

The True and Better Adam (Part 2)

Romans 5:12-21

March 19, 2017

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We find ourselves, in our study, in the second major section of this letter. Chapters 5 through 8 are the gospel experienced, that is, the security of our justification. Paul wants us to know, having explained that we have been justified by faith in Christ, that that justification is secure, for us, that it is certain, that our eternity is set.

And so, we've already looked at the first paragraph in the section. The first 11 verses of chapter 5 provide the immediate benefits of our justification. We walked through those amazing benefits that are ours already, because of, for the most part are ours already, some of them still in the future, because of what Christ has done in our justification.

We're now looking at the second paragraph in the section on our security, and this paragraph too is intended to give us a sense of confidence and security in Christ. This paragraph, that we've just read together, chapter 5 verses 12 through 21, is the legal basis for our justification. In other words, here we learn how it is that God can treat us as if we had lived Jesus' righteous life and how God can treat us as if we had satisfied His justice by death, when it was Jesus who died. This is the legal basis for our justification. And it gives us confidence because we find that we're no longer in Adam as we once were, but now we are in Christ, and we get all the benefits for what He did, and that secures us forever.

So, the main point of this paragraph is this, Jesus Christ can secure our justification. That is, He can make it possible for us to be declared right with God through His work because God appointed Him as our representative, just as he did Adam in the garden. Let me say that again, Jesus Christ can secure our justification because God appointed Him as our representative, just as he did Adam in the garden.

Now folks, you're going to have to put on your thinking caps again this morning. This is the most difficult paragraph in the entire book of Romans, perhaps in many ways, in the New Testament, but it is crucial, it is fundamental, it is foundational to the gospel. The passage we study this morning gives us the only legal basis on which God can credit the work of Christ to us without violating His own perfect justice.

You see, in God's wisdom, God chose to appoint both Adam and Christ as official representatives of those connected to them. In the garden, God made Adam the representative of all of his descendants. And who are Adam's descendants? All humanity, every human being.

Adam represented us in the garden and then God credited to us the consequences of Adam's bad decision, of his sin.

But it doesn't end there. In His earthly ministry, our Lord Jesus Christ was also appointed by God as a representative of all of His descendants. And who are His descendants? All of those who would believe in Him. And God then credits everything Christ did for His seed, for His descendants, to them. Theologians call the truth that's in this passage, the truth we're examining this morning, they call it federal headship or representative headship.

Again, this is something we experience all the time. I pointed out last time, our government is a representative government. We elect representatives and then we suffer either the consequences or the benefits of their decisions. The only difference in the case of Adam and Christ is we didn't elect them, God did.

Now, when we look at those expressions, federal headship or representative headship, they simply mean this, God legally appointed someone to serve as our representative and we receive either the guilt and consequences, or the benefits and blessings of that representative's actions. And this is crucial, because God can only credit the guilt or righteousness of one person to another person if, and only if, that person serves as a legal representative.

Now, this is not my outline of this passage, but let me just remind you what we looked at last time, of the basic flow of Paul's argument. It's very complex. Again, put on your thinking cap, this is the hardest passage in Romans. So here's what happens, Paul begins and then interrupts himself. So, here's how it flows, in verse 12 he starts his main argument. But then you'll notice, at the end of verse 12, in many versions there's a dash or some way to indicate that there's a parenthesis that follows, and verses 13 through 17, Paul addresses two parenthetical issues.

At the end of verse 12 he says, "all sinned." So, he takes a break in verses 13 and 14 to deal with this parenthetical issue, what does "all sinned" mean? And then, at the end of verse 14, he says, Adam is a type of Christ. So, he again interrupts himself, a second time, in verses 15 to 17, to deal with the issue of how is Christ different from Adam, superior to Adam. And then he doesn't come back to the argument that he really started in verse 12 until we get to verses 18 and 19, here is the main argument completed.

And then finally, in verses 20 and 21 he deals, kind of as an aside, with a question the Jews would have had. He's talking about Adam and Christ, and the Jew would have said, wait a minute Paul, timeout, what about the law, all of that stuff between Adam and Christ, what do you do with that? And so, in verses 20 to 21 he addresses the function of the law.

