

# **Romans 5:12-21 - Adam And Jesus As The Two Representatives Of Mankind**

## **Memory Verse**

Romans 12:1-2 NKJV

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

## **Introduction**

In Romans 5:12-21, Paul shows us four consequences of Adam's sin: sin entered the world, death entered the world, all mankind is condemned, and all men are born sinners. He also shows us four consequences of Jesus' righteous act: super abounding grace, eternal life, justification (declared not guilty), and being made righteous (a new nature).

**Romans 5:12-21 NKJV**

**Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—<sup>13</sup> (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. <sup>15</sup> But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. <sup>16</sup> And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. <sup>17</sup> For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)**

**<sup>18</sup> Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. <sup>19</sup> For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.**

**<sup>20</sup> Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, <sup>21</sup> so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

## **1. The origin and spread of sin throughout the human race**

**Romans 5:12 NKJV**

**Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned**

**Romans 5:12 NLT**

**When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.**

**Romans 5:12 AMP**

**Therefore, as sin came into the world through one man, and death as the result of sin, so death spread to all men, [no one being able to stop it or to escape its power] because all men sinned.**

## The importance of not allegorising Scripture

v 12 **Just as through one man sin entered the world:** Paul refers to the *true record of history* found in Genesis chapter 3. Paul doesn't try to prove it, he just accepts it as being true, as should we. Jesus also believed that the first eleven chapters of Genesis were true. For example, when Jesus defined marriage, He quoted from Genesis chapters one and two:

Matthew 19:3-6 NLT

Some Pharisees came and tried to trap him with this question: "Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife for just any reason?"

<sup>4</sup> **"Haven't you read the Scriptures?"** Jesus replied. **"They record that from the beginning 'God made them male and female (Genesis 1:27, 5:2).'** <sup>5</sup> And He said, *'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one (Genesis 2:24).'* <sup>6</sup> Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together."

Jesus also believed that the flood was a literal event that happened after the creation of mankind, and that it was a judgement of man's sin—see Matthew 24:38-39.

Warning: Many churches and Christians allegorise the first eleven chapters of Genesis, saying that there was no literal creation in six days which happened around 6,000 years ago, no literal garden of Eden, no literal Adam and Eve, no literal fall of man into sin, no literal curse, and no literal global flood. However, if these things are not real or literal, then it also means that the gospel is not literal or real. If the origin of sin and death is not real or true, then neither is the solution for sin and death—If Genesis is not true then Jesus died for nothing. Why? Because Paul teaches in Romans 5:12-21 that Jesus' death on the cross was to *defeat death that came about as a result of Adam's sin.*

Romans 5:12a AMP

Therefore, as sin came into the world through one man, **and death as the result of sin,** so death spread to all men.

Romans 5:18-19 NLT

Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. <sup>19</sup> Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.

The fossil record is evidence of death, disease, suffering, sickness, decay, and the curse (thorns etc). There are only two ways to interpret it—either as a result of the global flood which happened about 1400 years after creation as *revealed to us by God* (see Genesis chapters 6-8), or, as a record of the evolution of plants and animals over long ages according to *man's best guess or imagination.*

Using revelation from God to interpret the facts found in the fossil record: The Bible puts people, sin, and death right at the start of world history; Jesus said in Mark 10:6, *But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.'* Before Adam and Eve had any children, Adam rebelled against God, and as a result sin entered the world and affects all his offspring. Also because of this sin came the curse—so sin did not only result in death, but also disease, suffering, decay, and thorns and weeds and hard labour. So the fossil record, correctly interpreted in the light of Scriptural revelation, is a silent witness to the sad and brutal truth of what God said would happen as a consequence of man's sin.

Using man's best guesses to interpret the fossil record: On the other hand, rejecting the literal, historical, and scientifically accurate chapters in Genesis 1-11 forces a person to believe that the earth is millions of years old, and that the fossils are not a result of the flood, but rather the history of biological evolution through death and suffering over millions of years before the *assumed* evolution of man. This puts death, disease, suffering, sickness, and decay as being around millions of years before man. Therefore death and the curse cannot be a result of sin, and there was no fall of man as a result of one man sinning: This makes what Paul says not just meaningless, but also outright wrong—he is basing his conclusions concerning Jesus on events that never happened, and so obviously Jesus' death on the cross as Paul describes it means nothing—again, *Jesus death on the cross only defeated death that was a result of Adam's sin.*

To put it simply, if a person rejects the truth of Genesis chapters 1-11, they are rejecting the gospel. It doesn't mean that they can't be saved, but it does mean that they don't have a logical or true understanding of the gospel.

