

Sin, III

We are in Romans 5. No sooner has the apostle said that Adam was a type of the coming one—a Jewish way of referring to the Messiah—than he immediately launches into three verses whereby he shows how the two Adams—the first and the last Adam—are distinct. I do not understand perfectly his psychology, but here is my guess: Paul felt unclean saying Adam was a type of Christ and leaving it at that. So for three verses in a row, 15, 16, and 17, he shows how they are dissimilar. I will go quickly here because our real fruit is going to be reaped from verses 18 and 19. Adam and the Messiah are not alike in the effects that they bring upon their respective groups of people. Verse 15 says, “But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man”—Adam—“how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!” So they are dissimilar in their effects. The one brought death, the other brought grace, and the gift that is either justification that implies eternal life or eternal life that implies justification. It is not hard to figure out that Paul means bad things came through Adam and good things came through Christ—very good things indeed.

Verse 16 draws a contrast between one sin and many sins and between condemnation and justification. These two are biblically exact opposites: condemnation over against justification. The one sin/many sins contrast is not scientific. Verse 16 says, “Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man’s sin.” Do not get lost in the details here. Adam is a type of Christ, seen in the end of 14, but, as found in 15, they are not alike because death came through the one and life and grace came through the other. Verse 16 in essence says again, but they are not alike: “Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man’s sin: the judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.” Although the comparison is not perfect, the one sin is the sin Adam committed, the many sins are not the sins Christ committed, but they are the sins Christ atoned for. So Paul contrasts one and many—one got us into this situation in the first place, and Christ’s wonderful work takes care of many more than the one. And then the contrast is evident between condemnation that comes from Adam and the justification that comes through Christ. They are not alike. And then a third time, in verse 17, Paul shows that they are not alike: “For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.” Here the contrast is between two different reigns: the reign of death, reflecting back up to 14, and the reign of life. In verse 12 he sets up the problem: how is the one sin of Adam related to the many who sinned? He breaks off his thought. Instead he launches into a two-verse explanation as to how Adam’s sin resulted in death for people who did not sin in exactly the same way that Adam did. And then at the end of 14 he mentions that Adam is a type of Christ. He is an Old Testament prophecy in action, but because of the total thrust of the passage, speaking of Adam’s sin and condemnation repeatedly, he feels unclean in just leaving it at that. He cannot just get away with that. It seems like he is sully Christ’s reputation, so instead he says that fundamentally Adam is a type of Christ, but let me explain further. They are not alike in every way; they are not alike in the effects they bring to the human race. They are not alike in the fact that one brought condemnation, the other brought justification, and they instituted two different reigns. Adam brought the reign of death, the terrible tyrant who barged his way into the Garden of Eden—he was not invited but came to sit on the throne. Adam and Eve are not ruling over God’s creation as they should; they have been pushed aside and here are these terrible tyrants; sin and death are ruling. It is figurative but it is powerful figurative language to speak of the terrible effects of Adam’s sin. Having sufficiently discharged his duty to show the contrast between the two Adams, in 18 he completes the thought he began up above in verse 12.

Romans 5:18 says, “Consequently, just as a result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also”—there is the comparative phrase—“the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.” Let us work with this one. What did the one trespass of Adam yield? According to 5:18, Adam’s one trespass brings about condemnation for his race. Obviously, there is a certain parallelism of phraseology within 18 and its two parts and within 19 and its two parts. If we pressed it, we see all, all, many, many. If we pressed it, the two verses would contradict each other so obviously the terminology is not to be pressed. But this much is plain: the one trespass of the first Adam resulted in condemnation for all, for his race. What is opposite the trespass of Adam in verse 18? Christ’s righteousness, one righteous act. So to use post-Reformation reformed terminology, this does not focus on the active obedience of Christ, but on His passive obedience. The terminology has lost its meaning to us today. When we hear the word “passive” we think of passivity. That is not what it means at all. The word “passive” is from the Latin *passio*, which has to do with suffering, with the passion of Christ. Hoekema defines it as “the law-keeping obedience of Christ,” His lifelong, law-keeping obedience and His obedience unto death. But this is referring not to His lifelong obedience to the law—that is implied in this, that qualifies Him to do this, when it says, “one deed of righteousness,” plainly it speaks of the cross. “His suffering obedience” might be Hoekema’s expression for this concept. What is the result of Christ’s one righteous act? Justification is the exact biblical opposite of condemnation. Here we have the two Adams and their effects on the human race. Think with me now because, whether you know it or not, I am leading you to my conclusions. I am doing it from studying the Bible. Verse 18 says that one trespass resulted in condemnation and one righteous act resulted in justification. There is an underlying parallelism here that is unmistakable; it harkens back to the end of 14: Adam was a type of the one who was to come.

