. 15-17 Paul explains the typological relationship between Adam and Christ, presenting two basic contrasts between the two agents. These contrasts are introduced by the phrase 'is not like' (vv. 15, 16) and is followed by an elaboration introduced by 'how much more.' "*The first contrast is one of degree: the work of Christ, being a manifestation of grace, is greater in every way than that of Adam (v. 15). The second contrast is (mainly) one of consequence: Adam's act brought condemnation (v. 16b) and death (v. 17a); Christ's brought righteousness (v. 16b) and life (v. 17b).*" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 334] "The cases, although parallel, are not precisely alike. In the first place, it is far more consistent with our views of the character of God, that many should be benefited by the merit of one man, than that they should suffer for the sin of one. If the latter has happened, MUCH MORE may we expect the former to occur. The attentive reader of this passage will perceive constantly increasing evidence that the design of the apostle is not to show that the blessings procured by Christ are greater than the evils caused by Adam; but to illustrate and confirm the prominent doctrine of the epistle, that we are justified on the ground of the righteousness of Christ. [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 163]

**BUT NOT AS THE OFFENSE** — Paul begins the verse with 'but' since he is now qualifying the relationship type between Adam and Christ he spoke of in v. 14b. The words 'it is' are assumed; we might paraphrase it to read, *'but it is not in the case of the trespass, as it is in the case of the gift.'*

**THE FREE GIFT** — This 'gift' could be the righteous status given to the believer, but the contrast with 'trespass, offense' points to an act of Christ rather than the effects of that act. This is confirmed by v. 16 where the gift *leads* to 'righteousness.' *The 'gift' therefore refers to the act of Christ himself considered as a 'work of grace.'* "*Christ's act, being a work of God's grace, is far more potent than Adam's act.*" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 335] The only problem with this interpretation is that it makes 'gift' in v. 15a different than the 'gift' in v. 15c.

**"THE" MANY** — Important in this paragraph is the use by Paul of the term, "the many." "The many' refers simply to a great number; how inclusive is that number might be can be determined only by context. In the protasis of this verse, 'the many' clearly includes all people; for Paul has already said that 'all died' with reference to Adam (v. 12). But in the apodosis ('how much more...') 'the many' must be qualified by Paul's insistence in v. 17 that only those who 'receive' the gift benefit from Christ's act. Here it refers to 'a great number' of people (but not all of them) or to 'all who respond to the gift of grace.'" [Moo, pg 336f]

**THE ASSURANCE OF THE GRACE OF GOD** — Some take the 'how much more' to have a qualitative force, i.e., 'how much more abundantly will the grace of God abound to the many.' (e.g., Alford) Douglas Moo argues it is much more in keeping with the context to have a logical significance, 'how much more [certainly] will the grace of God abound to the many.' (e.g., Meyer) "*For [the many who respond to God], Paul claims, the enjoyment of the gift and grace of God will be even more certain than the death that came to all in Adam. Condemnation through Adam is inescapable, and Paul says nothing that would diminish the horrible reality of this judgment under which all people stand. But alongside condemnation there is the grace of God. And since it is precisely God's grace with which we have to do, there is an 'abounding plus' (Murray), a super-abundance connected with God's gift in Christ that has the power not only to cancel the effects of Adam's work but to create, positively life and peace.*" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 337] "The force of the passage lies in the words much more. The idea is not that the grace is more abundant and efficacious than the offense and its consequences: this idea is expressed in ver. 20; but, 'if the one dispensation has occurred, much more may the other; if we die for one, much more may we live by another.' The πολλῶ μᾶλλον (pollōi mallon = much more) does not express a higher degree of efficacy, but of evidence or certainty: 'If the one thing has happened, much more certainly may the other be relied upon.'" [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 164]

