

AM I STILL JUST A "SINNER"?

Romans 5:12–21

We had a wonderful shop teacher at my junior high: Mr. Lichtenstein. He was a no nonsense German. White haired. Not much taller than us students. From the moment we stepped into his shop we were in a different world. Mr. Lichtenstein didn't put up with anything. He put the fear of God in us. No one back talked Mr. Lichtenstein; if you did it was one and done. He was strict. He had to be with a shop full of power tools and a room full of pre-humans.

Along one wall of the shop were small lockers. To keep our work benches clear, we put our books, lunch bags and coats in our lockers. At the end of class we would put our drawings and wood projects in our lockers for safe keeping. One of the many things about which Mr. Lichtenstein was a stickler was wasting materials. If we were having a problem with a project, he encouraged us to come to him for help. What he did not abide was a student making mistake after mistake and wasting material.

One day Mr. Lichtenstein happened to look into a student's locker. He went ballistic. The student had been hiding defective projects. Mr. Lichtenstein lit into that kid in front of us all and then demanded we all empty our lockers for inspection. After that, Mr. Lichtenstein punished the whole class; we had to sit silent our benches until the period ended.

Right or wrong, Mr. Lichtenstein practiced a principle that is absolutely essential in the spiritual world. He exercised the principle of imputation: he charged all us students with the guilt of the offender.

Imputation is an immensely important spiritual truth. It explains the self-centeredness and evil practiced by every human being. It explains why death is inevitable for every human being. But on the positive side, *imputation* is the principle that enables us to be saved by Jesus. Through *imputation* we have been delivered from the penalty of death and we are being delivered from the practice of sin.

As I've already indicated, *imputation* didn't begin with Jesus; it began with Adam. But as Paul demonstrates in Romans 5:12-21, those things imputed to us from Jesus are far greater and more powerful than those things imputed from Adam.

In verses 12-14 Paul proves the reality of the spiritual principle of *imputation*.

ADAM'S SIN WAS IMPUTED TO ALL HIS DESCENDANTS (ROMANS 5:12-14)

Adam's Sin (Genesis 2:15-17, 3:6-8)

Paul's teaching is anchored in the historical event of the Fall. God gave Adam one prohibition: do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:15–17 ESV

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

The penalty for disobedience was death - separation.

Genesis 3:6–8 ESV

⁶ *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.* ⁷ *Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.* ⁸ *And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.*

Immediately Adam and Eve experienced death/separation. They experienced separation and conflict in their relationship to each other. They experienced death in their relationship with God.

Whether he realized it or not, by his one act of disobedience Adam enslaved the entire human race to sin and death.

Adam's Sin Was Imputed to All His Descendants (Romans 5:12-14)

Romans 5:12-14 ESV

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—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

It is critical we understand the concept Paul is teaching. Sin came into the world through Adam. Death/separation came into the world as a consequence of Adam's sin. Adam and Eve immediately died spiritually; they were separated from God. They began to die physically.

Paul next observes that everyone from Adam to Moses died. Death is the consequence for violating God's commands. But the people who lived from Adam to Moses had no commands to violate. They could not be charged with sin because there were no laws to disobey. Adam could be charged with sin for disobeying God's command to not eat from the tree. And the consequence for Adam was death. The people from Adam to Moses should not have died because there were no commands to violate. Yet they all died.

Why did death reign from Adam to Moses?

Because the guilt of Adam's sin was *imputed* to every one of his descendants. The people did not die as a consequence of violating a command; they died because they were charged with Adam's sin.

Adam is our federal head. We are identified with him. What he did affects his descendants. His guilt is imputed to every one of us. We inherit his sin nature. From conception we are separated from God.

It is important we understand this spiritual truth: as our federal head, Adam's guilt was imputed to us. As a result, from conception we are sinners enslaved to sin and death.

At the end of verse 14 Paul makes a very, very important statement. He points out that Adam is a type of Christ.

What is a type?

A *type* is an Old Testament person, event, or thing designed by God to foreshadow a real person, event, or thing in the New Testament.

What did Adam foreshadow about Jesus?

Adam foreshadows the federal headship of Jesus.

Adam foreshadows the spiritual principle of *imputation*.

Just as Adam's guilt was imputed to his descendants, so also the righteousness of Jesus is imputed to all who believe.

Adam's sin enslaved us to sin and death; the cross of Jesus liberates us to grace and life.

In verses 15-17 Paul demonstrates that the things imputed to us from Jesus are vastly superior and more powerful than the sin and death imputed to us from Satan. The key phrase in this paragraph is "much more". We have become very accustomed to the sin and death imputed to us from Adam. Few if any of us would dispute that we're born with a sin nature and that we are sinners. Nobody disputes that we will all eventually die. We have become so accustomed to these truths that even after we've been justified we still view ourselves as sinners. We still see ourselves as being "in Adam" when in fact we are no longer "in Adam". We are "in Christ" and the spiritual blessings imputed to us from Jesus are far superior and more powerful than the curses imputed from Satan. We need to smash our "in Adam" lenses and fully embrace who we are "in Christ". Our minds need to be renewed; our self-understanding needs to be transformed. If *imputation* from Adam is true how much more is it true from Jesus?