Verse 19 reinforces the truth. We have vocabulary variation but the same ideas. “For” means something like “Let me explain it to you a little differently.” “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.” I might have added that in 18, and actually the parallelism is not perfect because we have an additional element on the positive side: “justification that brings life.” So if we completed Paul’s thought we would have one trespass bringing condemnation for all and that resulting in death, obviously. On the other side we have all three elements: “one righteous act,” “justification for all,” and “resulting in life.”

In verse 19, what is Adam’s deed called here? It is not called trespass, but it is called disobedience. The result is that many were made sinners. Does it mean many and not all? That needs to be determined. Obviously he is not contradicting himself within the space of two verses, so we cannot use Romans 5:18 as a proof text for the fact that everybody is condemned unless you also want to say that it is a proof text for the fact that everybody is justified. Universalists do exactly that. It is one of their big proof passages. Universalism is the view that everybody will be saved in the end. A proponent of that view is called a universalist. But it is a false view. They can make this verse work that way, but they cannot make the whole Bible work that way.

Over against Adam’s disobedience is what? Christ’s obedience. Over against the many being made sinners is the many being justified. You just helped me reach my conclusions. You say, “Your claim, then, is that your conclusions are based upon what Paul was saying.” Exactly.

Martin Luther talked about working with the Bible and working with it carefully. Luther likened working with the Bible’s hard places to working with a nut. You do not just take a hammer and get mad at your nut; you pry it and work around carefully so as not to crush it. If you work with it, sometimes the nut falls open and reveals its choice meats within. I thought I got real light and understood what my hang-up was: I was comparing “all” with “many.” It is just so easy to do that. After a while I said that

this is dumb, obviously I am not to compare “all” with “many” or he would be defeating his own argument twice. It does not work. So I cannot press the “condemnation for all” unless I want to press, by way of being fair and honest with the Bible, “justification for all.” I cannot press “many were made righteous” and not “all” because many were made sinners and “all” does not work. Paul would be contradicting himself one verse after another. It is not many over against all, but it is one and all, one and all, one and many, one and many. The meaning is that the terms “all” and “many” are relative terms, the one Adam and the second Adam. So to find the actual numbers, you cannot just go by “many” or “all” because they contradict; you just have to go by the total import of the passage and all the scripture. In other words, it is showing the one Adam and the great effects the first Adam had on his race and the second Adam and the great effects He had on His race. It is all as opposed to one. It is many as opposed to one. So it is contrasting the Adams and their effects and not taking away with one hand what he just gave the other one. So to find out how many are condemned, you have to go to other Scriptures and this passage as a whole. There is even a hint the passage is utterly objective; it is entirely outside of us. What do we do in terms of the first or the second Adam? In general, in this passage we do nothing. It is all done for us. One exception, in the middle of verse 17, says, “How much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace [...] reign in life through [...] Christ.” In this one place it mentions receiving God’s grace and eternal life; here it is subjective. Other than that, these two Adams stand on their own and they do their work. So, my handling of the “all” and the “many” is not to juxtapose them and make them a contrast one to the other. You end up with hopeless contradiction. You have to see them as relative terms, talking about races of people. Paul could have said one trespass brought condemnation for all of Adam’s race, for all of Adam’s kin or people or descendants, but it does not say that. It just says for all. Likewise, it uses that same expression for Christ, so it is one over against all, one over against many, but do not contrast the “all” and the “many” as if he is giving numbers; he is not. He is showing the effects of the two Adams on their races. This is the best I can do. Think about the purpose of the statements.

