

Eternal Security – Message 2

Death in Adam

In this message we're going to explore the actual theological basis for our *confidence* and *certainty* of *Eternal Life*. By the end, I'm confident that we will all understand just how God has guaranteed our Salvation.

I've entitled this message: *Death in Adam* – and the next message in this series: *Life in Christ* and the verse we're going to use as our *heading* is **1 Corinthians 15:21:**

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

To explore the theme of '*Death in Adam*' we must go to the book of **Romans - chapter 5** in particular.

Now we know that we're saved by the atoning blood of Christ and when we accepted Christ as our Saviour, we accepted the message by simple faith. Becoming like a little child is the only way we were accepted by God.

But we *know* that as we grow in Christ, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation leads us into fresh *aspects* and a deepening *understanding* of just what is involved in the death of Christ.

You probably hadn't heard of **Romans chapter 5** when you first became a Christian, but it's only by understanding *this* passage that you and I will *really* understand just what God has done to both *justify* us and to permanently *guarantee* our salvation.

Romans 5 contains the account of how sin came into the world and tells us why *we*, as a *race*, suffer the consequences of the act of disobedience committed by Adam in the Garden of Eden so long ago.

Let's pick it up from **verse 12** and reading through to **verse 21**

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned--- For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive Gods abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ! Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and *life* for all people. For just as through the *disobedience* of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the *obedience* of the one man the many will be made righteous.

So you can see immediately that a clear parallel has been set up between *Adam* and *Christ*. And it's the nature of this parallel that explains the means by which God justifies the sinner and brings us into a perfect and eternal relationship with Himself.

As *believers* we know that our salvation is brought about by our union with Christ - but for us to really *understand* how this is done, Paul must *first* explain the nature of our union with *Adam*.

Why? Because he's going to demonstrate that our previous relationship with *Adam* is the *same* as our *present* relationship with *Christ*. If we understand the *one*, we'll understand the *other*!

In *fact*, the story of the entire human race can *only* be *understood* in terms of our relationship to *Adam* just as the story of *redemption* can only be *fully* understood in terms of our *relationship* to Christ.

If we want to feel totally secure in the *finality* of our Salvation - and truly understand how *nothing* can possibly affect our standing in Christ, we're going to have to appreciate the *true meaning* of *Substitution* and *Imputation*.

Our discussion of the passage we've just read will enable us to do so.

So let's begin.

The first thing we notice is that Paul presents two men - *Adam* and *Christ*. Each performed a *single act* that produced a *single result* - and *that result* is experienced by every member in their respective race.

Adam's act was one of *disobedience* in the Garden of Eden. God expressly forbade him to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil - and he did it anyway!

The *result* of that disobedience was *death* because the Bible says in **Romans 6:23** that: *the wages of sin is death*.

By contrast, Christ's act was one of total *obedience* to the Father. The Bible says in **Philippians 2:8**:

..being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

And the *result* of Christ's obedience was not *death* - but *glory*:

Phil 2:9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name....

Now by the *same method* by which we *died* in *Adam*- we now *live* in *Christ*!

Sounds mysterious? Well, if we can properly understand how this works with Adam, we'll understand how things work with Christ - whom the Bible describes as the *last Adam*.

So listen to the story of how God actually saves you - and I believe that this will give you the assurance that you can never lose your salvation.

Paul really begins his argument with **verse 12** of our chapter where he says this:

.... sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, -- in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.

That seems logical enough! We're all sinners because we all *sin* - just like Adam did - right?

Well - that's not actually what Paul has just said! He says: **...because all sinned**; not: '...because all *sin*!' Otherwise that would *immediately* exclude new-born babies etc - *they* haven't committed a sin until they reach the age of understanding! So by that logic they couldn't die until they had done so!

But the passage says that death came upon *everyone* **because *all* sinned** - *past tense!*

So what's Paul saying? Well, let's examine his *next* point. It's such an *important* one that it actually forms the foundation for his whole argument in this chapter.

He says this:

Verse 13. To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law.

So this is the first thing we need to understand otherwise we won't get the point of what Paul says next.

What he's saying here is that sin can't be held against someone who hasn't broken a specific law! Bottom line is: you can't pay the penalty for sin - or suffer the consequences of sin (in other words; you can't *die*) - unless you've disobeyed one of God's commandments. You must have broken a *specific law* to deserve death!

This principle has tremendous implications for us. To be held guilty of sin - we must have broken a specific law.

