

“The Tale of Two Adams” //

Romans 5:12–21 // Romans #11

Introduction

Before we get rolling today, I wanted to start with some **good news**--to **celebrate something** I heard from Josh Miller, who took a team from here last November to plant a church in Charlottesville, VA, just off UVA's campus.

- Last weekend they **baptized 3 people**, and they've had **8** professions of faith in the past few weeks--most UVA students. This 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.
- My wife, who is a **UVA graduate**, is much pleased by this.
- I told her, is it any coincidence that we plant a church there in Nov, and they make it to the **Final 4** this year for the first time since 1984: I'm not saying our church plant brought that blessing, but I'm not denying it, either. Hoos your one.
- **Let them know how proud you are of them?**

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 comprehend what's being said, *per se***; it's just difficult to get your mind around the logic and the fairness of them.

To be really candid with you, this is one of those passages where I've really **struggled to believe**, and 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 (and I've shared this with you)-- **What if Jesus came to me, in the midst of all these questions, and said**, “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. There was a bunch of Jesus' followers who had problems with what Jesus was teaching and they stopped following him. Well, 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)
- I think in our **first year or two in heaven** it might be like a big classroom with Jesus answering questions...
- Well, **keep that in mind** as we go through this.

This passage is going to address 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 while smoking weed illegally 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?

Paul **teaches concepts that touch on all of those** in these 10 final verses 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 it from the “felt-needs” stuff Paul was just talking about--i.e. about** how to have joy and hope in trials.

- We tend to think that there are two kinds of Bible teaching--the relevant practical stuff for normal people and then the deep doctrinal stuff for seminary nerds.
- That’s not how Paul saw it. The **practical is connected to the deep**. 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

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.

what he’s about to say connects with what he just said about having joy in suffering.)

- These are not **doctrinal musings for the seminary nerd herd**. These truths are how **all of us** can face life with hope, balance and joy; how we can live freed from bitterness and regret

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 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.

Here, in chapter 5, he’s going to go back even farther, all the way to back Adam, the first man, to show how even Adam’s story sets up the gospel.

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 embrace “the dark side.”
- **In so doing**, he brought death, destruction and chaos onto the entire galaxy.
- **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, he was able to reverse the curse that came from the disobedience of the 1st Skywalker, and even **able to redeem the first Skywalker**.
- George Lucas, the writer, said that the **central theme of Episodes 4–6** was the redemption of Anakin, the 1st Skywalker, by Luke, the 2nd.

- 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
- Lost a lot of the ladies...

That’s what’s happening in Romans 5:12–21. 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.**

- This is called **“the doctrine of original sin.”**
- Notice how vs. 12 ends: 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.
- 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?)**

² I first heard this analogy from Tony Merida, in a sermon he preached on Romans 5:12–21. The original source of the illustration, for both Tony and me, is Michael F. Bird, *Romans: The Story of God Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 186–8.

- **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 he knew that what Adam chose is what each of us would have chosen had we been given the choice.** (Keep in mind, God was not some passive observer. He is the infinitely wise Creator. He understands literally everything about us. And **he knew that how Adam acted** would be how each of 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 we know more than God.³
 - **God who knows all and is infinitely just, knew that 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...yet you think you could have resisted the temptation to eat from a tree promising God-like power and knowledge?”
- **You say, “But still, I didn’t make the choice,** so it doesn’t seem fair to be held accountable for something I didn’t choose.”
 - **OK, but haven’t you ratified** that choice at some point in your life? Hasn’t there been a point in your life where you adopted Adam’s line of thinking:
 - 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?)
 - **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 Destructors.”

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

- 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 delighted in doing the wrong.
- 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 all 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."**

- This means that we all sinned in Adam because God regarded him as our representative;
- Secondly, we have ratified his choice since then.

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

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."

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."

- And even if we're still struggling with the logic behind why original sin works like it does, we at least have to concede the presence of its effects?
- **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.
 - **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**

⁶ Keller, 125.

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

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. That "something inside of him" is the spirit of Adam who wants to do things his way)

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 worldview, have said, *"Well, now that we're in an advanced state, we see that kindness and love can actually help humans survive in community. So, we should choose that."*

But note even in that, they are not saying that love 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

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

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

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**.

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 selfishly disobeyed God and ate from the forbidden tree, bringing a curse on earth.
 - The second Adam sacrificially obeyed God and climbed up onto a cursed tree to take that 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, does what Paul does here--he 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. He was literally taking it on his head.
 - John tells us that **the first person person Jesus encounters** after his resurrection is **Mary in a 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 all through 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
 - All these point to the **ultimate rep** who would win the **ultimate battle** for us

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.

- **Just like death** came through a representative, life comes to all through a representative.
- **Now you see that phrase "Life for everyone"** and you say, "*Does this mean everyone will be saved?*" Just like through Adam's sin we were all automatically made sinners, maybe through Christ's sacrifice we were all made righteous."
- But **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**, For if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised him 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 back **vs. 17 really quickly**: 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. ("those who receive" means that not everyone will receive it.)
- It's like an **invitation that has been extended to all**, but you have to RSVP

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 context 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.
 - **Who are you one with?**
- (You say, "Well, I don't like it that I got included in Adam's choice."
 - Well, now you have the chance to reverse it!
 - What are you **going to do?**)

Now, before Paul closes the chapter, he goes back to his discussion of the law--you are like, "Paul, what is the deal with the law? Why do you keep going back to it? Did it hurt you as a kid? Reject your invitation to the prom?" **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.) ²⁰ The 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 nauseated
- **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?) ¹³ In 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. When you have the knowledge of right and wrong, that's when it becomes more sinful, and so the law just made us more sinful by giving us more commands that we couldn't, or wouldn't, obey.

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?

- **Personal**
- **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 knowledgeably suppress the truth about God. Where there is no awareness of knowledge, there can be no suppression.
 - **Or, John 9:41**: Jesus was **arguing with the Pharisees**. They claimed to be the light of Israel. And at one point in the argument, they say, 'Are you calling us sinners?' And Jesus

saysm "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.
 - **If you lost a child...** you'll meet them again. Abortion? You'll have a chance to ask forgiveness.

You say, "Well, does this apply to adults who have never heard?"

- 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 chapters 9 and 10, 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.
- **He died for all of them;**
 - took their thorns;
 - he waits for them in the Garden
 - wants to breathe into the nostrils the breath of life

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*.
- 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! Just like me. He is **created for God** just like me; this man yearns for him even if he doesn't know what he's yearning for; he has resisted the voice of his loving Creator and suppressed the truth just like I had--but **God loves him as a wandering son; Jesus was**

thinking about him when he died on the cross and has been working in his heart to bring him back.)

- Every **human is at his or her core a son of Adam or daughter of Eve** that Jesus has died to redeem, and in whose life he's been revealing himself.
- **When I preach the gospel to them**, I'm reminding them of what they've always known; explaining to them what they were created for that they've never been able to articulate

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. **One with which?**
- **Are you telling others?** Whom has God put in your life?