In this passage we have two heads: the first Adam and, to use the language of 1 Corinthians 15, the second man, or the last Adam. Please refer to the chart in your notes. We have different acts that are spoken of. We have verdicts that our holy God gives because of those acts and then we have results. What is Adam’s act? In the passage it is called a number of different things. Adam’s act is called sin, transgression, and disobedience. Are we to see them as different and make divisions? I do not think so. I would say they are fine nuances, probably, but not any big ones. They are basically pointing to his heinous crime of disobeying the Lord his God, of questioning God’s goodness, thinking God is keeping something back from us, and so forth. It is wicked. What is the work of Christ? That is exactly the opposite of the sin of Adam. It is His righteousness or His obedience: one act in each case. What a passage! It gives the history. It gives the fate of the human race on these two people’s shoulders. Is this fair of God to do it this way? I do not know, you ask Him. God sets up the rules. By the way, if you do not like representation by Adam, think about it a little bit before you throw it away. You certainly like representation by Christ because we are saved because of one man and what He did for us on the cross and in the resurrection. I have nothing to do with that. It is true I have to believe to be saved, but I believe in what He did, nothing else, and it saves me. We all know unsaved people who say to us, “That is too easy. I am not going to do it that way. I am going to stand on my own two feet. If that is how it is, I am going to miss out.” What terrible words; they make us shudder. The utter autonomy of the human sinner says something like that. Maybe we did in the past and God broke down our resistance; may He do it for others as well.

What is the verdict? The only verdict a holy God can give in the light of sin, of transgression, of disobedience: Guilty, condemned. Death is not a verdict; death is a result. Think about it. What other verdict could God give? I will tell you what modern people would say. They would say, “No problem.

God loves everybody and He cannot be mad with anybody.” Read three chapters of the Bible, three chapters of Romans, and you cannot miss the answer: condemned, guilty, and damned is the proper answer. What is the exact biblical opposite of condemnation? It is the verdict of a holy God. It is the only verdict He can give in the light of the work of His Son. For God to do anything else but declare righteous the one who believes in Jesus is for God to deny Himself. That is how wonderful the work of Christ is. It measures up perfectly. Romans 3 shows us it is propitiation, it takes away God’s wrath. That means the Son of God took our condemnation so, if we believe in the Son, the Father can only give one verdict to anyone who runs to Christ for refuge and believes in Him. Our condemnation is paid. God does not engage in double jeopardy here. It is already paid. I believe, therefore I am forgiven. Said positively, when God looks at the perfect righteousness of His Son, He can only give one verdict: righteous. He declares righteous everyone who believes in Him. Of course, the outcome is life. Find problems in this if you will, otherwise you have just adopted the representative view in my own estimation. That is how much I think He has woven into the fabric of this passage. Can you quibble with the chart? I cannot. I would like to know if it is wrong. I do not want to teach error and I do try to distinguish between things that are more or less clear in Scripture.

I think you understand Pelagianism teaches Adam was just a bad example. The discussion of original sin is basically a Calvinist intramural debate. John Wesley was very godly and he preached the Gospel and I rejoice in that. I am setting that up for a place to disagree with him, of course. But he was really clever and wise; he managed to affirm the doctrine of original sin and still end up with his freewill theology. The way he did it was to say that original sin is a truth, and because of it we are born corrupt, we are sinners, but—and here was the stroke of genius on Wesley’s part—by virtue of the universal prevenient grace of God, these effects of original sin on the will of man are meliorated. I need to do a little bit of defining here and give a couple of different views of prevenient grace. Prevenient means preceding grace. Remember the King James version of 1 Thessalonians 4, which says, “Those who are asleep will not prevent us who are alive,” and all the modern translations say, “will not precede.” They come from the same Latin root. There are two views of preceding grace, of grace that comes before salvation. The Calvinist view, maybe better called the Augustinian view since it goes all the way back to Augustine, says that prevenient grace is particular, definite, and limited. Because it is efficacious—it accomplishes God’s goal—it actually brings people to salvation. This is the Augustinian/Calvinist view of prevenient grace. John Wesley did not make up the idea of prevenient grace. He changed the tradition before him. By the way, it is not nasty to call Wesley an Arminian after James Arminius, who preceded him. Wesley named his own newspaper *The Arminian*. We have Wesleyan Arminianism as a modern and, in many cases, Bible-believing theology over against a Calvinist theology. Prevenient grace is universal and it is not efficacious. It goes to everyone. Here was Wesley’s genius: he said that flowing from the cross of Christ is universal preceding grace that nullifies the effects of sin. Not that people are not born sinners, not that we are not corrupt, but that our wills are set free by this grace. He has got original sin, it is true. We fell in Adam, we are all corrupt because of that, but then with this appeal to a universal preceding grace he could say, “But the effects of original sin are nullified on the human will especially, so that we are able to choose God.” It fits into his theology beautifully, thus election means God foresees who would choose Christ and believe the Gospel and they are chosen. Christ died to make salvation possible for everyone, it fits. I do not agree with it. I do not think it will hold up to a biblical study of the concept of grace. That is beyond our purposes right now.

