

“A Tale of Two Heads” (Romans 5:12–21)

Israel is known for two main bodies of water. In the north there is the Sea of Galilee, which is really a lake that is 13 miles long and 7.5 miles wide. Fishing is big in the Sea of Galilee because there are over 22 different kinds of fish. There is also vegetation and fruit on the shore. It is a beautiful body of water. Now, 60 miles to the south is the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is 47 miles long and 9.5 miles wide. It is the lowest point on the entire earth. You could take Mount Everest and drop it into the Dead Sea and its peak would still be a couple of meters shy of sea level. Everyday two million gallons of water flow into the Dead Sea, but none of the water goes out. Amazingly, the Dead Sea contains 30 grams of salt per liter. Consequently, no one has ever drowned in it. There is so much salt and so many minerals that one just floats. Also, there is no life or vegetation. Even the shore is barren. Tumbleweed are the only thing you find. These two bodies of water provide a very stark contrast between that which is brimming with life and that which is exuding nothing but death.

The physical geography of Israel is a portrait of the spiritual reality of humanity. Just as there is one sea that continually breathes life and fruitfulness, there is another sea that breathes death and uselessness. In the same way, there are two classes of people: the person who is in Adam and the person who is in Christ. Of all the people who have ever lived, these two men stand out from the rest of humanity. As representative men, all of human history revolves around these two men—what they did and what flowed from what they did. If you know these two men, you will grasp the essential message of the Bible.

In Rom 5:12–21 Paul wants to compare and contrast the work of Adam with Jesus Christ so that we understand that what Jesus did was far greater than what Adam did.¹ That’s the whole message of these verses, in a nutshell.² In 5:1–11 Paul told us about the immediate results or benefits of being justified by faith.³ However, we also receive something greater and deeper. Rom 5:12–21 goes on to tell us that our entire position is changed!⁴ We used to be “in Adam,” but now we are “in Christ.” This is HUGE! Paul’s simple point: *Grace reigns over all!* In these ten verses, Paul shares two important principles, the latter of which can change your life.

1. All humans are in Adam (5:12–14).⁵ In these first three verses, Paul explains the result or consequence of Adam’s sin. Serving as our representative, Adam sinned, and his sin was applied to every person who has ever lived or will ever live. Paul summarizes and explains this thought in 5:12: **“Therefore,⁶ just as through one man sin entered into the world,⁷ and death through sin,⁸ and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”⁹** The word “therefore” (*dia touto*) is a preposition that is frequently translated “because of this, for this reason,” which looks back at what Paul has just said or continues his argument. This means that 5:12–21 serves as a conclusion to what Paul has said in 5:1–11 and as a prelude to what he will share in chapters 6–8. Paul begins to compare Adam and Christ in 5:12 (“just as . . . so”), but he breaks off his sentence at the end of 5:12. Now, you don’t have to be an English major to realize that 5:12 is not a complete sentence. Many of our English translations provide a dash so that it’s obvious Paul didn’t finish his thought. (I call these “divinely inspired rabbit trails.”) If we are to understand the flow of Paul’s argument, we must realize that 5:13–18a are a big parenthesis,¹⁰ and 5:12 is picked up again in 5:18b. So let’s read it that way, skipping 5:13–18a: **“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 . . . even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.”** Returning to 5:12, Paul writes that sin entered the world “through one man and spread to all men.” Twelve times in 5:12–19 Paul uses the word “one.” He uses this word repeatedly to refer to Adam¹¹ and his sin and Jesus Christ and His work (cf. 1 Cor 15:22; 45–49). Paul also uses the word “all” eight times in this section. Both of these key words provide comparisons and contrasts throughout this section.

