

“The Tale of Two Adams” //

Romans 5:12–21 // Romans #11

Introduction

Before we get rolling today, I wanted to **celebrate something** I heard from Josh Miller, who we just sent out to plant in Charlottesville in November.

- Last weekend they **baptized 3 people**, and they’ve had **8** professions of faith in the past few weeks. That is nearly unheard of for this early in a church launch.
- Here’s what is **most exciting about that**: nearly every profession of faith came from one-on-one, personal evangelism. It was normal people asking, “Who’s My One?” and trusting the Holy Spirit to guide them.
- And, UVA got to **Final 4** this year for the first time since 1984: Not saying our church plant brought that blessing, but I’m not denying it, either.

Take out your Bible, and your journals (page 40), and a pen--and open to Romans 5.

I hope you brought your **theological big boy pants** this weekend and that you have the belt on those things pulled tight, because this one is going to be a doozy.

I **mentioned toward the beginning of this series** that I think this is **1 of the 2** most difficult passages in Romans.

- It’s **not hard to understand what’s being said, *per se***; it just teaches difficult concepts to get your mind around.

To be really candid with you, this is one of those passages where I’ve sensed God saying to me, “Look, are you willing to accept my

word just because it is my word and comes with my authority, or do you feel like you need to understand and agree with it before you’ll accept it?

- I’ve sometimes thought about faith like this: **What if Jesus came to me and said, in the midst of all these questions**: “I’m not going to explain... Are you willing to trust me... to doubt your doubts?”
- BTW, this is **what Jesus said to Peter** when Peter had some unanswered questions. A bunch of Jesus’ followers had left Jesus because they had these unanswered questions, and Peter had the same objections as everyone leaving, so he says, **“Jesus, I sympathize with those leaving... I don’t understand (this or that).”** Jesus doesn’t explain, he just said, “Are you going to go away like them?” Peter said, “Where can I go...?”
- **That’s how I’ve felt sometimes**. the evidence for Jesus being the Son of God is undeniable to me. The evidence for his resurrection is solid. So where else could I go?

My favorite definitions of faith, I’ve told you, which you may want to write down:

- **Faith is when the unexplainable meets the undeniable.**
- **Faith is accepting what you cannot understand based on what you can understand.**
- (Your pen should be moving)
- Well, **keep that in mind** as we go through this.

This passage is going to answer a few questions I get asked a lot:

- What is original sin and how is it fair?
 - Some of you have heard the term “original sin” but you’ve not been sure what it is. Original sin: Is that like a sin that nobody else has ever done before? *“Today I stole a hershey bar and a diet mt dew while thinking an unkind thought about my ex-wife and smoking illegal weed at the same time. No one has ever done that exact combination, so that is an original sin.”*
 - So, what is original sin?
- Second, what about babies and the mentally handicapped--what happens to them when they die?

- And, what about people who have never heard?

The answers to those questions are embedded in these 9 final verse of Romans 5.

If you remember, **in the first 11 verses of Romans 5**, Paul showed us **how the gospel reshapes our view** of trials. **He shifted from argumentation for the gospel** to celebration of the gospel. Now, in vs. 12, he shifts **back to argumentation**.

This might be one of the densest doctrinal sections in Romans.¹ **But it's important not to separate this doctrinal deep dive from the "felt-needs" stuff Paul was just talking about** with how to have joy and hope in trials.

- We tend to think that there are two kinds of Bible teaching--the relevant practical stuff and then the doctrinal stuff for serious Bible students.
- That's not how Paul saw it. The way to **deal with problems in your life is to go deeper in who you are in Christ**.
 - Notice that the first word in this paragraph is "therefore."
¹²Therefore, (by using "therefore," Paul is showing us that what he's about to say connects with what he just said, which was all about having joy in suffering.)
 - IOW, these are not **doctrinal musings for the theological nerd herd**. These truths are the way to face life with hope, balance and joy; the way to live freed from bitterness or regret in your relationships.
- The **deeper you go in Christ**, the more equipped you are to face life with confidence.

So, here we go... **¹²Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned. ¹⁴...(and) death reigned from Adam to**

¹ John Stott says it is like a carefully constructed musical composition where every note is chosen carefully and just breezing through it, you have no idea all the complexity there. John Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 149.

Moses, even over those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam's transgression.

If you remember in chapter 4, Paul used the story of Abraham to show how Abraham's life illustrates justification by faith. In chapter 5, he's going to go all the way to back Adam, the first man, to show how Adam's story points to Jesus.

- He's **going to show that all of history** can be told as the **story of 2 Adams**.