“It is important to understand that the Adam and Eve account is not an optional passage to be accepted or rejected, or allegorised away. According to Paul's theme here in Romans 5, you can't take away the truth of Genesis 3 without taking away principles that lay the foundation for our salvation.” (David Guzik)

“To Paul, Adam was more than a historical individual, the first man; he was also what his name means in Hebrew—‘humanity.’ The whole of humanity is viewed as having existed at first in Adam.” (Bruce)

### Adam's wilful and deliberate sin

v 12 **Through one man sin entered the world:** Paul clearly says here that *Adam* is solely responsible for the fall of the human race, and not Eve. You might object here. You might point out that Eve was the first one to eat the forbidden fruit, and then she passed it on to her husband. However Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:14 that *Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression (NKJV).*

What this means is that Adam was not deceived like Eve was, but rather he deliberately rebelled against God. Adam wilfully, with eyes wide open, with full understanding of what he was doing, chose to rebel against God—thus God holds Adam responsible for committing the first deliberate act of rebellion against God.

### The consequences of Adam's sin

v 12 **Just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men:** Death was the result of Adam's sin. Adam knew this before he chose to sin. God had previously promised him that *'in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die'* (Genesis 2:17). Death entered the world when Adam sinned, and it will be a part of the world until Jesus creates the new heavens and earth as foretold in Revelation chapters 21-22.

v 12 **Thus death spread to all men, because all sinned:** How can we know that all mankind are born as sinners? Because sin and death are connected—death is the consequence of Adam's sin. Because all people will die physically (with the exception of believers at the time of the rapture), then we know that we are all born sinners. A sinless man is not subject to death. Those who are sinners includes babies; David says, *For I was born a sinner—yes, from the moment my mother conceived me (Psalm 51:5 NLT).*

“Humans are mortal—subject to death—before they commit any sin themselves. Since mortality is the result of sin, it shows that we are made sinners by Adam’s sin, not by our own personal sin.” (David Guzik)

*Adam and Jesus are the two ‘federal heads’ or representatives of all mankind*

v 12 **Because all sinned:** *All of mankind sinned in Adam.* Here Paul introduces Adam as the federal head or overall representative of all mankind. Later he will introduce Jesus as an alternative federal head or overall representative of all mankind.

“*All sinned* in this case means ‘all sinned in Adam’; Adam’s sin is the sin of all.” (Morris)

“This sounds odd to our individualistic ears, but Paul clearly teaches that we **all sinned** “in” Adam. Adam is the common father of every person on the earth; every human who has ever lived was “in” Adam’s genetic makeup. Therefore, all mankind actually sinned in Adam.” (David Guzik)

Jon Courson explains the concept of Adam being the federal head or overall representative of all of mankind:

“...because of Adam’s failure, sin entered the world. Adam ushered in sin, which brought with it sorrow, suffering, and sickness. “Thanks a lot, Adam,” you say. “It’s not fair that we should feel the repercussions of your rebellion.” But when Adam represented us in the Garden of Eden, he did better than we would have done. He was our champion. Think of it this way....

*Suppose we send our country’s finest power-lifting team to the [Olympic] Games. If these guys of immense strength, who have dedicated their lives to lifting weights, go to the Games and get beaten badly by the Russians, which of us would say, “The Russians didn’t really win. After all, they didn’t beat me”? That would be absurd. If we send our champions and they are defeated, we all lose because they are our best.*

So, too, Adam was the best humanity had to offer. But he got beat in the Garden of Eden. He represented us, and we would have done no better. “I don’t know about that,” you say.

Well, I dare you to go one week without sinning. Go seven days without thinking a bad thought, without having a rotten attitude, without saying an unkind word, without doing anything wrong. And if you can go one week without sinning, come and talk to me. I want to meet you!”