Paul wraps up 5:12 with the important phrase “because all sinned.”¹² Although there are various ways of handling this phrase, it is best to understand Paul to be saying that spiritual and physical death came to all people because when Adam sinned his sin was applied to our spiritual accounts. If Paul were thinking about the sins of all people he would have written “all sin” or “all are sinful.” The structure of Paul’s argument supports the view that Adam’s sin counted against us.¹³ Whether we like it or not, the Bible is clear that Adam was our representative head, and when he fell, we fell. You may get upset and say, “I don’t want Adam to represent me.” Well, you may not have voted for the president in the last election, but he can still send your son or daughter to war because he is your representative. You may not agree with everything your senators do, but they still represent you in congress. In case you don’t like political illustrations, let me use one from the sports world: What happens when a member of your favorite football team jumps off sides? The entire team is penalized for the one player’s infraction (i.e., sin) because that player represents a larger unit. He is not just acting for himself.¹⁴ This is what Paul is talking about—he is teaching the idea of representation. The consequences of Adam’s sin came to bear on all humankind.

You might object, “I don’t like this doctrine of representation! It’s not fair! I don’t want to be represented by Adam!” Yet the truth is, if you had been in the Garden of Eden instead of Adam, you would have committed the very same sin. As for me, I would have undoubtedly eaten the fruit almost immediately. At least Adam and Eve apparently lasted a while before partaking of the fruit. Socrates quote, “Know thyself,” applies here. I know myself too well. I know the sin that lies within me. Moreover, the moment each of us reject the doctrine of headship or representation, we have rejected one of the most wonderful doctrines in the Bible. Although Adam was our representative, Christ was our representative as well! Not only did Adam act on our behalf, but Christ acted on our behalf, too! I don’t think I’ve ever heard a Christian complain, “It isn’t fair that Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, came to die for the sin of humankind. I don’t want to be represented by Christ!” Yes, Adam sank our spiritual ship, but God has thrown a life preserver to us. His name is Jesus! What Adam did was the worst thing that ever happened, but what Christ did was the best thing that ever happened.

In case you’re still not convinced, consider the story of the forester named Sam. Sam chopped down trees every day, and every time the boss came by he would hear Sam saying, “Ohh, Adam! Ohh, Adam! Ohh, Adam!” One day the boss asked, “Why do you moan ‘Oh, Adam!’ every time you’re out here chopping trees?” Sam replied, “Because if Adam hadn’t sinned, I wouldn’t have to do this backbreaking work, which is part of the curse.” So the boss said to Sam, “Come with me.” He took Sam to his palatial home with a tennis court, swimming pool, maid, and butler. “All this is yours, Sam,” he said. “You never have to complain again. I give all of it to you, a perfect environment.” Sam couldn’t believe it. The boss said, “Now you can have everything you’ve ever wanted, all the time. The only thing you mustn’t do is touch a little box sitting on the dining room table. Whatever you do don’t touch it!” From then on Sam played tennis every day, he swam, he had his friends over, but after a while he got a little bored. There was only one thing in the house he didn’t know about—that little box on the dining room table. For days he would walk by, checking out the box, but then he would remind himself, “You can’t touch it. Don’t touch it.” Day after day he was tempted to look. One day he finally gave in. “I’ve got to find out what’s in that box!” He went over and opened the box and out flew a little moth. He tried to catch it, but he couldn’t. When the boss came home he found the moth had escaped, he immediately sent Sam back to the forest to chop trees. The next day the boss heard him groaning, “Ohh, Sam! Ohh, Sam! Ohhh, Sam!”

You see, although Adam served as our federal representative and we have now inherited original sin, we are every bit as guilty. We are guilty sinners because Adam sinned (5:12–14), but we are also guilty sinners because we have sinned (3:23). We are condemned on both accounts. So it becomes a mute point. We can’t blame Adam alone. We need to blame ourselves. Adam and Keith are both guilty! My guess is Keith has committed far more sin than Adam. So, I have myself to blame.

In 5:13–14, Paul now explains the result of man’s sin even apart from the Law: **“For until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned¹⁵ from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.”** Paul breaks off his construction and moves in a different direction. But what he says is connected with the preceding because he links it up with the conjunction “for.” Even before the Law was given (Exod 20), sin and death exercised power over humanity (Gen 4, 6, 19, 37–38). Sin resulted in death even before the commands of the law had defined what sin was. Even when sin goes unrecognized or unacknowledged, it still has an affect.