JESUS' RIGHTEOUSNESS IS IMPUTED TO ALL WHO BELIEVE (ROMANS 5:15-21)

Jesus' Righteousness (Romans 5:15-17)

Romans 5:15-17 ESV

¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. ¹⁶ And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ¹⁷ 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 righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Adam's sin is no match for the blood of Christ.

When we trust in the Cross of Jesus He becomes our federal head. His blood, shed on the cross, is imputed to us. We are forgiven all our sin and declared righteous by God.

In these verses, Paul shows how the blood of Jesus trumps the sin of Adam.

First, Adam's sin imputed to every one of his descendants should have resulted in the death of every single human being ever conceived. That is, if sin and death had their way, every human being would spend eternity in the Lake of Fire separated from God. But that won't happen. If Hitler had his way, every Jew in Europe would have been killed. Many died, but many lived because of those who resisted Hitler and rescued Jews. In the same way, many have died and will die because of Adam, but many will live because of the blood. The blood of Jesus is the greatest rescue operation in history. The blood of Jesus imputed to those who believe is rescuing men, women and children from the sin and death imputed to us from Adam.

Second, Paul states in verse 16 that the entire human race was condemned to death after only one sin. Here, Paul is dealing with potency. His point is that Adam's sin was incredibly potent; his one sin had the potency to kill him and all his descendants. Think of it like this, the venom from one bite of the Inland Taipan snake has the potency to kill 100 adult men. If a person bitten one time by the Inland Taipan snake is as good as dead how dead would that same person be after a thousand bites by the Inland Taipan snake? That's Paul's point. Adam's one sin was so potent it condemned the entire human race. By the time of the cross billions of sins had been committed. We were dead after one sin. After billions we were dead, dead, dead. No possibility of being made alive.

But the Good News is that the venom of sin is no match for the blood of Jesus.

Jesus' blood pays the penalty of every one of those billion sins and cancels their killing power. The blood of Jesus imputed to us who believe is infinitely more powerful than the sin imputed to us from Adam.

Third, in verse 17 Paul points out that the devastating reign of death came into the world through a mere mortal like Adam. How much greater and more certain and more powerful are those things that come into the world through the God-Man Jesus Christ?

In Christ, you stand before God righteous and alive. You have unlimited access to Him and His grace. You are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. You are alive forever; your hope is to see the glory of God. All these resources are ours because the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to us. These realities are every bit as real and certain as the sin and death imputed from Adam. We are not in Adam anymore. We need to stop living as if we are in Adam. We are in Christ. You are no longer a sinner. You are no longer dead. You are justified, You are alive to God. You are being transformed to become more like Christ. You are being transformed so that you can spread God's grace to others. This is the new reality brought by the imputation of Christ.

Jesus' Righteousness Is Imputed to All Who Believe (Romans 5:18-21)

Romans 5:18-21 ESV

¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the

many will be made righteous. ²⁰ Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Forensic Impact of Imputation (5:18)

Romans 5:18 *ESV*

¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

The imputation of Adam's trespass led to all mankind being declared unrighteous by God and sentenced to death. The imputation of the blood of Christ leads to all believers being declared righteous by and restored to life.

The Experiential Impact of Imputation (5:19-21)

Romans 5:19-21 *ESV*

¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. ²⁰ Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The imputation of Adam's trespass caused each of us to be born with a sin nature and to sin constantly against God.

The imputation of Jesus' blood begins a process of transformation such that through the Word and Spirit we increasingly become like Jesus in thought and deed. In Christ, our character is being re-formed in righteousness and goodness and love. In Christ, sin is no longer our master. In Christ, God's grace is our master; the ultimate expression of His grace being the person and work of Jesus Christ our Savior. In Christ, we are part of a new reality. We are alive. God's grace is our spiritual oxygen, our spiritual food, the fragrance of this new world in which we live.

In Christ we are part of a new reality. We are no longer "sinners". In Adam we were "sinners". In Christ we are the justified; the redeemed; the righteous.

We need to embrace this paradigm shift. It should be reflected in our language and our self image. I challenge you to stop calling yourself a sinner. In Christ you're not just "a sinner saved by grace" trying to sin less until I go to heaven. In Christ the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to you, you are now connected to God, indwelt by His Holy Spirit. You now can understand and apply His Word. You have unlimited access to God and His grace to empower your life. You are alive. You are walking in God's grace. You are becoming more and more like Jesus as you yield yourself to the Word and the Spirit.

This is all part of God's salvation plan. *Imputation* is the means by which our sins are paid and we are made right with God in justification. But *imputation* is also the means by which we are being saved from that old life in Adam to our new life in Christ in sanctification!

Praise God for *imputation* and for our Lord Jesus Christ!