**v 16 — THE ONE WHO SINNED** — The first part of this sentence is very compact, literally, "*and the gift is not like the one who sinned.*" As is, this is incomplete since "*the one who sinned*" does not make an adequate contrast with "*the gift.*" To complete the comparison, we must add the point of contrast from the context. Moo suggests the best alternative is to add 'condemnation' from the next verse; "*and the gift is not like the condemnation that came through the one who sinned.*" "*Justly indeed,' says Koppe, 'on account of one offense, many are subjected to punishment; but by divine grace many are freed from the punishment of many offenses.' ... 'Condemnation does not necessarily suppose personal transgression, any more than the opposite, justification, presupposes personal righteousness. On account of one single sin, all are condemned to suffer death.' ... The condemnation which we suffer on account of Adam, is a condemnation on account of one sin.'* Whitby expresses the meaning thus: "*The judgment was by one sin to condemnation, we being all sentenced to death on account of Adam's sin.*" [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 167]

**ITEMS OF CONTRAST** — "Paul, in fact, has two contrasts in mind: (1) the contrast between the results of Adam's act and Christ's — condemnation versus justification — and (2) the number of sins taken into account — the judicial verdict associated with Adam was based on one sin; the decree of justification that came through Christ came after an untold number of sins. *Not only, then, are the results of the actions of Adam and Christ diametrically opposed; but the graciousness of God's work in Christ becomes all the more evident when one considers the number of sins taken into consideration in each respective action: 'That one single misdeed should be answered by judgment, this is perfectly understandable: that the accumulative sins and*

**guilt of all the ages should be answered by God's free gift, this is the miracle of miracles, utterly beyond human comprehension.**" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 338] "The point of this verse is, that the sentence of condemnation which passed on all men for the sake of Adam, was for one offense, whereas we are justified by Christ from *many* offenses. Christ does much more than remove the guilt and evils consequent on the sin of Adam. This is the second particular in which the work of Christ differs from that of Adam.... **Christ has done far more than remove the curse pronounced on us for the one sin of Adam; he procures our justification from our own innumerable offenses. This is the main idea presented in this verse.**" [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 167] Alva McClain illustrates this fact in this manner: anyone can start a forest fire, but it takes multitudes of people to put out a forest fire (if they can put it out at all; mostly this depends upon weather conditions). Adam started a fire, but the Lord Jesus Christ put the fire out. "How much more abundant" was the work of Christ!

**v 17 — SUMMATION OF ADAM AND CHRIST** — Paul wraps up his digression the contrasting effects of our representative agents. "The parallel, as Paul stresses throughout this paragraph, is that, in each case, a critical spiritual condition has been introduced into human history 'through' the act of 'one man.' This emphasis on the 'one man Adam' and his sin as the instrument by which death exercises its rule reveals again the concern of Paul to tie the fate of all people in some direct way with the sin of Adam. Paul's purpose is not, however, to leave us depressed and hopeless in the face of this tragic and inescapable fact of human existence. Quite the contrary, he wants to cheer and encourage us by showing that the same connection between the act of one man and the fate of all that obtained in the case of 'the one man' Adam also obtained in the case of another act of another 'man,' and that the act of this second 'man' brings consequences even more glorious than those of the first man were deleterious. There is on the side of Christ's act an 'abundance' that leads Paul to put the two parts of the sentence not in a relationship of simple comparison — 'as ... so also' — but in the relationship of degree — 'how much more.'" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 339] **"For if all are in a state of condemnation by reason of the offense of one, much more shall those towards whom abundance of mercy and pardoning grace are shown, be redeemed from a state of condemnation, and advanced to a state of happiness."** [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 168]

**HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY** — **"Paul breaks the parallelism of the sentence in another significant way: while the result of Adam's act is the subject of the first clause — 'death reigned through the one' — it is human beings who are the subject in the second — 'those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness.' This change underscores an important difference between the reigns of death and life. The former has the character of fate; while, as v. 12 has shown, not unrelated to our own act of sin, death is — originally — not a consciously chosen destiny. The reign of life, on the other hand, is experienced through choice and personal decision; it is for those who 'receive' the gift. The importance of this qualification can hardly be overemphasized."** [Moo, *Romans*, pg 339f]

**v 18 — RETURN TO THE ORIGINAL COMPARATIVE STATEMENT** — Paul now returns to his original argument began in v. 12. Paul continues his comparative structure in vv. 18-21, using it three times to state the parallel between Adam and Christ: 'as ... so' (v. 18) and 'just as ... so' (v. 19, 21).