Now, the heart of this paragraph then, is that God appointed Christ as the representative of all who would believe in Him. But to understand how Christ can represent us, you first have to understand how Adam did, and so that's where Paul starts. So, in verses 12 to 14 we have Adam

our representative, how sin, condemnation, and death came to all men, Adam our representative, how sin, condemnation, and death came to all men. This is foundational, because if you don't understand this, you don't understand how Christ can act in our place. So, let's look at it together.

Now, remember, the flow of the context here, in the first 11 verses of this chapter, Paul has explained to us all of the blessings of salvation and justification that are ours because of Christ. And again and again, in those 11 verses, he says it's because we are in Christ. We are in Christ. We are in Christ. We get the benefits of His death. So that raises a question, how can God legally, justly, credit to us what belongs only, and really, to Jesus Christ? How can He do that without violating His justice? Isn't He, in doing that, violating one of the most basic principles of God's own justice, that He treats each person based on their sin or righteousness?

Ezekiel 18, "the soul that sins shall die" and "the one who lives in righteousness," will gain the reward of that righteousness. So, if that's how God operates, how can He do for us what He does with Christ? How can He treat us as if we had lived Jesus' righteous life and treat us as if we had satisfied the justice of God by dying, when it was Christ who died? Isn't this some kind of legal fiction, as it is sometimes called by its enemies? Paul says, absolutely not, because God has made Christ our representative in the same way that He's already done so in the way He made Adam our representative.

And so, in verse 12, we find Adam's representation explained. Notice verse 12, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned." Now, as we noted last time, in that verse Paul lays down four basic propositions about original sin. Original sin is just that sinful state or condition in which all human beings are born. He lays down four propositions about that.

Number one, sin entered the world through Adam, sin entered the world through Adam. Verse 12, "just as through one man," Adam, he refers to him by name down in verse 14, we're talking about Adam, "just as through Adam sin entered into the world." Now, as we noted last time, that doesn't mean just that people started sinning, although that's true, it means more than that. It means that all men, universally, became morally guilty, morally corrupt, and began to commit actual sins. Sin entered the world through Adam.

Secondly, we discovered last time, a second proposition about original sin, in verse 12, is that death entered the world through Adam's sin, death entered the world through Adam's sin. Notice verse 12, "just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death entered into the world through Adam's sin." You see, God decreed the sentence of death on Adam because of his sin.

What kind of death? Well, we learned all three biblical manifestations of death. There was, first of all, physical death. He didn't die right away, but even on the day he sinned in Genesis 3, God

says, “from dust you are made and to dust you will return,” you’re going to die, Adam, because of what’s happened; physical death is coming. Secondly, there was immediately, on the very day and moment that he sinned, there was spiritual death, he was alienated from God. Here, Adam and Eve, who had once enjoyed the company and communion of God in the garden, now God comes walking in the garden in the cool of the day and what do they do? They run and hide. They are alienated from God, spiritual death. And then thirdly, they brought in, Adam brought into the world by his sin, the second death, as John the Apostle calls it, in Revelation 20, that is, eternal death.

Now, Adam and Eve do not experience this, because on the very day they sinned they were redeemed. I believe I could prove that to you if we had time to go back to Genesis 3, but there was a period of time from when they sinned until they were redeemed that they were liable to, worthy of, eternal death, the second death as it’s called, eternal separation from God and suffering in the lake of fire. They brought death; death entered the world through Adam’s sin.

Now, that brings us to fresh material today. Where we left off last time we now pick up, Paul’s third proposition about original sin. Number three, death spread to all men because of Adam’s sin, death spread to all men because of Adam’s sin. Again, verse 12, “Therefore just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men.” “And so,” in the Greek text, is literally, in this way. So, death came into the world through Adam’s sin, and in the same way, through Adam’s sin, death spread to everyone.

In fact, there is a very picturesque way that it’s expressed in the in the original language. Literally translated it says, death went through all men. You can picture it spreading like a disease through all human beings. Death spread to everyone Adam represented, all of his descendants. In other words, every human being. Death came to all men and it came in the same three biblical manifestations that it came to Adam. There was physical death that spread to all men. Adam, you remember, lived 800 years, we saw last time, he lived 800 years after his sin, but then he died.

