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Romans 5:12-14

The Reason Every Man Needs To Be Justified By Faith

by Dr. Wayne A. Barber

We're moving into a very, very, important passage in the book of Romans. Verses 12 - 21 are so critical for us to understand before we enter into chapter 6. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 of Romans are absolutely dynamite, but if you don't understand Romans 5, especially verses 12 through 21, a lot of confusion can come. We're going to talk about the reason why every man desperately needs to be justified by faith, by putting his faith into the Lord Jesus Christ.

Have you ever had somebody look at you with a puzzled look when you said to him that every person apart from Jesus Christ is a sinner? They say to you, "I've always tried to be a good person. I've joined the church. I've given money to the church. I do things for underprivileged kids. I give to the poor. What do you mean I'm a sinner?"

I want you to see from God's word why it is that all men who have not placed their faith into Jesus Christ are sinners: they are IN Adam as opposed to being IN Christ. Verses 12 through 21, especially verses 14 and down, are going to give you a contrast of what it means to be IN Adam and what it means to be IN Christ.

In Romans 1:19—3:20, Paul showed us the result of being ungodly. He showed us how the Gentiles not only did these evil things that are worthy of death, but they approved others who did them. We saw how the Jews judged everybody else but themselves with

their own law, not realizing that the very law they were using to condemn others was condemning them. We saw the whole process of the results. But we didn't see the reason. What happened that caused it to be this way? What event took place that caused men to be born ungodly sinners and disrespectful enemies of God?

We see the answer in 3:21 through chapters 4 and 5. It is justification by faith alone. Justification means to have the charge dropped against us. What charge? The charge that we are sinners; the charge that we are ungodly; the charge that we deserve eternal death. The charge against us is dropped.

How are we justified? By putting our faith into the Lord Jesus Christ who came to do for us what a man could never do for himself. So, you see, now we are going to understand what it means to be IN Adam and what it means to be IN Christ. When you put your faith into Christ, you are taken out of Adam and you are placed into the body of Jesus Christ. Paul says in Colossians you are taken out from under the power of darkness and you are placed into the kingdom of His dear Son.

Paul is going to show us why even Abraham had to be justified. The problem does not come from what you are doing on the outside. The problem is on the inside. You've got to be changed from within. A man does what he does because he is what he is. He is also going to show us man is desperate to be justified before God.

Romans 5:12-14 reads,

"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 -- for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come."

There are three things that I want to bring out that I think will answer the question, "Why is it that men are born sinners? What happened to cause the whole human race to end up sinners, ungodly and enemies of God?" The first thing Paul does is take us to the event that caused all men to be sinners in 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."

When did sin begin? It started with Adam. How do you know he is talking about Adam? Look at verse 14:

"Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come"

If you'll follow the context through verse 21, he's comparing Adam and what he did and how it affected the human race with Jesus and what He did and how that affected the human race.

Liberals look at this text and tell us that Genesis 1-11 is myth and that Adam and Eve were a race of people, not a man and a woman. If you believe that, take Romans 5 and throw the rest of your Bible away! ONE man sinned, and because he sinned, sin entered the world. That man's name was Adam. It all started right there.

God warned Adam and Eve. It's not like God to slip up behind somebody and pull something over their eyes as if they didn't know. Oh no, we have already established the integrity of God. Chapter 1 shows that even the Gentiles know that there is a God. He has given us obvious understanding of that in creation and other things around us. We know there's a God! God has such integrity. He told Adam specifically what he could do and what he couldn't do.

Go back to Genesis 2. Let's not just run through this and assume everybody understands it. Let's go back and at least read the warning that God gave to Adam and Eve in the garden. In Genesis 2:16 He is speaking to Adam. "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely.'" This is the goodness of God. We don't know exactly how big the garden was, but we know it was something else!