**ONE TRESPASS OR MAN?** — The Greek word for 'one' here is open to interpretation. Some believe that it should refer to 'trespass,' especially since it does not have a definite article; see NASB, NIV, Godet, Murray. Others believe the contrast between 'all men' is stronger if we take the word 'one' to refer to Adam and Christ: "one man's trespass / one man's act of righteousness;" see KJV, NRSV, Bengel, Cranfield.

**UNIVERSAL SALVATION?** — Paul's verbiage in this verse has led some to believe Paul is teaching a universal salvation by stating justification of life came upon "all men." "And if, as is clear, Adam's act has brought condemnation to all, without exception, must we not conclude that Christ's act has brought justification and life for all? A growing number of scholars argue that this is exactly what Paul intends to say here. Recently, for instance, A. Hultgren has urged that the universal statements in this passage must be taken seriously, as descriptive of a 'justification of humanity' that will be revealed at the judgment. Some people are justified by faith in this life, but those who do not accept the offer of God in this life are nevertheless assured of being justified at the judgment (see A. J. Hultgren, *Christ and His Benefits: Christology and Redemption in the New Testament*). **Such universalistic thinking is, naturally, very appealing — who likes the idea that many people will be consigned to the eternal punishment of hell? But if, as seems clear, many texts plainly teach the reality of such punishment for those who do not embrace Christ by faith in this life (cf., e.g., 2 Thess 1:8-9; Rom 2:12; and the argument of 1:18-3:20), those who advocate such a viewpoint are guilty of picking and choosing their evidence.... [Those who reject the doctrine of eternal punishment] misses the point for which Paul is arguing in this passage. This point is that there can be assurance of justification and life, on one side, that is just as strong and certain as the assurance of condemnation on the other. Paul wants to show, not how Christ has made available righteousness and life for all, but how Christ has secured the benefits of that righteousness for all who belong to him.**" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 342f] This argument returns us to the previous verse: justification and life are for those *who respond* to the offer of salvation in Christ! Paul is careful to qualify his statements which some have taken and misconstrued along their own lines of beliefs. "Throughout the passage, Paul's concern to maintain the parallelism between Adam and Christ has led him to choose terms that will clearly express this. In vv. 15 and 19, he uses 'the many'; here he uses 'all people.' But in each case, Paul's point is not so much that the groups affected by Christ and Adam, respectively, are coextensive, but that Christ affects those who are his just as certainly as Adam does those who are his. When we ask who belongs to, or is 'in,' Adam and Christ, respectively, Paul makes his answer clear: every person, without exception, is 'in Adam' (cf. vv. 12d-14); but only those who

‘receive the gift’ (v. 17; ‘those who believe,’ according to Rom 1:16-5:11) are ‘in Christ.’ That ‘all’ does not mean ‘every single human being’ is clear from many passages, it often being clearly limited in context (cf., e.g., Rom 8:32; 12:17, 18; 14:2; 16:19), so this suggestion has no linguistic barrier. In the present verse, the scope of ‘all people’ in the two parts of the verse is distinguished in the context, Paul making it clear, both by his silence and by the logic of vv. 12-14, that there is no limitation whatsoever on the number of those who are involved in Adam’s sin, while the deliberately worded v. 17, along with the persistent stress on faith as the means of achieving righteousness in 1:16-4:25, makes it equally clear that only certain people derive the benefits from Christ’s act of righteousness.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 343f] “If therefore the *all* means, all men, the apostle teaches that all men are saved. And this is the use to which many Universalists have put the passage. As, however, not only the Scriptures generally, but Paul himself, distinctly teach that all men are not to be saved, as in 2 Thessalonians 1:9, this interpretation cannot be admitted by any who acknowledge the inspiration of the Bible. It is moreover, an unnatural interpretation, even if the attention be limited to this one passage; because, as death on account of Adam supposes union with Adam, so life on account of Christ supposes union with Christ. It is all who are in Adam who are condemned for his offense, and the all who are in Christ who are justified by his righteousness.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 172]

**v 19 — REPETITION FOR EMPHASIS** — In case we have missed his point, Paul repeats himself in this verse, practically repeating what he said in v. 18 using different language. The differences between the two verses are significant however, as explained below.