“We may not *like* the fact that we are made sinners by the work of another man. We may protest, and say, “I want to stand on my own two feet, and not be made a sinner because of the work of another man.” Nevertheless, it is fair to be made righteous by the work of another man *only* if we are also made sinners by the work of another man. If we aren’t made sinners by Adam, then it isn’t fair for us to be made righteous by Jesus.” (David Guzik)

“Again, someone may object: “But I never *chose* to have Adam represent me.” Of course you did! You identified yourself with Adam with the *first sin* you ever committed. It is absolutely true that we were *born* into our identification with Adam, but we *also* choose it with our individual acts of sin.” (David Guzik)

What at first sounds completely unfair, suddenly becomes very advantageous to us. Think about it. God's plan is that all mankind were made sinners through no action or effort of their own because of Adam's *unrighteousness*. However, when we turn that around, and realise that in the same way, sinful man can also be made righteous through no action or effort of their own because of Jesus' *righteousness*, it suddenly sounds like a good deal—I get everything for nothing, I don't have to lift a finger to be made righteous.

Consider the alternative. Imagine that there were no federal heads or representatives of the human race. If Adam was only responsible for his own sin, and there was no Saviour to make it possible for sinful man to be made righteous, then I would also be responsible for my own sin. It would be “one strike and you are out.” It would only take one sin and I would be a sinner deserving of eternity in hell—with no rescue plan in place.

God's plan is much better. Every person, although born a sinner because of what Adam did, can, without any work or effort on their part, be born again in to God's family because of what Jesus did. All I have to do is choose to repent of my sin and put my trust in what Jesus did for me when He died in my place on the cross.

It all comes down to who I want to identify with: Adam or Jesus! Adam sinned in my place and made me a sinner, but Jesus lived a perfect life and died in my place and so can therefore make me righteous. Here are the two choices that every man has:

- If I want to be the king of my own life, do what I want to do, indulge in sin and enjoy the passing pleasures of sin that this world offers, refusing to submit to God's rule over my life, then I will choose to remain “in Adam”—I am choosing Adam as my federal head.
- If I desire to be back in relationship with God, and I willingly repent by submitting to Jesus (call Him Lord), and turning my sin, and also trust that Jesus death on the cross was the full payment for my sin debt—I am choosing Jesus as my federal head.

Of course, there are severe consequences for continuing to identify with Adam—eternity in the Lake of Fire. On the other hand, I can choose to enjoy eternal life with God.

## **2. Proof that we are born sinners because of Adam's sin, and don't become sinners because we broke God's law**

### **Romans 5:13-14 NKJV**

For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

### **Romans 5:13-14 NLT**

Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. But it was not counted as sin because there was not yet any law to break. <sup>14</sup> Still, everyone died—from the time of Adam to the time of Moses—even those who did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did. Now Adam is a symbol, a representation of Christ, who was yet to come.

### **Romans 5:13-14 AMP**

[To be sure] sin was in the world before ever the Law was given, but sin is not charged to men's account where there is no law [to transgress].

<sup>14</sup> Yet death held sway from Adam to Moses [the Lawgiver], even over those who did not themselves transgress [a positive command] as Adam did. Adam was a type (prefigure) of the One Who was to come [in reverse, the former destructive, the Latter saving]. [Genesis 5:5; 7:22; Deuteronomy 34:5]

v 13 **For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law:** Imagine that someone stole your car and drove it down the boat ramp into the ocean. You go to the police, but the police tell you that there is nothing they can do because, as yet, there is no law against stealing cars—it will come into force in 3 months time. You know by your conscience that what the thief did was wrong, but because there was no written law in place, the offender can not be charged. This is what verse 13 means—***Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. But it was not counted as sin because there was not yet any law to break*** (v 13 NLT).

v 14 **NKJV—Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam**  
**NLT—Still, everyone died—from the time of Adam to the time of Moses—even those who did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did]:** Despite their being no written law for people to be held accountable to until the time of Moses, people still died. This proves that physical death for all men is the result of Adam's sin, and not our own sin.