But “sin is not imputed when there is no law.” What does this mean? The word “imputed” (*ellogeo*) means “to charge to one’s account.”¹⁶ Sin is there, but it is not counted as a legal matter, liable to legal punishment. In other words, where there is no law sin is not reckoned as punishable. Adam’s sin was a transgression of an explicit command of God. God stated a one–point law, “You shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil . . . In the day you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen 2:17). Adam broke a direct command when he sinned. After Adam, God gave no more explicit commands until the time of Moses. Although people sinned, their sins were legally tolerated (“not imputed”). Yet, people from the time of Adam to Moses died. Why did they die? They had not broken a command to which the death penalty was attached. The answer is that people died because they had sinned “in Adam.” They shared Adam’s punishment because he served as their representative.

Adam is spoken of as “a type of Him who was to come.” The word “type” or “pattern” (NIV) refers to a person, place, or thing that can be compared or contrasted with someone or something else. In this context, when we look at Adam we can see certain principles that apply to Jesus. Here are several of these “types”: (1) Adam and Jesus were both real persons. (2) Adam and Jesus have both served as representatives for the whole of humanity. (3) Adam and Jesus both drew the world to themselves: one for evil, one for good. (4) Adam and Jesus both affected the course of humanity through one single act. (5) Humanity follows up the work of Adam and Jesus: one with sin, the other with faith. (6) Humanity is either “in Adam” or “in Christ.”

Before we move on, please notice a phrase in 5:14: “death reigned” (cf. 5:17). What keeps the mortuaries in business? What keeps the undertakers going? Why do cemeteries stay in business? Why is it that they never run out of customers? The answer is simple: Death reigns. Life insurance is based on one great theological truth: Death reigns. That’s our heritage from our spiritual father Adam. He sinned, and as a result, death now reigns on the earth. The next time you see a hearse, remember, “Death reigns.” The next time you drive past a mortuary, remember, “Death reigns.” The next time you pass a cemetery, remember, “Death reigns.”¹⁷ What a sobering reality!

[Is there any solution to this problem of sin? Yes! There is good news as we read on. Although all humans are in Adam, we find great and glorious news in 5:15–21 . . .]

2. All believers are in Christ (5:15–21). Paul now explains that God’s grace is readily available to every person who places his or her faith in Jesus Christ alone. The promise of eternal life is a “free gift.” In fact, the word “grace” (*charis*) and the related word “gift” (*charisma*) occur seven times in 5:15–17.¹⁸ Paul couldn’t have made his point more inextricably clear. Salvation is free—no strings attached! In 5:15–17 Paul contrasts the work of Adam and Christ. These three verses are some of the richest in the entire Bible: **“But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation,¹⁹ but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness²⁰ will reign in life²¹ through the One, Jesus Christ.”**

The word “but” (*alla*) brings out the many contrasts between Adam and Christ. First comes the negative: “the free gift is not like the transgression” (5:15a). Adam’s “transgression” brought death to all men, and God’s “gift” brought life to all who will accept it.²² The principle found in this verse is that grace is more powerful than sin. Note the precious expression: “the free gift.” Justification/salvation is free, but it is not cheap. It was purchased at infinite cost (1 Cor 6:20; 1 Pet 1:18–19). *Grace reigns over all!*

Erwin Lutzer tells a story about a missionary who became a good friend of an Indian pearl diver. They had discussed salvation for many hours, but the Hindu could not believe that it could be a free gift. He believed that salvation could come by walking the nine hundred miles to Delhi on his knees. But the missionary said that salvation was so costly that Jesus had to buy it for us. Before he left on his pilgrimage, the Indian gave the missionary the largest and most perfect pearl he had ever seen. The pearl diver explained that his own son had lost his life in getting this pearl from the bottom of the sea. The missionary thanked him, but then insisted that he pay for it. The Hindu was offended, saying that there was no price that could be paid for a pearl that had cost him his son. Then and there the truth dawned: That is why Christians insist that no one can pay for salvation. It cost God the death of His only Son. To think we can pay for that is an insult indeed. *Grace is free to us but very costly to God.*²³