Ok - fair enough in the case of those who lived after God gave His law to *Moses* - the people were *bound* by that law; they *broke* it and *death* was the result.

But wait a minute! What about the people who lived *before* God *gave us* the ten commandments etc? What happened to them?

Paul says it in **v.14**

Nevertheless, (that is: in spite of them apparently not being given a commandment) **death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam.**

They died as *well* - a *thousand years* before God gave his law to Moses!!

So what's Paul getting at? Just this - that all those generations of people who lived after the garden of Eden must have actually broken the law; they *must* have violated one of God's specific commandments - otherwise sin couldn't be held against them and they wouldn't have died!

Do you see what Paul is driving at? The law wasn't given until Moses received it on Mt Sinai. The only commandment that had been given *before* then, was the one that Adam and *Eve* disobeyed.

But everyone still died! Logically then, everyone *must* have been guilty of *also* breaking *that particular commandment*.

That's the point Paul's *making* here!

...death came to all people, because all *sinned*

But how is that possible? Only Adam and Eve were in the garden. How could the whole human race - including you and me - be said to have been in the garden, violating God's commandment?

The answer to *this* question reveals to us the actual cause of the human *condition*. It tells us how we became sinners and ultimately leads us into a deeper understanding of the true nature of salvation.

We need to really understand this!!

The whole human race -including you and me - aren't sinners because of the sins *we* commit in our *lives*. We're sinners because of *one sin* that *we* committed *in the garden of Eden!*

But wait a minute! *We* weren't in the garden! No one else *was* - except *Adam* and *Eve*! We weren't *there* to commit that sin. And even if we *had* been, who's to say that we would have disobeyed like Adam did? It sounds like the

whole human race is being arbitrarily held accountable for the actions of just one man!

Well - unfair as it seems - that is certainly what appears to have *happened*. In **verse 15** we read that **many died through one man's trespass**. **Verse 17** says **that by the trespass of one man, death reigned *through* that one man** (*italics mine*).

Clearly we've all been pronounced guilty because of Adam's sin - even though we weren't there at the time!

So the objection naturally arises - and we've *all* heard it before - how can that be *fair*? Why blame *us* for *Adam's* sin?

Well, to understand just why and how this happened, we need to understand the principle of *Federal Headship* - or, if you like, *Representative* Headship.

We're actually all fairly familiar with this principle in many levels of life.

Take one example: If a group sends a representative or a proxy to speak or act on its behalf, the representative becomes a substitute for the group. What he or she *says* or *does* is what the group is deemed to have *said* or *done*. The

actions of the proxy are binding on the whole group. The group doesn't have to be physically present: it *is* present - in the person of that *proxy*.

This is the true nature of substitution!

Our *country* runs on this principle; it's called *representative government*. If the Government declares war - it's acting on *our* behalf and we are consequently *all* at war and many of us will die because of its decision.

We say the *Government* supports the needy but it *is*, in fact, we *ourselves*, through our *taxes*, who support these people. The Government is acting as a *substitute* for us; it's functioning on *our* behalf; it's acting as our *representative*.

Take another example. If you hire somebody to kill for you, you may not have committed the act personally, but you are legally just as *guilty* as - or even *more* guilty - than the person who pulled the trigger! Because he or she was representing you - acting on your behalf. In the eyes of the law - and in fact by any standard of measurement - that person's actions are *your* actions.

In 2004, in the state of Delaware, a woman, Linda Charbonneau, co-opted both her daughter and her daughter's boyfriend to kill her husband and, subsequently, her husband's boyfriend. At her sentencing, she received

the death penalty. The ones that actually committed the murder avoided execution. The reason? As the judge said: "They were her agents. She has more, not less, responsibility for the murders."

A further example we're *all* familiar with is found at the Olympic Games. When an athlete wins a gold medal - the *country* that athlete *represents* is victorious. When he or she stands on the podium to receive a medal, they don't play his or her favourite pop song - they play the country's *national anthem*. The country shares in the athlete's victory - just as they might share in the disappointment or even humiliation of his or her defeat.

Get even closer to home. You may not play football *yourself*. Yet what happens when your favourite team wins? *You* rejoice - and even boast in its victory saying: '*we* won'. In effect, every action *they* perform becomes *your* action. You might have heard football fans saying things like: '*We* had a good training session Thursday night' or '*We* purchased this particular player last week'.

Have you ever found it *amusing* how that when a person starts a new job with a company, in a few hours (or even minutes) he or she will be saying: "*We* sell this particular product or *we* intend to promote this particular event next week", even though that person will have had nothing *personally* to do with these activities or decisions.