**“ALL” VERSUS “THE MANY”** — in this verse, Paul calls those in Christ as “*the many*” which parallels the “*all*” of v. 18. This again emphasizes the fact not all people without exception are included in the justification and life given by Christ but only those who have believed the gospel message.

**“OBEDIENCE” VERSUS “DISOBEDIENCE”** — “Paul calls Adam’s destiny-determining action an ‘act of disobedience’ rather than simply a ‘sin’ (v. 12) or ‘trespass’ (vv. 15, 17, 18). The characterization is, of course, a fair one since Adam and Eve had been explicitly told not to eat the fruit of the tree. In keeping with the careful contrasts that Paul has used throughout the passage, then, Christ’s work is characterized as ‘an act of obedience.’ Paul may be thinking of the ‘active obedience’ of Christ, his lifelong commitment to ‘do his Father’s will’ and so fulfill the demands of the law. But *Paul’s focus seems rather to be on Jesus’ death as the ultimate act of obedience. This is suggested by the parallel with Adam’s (one) act of disobedience, Phil 2:8 — Jesus ‘became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross’ — and the consistent connection Paul makes between justification and Jesus’ death.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 344]

**THE RESULTS OF ADAM / CHRIST ARE PERSONALIZED** — Another difference and new point contained within this verse is the move away from the states or destinies of each group (death vs. life, or condemnation vs. justification) to a description of how these results are made personal. Through Adam, “the many” were made sinners while through Christ “the many” will be made righteous. “Debate surrounds the exact meaning of the verb Paul uses here. Some argue that it means nothing more than ‘make.’ But this translation misses the forensic flavor of the word. It often means ‘appoint,’ and probably refers here to the fact that people are ‘inaugurated into’ the state of sin / righteousness. Paul is insisting that people were really ‘made righteous’ through Christ’s obedience. This ‘making righteous,’ however, must be interpreted in the light of Paul’s typical forensic categories. To be ‘righteous’ does not mean to be morally upright, but to be judged acquitted, cleared of all charges, in the heavenly judgment. Through Christ’s obedient act, people become really righteous; but ‘righteous itself is a legal, not a moral, term in this context.... In both parts of the verse, then, we are dealing with a real, though ‘forensic,’ situation: people actually become sinners in solidarity with Adam — by God’s decision; people actually become ‘righteous’ in solidarity with Christ — again, by God’s decision.... People can be ‘made’ sinners in the sense that God considers them to be such by regarding Adam’s act as, at the same time, their act. It seems fair, then, to speak of ‘imputation’ here. This particular understanding of the word is in keeping with the legal connotations that the term often has, and it alone matches the second use of the verb in the verse. For, while some suggest that, as people are ‘made’ righteous by believing, so they are ‘made’ sinners by sinning, the substitution of a different term in the second member — ‘believing’ — destroys the analogy. To maintain strict parallelism, we would have to argue rather that, as people are made sinners by sinning, they are made righteous by being righteous, or doing righteous things. Yet this interpretation is obviously impossible; people are made righteous only by the righteousness of Christ and their faith in Christ, not by being righteous.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 345f]

**ADAM’S CONDEMNATION DESERVED, CHRIST’S JUSTIFICATION UNDESERVED** — “[W]hile our solidarity with Adam in condemnation is due to our solidarity with him in ‘sinning,’ our solidarity with Christ in righteousness is not because we have acted righteously in and with Christ. While Rom 6 suggests that we were in some sense ‘in Christ’ when he ‘obeyed even unto death,’ that obedience is never accounted to us as our own. In other words, *while we deserve condemnation — for ‘all have sinned’ — we are freely given righteousness and life. It is this gratuitous element on the side of Christ’s work that enables Paul to celebrate the ‘how much more’ of our ‘reigning’ in life (v. 17) and that gives to every believer absolute assurance for the life to come.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 346]