In 5:16 Paul introduces a fourfold contrast: (1) “the gift” vs. “the one who sinned,” (2) “judgment” vs. “the gift,” (3) “one transgression” vs. “many transgressions,” and (4) “condemnation” vs. “justification.” The word “condemnation” refers to “the punishment following a judicial sentence.” In 5:16 we learn that the result of Adam’s sin was the condemnation of all men. But through the death of one man, the many can now experience justification. Finally, in 5:17 Paul tells us that Adam’s sin brought death into the world while Christ’s death brought life into the world. Please notice, though, that Paul states that this life is only available to “those who receive.” This passage does not teach Universalism (i.e., the belief that in the end everyone will be saved). It does the exact opposite; it clearly emphasizes the necessity of belief.

If we receive the gift of justification, Paul states that we will “reign in life” through Jesus Christ. The word “reign” (*basileuo*) comes from the word “king.” In Scripture there are words that we can attach to “king”: (1) wealth, (2) authority, (3) subjection, and (4) influence. No other person has a greater ability to influence people than the king. *We* have no idea the sphere of influence that we hold. Paul is calling us to live this life according to who we are in Christ. This is the goal of grace—“reign in life”—not justification, but sanctification; the goal of the Christian life is not just to get us to heaven (justification), but also to bring heaven down to earth (sanctification). So right now, in this life, we are training for reigning.²⁴ God is equipping us to rule in the world to come. *Grace reigns over all!*

In 5:18–21 Paul summarizes the basic argument he began in 5:12 (“so then”). In these four verses, he makes comparisons between Adam and Christ (5:18–19), and contrasts between sin and grace (5:20–21). In 5:18–19 Paul now, finally, completes the comparison he began in 5:12. **“So then²⁵ as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.²⁶ For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.”²⁷** In 5:18 Paul returns to the thought he began in 5:12. He begins with, “So then” (*ara oun*) and stresses the logical sequence. Adam provided condemnation, but Christ provided justification. In 5:18, the first “all” is literal (condemnation of all men), the second one is a figure of speech (synecdoche of whole for part). In 5:19 the first “many” is literal, and the second is a figure of speech (synecdoche of part for whole).

In the movie, “The Last Emperor,” a young boy is anointed as the last emperor of China and lives a life of luxury with 1000 servants at his command. One day his brother asks, “*What happens when you do wrong?*” The emperor answered, “*When I do wrong, someone else is punished.*” He then demonstrates by breaking a jar, and one of his servants is beaten. In Christianity Jesus reverses that ancient pattern. When the servants (that’s us) make a mistake, the King is punished. Instead of us being condemned eternally for our sins, Jesus is condemned. *Grace reigns over all!*

Paul concludes this paragraph in 5:20–21 by commenting on the purpose of the Law and the nature of God’s grace. **“The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death,²⁸ even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”** In 5:20a Paul states, “The Law came in so that the transgression would increase.” The Law reveals our inability to achieve God’s standard. In this context the word “increased” (*pleonazo*) does not mean to multiply or grow larger; it means to highlight even more.²⁹ One of my favorite tools for Bible study is a yellow highlighter. I highlight portions in my Bible so that my eyes are drawn to certain words or phrases that I want to focus on. Whenever I’m studying a particular passage I’ve highlighted, I can immediately see the text I believe is important. In the same way God’s standard of perfection is so important that He brought the Law in so our transgressions would become more obvious. The Law served to highlight our desperate need. This prepares us to admit our need for God’s grace. The Law does not decrease sin; it actually increases sin! The logical conclusion is that legalistic teaching will lead to more sin, not less sin!³⁰