But the divine judgment of physical death didn’t start with Adam, it happened much sooner. In fact, physical death began on the very day that Adam sinned. Do you remember the first physical death? It was an animal that God killed to provide covering for them. I think picturing the eventual sacrificial system where an innocent one would die to cover the sin of the guilty. But the first human death came shortly thereafter, when Cain murdered his brother Abel. Abel was the first human to die, but death spread to all of Adam’s descendants.

Go back to Genesis 5, Moses, as he writes Genesis, labors to make this point. Look at Genesis 5:5, “So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.” Adam died. Verse 8, “Enosh lived ninety years, and became the father of.” I’m sorry, verse 8, “So all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years, and he died.” Verse 11, “So all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years, and he died. Verse 14, “So all the days of Kenan were

nine hundred and ten years, and he died.” Verse 17, “So all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years, and he died.” Verse 20, “So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years, and he died.” Verse 27, “So all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years, and he died.” Verse 31, “So all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years, and he died.” Could Moses make it any clearer than that?

Death spread to all men. That’s why the writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 9:27, “it is appointed for men,” God has appointed for all men, “to die once, and after this comes judgment.” Why? It’s because of Adam. In fact, Paul couldn’t make it any clearer than this, 1 Corinthians 15:22, “in Adam all die,” “in Adam all die.”

This is not like a favorite topic. You probably haven’t been to a party recently and, you know, struck up a conversation about death. We don’t like to think about it, it reminds us of our mortality, it reminds us of the reality. But folks, understand this, everybody here this morning, if the Lord tarries, will die. I will die. You will die. Why? Because death spread to all through the sin of Adam. That’s what Paul says here.

Now, this is a sobering thought. Think about this, if you want to grasp the seriousness of your sin, if I want to grasp the seriousness of my sin, all we have to do is think about this, every human death, every human death, is the direct result of God’s judgment on one sin. And was that like this really gross perverted sin, was it like this high-handed act of obvious rebellion as we would see it? No, Adam ate a piece of fruit from the one tree God said he couldn’t eat it from. And because of that one act of rebellion, God sentenced every human being to death. That tells us how serious sin is. It tells us how holy God is. It tells us the need for the gospel.

Now, physical death spread to all men, but not only physical death spread to all men, but spiritual death spread to all men. Ephesians 2 talks about us being dead in sin. But look at Ephesians 4. Ephesians 4:18, here is Paul’s description of every unbelieving person, every person who is not in Christ. This was us before we came to Christ. This is every person who is not in Christ. Verse 18, he says they are, “darkened in their understanding,” and then he says this, “excluded from the life of God,” they are spiritually dead. They are dead to God. They can’t know God. They can’t interact with God. They’re alienated from God, just as Adam was the very moment he sinned and he hid from God.

Spiritual death spread to all men, but not only that, not only physical death, not only spiritual death, but the second death or eternal death, spread to all men. Again, listen to Revelation 20:15, “all,” get that word, “all who were not written in the Lamb’s book of life were cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death.” So, eternal death spread to all men and the only ones who won’t endure that second death, eternal separation from God, in eternal suffering, from the presence of God, are those who know Jesus Christ, who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

Now, to many it seems unfair that death spread to all men through Adam's sin, so in the next phrase Paul explains why God allowed death to spread to all men in a fourth proposition, back in Romans 5, in a fourth proposition about original sin. And it's this, God credited the guilt of Adam's sin to all men, God credited the guilt of Adam's sin to all men. This is why death spread to all men, because we all were declared guilty by God for Adam's sin. This is what the text says. Look at verse 12, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because," here's why I say that death spread to all men, "because all sinned." The reason all men die is because all sinned.

But, of course, this raises the huge question of what does Paul mean by "all sinned"? Clearly, Paul meant to say that there is some connection between Adam's sin and the sin and condemnation of all of us, there's some connection between us and Adam and his sin. What is that connection? Well, again you've got to, you've got to put on your thinking cap. This will be worth it if you stay with me, but there are four primary views that theologians put forward about the relationship between Adam's sin and us, and therefore, of what Paul means by "all sinned."

