

# Sermon Outline

## HEADS OF STATES: A STUDY OF ROMANS 5:12-21

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### THE REIGN OF DEATH (ROMANS 5:12-14)

#### I. Introduction

- A. Why is there so much pain and disease in the world; and what is the way out?
- B. Romans 5:12-21 provides God's answer to this question.
  - 1. Romans 5:12-21 is one of those segments in the Bible that summarizes things for us and gives us the big, cosmic picture in a very small space.
  - 2. Romans 5:12-21 is one of those texts that explains the big picture from beginning to end.
  - 3. Romans 5:12-21, shows us: (1) Why is there evil and suffering in the world? (2) How we can be delivered from this situation?
- C. List of lessons
  - 5:12-14: The rule of death and sin
  - 5:14: Adam as type
  - 5:15-16: The free gift of God's grace
  - 5:17-19: Jesus' "one act of righteousness" that redeems
  - 5:20-21: The reign of grace and righteousness

#### II. From Condemnation to Justification (Rom 1-4)

- A. But before we begin today's lesson, let's try to understand something of the context in which Romans 5 takes place.
- B. In Romans 1, the apostle Paul explains the problem with the human race—idolatry and sins that emerge from it.
  - Romans 1:22-23, "Claiming to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things."
- C. In Romans 2, Paul declares that God's condemnation rests on both Jew and Gentile.
  - 1. While the Gentile may be guilty of idolatry and other gross sins, the religiously-cultivated Jew is not much better, because even the Jew does not live wholly by God's Law (vv 21-23).
  - 2. Paul sets out a very important principle for us in 2:13: "For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified."
  - 3. Therefore, no one is righteous (Rom 3:9-12).
- D. How is it possible for anyone to be saved?
  - 1. If we are all sinners, is there any hope for us? *Yes.*
  - 2. Hope comes from the most unlikely Source. Hope comes from God himself, whom you and I have so grievously offended.

- Romans 3:21-26: “<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—<sup>22</sup> the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. <sup>26</sup> It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”
- 3. Here is the Gospel at its heart. Here is the central truth of the Christian faith: JESUS CHRIST DIED FOR SINNERS.
  - a. Jesus Christ, the Israeli Messiah, the Jewish King, the eternal Son of God-in-human flesh, gave his own holy and perfect life on a cross as a propitiation, an appeasing sacrifice, for sinners like you and me.
  - b. When we receive this sacrifice by faith (or trust in the sacrifice to work for you), God pronounces us *innocent, just, righteous*—even when we are still sinful and rebellious in ourselves.
  - c. That’s the core message of Christianity: God declares sinners *righteous* on the basis of the work and piety of the Jewish Messiah.
- E. In Romans 4, Paul shows that the principle of justification-by-faith was already active in the life of Abraham, the father of the Israelite people.
  - 1. Long before Abraham did any good works for God and received the mark of circumcision, he was declared righteous by God on the basis of his faith in God’s promises.
  - 2. Paul cites Genesis 15:6: “And he [Abraham] believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.”
  - 3. Those who trust in God’s Son Jesus Christ will also be counted as righteous—long before this faith can even bear fruit in any good works.
- F. In Romans 5, Paul declares: “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (v 1).
- G. In verse 11, which is the verse immediately before our passage, Paul says, “...we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” It is here that verse 12 begins.

### III. “Through One Man” (Romans 5:12)

- A. “Therefore” begins verse 12. What follows this “Therefore” seems to be a further explanation of what Paul has taught in Romans 5:11 (or even verses 1-11).
- B. An idea that connects verse 12 to verse 11 is the idea of *agency*, expressed in the word “through.”
- C. This is the essential idea of Romans 5:12-21:  
 —*Just as sin, death, and estrangement from God came through Adam; righteousness and life, and reconciliation with God came through Jesus Christ.*

#### IV. How Sin Entered the World (Romans 5:12)

- A. Beginning with verse 12, Paul says, “Therefore, just as sin came into the world *through* one man, and death *through* sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—”
- B. This passage sets up a comparison: “Therefore, just as...”
- C. But the comparison is not completed at this time. The “so also” does not come just yet.  
—To know what Paul had in mind, go all the way to verse 19 to see how he finishes the comparison.
- D. Although Paul doesn’t finish the comparison, he’s already given us three important pieces of information concerning the origins of evil and death.
1. “sin came into the world through one man...”
    - a. The “one man” is Adam, the first man and the father of the human race.
    - b. When Adam preferred the advice of the serpent to the Word of God, he rebelled against the LORD, his Creator. That is what sin is.
    - c. Sin is...
      - i. acting against what God has required.
      - ii. failing to do what God has required.
  2. “...death [came] through sin...”
    - a. Through the sin of Adam, death entered the human experience.
    - b. There is so much pain and suffering in the world, because Adam, our first father, sinned, and in doing so, he opened the door for death.
  3. “...death spread to all men because all sinned—”
    - a. Taken alone, this statement sounds like death spread to all men because each human being made his own decision to sin. Death multiplied as a result of each human being deciding to sin.
    - b. But there is a problem with that view.
      - i. Across Romans 5:12-21, the primary cause of sin and death is centered on the one man, Adam.
        - (A) Consider:
          - Rom 5:15: “...many died through *one man’s* trespass...”
          - Rom 5:17: “For if, because of *one man’s* trespass, death reigned through that one man...”
          - Rom 5:19: “For as by the *one man’s disobedience* the many were made sinners...”
        - (B) Why talk so much about the one man’s sin if, at the end of the day, we die on account of our own decision to sin?
        - (C) Since the emphasis of 5:12-21 is on how the actions of one man led to the death of all, “death spread to all men because all sinned” must be interpreted in light of that context.
      - ii. “Sinned” is an aorist verb.
        - (A) An aorist tense is not merely a past tense. It denotes a definitively completed act, not one that happened in the past and might still be continuing.
        - (B) When Paul says “all sinned,” he uses an aorist verb.