**v 20 — THE NEGATIVE “ADDING” OF THE LAW** — Paul has divided all mankind into two basic groups: those who are identified with Adam and those who are identified with Christ. But to the Jewish reader, one of the questions they would have is this: how could centuries of salvation history be ignored? Specifically, what is the place for the Mosaic law in this simplistic

explanation? All Jews held the law in high esteem, and many based their eternal destiny upon the law of Moses. Paul turns his attention to this question in this verse. “The ‘law,’ Paul asserts, ‘came in beside.’ The verb Paul uses here often has a negative connotation; the only other occurrence in the NT is in Gal 2:4, where Paul applies it to Judaizers, who have ‘sneaked in’ to spy out the freedom of the Gentile Christians. However, it would be going too far to think that Paul pictures the God-given Mosaic law as ‘slipping in’ with an evil purpose. On the other hand, the word should not be given a completely neutral significance either. *Negative connotations dominate in the use of this verb during the NT period (cf. BAGD), and Paul seems purposely to have chosen it in order to ‘relativize’ the role of the law in salvation history. It has been ‘added’ (cf. Gal 3:19), introduced into a situation in which sin already holds sway, and has no power fundamentally to alter that situation. Nevertheless, the law came with a purpose. But its purpose, Paul affirms, was not to change the situation created by Adam, but to make it worse. The law ‘has increased’ the trespass — not erased, or eased, or neutralized it, as many Jews, and perhaps some Jewish Christians, may have argued.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 346f] “[T]he meaning of the clause is, that the great design of the law (in reference to justification) is to produce the knowledge and conviction of sin. Taking the word in its usual sense, the meaning is, that the result of the introduction of the law was the increase of sin. This result is to be attributed partly to the fact, that by enlarging the knowledge of the rule of duty, responsibility was proportionably increased, according to chap. 4:15, and partly to the consideration that the enmity of the heart is awakened by its operation, and transgressions actually multiplied, agreeably to chap. 7:8. Both views of the passage express an important truth, as the conviction of sin and its incidental increase are alike the result of the operation of the law.... It was not intended to give life, but to prepare men to receive Christ as the only source of righteousness and salvation.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 177]

**THAT THE TRESPASS MIGHT INCREASE** — Interpretations vary as to exactly how the law ‘increased the transgression.’ In alignment with comments made on 4:15, I agree with that interpretation that takes this to mean the law actually made those under sin more accountable since now positive, clearly-stated commandments from God were given. *“The fact and power of ‘sin’ introduced into the world by Adam has not been decreased by the law, but given a new dimension as rebellion against the revealed, detailed will of God; sin has become ‘transgression.’ That this interpretation is on the right track is confirmed by (though not proven by) the parallel test, Gal 3:19: ‘the law was added in order to create transgression.’ Hence, as Bornkamm summarizes, ‘The law has therefore no epoch-making significance, but has only the function of actualizing and radicalizing the crisis of Adamitic human existence.’ Since Paul has used ‘trespass’ of the sin of Adam in this context, we may say that the law has the function of turning those it addresses into ‘their own Adam’: as a sinner who ‘transgresses known ‘law’ (cf. v. 14). Against Jewish tendencies to attribute virtually salvific meaning to the law, Paul dethrones the law by ranging it on the side of Adam and sin.”* [Moo, *Romans*, pg 348]

**GRACE ABOUNDING** — This negative purpose of the giving of the law is not God’s final word on the subject. Ultimately, the law is a gift given to Israel with positive purposes: *“In showing sin to be ‘utterly sinful’ (Rom 7:13), the law reveals the desperate situation of people apart from grace. But, as Paul has emphasized throughout this paragraph, God’s grace is more than sufficient to overcome the increase in the power and seriousness of sin brought by the law. For in that very place where sin ‘increased,’ grace ‘super-increased.’”* [Moo, *Romans*, pg 348f] “That is, great as is the prevalence of sin, as seen and felt in the light of God’s holy law, yet over all this evil the grace of the gospel has abounded. The gospel or the grace of God has proved itself much more efficacious in the production of good, than sin in the production of evil.... The fact, therefore, of the triumph of grace over sin, is expressed in the clearest manner.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 177]