Let me give the four views to you. View number one we'll call the Pelagian view. This was the view of the heretic Pelagius. He was the arch nemesis of Augustan. And Pelagius taught this, he said, we inherit no moral pollution from Adam through our parents, and, in fact, we are born without a sin nature. Pelagius said, we're born like a blank slate and we choose either sin or righteousness, and we have the ability to do that. This view was understandably condemned as heresy.

In addition, Pelagius said, we also bear no personal guilt for Adam's sin. So, Pelagius would interpret "all sinned" here in verse 12 this way, we choose to sin because we choose to follow Adam's bad example. That's the only relationship. According to Pelagian theology, the sin of Adam had no effect on us except that of a bad example. Now folks, the immediate context rejects this view entirely. We'll see as we walk through it, but according to Paul this whole passage says there is some relationship between Adam's sin and ours beyond that of example.

The second view is that of John Calvin. We'll call it the inherited sinful nature view. Calvin taught we inherit moral corruption. He said, obviously, because this is clear in Scripture, we do inherit moral corruption from Adam through our parents, but we bear no personal guilt for Adam's sin. Now, I love and appreciate John Calvin, but he's a man and I think he's wrong here, and I'll show you why.

Now, Calvin would say therefore, that "all sinned" in verse 12 means this, we have all committed personal sins because we inherited moral corruption from Adam through our parents. In other words, "all sinned" here means what it always means, I sin, you sin, we all sin, because we inherited this moral corruption from Adam. Now, the reason this, I don't think, can be the view of this passage, is because, look at Paul's direct statement in verse 18. He says, "through one transgression," the sin of Adam, "there resulted," notice he doesn't say corruption, he says,

what? “Condemnation.” What does the word condemnation mean? Legal guilt, legal guilt. So, this can’t be what Paul’s teaching here.

That brings us to a third possible interpretation and this gets a little closer. It’s called the seminal or the realistic view. This was the view of Augustan, the church father, and Augustan said, obviously, Scripture teaches we inherit moral corruption from Adam through our parents, and he said, we do bear personal guilt for Adam’s sin. In other words, we are guilty because Adam sinned. Why? Augustan’s answer was, because we were really, or seminally, in Adam when he sinned.

So, in this case, “all sinned” would be interpreted this way, we all really sinned in Adam because we were there in his loins, seminally, when he sinned. You say, where would that idea come from? Well, it comes from Hebrews 7. You remember, there the writer of Hebrews argues, when he’s talking about the priesthood of Christ, he argues that Levi, in the loins of Abraham seminally, paid tithes to Melchizedek. You remember that? They use that argument to say the same thing is true with Christ.

As I said, I think this view gets a little closer to the reality, but it still falls short in several ways. Think about how this can’t be the right view. First of all, because it doesn’t explain why we are guilty only of Adam’s first sin. Why not of all of his sins, because we were seminally in him when he committed all of them? Secondly, it cannot explain why we’re not guilty of the sins of all of our ancestors, because we were in all of them seminally in the same sense that we were in Adam. So why not that too? In addition, verse 14 explicitly says that Adam’s descendants between Adam and Moses did not commit Adam’s sin.

But I think the major problem with this view is that it destroys the parallel between Adam and Christ in this passage. How are we righteous in Christ? Are we righteous in Christ because we were in His loins when He acted on our behalf? Absolutely not. The parallelism demands that what was true of Adam be true of Christ and what was true of Christ be true of Adam. We have to have gained sin and condemnation from Adam the same way we gain righteousness from Christ.

So, that brings us to the fourth and final view, and the one, obviously, I’ve been leading you toward, and the one that I would propose to you and I think this passage teaches. And that is, that what’s being taught here is representative headship. This is the reformed view and understanding of this passage, and it says this, we inherit moral corruption from Adam through our parents. Again, that’s the that’s a orthodox view. In addition, we bear personal guilt for Adam’s sin. I am guilty because Adam sinned. Why? Because God appointed Adam as our federal head or our representative. So, in this case, “all sinned,” back in Romans 5:12, means this, we all sinned in Adam because God had appointed him to act as our representative, he acted for us, and we received the consequences of his sinful choice.

Now, don't misunderstand, this view doesn't deny that everyone has sinned. Clearly Paul's already addressed that back in chapter 3 verse 23, "All have sinned." This view doesn't deny that we inherit a sinful nature and that that's not important. I mean, go back again to the first three chapters of Romans, Paul is very concerned about that and that we understand that. What this view says is that Paul simply isn't talking about those things in this text.