“We know that at the root of it all we are made sinners because of Adam and not because we break the law ourselves. We know this because sin and death were in the world before the Law was ever given.” (David Guzik)

Note: this does not mean that people are not accountable for the sins that are committed when they don't know or didn't have the law of Moses. Romans 2:12-16 tells us that these people will be judged according to their conscience. The key here is the word **transgression**, which means the wilful or deliberate breaking of a specific command. Death spread to all mankind as a result of Adam breaking the prescribed law that God had given to him in the garden of Eden.

v 14 **Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come:** Adam is a **type**, picture, or representation of Jesus. Consider that both Adam and Jesus started out as perfect, and what both of them did had huge consequences for all mankind.

### **3. Comparing the two federal heads—Adam and Jesus**

**Romans 5:15-17 NKJV**

**But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. <sup>16</sup> And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. <sup>17</sup> For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)**

**Romans 5:15-17 NLT**

**But there is a great difference between Adam's sin and God's gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ. <sup>16</sup> And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but God's free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. <sup>17</sup> For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.**

## Romans 5:15-17 AMP

**But God's free gift is not at all to be compared to the trespass [His grace is out of all proportion to the fall of man]. For if many died through one man's falling away (his lapse, his offense), much more profusely did God's grace and the free gift [that comes] through the undeserved favour of the one Man Jesus Christ abound and overflow to and for [the benefit of] many.**

**16 Nor is the free gift at all to be compared to the effect of that one [man's] sin. For the sentence [following the trespass] of one [man] brought condemnation, whereas the free gift [following] many transgressions brings justification (an act of righteousness).**

**17 For if because of one man's trespass (lapse, offense) death reigned through that one, much more surely will those who receive [God's] overflowing grace (unmerited favour) and the free gift of righteousness [putting them into right standing with Himself] reign as kings in life through the one Man Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).**

v 15 **But the free gift is not like the offense:** Sometimes Paul compares the similarities between Adam and Jesus, but here he contrasts the differences.

v 15 **For if by the one man's [Adam's] offense many died:** Adam's offense had a devastating effect on the human race—many died.

"He is not saying that death reigned over us all because we all sinned; he is saying that death reigned over us all because Adam sinned." (Morris)

v 15 **Free gift... Much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man:** Romans is the gospel of grace. Here again we see that our salvation is an underserved gift, and also that the gift is so much greater than the punishment that we are being saved from. It's like I need \$100 to pay the rent, but you give me \$1,000 dollars instead. In the same way, God, because of His great grace, goes far beyond just forgiving our sins, and chooses to bless us in many other incredible and beautiful ways—the greatest blessing is that of being adopted into His family.

v 16 **And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned:** Here is another contrast between the effects the two federal heads continue to have on mankind.

v 16 **For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation:** Adam's **one offense** resulted in **condemnation** for the entire human race; because Adam represents the entire human race, when Adam broke God's command, we all broke God's command—we *share Adam's guilt*.

v 16 **But the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification:** In contrast, the **free gift, which came from many offenses** being laid on Jesus, **resulted in** justification. Now, all of mankind can be declared "not guilty" because of what Jesus freely did—we *can share Jesus righteousness because Jesus paid our sin debt*.

Here's a quick summary of verse 16. In Adam we become guilty and receive condemnation for something we did not do. In Christ we can become justified (not guilty), again, based on something that we did not do—it is a free gift, it's grace.

v 17 **For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one:** Here is another contrast. Because of Adam's **one offense death reigned**.

v 17 **Much more** those who *receive* abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ: In contrast, because of what Jesus very graciously did, every man has the opportunity to ask and **receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness**. The result, we **will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ**

Here's a quick summary of verse 17. Adam's one offense resulted in a *reign of death*—in Adam's "kingdom" death reigns. In contrast, Jesus' abundant grace and gift of righteousness resulted in a *reign of life*—in Jesus' kingdom life reigns. Choosing our federal head really is a choice between *life* and *death*.

v 17 **Much more**: Here is where faith, hope, and love are so important—when we first believe that God truly loves us, we can put our faith in God's promise of eternal life, and so experience great hope. While the physical death of our body because of Adam is an absolute certainty, we are given the assurance that eternal life in Jesus is ***much more certain***. We can be **much more** certain or sure of our eternal life than we can be of our inevitable physical death.