Although I fervently preach and teach God’s grace, I often find myself thinking and feeling like a modern-day Pharisee. I get on my performance treadmill and try to work, work, work, somehow hoping that the Lord will love me more. Theologically, I know this is heresy. If anyone suggested this type of mindset to me, I would tell them nothing could be further from the truth: it is impossible for God to love them more than He already does. Unfortunately, I have lived with a set of high expectations for myself (and sometimes others). I have rarely, if ever, measured up to my own expectations, much less those that I have sensed God has for me. I’ve realized that I have often paralyzed myself with burdensome and cumbersome legalism. I’ve even seen how this has affected my own children. My expectations for my kids are often unrealistic. There have been plenty of times when I have not allowed my boys to be boys or my girl to be less than perfect. When I do bite my lip and hold my tongue, they can often sense my internal expectations for them. It can be very overwhelming and demoralizing. Fortunately, Lori and I have been learning that works-based parenting and discipline-based parenting rarely works. What wins the day is GRACE-based parenting. When my children sense my unconditional approval of them, when I let them fail me (and God), they learn their father’s love and acceptance. They are also motivated to live a life of gratitude and respect. *Grace reigns over all!*

The greatness of God’s grace leads Paul to conclude this with fervency (5:20–21). At the beginning of this section sin and death were reigning; now grace is now reigning! The phrase translated “abounded all the more” (*hyperperisseuo*) literally means “super abounded.”³¹ Although sin had its day and “reigned in death,” grace will have the final hurrah through Christ’s righteousness. The result is “eternal life,” which here is both quantity and quality (cf. 6:23). Through the free gift of God’s grace, He empowers us to live for Him.

By condemning the human race through one man (Adam), God was then able to save the entire human race through one man (Jesus)! That is our passage in one sentence. Christian, you are no longer in Adam, you are in Christ. Stop swimming in the Dead Sea; move over to the Sea of Galilee. You are a new person with a high calling. Pre-Christian, if you haven’t received the gift that God has offered you, you are still in Adam. But you can receive the free gift by trusting in the person and work of Jesus Christ. When you do, you will no longer be trapped in a sea of death. You will escape the consequences of Adam and will have a life filled with greater purpose and worth. *Grace reigns over all!*

The doctor said, “If you are a believer in miracles, this would be one.” The doctor was talking about Alcides Moreno. By every law of physics and medicine, Moreno should have died. Moreno was a window washer in Manhattan. He rode platforms with his brother Edgar high into the sky to wash skyscrapers. From there he could look down to see the pavement far below where the people looked like ants. On December 7, 2007, catastrophe struck the Moreno family. As the brothers worked on the 47th story of a high rise, their platform collapsed, and Alcides and Edgar fell from the sky.

“If you are a believer in miracles, this would be one.” No, Alcides Moreno didn’t land on a passing airplane, or catch his shirt on a flagpole, or have anything else amazing happen like you see in the movies; he fell the entire forty–seven stories to the pavement below. As would be expected, his brother Edgar died from the fall, but somehow Alcides did not. He lived. For two weeks he hung on to life by a thread. Then, on Christmas Day, he spoke and reached out to touch his nurse’s face. One month later, the doctors were saying that he would probably walk again some day. If you are a believer in miracles, this would be one.

In the beginning of the human race, Adam also fell from a great height. From sinless glory in the image of God, Adam rebelled against God and fell into sin and death and judgment, and in this terrible fall he brought with him the whole human race. But, God the Son left the heights of heaven and descended to the earth to become a man. He lived a sinless life and then willingly went to the cross to die for the sins of Adam’s fallen race. On the third day he rose again, and in His resurrection He made it possible for all to rise again and live forever. If you are a believer in miracles, *this* would be one.³²

Today, will you remain in Adam and die, or will you believe in Jesus and live? Eternal life is a free gift, and it is available to you. Don’t let Adam’s fall (and your fall) keep you from missing out on Jesus’ great work on your behalf. *Grace reigns over all!* Receive God’s grace today.