How many SW fans we have in here? You know Star Wars has been called "The Tale of Two Skywalkers."

- The 1st Skywalker (Anakin) gave into the temptation to give in to "the dark side" of the Force. Death, destruction and chaos followed.
- In contrast, the 2nd Skywalker (Luke) faced the same temptation, but he was faithful and obedient to the Jedi way. Good egg, he was.
- And because of that, hope, life, and the triumph of good followed. In fact, at the end, Luke was even able to redeem the first Skywalker, his evil father Anakin.
- George Lucas, the writer, said that the central theme of Episodes 4–6 was the redemption of Anakin by Luke.
- Similarly, you could say that the entire storyline of the Bible is about the redemption of the first "Adam" by the Second Adam, Christ Jesus.²

Here's the basic idea. You ready? Adam, the first human created, chose to defy God's authority and reject his clear command to avoid the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Because of that choice, death descended on all people. Even though we weren't physically present with Adam, **God regards Adam's choice to be ours.**

² Tony Merida, sermon on Romans 5:12–21.

- This is called “**the doctrine of original sin.**”
- Notice the very important phrase at the end of vs. 12:
~~12-Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned.~~
- IOW, we all sinned in him.

Now, we say, “Wait, that doesn’t feel fair! How can I be held responsible for something we had no part in?”

- (And this is where I’ve struggled, and where C.S. Lewis did, too, FWIW. I mean, think about it. The effects of this choice were not insignificant! Because of this choice, **death passed upon all.** That means **every disease**; every natural disaster; every painful struggle with cancer; every child born with a birth defect; every divorce; every rape; every war; every case of abuse; even hell itself goes back to this choice. **And I wasn’t even there for it?!**)
- **My best friend growing up**, when our Sunday School teacher first taught us this, said, “Man, when I get to heaven I’m going to kick Adam’s tail.”

So how is this fair?

- **Well, in calling Adam our representative, God is saying that what Adam chose is what we all would have chosen had we been given the choice.** (Keep in mind, God was not some passive observer. He was the infinitely wise Creator. He is **omniscient** and understands everything about us. And **he knew that how Adam acted** would be how each us would react in that situation.)
 - **We cannot say:** “No, no. Had I been there I would have done the right thing,” because that is saying you know more than God.³
 - **Who are you to imply that you know more than God?**
 - **No, God knew that all of us, given that same temptation,** would have done the same thing Adam did.

- Think about it: You can't even keep Oreos in our house w/o being tempted...and you don't think you wouldn't have fallen to the temptation to eat of a tree promising God-like knowledge?"
- **You say, “But still, I didn’t make the choice,** so it doesn’t seem right to be held accountable for something I didn’t choose.”
 - **OK, but haven’t you ratified** that choice? Hasn’t there been a point in your life where you followed Adam’s line of thinking-
-how about a **point in the last HOUR?**
 - *I know better than God;*
 - *I would rather do what I want to do than what God wants me to do?*
 - *How many times in your life have you known what the right thing to do was and done the opposite?*
 - *And why is there even a secret delight in us sometimes in doing the wrong?*
 - **There’s a story St. Augustine** told 1500 years ago that has always haunted me. Augustine wasn’t raised as a Christian and he ran with a pretty sketchy crowd as a teen. They had some cool name in Latin like “The Destroyers.”
 - One night, after the gang had finished playing sports in the streets of their neighborhood, they were walking home when they noticed a tree with a bunch of pears on it. It was on someone else’s property:
 - **And here’s the thing, Augustine said:** the pears didn’t even look that good! And none of us was hungry. But we went over and stole a bunch anyway. We ended up just dumping them on the hogs.
 - *“But we loved doing it because it was forbidden.”⁴*
 - Augustine said, it’s always haunted me why I stole those pears. I did it just because it was wrong because my soul has a delight in what is wrong.

³ See Tim Keller, *Romans for You*, 128.

⁴ “Such was my heart, O God, such was my heart—which thou didst pity even in that bottomless pit. Behold, now let my heart confess to thee what it was seeking there, when I was being gratuitously wanton, having no inducement to evil but the evil itself.”

- In all of our lives we can look back and see some point where we chose the wrong just because it was wrong--because we had inward delight in (an attraction to) it. We've nursed a secret resentment of God and his authority.⁵
- So, **even though we weren't physically present** with Adam when he sinned, we've all ratified his choice.

I think all those things are implied in that phrase at the end of vs. 12, **"because all have sinned."**

- It means that we all sinned in Adam because God regarded him as our representative, knowing that we would have made the same choice that he made given the opportunity;
- Secondly, we all sinned individually since then, thereby personally ratifying his awful choice.