Now, let me give you several reasons that "all sinned" here in verse 12 must mean that all of us are personally guilty because Adam sinned. Let me give you the reasons. Number one, the theme of this passage is representative headship. In fact, the main point of the passage is tied to the word one. The word one occurs 12 times in this passage, six of those times it refers to Adam. Look at verse 12, "through one man sin entered into the world." Verse 15, this a key verse, "by the transgression of the one the many died." Verse 16, "the judgment arose from one transgression resulting," notice, not in corruption, but, "in condemnation," in a legal verdict of guilty for all. Verse 17, "by the transgression of the one, death reigned." And again, verse 18, very key, "through one transgression there resulted condemnation," legal guilt, "to all men." Verse 19, "through one man's disobedience the many were made," or constituted as, "sinners." Clearly then, we all sin through Adam who served as our representative. That's the first reason it has to mean that here. The context is about headship, one representing the many.

A second reason, and I'll come back to this a little later, is that infants die, many infants die, and they don't die because of personal sin. Many of them die in miscarriages. Many of them die shortly after birth. They don't die because of sin. So, why do they die? Sin brings death, death is the product and sentence of sin. They die, not because of personal sin, but because of the guilt of Adam's sin that has been credited to them, and they have received the sentence of death.

Now, let me hasten to say that the universal testimony of biblical theologians of the creeds of the church is that those who die in infancy or those who die without mental capacity to understand their sin or the gospel, God, in grace, saves and redeems them all. I believe that with all my heart. So, I'm not talking about their ultimate end, I'm talking about why do they die? Death comes because of the guilt of Adam's sin. They don't sin and yet they die.

A third reason I would give to you, and I think this is key, is the parallelism between Christ and Adam here. It means that sin and condemnation comes to us from Adam in the same way that the righteousness of Christ comes to us. Both are imputed, or credited, to our account by God. And then you have Paul's specific arguments in verses 13 and 14 that we're going to come to in a moment.

So, here's the big picture. God has appointed Adam as your representative. It's often been expressed, even in primers teaching kids to read, this way, in Adam's fall, we sinned all, in Adam's fall, we sinned all. Here's how the Westminster Confession, and even the Baptist Confession of Faith, puts it, "our first parents," and I'm going to leave a little out in the interest of time here, but I'll get to the heart of it, "our first parents, being the root of all mankind, the

guilt of their sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation.” In other words, we pass this down. It was passed to you by your parents. It’s passed by me to my children.

So, Adam sinned, you were declared guilty and received the sentence of death. Now, when you hear that, what’s your first response? Wait a minute Tom, that can’t be true because that’s, what? Not fair! It’s not fair! You know, you get it, that’s all, that’s the normal and natural response. It’s like, wait a minute, I’m being judged and sentenced to death for somebody else’s sin? It’s unfair!

It’s not unfair. Let me show you why it’s not unfair for Adam to serve as our representative in the garden. Think about this, Adam was in the perfect position to make the right decision. He was in the perfect position to make the right decision. He faced only one very small temptation, very, one small regulation, you can have every fruit of every tree in this garden except that one, don’t eat of the fruit of that tree. Compare that to the number of temptations to sin you face. Compare that to the way the temptation to sin permeates your life and mine.

Also, think about this, he wasn’t fallen, he didn’t have a sinful nature, and his unfallen faculties were greatly superior to our own. In addition, he lived in a perfect environment, a perfect home with a perfect companion. There was nobody around, no circumstance, no environment to lead him into sin, nothing. So, do you really think that you could do better if God let you represent yourself today? Of course not. Wasn’t it gracious of God to judge us in Adam, because he had the best chance of any of us.

There’s another reason that I would say it’s not unfair and that’s because we have made exactly the same decision every day of our lives. See, we think, you know, if I had been there, well, you know, I would have made the right decision. No, you wouldn’t. I wouldn’t have either. If you doubt that, you’ve got a perfect man in a perfect environment, he sins. You think you would do better? No, you wouldn’t do better. That’s why it’s not unfair of God, because it didn’t matter who was there representing us, we would all have made the same decision. James Montgomery Boyce writes, “If God had chosen to judge us as each of us think we would like to be judged, that is, in and for ourselves, with no relationship to any other person, then we would all inevitably perish.” We would do no better. And if you doubt that, just think about your life.