Scripture References

Romans 5:12–21

Genesis 2:16–17

Genesis 3:1–24

Psalms 51:5–7

1 Corinthians 15:22, 45–49

1 Timothy 2:14

2 Corinthians 5:21

Study Questions

1. How is it different to say, “I sometimes commit sins,” from saying, “I am a sinner” (Romans 5:12)? Why is the latter so much deeper and more serious? In conversations with others, how do I acknowledge my sinfulness? Do others understand my explanations? How do they respond?
2. In what ways do I feel the pain of a world under death (Romans 5:13–14)? How has sin affected my family and those close to us? When have I felt the devastation of my sin (or the sin of others) the most? How can I learn from this experience? How can I help others avoid such consequences?
3. Do I find it hard to believe that Jesus’ one act of obedience can change me from a sinner to a righteous saint (Romans 5:15–17)? Why would my pride prefer this transformation to be done in some other way? How can I rehearse my identity in Christ?
4. Why does Paul emphasize the “free gift” of justification five times in three verses (Romans 5:15–17)? Why is it so important to understand that justification/salvation is a “free gift”? How should this concept impact the way I present the gospel?
5. How does God’s overflowing grace change the way I think of myself (Romans 5:20–21)? How does it change the way I think about those outside the church? What can I take away from the overarching nature of God’s grace? How can I apply this to my marriage and parenting?

Notes

¹ In Rom 5:12–21 Paul compares and contrasts condemnation and justification. His comparison is signified by the phrase “as . . . (even) so . . .” (5:18, 19, 21). His contrast is “not as” (5:15, 16) and “much more” (5:15, 17, 20). Paul also compares and contrasts the two men: Adam and Christ. Notice the two acts: Adam’s act of disobedience when he ate the forbidden fruit (Gen 3:6) versus Christ’s act of obedience when he died on the cross (Rom 5:18–19; Phil 2:8). Note the overwhelming consequences in Rom 5:17–19 and the two results. Because of what Adam did—death, judgment, and condemnation, and because of what Christ did—life, righteousness, and grace.

² Hughes, writes, “It is universally agreed that the passage before us is one of the greatest theological sections in the entire Bible. In its ten verses Paul summarizes the theology of the preceding chapters about the lostness of man and his rescue through God’s provision. It is also commonly agreed that Rom 5:12–21 is among the most difficult passages in Romans, if not in the entire New Testament. Einstein’s advice before us that ‘we should make things as simple as possible, but not simpler than they are.’” R. Kent Hughes, *Romans: Righteousness from Heaven*. Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), Electronic ed.; Alan F. Johnson, *Romans*. Everyman’s Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 2000), 99. Nygren argues that Rom 5:12–21 is the high point of the whole epistle, in the light of which the whole is best to be understood. Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1949), 19.

³ We have peace with God (Rom 5:1a), access to God’s grace (5:2a), the hope of glory (5:2b), an understanding of our troubles (5:3–4), an experience of God’s love (5:5–10), and joy because we have been reconciled with God (5:11).

⁴ Although Rom 5:12–21 is likely in the sanctification section (5:1–8:39), it may also serve to conclude everything Paul has said in 1:18–5:11, and to prepare the way for everything he is going to say in 6:1–8:39. As Moo insightfully says, “The verses make better sense when viewed as 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.” Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*. New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 317. See also Thomas Schreiner, *Romans*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 271.

⁵ Hughes, *Romans*, Electronic ed. Offers the following outline:

The Ruin of Mankind (5:12–14) Summarizing 1:18–3:20

The Rescue of Mankind (5:15–19) Summarizing 3:21–5:11

The Reign of Mankind (5:20–21) Summarizing 6:1–8:39

Swindoll uses the same outline but substitutes “Humanity” (e.g., Humanity’s Ruin”). Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 122.