Have you ever been riding down the road and seen a bunch of cows in a pasture? Have you noticed how they have all that plush grass behind them, yet that one cow has his head stuck through the fence on the side of the road, trying to eat grass that is dead with tar all over it and rocks in it? Behind him is the plushiest looking field you've ever seen in your life, but he's trying to get to the grass by the road!

That's exactly what happens here. You see, Adam had the entire garden, all the trees to eat from. But God said, "There's one tree you cannot eat from." Verse 17: "but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat from it you shall surely die." We are going to see in Romans that that death was not just physical death. Physical death is the obvious evidence to people that there has been a spiritual death. There's been an estrangement between God and man. Death means separation. The moment that Adam chose to sin against God and eat from that tree, he was immediately estranged from God. There was a death. Even though he might not have understood all of that, he began physically to die, and death began to reign on this earth.

God said death would come, and death began to reign on this earth. The terrible consequence of Adam's sin was that it did not just affect Adam. It affected the whole human race. Look in 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."**

Sin entered the world! When you see that little word "sin" in that verse, will you take a pencil and write right behind it "THE sin"? When the definite article is used in scripture, it is very, very important. It's identifying something. You're going to see the word "sin" used other places, especially in chapters 5 and 6, when the definite article is used and when the definite article is not used. In English, we'll say "THE cup," but a definite article means the specific cup. In other words, I'm talking about something very specific. The sin of Adam was passed into humanity. It entered into this world.

The term "entered" is eiserchomai, and it is in the Aorist indicative. Aorist indicative means that at a certain point in time it took place. Adam sinned, and at that point in time, the consequence of sin was immediate. THE sin, now, entered into this world. It affected the whole world that we are living in. It affected the animal life. It affected the plant life; but especially it affected human kind.

With the sin came the consequence of that sin: "and so death spread to all men, because * all sinned." Take a pencil and right behind the word death, put down THE death. There's a definite article again. In other words, THE sin of Adam affected THE death, which was the consequence God warned them would take place. However, they didn't understand how devastating that consequence was going to be. They didn't realize it was going to be a spiritual death, and they didn't realize it was going to be a consequence that would affect the whole human race. It says, "THE death through THE sin, and so THE death spread to all men." I'm putting in that little THE so you can understand what I'm doing here.

You say, "That's not significant." Oh, yes it is! [Romans 6:1-13](#) talks about THE sin! You've got to understand THE sin before you can understand chapter 6. So the sin of Adam, THE sin of Adam, the event that caused the consequence of THE death has now entered into this world: "and so death spread to all men."

THE death spread to all men. The word "spread" is the word dierchomai, and it means to pass through, to travel through. Instead of "to" all men, it is "into" all men. The little word eis in the Greek means into all men. Boy, what a picture! When Adam sinned, out of his body was passed on the seed of sin to mankind from that point on. INTO man. THE death. THE sin. Every man born of man and woman on this earth is born into THE sin, is born INTO Adam, is born INTO THE death. Without ever having done anything it happens. Adam did it. That was the consequence of Adam's sin.

It goes on to say "because * all sinned." For some reason scholars over the years have had trouble with this. Personally I think it is pretty simple. I guess I just have a simple mind. Nobody had been born yet at that time; there was only Adam and Eve. Yet all have sinned because of their sin. What does that mean? It doesn't mean that you have to commit an act of sin to prove that you are a sinner. You are a sinner whether you think you have committed an act of sin or not. You are a sinner because you were represented in Adam when Adam sinned. When Adam sinned, you were IN Adam, even though you weren't born yet. The sin that was attached to Adam and the death that was attached to Adam is now attached to the entire human race.

The Bible gives us another example of how this works. Look at Hebrews 7:9. He is talking here about Melchizedek, who had no beginning and no end (a type of Christ), and how Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek. Look at verse 9: "And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes." Now, Levi was a priest. He was one of the 12 sons of Jacob who was later named Israel. He received tithes as a priest, but how did he pay tithes? Verse 10 continues, "for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him."