The result of this choice, Paul said, was that **death spread to all people.** (which of course means physical death and spiritual death.)

- And, even if we're still struggling with the logic of original sin, we can at least concede the universality of its effects, right?
- **G.K. Chesterton** said that **"Original sin is the only doctrine that is empirically verifiable!"**
 - **Everybody dies. Death rate in the human race is still 1 to 1.**
 - Death and disease affect everyone--nice people as much as cruel people, smart people as ignorant people, rich people as much as poor people; innocent infants as much as adults.⁶
 - **And, 'spiritual death' means we're all born in a posture of rebellion toward God, each with a fist clenched toward the heavens**, assuming our way is better and our desires are most important.

⁵ My words. "It was foul, and I loved it. I loved my own undoing. I loved my error--not that for which I erred but the error itself. A depraved soul, falling away from security in thee to destruction in itself, seeking nothing from the shameful deed but shame itself."

⁶ Keller, 125.

- **Every parent knows this.**
- Kids **come out of the womb like the seagulls** in that scene from Nemo--going, "Mine. Mine. Mine. Mine."
- **Seriously.** Have you ever seen a **2 year old displaying gentleness and selflessness**?
- Has your **18-month-old** ever said, "Mom and Dad... you know, you look like you've had a tough day. Why don't you just put me in my room and go take some **"you time."** That's **happened in my life** exactly **NEVER** times.
- Kids are **born thinking about themselves.**⁷
- We never had to send any of the **Greear kids** to sin camp. They never had to take **selfishness seminars**. They came by that instinctively. They inherited it from their mother.
- I saw something in a book the other day by this **acclaimed secular child psychologist, named Burton White**, famous for his empirical research on early childhood development: **"From fifteen to sixteen months on, as his self-awareness becomes more substantial, something in his nature we don't fully understand will lead him to deliberately try each of these forbidden activities, specifically to see what will be allowed and what won't. In other words, he will begin systematically to challenge the authority of the adult(s) he lives with. Resistance to simple requests becomes very common at this time, and if there is more than one child around, this can be a low point (!) in the parenting experience."**⁸
 - **"A low point."** *Oh, that's what you call it when I feel like clawing my eyes out!*
 - **"Something in his nature, which we don't fully understand..."** (Well, **we understand it** because God has revealed it to us in the Scriptures. He's born with the spirit of Adam.)

⁷ Joby Martin, message on Romans 5:12-21.

⁸ Burton White, *The New First Three Years of Life*.

So, even if you don't understand the logic of original sin, you can at least see the effects.

How else do you explain the pervasive wickedness of the human race?

- Why do we as a race have such trouble doing what is right--even when we know it's wrong, or bad for us?
- Why do riches almost always lead to selfishness; power to corruption?
- Why are we attracted to the wrong so much?

I should note that there is an **alternate theory** as to where our selfishness comes from. It is posed by **atheistic evolution**: basically, **that selfishness** is bred into us through the principle of the survival of the fittest.

- Selfishness helped our species, or our family line, survive in a harsh and competitive environment.
- Our species, our family line is here because we figured out a way to claw and crawl our way to the top, and that didn't happen by being kind and selfless.

According to this theory, there's no such thing as wrong, because "wrong" implies a referee who has established the rules. There's only useful or harmful for the propagation of the species.

Now, in recent years, certain evolutionists like Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris, realizing the moral bankruptcy of this theory, have said, "Well, now that we're in an advanced state, we see that kindness and selflessness can actually help humans survive in community. So, we should choose that."

But note even in that, they are not saying that selflessness is inherently good; just that now it appears to be useful for the species, whereas before cruelty and dominance were useful.

- **According to internal logic of this theory**, selfishness and exploitation and rape are not wrong or evil *per se*--bc there is no wrong or evil; they are simply not useful.
- **If you're an agnostic, you have to consider this**, because this is a **really big deal**, especially when it comes to something like **JUSTICE**.
- **MLK said the reason segregation laws in America were unjust was because they conflicted with the higher laws of God.**⁹ Not that they were useful. There were some racists at the time who might have said, "Well, the old system is more useful than us." But MLK said, "Useful or not, it is wrong because all are made in the image of their Creator."
- But if all we are are accidental biology and chemistry, you can't say that. You can only argue in terms of usefulness, not right and wrong; because **in order for something to be wrong there** has to be some higher standard to appeal to.

So there are two basic options: the atheistic option, which says that there's no such thing as good and evil, which makes justice impossible. The **other basic option is the Christian one**, which says that every single person alive is horribly bent toward evil.