(C) Paul has a definitive act of sin in mind—an act that took place in the past and is not repeated.

- c. When Paul says “all sinned,” he likely means that all sinned in that very first sin of Adam. All of us were implicated in Adam’s disobedience. All of us were considered in Adam’s sin.

E. Summary:

1. Adam sinned and brought death in all its manifestations on himself and all his descendants.
2. Adam’s descendants were in him that very day when he chose to submit to the serpent and disobey God.

## V. Sin Pre-dates the Law of Moses (Romans 5:13, 14)

A. In verses 13-14, Paul gives evidence for sin’s presence even before God imposed his Law on Israel. We know that sin was around, because people died.

B. “for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law” (v 13).

1. The Law is the moral code spelled out by God to Moses on Mount Sinai.
2. Before this Law, people did not know clearly what sin was.
3. The Law was given to define righteousness and sin.
4. Without the Law, we would not know what sin looks like: “...sin is not counted where there is no law.”

C. Can we say that sin came into existence only *after* the Law of Moses was publicly revealed? No, because “death reigned from Adam to Moses...”

1. Death is the evidence that there is sin.
2. If there is sin, then there is also Law. God’s holy, timeless, moral Law was in existence long before God re-issued that Law on Sinai.
3. While sinners may have forgotten it, the Law of God was in existence and in force before the prophet Moses was born.
4. Paul puts the scope of death from Adam to Moses to show that sin (and by implication, God’s Law) were around before Moses.
5. When that Law was re-issued through Moses, sin could once again be shown for what it is.

D. In verse 14, Paul adds that death reigned “even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam...” (v 14).

1. Paul probably means that death ruled over those who sinned without having a clear understanding of God’s Law (as was the case with Adam).
2. Yet, these people also come under the reign of death. They cannot plead innocence, because they all broke God’s universal Law in Adam.
3. While their personal sinning was “not like the transgression of Adam,” they were nevertheless sinners in Adam. That is why they died.

## VI. Cold, Hard Evidence

A. Paul broke off his comparison perhaps to explain why he believes that “all sinned” in Adam—even those who never had knowledge about God’s Law in the same, clear way that Adam did.

- B. The evidence of sin is in the reign of death over all mankind.  
—Death is the cold, hard evidence that we are sinners, even if we say we don't know the Ten Commandments, even if we claim that we haven't done anything wrong.
- C. Death and all its forms—suffering, sickness, broken bones, liver cancer, depression, eating disorders, dysfunctional families, adultery, dishonesty, anxiety disorders, loss of purpose in life, etc.—are all evidences that we are under the rule of sin.
- D. While we may claim that we don't know what God's Word says, we cannot escape the reality of death in all its forms.
  - 1. Death is the evidence of sin...
  - 2. ...which is evidence of universal moral Law...
  - 3. ...which is evidence that there is a sovereign God to whom you and I are accountable (cf. Rom 1:20).

## VII. Salvation Comes from the Outside

**What is the cause of the pain and the suffering of the world? Why can I expect to suffer in the world? Why should I not be surprised when people do me harm? Why should I not be surprised if my best friends walk away from me when I need them most? Why should I not be surprised when I feel intense loneliness? Why should I not be surprised if I myself commit the most horrendous and stupid evil I can think of? I should not be surprised if or when these things happen, because Adam sinned and I sinned in him. Cosmic spiritual and physical death is the consequence of that one ancient sin of Adam.**

- A. There are two implications that come from this truth.
  - 1. First: As long as we are Adam's children, we are doomed to suffering and death.
  - 2. Second: Salvation must come from the outside of the human race.
- B. The Gospel teaches us that God himself has provided a Savior. He is the Son of God. He is the new Human Being who doesn't come from Adam, but from God's very own side (cf. 1 Cor 15:47). He is the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - Rom 5:1-2: "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God."
  - Rom 5:11: "More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."
- C. If we have put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are no longer in Adam but in Christ.
- D. If we are still in Adam, we must accept God's perspective of our enslavement to sin—and turn to Christ that we may be saved.
- E. When we do believe in Christ, we can "rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

## Questions for Reflection

1. Was there anything in particular about today's sermon that blessed and encouraged you?
2. Was there anything that you disagree with or found difficult to accept?
3. What question does Romans 5:12-21 answer? Why is this text so important?
4. Based on Romans 1:22-23, what is the basic sin of mankind?
5. Why is idolatry the root sin?
6. Consider Romans 2:13 and 3:9-12. Why do these words spell our condemnation?
7. Based on Rom 3:21-26, how has God made a way for sinners to become righteous?
8. What is the central truth at the heart of the Christian Faith? How are we made just before God?
9. What are three facts revealed in 5:12?
10. What does "all sinned" mean? Why do we think that Paul does not mean "all sinned [individually]" but "all sinned [in Adam's first sin]"?
11. What is the evidence that all men and women were sinners even before the Law of Moses was published?
12. Our suffering and wrongdoing is due to our union with Adam. What were two implications we identified arising from this?
13. What has God done to save us from Adam? How do we enter into this salvation?