Levi was the great-grandson of Abraham. When Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, in effect Levi paid it, even though he wasn't born because he was still in his loins—he was unborn. What Abraham did also had an effect on Levi.

That is exactly the same thing Paul's saying about Adam. He is saying when Adam sinned we were all in the loins of Adam. He was the first man and Eve was the first woman on this earth. They began to have children, and the seed of sin, the nature of sin, was passed on from man to man to man. Therefore the whole human race was affected by Adam's sin.

Some years ago there was an incident in Reston, Virginia that illustrates this point. Some monkeys from the Philippines were brought into the States, and they had a disease for which there is no known cure. The disease affected the people who were treating them and they had to immediately isolate that complex to isolate that virus. One bite from an infected monkey could have affected the whole nation and then the whole world from that one virus if it was not immediately isolated.

In that light, but not in the exact same way, Adam infected the whole human race when he sinned. That is exactly what it is, the virus of sin. We are born into it. We have it when we are born. So, what is it that causes a man to be born ungodly? What is it that causes

a man to be born a sinner, to be born an enemy of God? It's nothing he has ever done, it is what Adam did. The curse comes from him and has affected the whole human race.

Well, we move from there to the second thing he does in verse 13. First of all, he tells you what happened that caused sin to enter into the world and to pass through all men and into all men. It was that sin of Adam. Secondly, Paul gives evidence that all men are sinners. This is beautiful evidence. Without having any Law to convict them, he shows that all men are sinners.

He says in verse 13,

"for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam."

Paul is really bringing his point home now. I can just imagine some of those religious Jewish people in his audience. By the way, when I say that, I am not trying to slam the Jews. Every man needs desperately to be justified. But the religious Jews took their own religion and justified themselves by the fact that they had the Talmud, by the fact that they were in the Covenant, by the fact that God covenanted with Abraham. They felt that they were part of that covenant and therefore spared from any individual judgment. What the Apostle Paul is doing very lovingly, I think, and very clearly is tearing down their argument. He is showing them why every man is desperate to be justified. He is proving the fact.

They would say, "Wait a minute. Sin is something you do. Therefore, there has to be a Law to tell you not to do it. If there's no Law to tell you not to do it, then you can't charge it against somebody's account." Paul says, "Sin was in the world from Adam until Moses before the Law ever even came."

Let's go back and look at that. He said, "for until the Law sin was in the world." Paul says before the Law ever even came about, sin was in the world. There is no definite article here. That means sin of all manifestations. We are all sinners with a definite article—THE sin attached to us. We are sinners by nature. But sin without the article means this is the evidence. In other words, people committed incest. People were homosexuals. People were prostitutes, people did all of the things that they are doing today. There is nothing new under the sun. It was in the world until the Law came about to expose it. That is what Paul says. It is in the imperfect tense, which means it was there, going on continuously. Just as the present tense would be used for today, the imperfect tense is used on a continuous basis in the past.

Then it says, "but sin is not imputed when there is no law." He uses a different word here than the word we have been studying in Romans. It's not like the word "reckoned" or He "imputed" His righteousness to us. It's a different word that means to charge against somebody's account. Paul is saying if sin is an action, it cannot be charged to your account unless there is a law forbidding it. Yet, sin was in the world from Adam until the Law came about. Now how do you explain that?

See what he's doing? He has built an argument now that no Jew can get out of. "Well, you're right. If there is no law, you can't charge it against somebody's account." Yet, there was sin in the world. Not only was there sin in the world, but there was death in the world, and death reigned from Adam to Moses.

What is he saying? He is trying to drill the point home: sin is not what you do, sin is what you are! Oh, the Law comes out to show you the evidence of it. The Law says, "You want to see that you're a sinner? Okay, here! Obey it!" Paul says, "I once was alive without the Law, and the Law came and sin revived, and I died. I couldn't obey it!" Why couldn't he obey it? He had the zeal. He had the sincerity. But he had the nature of Adam within him and that could not in any way measure to what God commands and demands. Sin is not an activity. That's just an evidence of sin. Sin is the nature of every man born of Adam, and you don't need a Law to convict someone of that.