- And you're like, 'Well, thanks, Pastor J.D. With those as my two options, I have to say this is the most depressing sermon I've ever heard.'

Yeah, this is a lot of bad news, but in vs. 13, Paul says **this whole idea of being represented by someone is actually great news also**, because it set up the way of our salvation.

Because, see, he reasons, **if the whole world was put under sin by one man, what if salvation could come to everyone through one man, also?**

And that's **exactly where Paul turns next**.

⁹ Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail."
https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html

¹⁴ (Adam) is a type of the Coming One. Another Adam, Paul says, would be born to the human race. And this one would be similar to the first Adam, **only in reverse**.

¹⁵ But the gift is not like the trespass. For if by the one man's trespass the many died, how much more have the grace of God and the gift which comes through the grace of the one man Jesus Christ overflowed to the many. ¹⁷ Since by the one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive the overflow of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Adam and Jesus are **alike in that their action has implications** for the whole human race, but they are **also different**, Paul says.

- The **motivation behind what they did was different**:
 - The first Adam disobeyed God and selfishly ate from a forbidden tree, bringing a curse on earth.
 - The second Adam obeyed God and sacrificially climbed up onto a tree to take the curse into himself.
- The **first Adam brought death upon the whole human race**; the 2nd Adam restored life to all who would receive it.
 - **John, in his Gospel, draws a parallel** between Jesus and Adam.
 - John starts out his Gospel saying, "**In the beginning was the Word...**" a clear allusion to of Genesis 1.
 - In **Genesis 1**, the Word of God brings order and beauty to an empty, chaotic world. **Throughout Jesus' ministry**, John is going to show us how he, the Word, is going to order and beauty back to empty and chaotic lives.
 - John points out that **Jesus died on the 6th day**. That was the day Adam had been created on; Jesus' death was bringing an end to the first creation.
 - John shows us that Jesus was resurrected on the **first day of the week**, showing he was beginning a new creation.

- John highlights that Jesus died with a **crown of thorns** on his head, which was one of the curses for man's sin.
- John tells us that the first person human Jesus encounters after his resurrection is **Mary in the garden**, who doesn't recognize Jesus--she thinks he's the Gardener. This is symbolic because the last place man and God had been together was in the Garden when Adam and Eve hid from God. Jesus appearing to Mary in the Garden is him saying, "I came back for you and met you in the same place you left me."
 - When Jesus meets his disciples after the resurrection, John tells us that he **breathes on them** his Holy Spirit. Odd? Maybe, but he's re-creating the first creation.
 - **His point? SAME AS PAUL'S here: Jesus is the 2nd Adam, restoring all that the first Adam messed up in the world.**

- We were **condemned through the actions of a representative who did what any of us in his situation would have done**; but now we're saved through a representative who did what none of us *could* have done.
- BTW, this idea of a representative acting on behalf of the people is alluded to over and over in the Old Testament.
 - In the **sacrificial system**, it was a representative lamb who died on behalf of the people
 - In the story of **David and Goliath**, David defeats Goliath all by himself, as Israel's representative as they stood terrified on the sidelines just watching

¹⁸ So then, as through one trespass there is condemnation for everyone, so also through one righteous act there is justification leading to life for everyone.

- **Life for everyone?** Some have said, 'Well, this sounds like everyone will be saved. Just like through one man sin and death came to all; through one act of obedience salvation came to everyone.'

- But **that's not the question Paul is trying to answer here, and that** would contradict too many other things Paul has said, even right in Romans.
 - Not everyone is saved; **faith has to lay hold** of righteousness.
 - **Romans 10:9–10**, if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised his from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.
 - **John 3:36**: He that believes on the Son has everlasting life; he that does not believe is condemned already, and the wrath of God abides on him.
 - Here's an **important rule of Bible interpretation**: Always interpret hard verses by easy ones; unclear verses by clear ones.
 - The **Bible never contradicts itself; and it clearly says** we have to trust Jesus to be saved.
 - Paul even indicates in this passage that not everyone will be saved. Look bac **vs. 17 really quickly**: ¹⁷Since by the one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive the overflow of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. ("those who receive" means that not everyone will receive it.)

What Paul is saying that there are **two family lines**, one from Adam and one from Jesus, and you have to choose: **Team Adam and Team Jesus**.

- You are **on one or the other**.
- The word "**one**" is used **12 times** in these verses. One in this passage means "unity with."
 - We are either **one with (have unity with) Adam in his sin and condemnation, or one with Jesus in his submission** to the Father and eternal life.
 - **Which team are you?**
- You say, "Well, I don't like it that I got included in Adam's choice."