⁶ Romans has several strategically placed “therefores” (cf. 5:1; 8:1; 12:1).

⁷ Stott illustrates, “As Adam was the door through which sin entered, so sin was the door through which death entered. This is an allusion to Genesis 2:17 and 3:19, where death (both physical and spiritual) is said to have been the penalty for disobedience (cf. 1:32; 6:23).” John R. W. Stott, *Romans: God’s Good News for the World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), 150.

⁸ Sin and death are a couplet—they always go together. Sin brings forth death (Jas 1:15).

⁹ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 321 notes the chiasm of Rom 5:12:

A sin (12a) produces

B death (12b);

B all die (12c)

A because all sin (12d).

¹⁰ The NKJV places parentheses around Rom 5:13 and 17.

¹¹ The Hebrew term *adam* (“Adam”) literally means “man, human being.”

¹² Wallace explains why the Greek phrase *eph oh* should be translated “because” (i.e., a causal conjunction). See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar and Beyond* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 342–43.

¹³ Consider the following fivefold repetition of this truth:

(1) “For if by the transgression of the one the many died” (5:15).

(2) “The judgment arose from one transgression” (5:16).

(3) “By the transgression of the one, death reigned” (5:17).

(4) “Through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men” (5:18).

(5) “Through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners” (5:19).

¹⁴ The positive side of this illustration could be posed like this: When your favorite football team wins a game do you declare, “The Seahawks won?” Of course not! You likely exclaim, “We won!” You are an avid fan and you’ve developed a sense of ownership.

¹⁵ The word *basileuo* (“to reign”) means “to exercise authority at a royal level” or “to obtain royal power” (BDAG s.v. *basileuo* 1–2).

¹⁶ BDAG s.v. *ellogeo*. See Phlm 18 for the only other NT occurrence.

¹⁷ Ray Pritchard, “Paradise Regained” (Rom 5:15–21): www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/1993-01-04-Paradise-Regained/.

¹⁸ There are two different Greek words for “gift” used in Rom 5—*charisma* (5:15, 16) and *dorea/dorama* (5:15, 16, 17)—but they are synonymous.

¹⁹ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 338 n. 108 notes that many Greek terms ending in *-ma* denote the action or activity that results in more than the judicial verdict. Thus, it appears that Paul is referring to the life of service to death rather than the ontological, judicial, spiritual reality of condemnation. This explains why Paul changes terms from the condemnation in chapters 1–4. The term is only used in 5:16, 18, and 8:1.

²⁰ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 340 helpfully analyzes: “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 decisions; it is for those who ‘receive’ the gift. The importance of this qualification can hardly be overemphasized. For it reminds us — lest we have forgotten Rom. 1–4! — that righteousness and life are for those who *respond* to God’s grace in Christ and that they are *only* for those who respond.”

²¹ Lopez writes, “Since death had automatic dominion over those born of Adam Paul did not say that the subjects of death reigned in death, because death exercises dominion over them (Murray, *Romans*, 1:197). Yet, *those who will reign in life* are only those who *receive the gift of righteousness*. This is important. In Romans 3:21–4:25 Paul stressed the importance of responding to God’s righteousness through faith in Christ. Thus only those who *receive* Him are the recipients of grace. As a result of this, universalism receives the death knell. Since men are under the ‘penal servitude’ due to their unrighteousness, God must supply His righteousness if humanity will ever escape their enslavement to sin. Hence only those who receive the free gift of eternal life (5:15) *will reign in life*. Contextually the future reign here does not necessarily refer to the saints’ future reign with Christ, but to a ‘logical’ future (Moo, *Romans*, 340) of the present experience of life that Paul developed earlier by the phrase ‘through Him’ and ‘by His life,’ in 5:9–10. This is precisely what Paul surfaces here and in chapter 6. The means by which this *reign in life* manifesting righteous acts comes is *through . . . Christ*. This is nothing less than the resurrection-life experience that Paul begins to develop here but completely discloses in 6:1–23.” René A. Lopez, *Romans Unlocked: Power to Deliver* (Springfield, MO: 21st Century Press, 2005), 119. Stott writes: “Formerly death was our king, and we were slaves under its totalitarian tyranny. What Christ has done for us is not just to exchange death’s kingdom for the much more gentle kingdom of life, while leaving us in the position of subjects. Instead, he delivers us from the rule of death so radically as to enable us to change places with it and rule over it, or *reign in life*. We become kings, sharing the kingship of Christ, with even death under our feet now, and one day to be destroyed.” *Romans*, 155–6.