Paul says, "How do you understand then that sin was in the world from Adam to Moses?" Verse 14 tells us:

"Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come."

The definite article is used again. THE death! THE death that was attached to Adam continued to reign. The word means to reign as a king reigns. They couldn't stop it. They had to die. We can't stop it. We're going to die.

Somebody said, "When you become a Christian you are free from the curse of sin." Yes, you are! But then they say, "That means we don't have to die." Wait a minute! Yes, one day we are going to be free from dying when we have a glorified body that will never die. We will be healed completely when that body comes around. But until that day comes, we still die! You cannot stop it. People are trying to find all kinds of remedies to keep from dying, but you are going to die. Death continues to reign. Why does it continue to reign? Because of sin and the curse upon Adam. It's THE sin. We are free now, and we have conquered death through Christ—Christ conquered it. Death doesn't cause us any fear anymore, but we are still going to die unless He comes before that event happens in our lives. So he says, "Death continued to reign." THE death continued to reign.

You can't be good enough to get out of Adam. You have to be born again and placed into Christ. That's the key. Religion won't do it. Good works won't do it. What are you banking on? This is why every man has to be justified by putting his faith into the Lord Jesus Christ. Sin is not just what you do. You can find people who are moral and ethical. You can find people who probably live better lives than some Christians you've been around. That doesn't mean they are saved. That just simply means they are sincere. But, you see, when you are saved, when you are rescued, when you are delivered, you are delivered OUT OF Adam and the penalty that's impending, which is eternal death. You are placed into the body of Christ. That's salvation.

Well, he gives us then the event that caused it all. He shows us evidence that sin was in the world from Adam to Moses, even though there was no Law to condemn anybody. Sin was there. Death—THE death—continued to reign during that time, proving the fact that Adam infected the whole human race once he sinned.

Then third, he shows the eternal effect of two people. Now you have to understand the difference. One is a creation, the other is the Creator, who became the God Man. That's what we'll see in the rest of chapter 5 as he says, "Okay, here is what it means to be in Christ and here is what it means to be in Adam. This is what Adam did for you. This is what Christ has done for you."

Paul goes on in verse 14 and says of Adam, "**who is a type of Him who was to come.**" What in the world did Adam have that was in any way a likeness to Jesus? There are significant differences, but there is one likeness that stands out. Both of them were representative of the human race. Adam made a selfish decision and cast the world into sin. Jesus made a selfless decision, as Philippians 2:2 teaches us: "esteem others as highly as yourself, have this attitude in yourself which was also in Christ Jesus when He emptied Himself and thought it not robbery to be equal with God." He made a selfless decision to come to this earth and affect all humankind.

Adam affected all men, and Jesus can potentially affect all men. The difference is: Adam's penalty was imposed upon man. We weren't even born. You must put your faith into Jesus before it can affect you for eternal life. We are not teaching universal salvation. No. But what He did has the potential of affecting the whole human race. You are either IN Adam or you are IN Christ. What Adam did affected all humankind.

My question to you is, "Are you in Adam or are you in Christ?" If you're counting on your goodness and your good deeds and your helping people to get you into heaven, no way! You have to be born again and, by the Holy Spirit, placed into the body of Christ. You have to be taken out of Adam and put into Christ or you will never see God through all eternity. You will see Him only at the judgment seat, the Great White Throne Judgment, but you'll never, ever, be with Him in all of eternity. That's why we are desperate to hear the good news of what Jesus has done for us. He takes us out of Adam. Sin is not what you do. It's what you are. It's evidenced by what you do. That's the obvious evidence. Sin is more than just an act. It's a nature, an attitude. It came from Adam