Although he technically has a doctrine of original sin, it is not important. What is important is how you use your free will. That is why I am not being unfair to say that the doctrine of original sin really is a matter of Calvinist intramurals, Calvinists quibbling with Calvinists over what this really means.

Does this translate, in practical terms, into the Arminian denial of spiritual inability? Yes and no. They could say by virtue of Adam's fall we are spiritually unable to save ourselves, but appealing to universal prevenient grace, nullifying the effects of the Fall on the will, we now have "gracious ability," as they call it. They appeal in their own—this is not a Calvinist using nasty terms—they say we have ability, but they give credit to God for giving it to us. Furthermore, whereas synergism, the notion of man and God working together for salvation, is a dirty word in reformed circles, it is a very fine word in Arminian circles. But again, it is synergism enabled by grace. The question is whether this is the view of grace the Bible presents. My answer is no, with all due respect and even admiration for Wesley and his brother and their ministries. Sincerely I say that. Is this the Bible's view of the unsaved people's ability? No, it is not. It is an important matter to know what an unsaved person can do or cannot do to be saved. So let us proceed with the Calvinist intramurals. I will dismiss Pelagianism as being no view of original sin at all. I will pass by Arminianism because, at its logical conclusion, it really does not concern original sin. So we are now distinguishing—differentiating between—and evaluating the representative from natural headship views.

Natural headship is sometimes called realism or realistic headship. I here quote the moderately reformed Baptist theologian Millard Erickson, for whom I have great respect, who advocates this view. "This approach is related to the traducianist view of the origin of the soul." You remember I said last time to know that creationism and traducianism exist. I make no personal commitments to either one because I do not think the Bible gives us enough data to make commitments. Erickson disagrees, in favor of traducianism. "This approach is related to the traducianist view of the origin of the soul, according to which we receive our souls by transmission from our parents just as we do our physical natures. So we were present in germinal or seed form in our ancestors in a very real sense. In a very real sense, we were there in Adam. His action was not merely that of one isolated individual, but of the entire human race. Although we were not there individually"—a very important concession—"we were nonetheless there. The human race sinned as a whole, thus there is nothing unfair or improper"—notice that expression—"about our receiving a corrupted nature and guilt from Adam, for we are receiving the just results of our sin. This is the view of Augustine."

Notice that both the representative view and realism are Calvinist views; they are headship views called natural headship and federal headship. We will do more when we contrast them, but let me critique natural headship. I will freely admit the strength of the concept of natural headship. It is folly to deny that Adam is the natural head of the human race. He is plainly in the Bible, but that does not say that natural headship is the way to explain original sin. I do not think it is. But I affirm that he is the natural head of the human race.

First, notice Erickson's comments about "nothing unfair or improper." The big problem with the representative view of original sin is that it seems unfair for God to blame us for what Adam did. This is called the problem of alien guilt. Adam made me do it. That is not fair; why should I be condemned for somebody else when I did not have anything to do with it? The problem of alien guilt plagues the representative view. All the other options within the umbrella of Calvinism are attempts to solve the problem of alien guilt and so that is the reason realism exists. Erickson claimed, "thus there is nothing unfair or improper about our receiving a corrupted nature and guilt from Adam, for we are receiving the just results of our sin." That does not hold up to scrutiny in my estimation.

Although realism claims to better handle the problem of alien guilt than the representative view does. S. Lewis Johnson wrote, "Romans 5:12: An Exercise in Exegesis and Theology" in a book entitled *New Dimensions in New Testament Faith*. I keep appealing to it for it is a great essay. I was utterly persuaded by it and I have great appreciation for Dr. Johnson's work. He taught New Testament at Dallas

Theological Seminary for over 20 years, he worked himself, through doing detailed exegesis Bible study, to a 5-point Calvinist position. He found himself *persona non grata* at Dallas, which is a 4-point Calvinist institution. The founder and first president, Louis Sperry Chafer, wrote strongly against particular or limited atonement. Since Johnson was of a vocal sort, I think they agreed for him to leave. This greatly respected and beloved man of God went to Trinity Divinity School and for the last ten years or so of his ministry taught theology—not the New Testament—and worked from the Hebrew and Greek text extensively. I understand he is going to write a systematic theology book. I think he is still dispensational in some of those larger concerns. It would certainly be an improvement over the sole systematic text we have for that tradition, which is Louis Sperry Chafer's systematic theology book. Anyway, I really appreciate this essay by Johnson. He says it well:

Even if we should grant that generic humanity, undifferentiated humanity, humanity in Adam's loins—I suppose we are saying in his seed, in his testicles gradually then dispersed throughout the generations that came after him—even if we should grant that generic humanity sinned in Adam, we would have no relief from the problem of an alien guilt. If punishment is to be vindicated, the act of sin must be one of conscious self-determination and personal criminality, yet according to realism when Adam sinned, his posterity, his descendants as individuals and persons did not exist. The act of Adam's sin predated their personhood. I cannot see how this alleviates the problem of justice one iota or how we can act before we are.

It looks simplistic to me to say that we really sinned in Adam. How are we in Adam? In fact, I have seen two variations of this. There is the spiritual view. I do not know how we were there but if the Bible says that we were there, we were there. I get nervous about that. Do you believe in the pre-existence of souls? That is not a Christian doctrine. Origin believed in that. It is a platonic doctrine. In some undefined way we were mystically present in the garden. The other view is, as Erikson said, "we were present in germinal, or seed form, in Adam.

Let us grant that in that Adam was the natural head of the human race. How does that get around alien guilt? We were not there committing the act as persons because we did not exist as persons. The notion of our being there in an undifferentiated way in generic humanity I do not think solves that problem a bit. It gives an illusion of solving it perhaps but it does not hold up to careful scrutiny, at least in my estimation. Another telling criticism is the last clause of Romans 5:14, which seems to contradict realism. This clause asserts that death reigned "even over those who did not sin in the likeness of the transgression of Adam." Realism holds that all people, without exception, sinned as Adam did since they were racially in him, Johnson explains. All have broken a definite and positive command. How could it be otherwise? They were in his loins. The same command Adam broke, thus realism cannot have a place for a different modus, a different way or manner of sinning. Romans 5:14 contradicts realism, even over those who did not sin in the manner Adam did. That cannot be true of realism. We sinned exactly as he did because we were really there. It contradicts the text. I am not saying Romans 5:13 and 14 are crystal clear in every regard, but that much seems clear. I told you earlier on I was setting you up. Go back and do the Bible study again. If you can show me wrong I am happy to retract, but I do not think you can.

Johnson contends, rightly I think, that realism has trouble with the Adam/Christ parallel of Romans 5. "Just as human beings are justified for a righteousness that is not personally their own." Do you know what Martin Luther called it and what the Protestant tradition has called it since Luther? Alien righteousness. I love alien righteousness. Luther said, "The righteousness that saves us is not our own personal righteousness. It is an alien righteousness, outside of us, belonging to another, even Jesus Christ that is made over to our spiritual bank accounts." I love representation, not in Adam so much, but I love it in Christ and I am not excited about alien guilt, but I am absolutely thrilled about alien

righteousness. Because of the parallelism here I do not think I can have the one and not have the other, so if I rejoice in alien righteousness, I think I am stuck with alien guilt. We are not making up the rules of the game, but rather we are trying to figure out, in hindsight, what God did. Just as men are justified for a righteousness that is not personally their own, so they are also condemned for a sin that is not personally their own. Of course it must be recognized that the analogy is not a complete one between the two Adams, but it does seem essential to Paul's point to maintain that the nature of the union between the two principles, Adams 1 and 2, and their people, is parallel. Realism thus looks good because, frankly, it is an embarrassment to say Adam sinned and we are all condemned because of that, but I would suggest it is an embarrassment that we should get used to living with. It is not the only answer as to why we are sinners. It is not even Paul's immediate answer. Why they are sinners is because they break God's laws in creation, the law on the heart and the law given in the law of Moses, but it is his ultimate answer because he is protecting God's justice and making us upright in the first place. And he is showing, I believe, that he has a view of the history of special revelation that is nothing less than a representative view that focuses around the works of two Adams, of two human beings. It seems to be the way God set it up.

These are views of original sin. These are views of these verses. Just as a result of one trespass was condemnation for all. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners. They are wrestling with difficult passages and trying to understand what Paul is saying. The main thing Paul is saying is, "Hallelujah, Christ's righteousness gives us standing and acceptance before God." But in doing that Paul draws these parallels and this is the place that the Bible speaks of original sin. In other places it implies a doctrine just like this and perhaps we will take a peek at those later.