²² Cranfield puts it well: “That one single misdeed should be answered by judgment, this is perfectly understandable: that the accumulated sin and guilt of all the ages should be answered by God’s free gift, this is the miracle of miracles, utterly beyond human comprehension.” C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans*, vol 1. ICC series (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 286.

²³ Erwin W. Lutzer, *How You Can Be Sure You Will Spend Eternity With God* (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 41.

²⁴ Hughes, *Romans*, Electronic ed. puts it well, “As believers we are intended to reign. But the truth is, many of us are not reigning.”

²⁵ This is the first occasion that Paul uses the strong inferential *ara* (“so then”). However, see the following uses: Rom 7:3, 25; 8:12; 9:16, 18; 14:12, 19.

²⁶ Paul is not advocating universalism here. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 343 explains: “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.’”

²⁷ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 345 summarizes: “Rather than states, or destinies (death/life, condemnation/justification), Paul now describes these results in more ‘personal’ categories: through Adam, the many ‘were made sinners’; through Christ, they ‘will be made righteous [people].”

²⁸ Lopez, *Romans Unlocked*, 122 elaborates: “Paul spoke, in vv 14, 17, of death reigning, but now refers to sin’s reign as a king *in death*. The ambiguous *en* may be rendered in various ways: ‘sin reigned with death’ (i.e., accompaniment), ‘sin reigned through death’ (i.e., instrumentally), or ‘sin reigned in the realm of death’ (i.e., sphere). The latter seems best since the sphere where death reigned, in vv 16–17, is the same where sin reigns as king. Nevertheless, God’s immense grace as a powerful king establishes its throne through (by means of) righteousness (*dikaioynē*) in the lives of believers by overthrowing sin’s monarchy. However, although this overthrowing of sin occurs in one sense at justification, Paul’s idea here refers to the grace-rule that believers will manifest in living righteously as chapter 6 shows: ‘present . . . your members as instruments of righteousness to God’ (v 13), ‘obedience leading to righteousness’ (v 16), ‘slaves of righteousness’ (v 18) and ‘you were free in regard to righteousness’ (v 20). Hence, the purpose of believers is to (*eis*, preposition indicating purpose) experience eternal life similar to the purpose in 6:22 that shows believers being set free from sin ‘leading [*eis*] to sanctification, and the end is eternal life’ (NET). Thus Paul concludes by showing how all of this is possible through Jesus Christ our Lord (cf. the phrases ‘through Him’ and ‘by His life’ in 5:9–10) as chapter 6 develops.”

²⁹ BDAG s.v. *pleonazo* 1: “to become more and more, so as to be in abundance, *be/become more* or *be/become great, be present in abundance, grow, increase*.”

³⁰ John Hart, “The Letter to the Romans,” unpublished class notes (2010 ed.), Moody Bible Institute.

³¹ The verb *perisseuo* means to overflow. Paul, however, has intensified this by attaching the preposition *huper* (“over”) to the verb. Thus, *hyperperisseuo* means “super abundant outpouring.” See also BDAG s.v. *hyperperisseuo* 1: “to be very high on a scale of amount, *be in great excess*.” *Hyperperisseuo* occurs only one other time in the NT (see 2 Cor 7:4).

³² Preaching Today citation: Craig Brian Larson, editor of PreachingToday.com source: “It Wasn’t All Bad,” The Week (1-18-08), 4.