**V 21 — ONE LAST COMPARISON** — Paul brings his comparison / contrasting of Adam and Jesus to a climax, while at the same time giving the purpose of the “super-abounding” of grace mentioned in the last verse. In doing so, Paul once again uses “just as ... so also.” The difference however is Paul relates sin and death in a way unlike what he has mentioned previously in this paragraph. Here sin is said the “reign in death.” Of the several ways in which this could be taken, perhaps the best is to understand this is using “in death” as the sphere in which sin thrives: “sin reigned in the ‘dominion’ of death.” *“Death has its own dominion: humanity as determined, and dominated, by Adam. And in this dominion, sin is in control. But those who ‘receive the gift’ (v. 17) enjoy a transfer from this domain to another, the domain of righteousness, in which grace reigns and where life is the eventual outcome.”* [Moo, *Romans*, pg 349f] “The design of God in permitting sin, and in allowing it to abound, was to bring good out of evil; to make it the occasion of the most wonderful display of his glory and grace, so that the benefits of redemption should infinitely transcend the evils of the apostasy.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 177f]

**ETERNAL LIFE BY JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD** — “This is that life of which Jesus Christ, who is risen from the dead, is the author, as the death here Spoken of is that which *He* came to destroy. The source of our natural life is Adam, but he is dead, and in his communion we all die. But a new source of life is provided in the second Adam, that He may deliver from death all that are in His communion. ‘The first Adam was made a living soul,’ that he might communicate natural life to those who had not received it. ‘The last Adam was made a quickening spirit,’ that He might impart spiritual life to those who had lost it. The first communicated an earthly and perishable life, the second a life that is celestial and immortal. Jesus Christ is that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us; and the Father hath given Him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to as many as He hath given Him. ‘My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give unto them eternal life.’ The termination, then, of the reign of death over those whom He represents, and the establishment of the reign of grace through the everlasting righteousness which He has brought in, are all by Jesus Christ. He hath abolished death. By Him came grace and truth; He brought life and immortality to light. He ‘is the true God, and eternal life.’ And ‘to this end Christ both died, and rose, and

revived, that He might be the Lord both of the dead and the living.’ The similarity of the Apostle’s commencement in unfolding the doctrine of justification, and of his conclusion, is very striking. He begins, ch. 1:17, by declaring that the *Gospel of Christ* is the power of God *unto salvation*, because therein is the *righteousness* of God revealed; and he here ends by affirming that *grace* reigns through *righteousness* unto *eternal life* by *Jesus Christ* our Lord. In this 21st verse the doctrine of the whole preceding context, of the salvation of believers, is summed up in a manner most beautiful and striking. Having exhibited in a strong light the righteousness of God, ch. 3:21, 22, the Apostle returns to it in this chapter; and, having contrasted Christ and Adam, he brings out his conclusion in this verse with a contrast of the reign of sin and grace. Sin had an absolute sway over all the descendants of Adam. There was nothing good among them, or in any of them. Sin existed and predominated in every human soul. Therefore it is said to *reign*. The absolute and universal influence of sin is figured by the empire of a monarch exercising authority in uncontrolled sovereignty. Grace also *reigns*. There was nothing in men to merit salvation, or to recommend them in any measure to God. Grace therefore *reigns* in their salvation, which is wholly and entirely of free favor. Sin is said to reign unto, or in, death. This shows that death was, in every human being, the effect of his sin. The way in which death manifested its universal reign over the human race, was in causing their death. This most fully proves that infants are sinners. If sin ruled in causing death to its subjects, then all who died are the subjects of sin. Death to the human race is in every instance the effect of the dominion of sin.” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 230]