This concept of Federal headship - of *representation* or *substitution* - also runs right through the Bible; it's how God actually *evaluates* and *judges individuals*. Not on an *individual, personal* basis per se (because if that were the case, *everyone* would be going to hell), but on the grounds of the *group* to which he or she belongs - and, specifically, by the actions *performed by that group's representative*.

Remember how the sin of Ham had dire consequences for the entire progeny of Canaan? Ham sinned and his son Canaan - together with all his descendants - was cursed as a result.

Another example: the character and destiny of entire tribes of Israel were determined by the actions of their progenitors. Particularly, for example in the case of Reuben, Simeon and Levi.

Again, in [Ex. 34:7](#) we read of God visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.

And remember when Achan kept the forbidden spoils after the conquest of Jericho? A transgression committed by *one* man - and perhaps his *family*. But what did God say to Joshua in [chapter 7:11-12](#)?

Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions. That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies (italics mine).

You can see that on this occasion, God viewed Israel corporately through the actions of just *one man*. It really *is guilt by association*. Achan sinned and *all Israel* were incorporated *in* Achan and pronounced guilty!

A more familiar example is the story of David and Goliath. When they met on the field of battle, each was representing his own nation or army. The *Philistines* were defeated because *Goliath* was defeated and *he* was *representing* them. The Israelites were victorious because *their representative, David*, was victorious.

So we find that God deals with entire bodies of people through their representatives. This explains why whole cities - women and children included - were wiped out because of the wickedness of their kings!

This idea of *representation* or, more specifically, *incorporation* of a body of people in *one individual*, is an essentially Hebrew concept. In Western thought and philosophy we find that the *self* is paramount. Everything is

seen in reference to the individual *alone*. But this is not *so* in Eastern thought. The community to which one belongs - and, in particular, the nature of the individual representing that community - is what makes all the difference.

So, getting back to our chapter, we can now see what Paul is driving at.

If the whole human race sinned in the garden, it must have been that Adam was our *representative*. He was speaking for us. He was our *proxy* if you like : our *Federal Head*.

Understand the significance of this! It means that it wasn't just one man being tested in the garden. God was testing the whole of humanity - our entire race - through this first man because he was speaking *for us*. *His* actions were therefore *our* actions and *his* words were *our* words. He was *standing in our place* - *substituting* for us. And because God had decreed that we should all be represented by the first man, we *all* suffer the consequences of *his* actions!

But is that reasonable? Maybe we would have done better than Adam! Why not give *us* a chance?

Well - it wouldn't make a scrap of difference!

Let me explain: we choose our government to represent us - but our choices are fallible and our confidence often misplaced. That government may turn out to be corrupt or simply fail to represent us fairly or accurately. A proxy acting on behalf of a group - though chosen by that group - may be a loose cannon and misrepresent the wishes of the group entirely.

However - this is *not* the case with a loving, compassionate and all-knowing God of wisdom and truth. *He* knew what He was doing when He selected our representative. From all eternity He's been acquainted with every human being ever born - and we can be sure that His choice of a representative was entirely just and fair.

This means that what Adam did, every single one of us would have done because - I repeat - it wasn't just an individual being tested in the garden: it was the entire human race - represented by the first, perfect man. We were *incorporated* in Adam. In that sense we all sinned *in Adam!* His actions were our actions: he was speaking and actively *on our behalf* - in our place - a truly representative role. And consequently we're all answerable for that sin in the garden!

So Paul sums it up this way in **verse 17**:

...through the disobedience of the one man (that's Adam)
the many (that's us) **were made sinners**

The word 'made', is the Greek word *kathistemi*, and it means: *to appoint, put in the category of...* What this means is that you and I - our whole species in fact - have, as a result of *Adam's* sin, been designated as a *race of sinners* before God. That is now the nature of the human race, which means that every one of us are deemed to be sinners simply by being born into that race!

As king David said in **Psalm 51:5**,

Behold I was brought forth in iniquity. In sin my mother conceived me.

So why does Paul take such pains to explain to us just how we came to be condemned in sin? And how does all this contribute to our assurance of eternal security?

Well - the answer is found in the other side of the *Adam-Christ* story. Being judged by the actions of a representative may seem harsh at times but there is a very important reason why God has always operated on this principle.

He has used it to bring *life* to us - in exactly the same way as *death* was brought upon us through Adam. How He has done so will be the subject of our second message on this subject of *Death in Adam - life in Christ*.

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