Number three, and this is key, it’s not unfair because this is the only way God can credit the work of Jesus Christ to us. He credits it, remember that word, we looked at it in chapter 4, it permeates the gospel. The word impute, or credit, it’s a financial word that means to post to a ledger, to credit something to someone’s account, and imputation is at the heart of the gospel. In fact, in salvation there are three great acts of imputation. We’ve looked at these and all of them concern our representatives, Adam and Christ.

The first great act of imputation is, God credits the guilt for Adam's sin to all men. That's what we're studying here in this paragraph. Now, for those who repent and believe in Jesus, there's a second great act of imputation. And that is, God credits the guilt for our sin to Christ. Second Corinthians 5:21, "God was in Christ," and what did He do with Christ, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf." First Peter 2:24, "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree." So, not only does God impute the guilt of Adam's sin to us, but He then imputes, for those who repent and believe, our guilt to Christ, and He treats Christ on the cross as if He had committed our sins. But there's a third great act of imputation in the gospel. God credits Christ's death for us and Christ's righteousness to us, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

So, listen folks, if it bothers you that you receive the guilt for Adam's sin, if you are tempted to say that's unfair, be careful. Be careful because that is exactly the same way you get credit for Christ's death and righteousness, through the imputation of the actions of someone who acted as your representative in your place.

Here's the point, if it's unfair for God to credit Adam's sin to you, it is equally unfair for God to credit your sins to Christ and Christ's righteousness to you. If God could not legally and justly allow Adam to be your representative, then He cannot legally and justly allow Christ to be your representative. If the one is unfair, so is the other. But thank God, it's not unfair. It is just of God to appoint Adam as our representative and it is grace for God to appoint Christ as our representative. God credited the guilt of Adam's sin to all men.

Now, having said that, at the end of verse 12, Paul interrupts himself to explain and defend that statement. And so, in verses 13 and 14, notice, Adam's representation defended. Paul understood that what he had just said, it was just as controversial and revolutionary in his day as it is for me to teach it today, all men sinned through Adam, that's revolutionary. And so, he interrupts himself to defend it in verses 13 and 14. And his major point in these verses is that if all of the people between Adam and Moses died not having an explicit law to disobey, then they had to die for some reason other than their own sin; they died for Adam's sin. That's his point.

Look at verse 13, "for until the Law sin was in the world." Before the Mosaic Law was given at Sinai people still sinned. If you doubt that, just read the early chapters of the Bible. But before the law there was a key difference. Verse 13, "sin is not imputed when there is no law." Now, Paul is making the same point he's already made. Go back to chapter 4, chapter 4 verse 15, "where there is no law, there also is no violation." What does Paul mean in those two passages? Let me remind you of what he's not teaching. Paul is not saying that if you don't possess God's written law, sin isn't really sin and it doesn't bring any guilt. No, Paul isn't teach that.

Go back to chapter 2 verse 12. Here's what he believes, "all who have sinned without having the written law will perish." They're going to die and be judged without the law. Because they have, why? They have "the substance of the law written on their hearts," which is the next

couple of verses there. Verse 12, he says, “and all who have sinned under the Law,” that is, all who have the written law and have sinned, “will be judged by the Law.” But they’re all going to be judged, all human beings are guilty of sin. And, of course, again, you see this clearly illustrated in the flood, in the tower of Babel, Sodom and Gomorra. They didn’t have the written law, but they sinned and were judged for it.

So, what was Paul teaching here then? Paul was teaching that without God’s written law sin isn’t as serious an offense. Once we have God’s written law, once we have a verbal or written command of God, our sin is a worse offense. I mean, you understand this, while you are guilty either way, if you go plowing through a school zone at 50 miles an hour, you’re guilty of sin. It’s a lot worse offense if you know it’s a school zone and you blow through it anyway than if you do it inadvertently. Again, you’re guilty both ways, going to suffer the penalty either way, but it’s a far more serious thing to just disregard the law, it’s then willful transgression.