"It is staggering to think how *completely death* has **reigned** under Adam. Everyone who is born dies—the mortality rate is 100%. No one survives. When a baby is born, it isn't a question of whether the baby will live or die—it will most certainly die; the only question is *when*. We think of this world as the land of the living, but it is really the land of the dying, and the billions of human bodies cast into the earth over the centuries proves this. But Paul says that the **reign of life** through Jesus is **much more** certain. The believer's **reign in life through** Jesus is *more certain* than death or taxes!

Not only did Jesus Christ come through *for* us, but He came bringing gifts *to* us. It is the wise man, the intelligent woman who understands that, although Adam caused problems and pain, sin and death—Jesus heaps unmerited, undeserved, unearned favour of God upon us. The first Adam let us down, but the Last Adam—our Hero, our Champion, Jesus Christ—rains grace upon us. (Jon Courson)

#### **4. A summary of Adam and Christ and their effects on humanity**

##### **Romans 5:18-19 NKJV**

Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. <sup>19</sup> For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

##### **Romans 5:18-19 NLT**

Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. <sup>19</sup> Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.

##### **Romans 5:18-19 AMP**

Well then, as one man's trespass [one man's false step and falling away led] to condemnation for all men, so one Man's act of righteousness [leads] to acquittal and right standing with God and life for all men. <sup>19</sup> For just as by one man's disobedience (failing to hear, heedlessness, and carelessness) the many were constituted sinners, so by one Man's obedience the many will be constituted righteous (made acceptable to God, brought into right standing with Him).



v 18-19 **Through One man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, ...many were made sinners:** Consider the consequences of Adam's sin—judgement, condemnation, and being made a sinner (someone who loves to sin).

v 18-19 **Through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.** <sup>19</sup> ... **so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous:** Now consider the consequences of Jesus' one act of righteousness (dying in our place)—we are declared not guilty, we have life, and are given a new righteous nature that loves to obey God (made righteous is the opposite of being made a sinner)

*Is everyone saved because Jesus died for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2)—refuting the false doctrine of universalism, the belief that everyone will be saved because Jesus died for all*

v 18 **The free gift came to all men:** Consider carefully, Adam's offense automatically resulted in **all men** being condemned. But does "**The free gift came to all men**" also mean that **all men** are automatically justified or saved?

"Does this mean that **all men** are justified by the **free gift**? Without making a personal choice, every person received the curse of Adam's **offense**. Is it therefore true that every person, apart from their personal choice, will receive the benefits of Jesus' obedience? Not at all.

- First, Paul makes it clear that **the free gift is not like the offense**—they are *not* identical in their result or in their application.

- Second, over three verses Paul calls the work of Jesus a **free gift**, and he never uses those words to apply to the work of Adam. It is simply the nature of a gift that it must be received by faith.

- Finally, Paul *clearly* teaches throughout the New Testament that all are not saved. In what sense then did **the free gift come to all men**? It came in the sense that the **gift** is presented, but not necessarily *received*." (David Guzik)

## **5. The purpose of the law**

**Romans 5:20a NKJV**

**Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound.**

**Romans 5:20a NLT**

**God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were.**

**Romans 5:20a AMP**

**But then Law came in, [only] to expand and increase the trespass [making it more apparent and exciting opposition].**

Firstly, the law doesn't cause us to sin, rather it reveals God's perfection. It is a mirror that we look into so we can see how sinful we are and then seek help from God to repent of those sins (see James 1:23-25).

Secondly, the law causes sin to **abound** because of the sinfulness of my heart. It's the old wet paint scenario. If I'm told not to do something, my sinful nature is naturally rebellious and will therefore want to do it. As the Amplified Bible puts it, the law excites or promotes opposition, and so reveals to us the utter depravity of our sinful nature, how it is just longing for any way to break God's law.

## 6. God's unlimited and eternal grace towards us

### Romans 5:20b-21 NKJV

But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, <sup>21</sup> so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### Romans 5:20b-21 NLT

But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant. <sup>21</sup> So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### Romans 5:20b-21 AMP

But where sin increased and abounded, grace (God's unmerited favour) has surpassed it and increased the more and superabounded, <sup>21</sup> So that, [just] as sin has reigned in death, [so] grace (His unearned and undeserved favour) might reign also through righteousness (right standing with God) which issues in eternal life through Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One) our Lord.

v 20 **Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more [literally grace "super-abounded"]:** Logically we would expect that when sin abounded then wrath would also abound. But instead, God does the opposite, giving us what we don't deserve—super-abounding forgiveness—no matter how much person sins, there will always be forgiveness.