## **APPENDIX: THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN —**

**THE QUESTION: SIN IS BOTH PERSONAL AND CORPORATE** — “Paul certainly uses the verb ‘sin’ regularly to denote voluntary sinful acts committed by individuals; and this is what most commentators think this same word [in v. 12d], in the same tense as is used here (the aorist), designates in Rom 3:23: that all people, ‘in their own persons,’ commit sins. Probably a majority of contemporary scholars interpret v. 12d, then, to assert that the death of each person (v. 12c) is directly caused by that person’s own, individual sinning. The question is then how this ‘individual’ explanation of death is to be squared with the ‘corporate’ explanation of the universality of death in v. 12a-b and, with even greater emphasis, vv. 15-19. In other words, how can we logically relate the assertions ‘each person dies because each person sins (in the course of human history)’ and ‘one man’s trespasses led to condemnation for all people’ (v. 18a)?” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 323] ***In attempting to correlate these two tensions, it is important to remember the following: (1) there is a mystery here which we might not be able to answer; and (2) it would probably be incorrect to limit our response to a single explanation; perhaps several of the explanations are in their own way correct and does not violate scripture. “If, then, we are to read v. 12d in light of vv. 18-19 — and, since the comparative clauses in these verses repeat the substance of v. 12, this seems to be a legitimate procedure — ‘all sinned’ must be given some kind of ‘corporate’ meaning: ‘sinning’ not as voluntary acts of sin in ‘one’s own person,’ but sinning ‘in and with’ Adam.... All people, therefore, stand condemned ‘in Adam,’ guilty by reason of the sin all committed ‘in him.’ This interpretation is defended by a great number of exegetes and theologians. It maintains the close connection between Adam’s sin and the condemnation of all that is required by vv. 15-19, a connection suggested also by 1 Cor 15:22 — ‘in Adam all die.’ And a sin committed before individual consciousness also explains how Paul could consider all people as ‘by nature children of wrath’ (Eph 2:3).”*** [Moo, *Romans*, pg 326f]

**IS ORIGINAL SIN FAIR?** — “The German theologian W. Pannenberg puts it bluntly: ‘It is impossible for me to be held jointly responsible as though I were a joint cause for an act that another did many generations ago and in a situation radically different from mine.’ Various theological and philosophical constructs can offer more or less help in answering this question, but no explanation ultimately removes the problem. ‘Original sin’ remains ‘an offense to reason’ (so-called by Bernard Ramm). On the other hand, some such doctrine is necessary to explain the fact of universal sin and evil. Pascal, in a famous passage, put it like this: ‘Original sin is foolishness to men, but it is admitted to be such. You must not then reproach me for the want of reason in this doctrine, since I admit it to be without reason. But this foolishness is wiser than all the wisdom of men. For without this, what can we say that man is? His whole state depends on this imperceptible point. And how should it be perceived by his reason, since it is a thing against reason, and since reason, far from finding it out by her own ways, is averse to it when it is presented to her?’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 329]

**A DIVINE MYSTERY** — “*Perhaps, indeed, Paul has not provided us with enough data to make a definite decision; and we should probably be content with the conclusion that Paul affirms the reality of a solidarity of all humanity with Adam in his sin without being able to explain the exact nature of that union.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 238]

## **VIEWS REGARDING ORIGINAL SIN**

**PELAGIANISM** — so-named after the 4<sup>th</sup>-century theologian who made it famous. Not widely held in our day. This theory denies any real relationship between Adam’s sin and our sin. Adam was an example only. We sin ‘as Adam did’ or in imitation of Adam, but there is nothing within Adam which constrains us to sin or be sinners. Easily rejected because this passage makes it clear Adam in some way the cause of universal condemnation (especially vv. 18,19). Pelagianism also fails to answer why, if there is no direct relation between Adam and the rest of humanity, why everyone without exception follows Adam’s example. “The Pelagian theory is, that Adam was the mere occasional cause of men becoming sinners. He was the first sinner, and others followed his example. Or, according to another form of the same general idea, his sin was the occasion of God’s giving men up to sin. There was no real connection, either natural or judicial, between Adam’s sin and the sinfulness of his posterity; but God determined that if the first man sinned, all other men should. This was a divine constitution, without there being any causal connection between the two events.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 145]