Knowledge increases our guilt. Here’s how John Calvin puts it, “He who is not instructed by the written law, when he sins, is not guilty of so great a transgression as he who knowingly breaks and transgresses the law of God.” That’s the point. Verse 14, “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses.” In other words, everyone from Adam to Moses died. Death was completely sovereign from Adam to Moses. There was only one exception in that time period, it was Enoch, chapter 5 of Genesis.

Now, the fact that everyone died, except Enoch, before there was a written law, Paul says, proves that God had credited the guilt of Adam’s sin to them, he served as their representative. Verse 14, “Nevertheless death reign from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam.” That word offense is actually transgression. It is the same word translated violation back in chapter 4 verse 15.

Here’s his point, between Adam and Moses there was no specific command from God, no verbal or written command to violate, there was no express violation of a specific verbal or written commandment like had happened with Adam. Adam had a command, don’t eat of that tree, and he broke it. But between Adam and Moses there was no such verbal or written command of God, only the law written on the heart.

But, here’s his point, even though those between Adam and Moses did not overtly violate an expressly revealed command of God, they all died, including many infants, who hadn’t sinned at all. But wait a minute, death is a penalty for sin, so why did they all die? And Paul’s point is because they all sinned in Adam as their representative and received the sentence of death. We all will die, you will die, I will die, if Christ doesn’t return, and it will all be for one reason, because Adam was our representative. He sinned in our place and God sentenced us all to death.

Now, he finishes verse 14 with this fascinating phrase, “Adam is a type of Him who was to come.” He’s going to spend the rest of the passage explaining that, but let me give you the key

similarities between Adam and Christ. When he says he's a type, here are the key similarities. Number one, God appointed both as official legal representatives. Number two, God appointed both as the representatives of their seed, or their descendants. In the case of Adam, his physical seed, his physical descendants, all of humanity. In the case of Christ, his spiritual descendants or seed, those who would believe in Him. First Corinthians 15:22 says, "in Adam all die, in Christ all will be made alive."

Number three, God appointed both as the only two representatives of humanity ever. How do I know that? If you are taking notes, jot down 1 Corinthians 15:45, because in that passage Paul talks about the first man, Adam, and then he refers to the last Adam, referring to Christ. So, the first Adam, the last Adam. Why doesn't he say the first Adam, the second Adam? Why does he say the last Adam? Because he's underscoring that in all of human history there will only be, there are and will only be, two official legal representatives, Christ and Adam, that's it. So, Christ is the last Adam. Christ is the true and better Adam. There are only two heads of the human race. The first was Adam, the second and last is our Lord Jesus Christ.

And number four, this is the fourth similarity, God credits the results of the work of both to their seed, God credits the results of the work of both of these representatives to their seed. We have all received, everybody here this morning, has received the consequences of Adam's actions: sin, condemnation, death, that's what the rest of the passage will teach: sin, condemnation, death. Everybody is in Adam, but if you have believed in Jesus you have now received, instead, the benefits and blessings of Jesus' actions, which are righteousness, justification, and eternal life. So, the question for you this morning is, are you still in Adam or have you repented and believed in Jesus Christ and are in Christ, and now enjoy His righteousness, the legal verdict of righteous before God, and eternal life?

As we celebrate the Lord's table, we celebrate and give thanks for what Christ our representative did for us. Our Father, how could we even begin to adequately thank You that You appointed these two men as our representatives. Lord, we regret that in Adam we all sinned and we receive the punishment that sin deserves, as well as the punishment our sin deserves. But Father, we're so grateful that because You did that, You're also able to treat us as Jesus deserves to be treated, that He can stand in our place as our representative, that at the cross He died the death we deserved, that in His life He lived the life we should have lived, and that can be imputed, or credited, to our account as if we had done it, so that we can be right with You. Father, we bless You and thank You.

And now, as we come to the Lord's table, we want to come with clean hands and pure hearts and so we come confessing our sins. Father, each of us individually lift up our sins to You in the light of Your countenance and confess them, and plead for Your forgiveness, for Your cleansing, so that we can take of the Lord's table in a way that honors what He did for us. Lord, receive our worship in and through Him, we pray, in Jesus' name, amen.