Remember though, the only sin that God can't forgive is the sin of rejecting His gift of forgiveness—*There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son* (John 3:18). It's a foolish person who refuses to receive a free parachute as he's about to jump out of a plane, but that's what all unbelievers are doing.

*Does God's super-abounding grace mean we can sin as much as we want?*

v 21 **Grace reigns through righteousness.** What does it look like when grace is reigning in my life? Will there be a disregard for **righteousness**, and a casual attitude towards sin? No, **grace** reigns **through righteousness**. Therefore, if I am wilfully sinning, continuing in a settled state of unbelief and rebellion against God (see Hebrews 3:13), meaning that I am not fully submitted to and not fully trusting in God, then I am not walking in grace. I am living by law, by human effort—*For if you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen away from God's grace* (Galatians 5:4 NLT). This is another way of saying that we are out of fellowship with God; we are not living by the power of His grace working in and through us.

Paul in Titus 2:11-12 writes that grace teaches righteousness: *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.*

“Wherever grace rules, God’s righteous standard will be respected. The legalist’s fear is that the reign of grace will provide wicked hearts with a license to sin, but Scripture doesn’t share that fear. Grace does not accommodate sin, it faces it squarely and goes above sin in order to conquer it. Grace does not wink at unrighteousness, it confronts sin with the atonement at the cross and the victory won at the open tomb.” (David Guzik)

“As heat is opposed to cold, and light to darkness, so grace is opposed to sin. Fire and water may as well agree in the same vessel as grace and sin in the same heart.” (Thomas Benton Brooks)

Remember, grace teaches righteousness and grace reigns through righteousness—*may we learn to walk in and rely upon the grace of God.*

### Grace affects us in this life, not just the next

“**Grace reigns to eternal life.** God’s grace gives us something and takes us somewhere. It gives more than never-ending life. **Eternal life** has the idea of a *present quality of life*, God’s quality of life, given to us right now—not simply when we die.” (David Guzik)

### Grace affects the way I treat others

“**Grace reigns through Jesus.** There is a King in the kingdom where grace reigns, and the King is Jesus. A life of grace is all about Jesus and others, and not about me. A life of grace doesn’t look to self because it understands that this undeserved favour of God is given apart from any reason in self. All the reasons are in Jesus; none of the reasons are in myself. Grace doesn’t reign through self, but **through Jesus.**” (David Guzik)

## Summary and conclusion

“Everything wrong with the world today, everything wrong with you, your family, and the people you work with is all due to Adam’s failure. Knowing this allows me to see people in an entirely different light. I realize that whether a man is a sly entrepreneur who cheats his way into money he shouldn’t have by cutting deals he shouldn’t make, or whether he’s as obvious and gross in his sin as Charles Manson—I am no less a sinner than he. And it’s all because of Adam.

No wonder Jesus could look at the multitudes and have compassion on them—not crusade against them, march to get rid of them, or mobilise to neutralise them. He looked at the multitudes and in every instance He had compassion. You see, when it finally sinks in that by one Man righteousness, justification, and grace came—I stop striving and struggling to prove I’m a notch or two above you, and I stop feeling bad if I’m a notch or two below you. I’m not the issue at all. He is. *When I understand this, I stop being a worker and become a worshiper.*

Do I find myself trying to earn blessings by intensive prayer or Bible study? Do I try to prove I’m saved by street witnessing, or by ministering in Mexico? If I fall into that trap, my Christian experience will always be one of analysing, scrutinising, and condemning myself as well as others. Salvation is not based upon my knowledge, my deep study, or my twenty-four-hour prayer chain. It’s based upon one thing only: the grace and goodness of God in sending One Man, the Last Adam—Jesus Christ.” (Jon Courson)

Taking the time to meditate and understand the truths found in Romans 5:12-21 will free us from legalism and pride. *We can become worshippers in fellowship with God, and not workers trying to serve God using human effort.*