**CORRUPTED HUMAN NATURE** — This teaches that v. 12d does refer to the sins of all people which they commit, but all people commit these sins due to a corrupt human nature received ultimately from the sin of Adam. Adam’s original sin therefore corrupted the human nature and made our sins inevitable. “This view has much in its favor: it retains the ‘normal’ meaning of sin in v. 12 while explaining at the same time how Paul could assert that Adam’s sin brings condemnation upon all (vv. 18-19). It also explains why all people act contrary to the will of God: there is a fatal, God-resisting ‘bent’ in all people, inherited from Adam (Adam as fallen, not as created). For this reason alone, most theologians have assumed the necessity for some such view of the effects of Adam’s sin.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 325f] Moo then continues to comment that exegetically, this would require us to supply some words or meanings in Paul’s statements here. While not impossible, Moo suggests Paul has given us little reason to assume these emphasizes are supplied. Luther and Calvin both believed that when Adam fell, the human nature fell and we in that sense literally fell with and in Adam. Moo points out however that Calvin in his Institutes does presume original guilt in some sense from Adam. “According to this interpretation, the doctrine of the apostle is, that the inherent, hereditary corruption of nature derived from Adam, is the ground or reason why all die. This is what is called mediate imputation; or the doctrine that not the sin of Adam, but inherent depravity derived from him, is the ground of the condemnation of his race. Although Calvin gives this interpretation of the passage on which this theory is founded, it is not to be inferred that he was an advocate of that theory. He frequently and clearly discriminates between inherent depravity as a ground of condemnation and the sin of Adam as distinct, and says that we are exposed to death, not solely for the one, but also for the other. He lived in a day when the imputation of Adam’s sin was made, by the theologians of the Romish Church, so prominent as to leave inherent depravity almost entirely out of view. The whole tendency of the Reformers, therefore, was to go to the opposite extreme.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 149f]

**JEWISH TRADITION** — “[O]ne further point inclines us to think that Paul may, indeed, have been thinking along these lines: the popularity of conceptions of corporate solidarity in the Jewish world of Paul’s day. This notion, rooted in the OT, held that actions of certain individuals could have a ‘representative’ character, being regarded as, in some sense, the actions of many other individuals at the same time. (The classic biblical evidence for such a notion comes from Josh 7, where a sin committed by one individual, Achan, is also said to be ‘Israel’s sin’ [vv. 1-11], and the reason why God’s anger ‘burns against Israel’ [v. 1].) I think that there is good reason to suppose that Paul adopted such a concept as a fruitful way of explaining the significance in salvation history of both Adam and Christ. For Paul, Adam, like Christ, was a corporate figure, whose sin could be regarded at the same time as the sin of all his descendants.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 327f] Other comments by Moo: “[T]he importance of ‘corporate’ categories for the OT and Jewish thinking is generally accepted.... The Jewish text that comes closest to Paul’s conception is 4 Ezra 7:118: ‘O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants.’ It must be said, however, that the idea of a corporate sinning of all in Adam is never made explicit in Judaism. At a later date, indeed, the rabbis tended to stress individual responsibility for sin. Indeed, Paul’s pessimistic view of human beings trapped under sin’s power played a key role in establishing differences between his theology and that of Judaism generally.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 328]

**THE REALIST INTERPRETATION** — “On this view, our relationship to Adam is ‘real’ in the sense that we are all biologically descended from Adam. On this view, our relationship to Adam is ‘real’ in the sense that we are all biologically descended from Adam. ‘The totality of human nature’ was concentrated in Adam; his sin can, then, be said to be the sin of everyone.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 328] See Shedd, A. H. Strong, many Roman Catholic theologians. This could be shown to have scriptural support: Levi was said to be ‘in the loins’ of Abraham in Hebrews 7:10. This also helps understand the issue of fairness of God condemning all mankind because of Adam’s sin.

**REPRESENTATIVE OR FEDERAL HEADSHIP OF ADAM** — “Many Reformed theologians offer a ‘representative,’ or ‘federal,’ explanation. Without denying the fact of realistic union with Adam, advocates of this approach insist that Adam’s sin was ‘imputed’ to all directly by virtue of his being appointed by God as our representative. Thus, when he sinned, we sinned; when he fell, we fell; and we die because we have been accounted as having sinned in and with him.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 328] See Murray. This also has support elsewhere in scripture: 1 Cor 15 speaks of Adam as a parallel to the “Second Adam,” our Lord Jesus Christ.

“The folly, degradation, and hatred that are the chief characteristics of human history demands an explanation. Why do people so consistently turn from good to evil of all kinds? Paul affirms in this passage that human solidarity in the sin of Adam is the explanation — and whether we explain this solidarity in terms of sinning in and with Adam or because of a corrupt nature inherited from him does not matter at this point. On any view, this, the biblical, explanation for universal human sinfulness, appears to explain the data of history and experience as well as, or better than, any rival theory.”

Douglas Moo, *Romans*, pg 329