- Well, now you have the chance to reverse that choice.
- What are you **going to do?**

Now, before Paul closes the chapter, he goes back to his discussion of the law. (*It may seem random to you, but **remember, one of the primary objections he is trying to address** is that the Jewish law is necessary for salvation. So, he turns back there again.*) ²⁰The law came along to multiply the trespass.

- **IOW, his familiar theme: the law was not given to save us;** the law was given to show us how sinful we are.
 - Our **hearts were sinful before the law**; the law just revealed how sinful we were by giving us more rules we would never keep.
- Imagine if you were sick with the flu and I gave you this set of rules:
 - Thou shalt not run a temperature
 - ...have the chills
 - ...sneeze
 -have a headache
 - ...feel nauseous
- **With every new command not to have symptoms**, I'm just multiplying the ways you fall short. At some point you say, "I get it! I can't keep these! I'm sick!"
- That's **what the law did**.
- It didn't create sin in us; it just revealed it!

See what Paul says in vs. 13 (which we skipped?) ¹³In fact, sin was in the world before the law (it was always in our hearts), but sin is not charged to a person's account when there is no law. The coming of the law just made sin worse because it gave us more commands we couldn't, and wouldn't, keep..

Now, that phrase, sin is not charged to a person's account when there is no law, has implications for a question many of you have had:

What about babies or mentally challenged people? Will they go to heaven?

- According to this verse, if someone doesn't know the law, they aren't held accountable for it.
 - Remember what **Romans 1:18** said about why God's wrath was against sinners? Because they "suppressed" the truth in unrighteousness. IOW, they knowingly suppress the truth about God. Where there is no awareness of knowledge, there can be no suppression.
 - Or, **John 9:41**: Jesus was speaking with the Pharisees, religious hypocrites, and He told them that they, who claimed they could see, were really blind." And they said, "Are you calling us blind?" and he said this, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt. It is because you say you can see that you are guilty." In other words, if we have no way to understand our sin, God does not hold us accountable for it.
 - **And Deut. 1:39**: When all of Israel sinned and was kept from the promised land as a punishment, God allowed the children to go in because "they didn't know good from evil." He didn't hold them accountable for that sin since they didn't have the capacity to choose it.
 - So, **my conclusion is that for infants or mentally challenged people**, they are not held guilty of sin because they have no perception of the law in their hearts and as such they will go to heaven when they die, covered under Christ's blood as an act of God's grace.
 - **YOU ARE NEVER MORE KIND THAN GOD.** Those who have lost babies or children. Women with abortions. You will see them again in heaven.

You say, "Well, what about adults who have never heard?" The villager in Africa or the Himalayan mountains that have never heard God's laws, are they not held accountable for that either?

- Well, remember what **Paul said in Romans 2:14–15** says--that God has written his law on the hearts of every adult. Even though they may never have seen or heard the Bible, they know the law

of God in their hearts and have **rejected** that, they have consciously chosen to ratify Adam's choice--at which point they become subject to his penalty.

- (We'll **cover that more** when we get to chapter 9, but that's the basic idea)

MUSIC

But Summit, this is why we GO.

- The **whole world is guilty** of the sin of the first Adam--they have all ratified his decision.
- **They need to hear about the salvation available in the 2nd Adam.**
- But they **have to choose** it. God has already made a way for them to be saved, but they have to choose.

But where sin multiplied, grace multiplied even more (no matter how dark or bad the sin, God's grace was greater) ²¹ so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace will reign through righteousness, resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Translation: God has already provided everything necessary for the salvation of the whole human race!

- There is **only one race of people**--the sons and daughters of Adam.
- We all have the **same problem**, sin.
- But **God has sent a second Adam** to redeem, and he's sufficient to save all the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve.

But how will they call on him of whom they have not heard...?

- Go overseas
- Go on a mission trip: NEXT steps/website
- INVITE someone at Easter (cards)

It's helpful for me to think about the fact that every person I meet is, at his or her core, sons and daughters of Adam and Eve.

- We may come from different backgrounds or nationalities, but we were all by one Heavenly Father *for him*. We are all made in his image and in our hearts we yearn for him, even if we don't know it.
- Sometimes I'll see a **Hindu, for example**, and we barely speak the same language. This is a son of Adam made in the image of God! He is **created for God**; he misses him, he has resisted the voice of his loving Creator and suppressed the truth just like I had--but **God loves him** and **Jesus died for him** and God yearns for him to come back and is drawing him in his heart!)

2 questions:

- **Have you chosen the 2nd Adam?** Remember, you didn't have to choose to be born to the first Adam. You do have to choose to be born again to the 2nd.
- **Are you telling others?**