

Is Mankind Also Guilty Of Adam's Sin?

When the first man, Adam, was created by God, he had everything he could possibly need and want in the Garden of Eden, including a beautiful helpmate as his wife. God gave him a test to show whether Adam, who was living a life of luxury, was still in subjection to Him. Simply put, Adam had one restriction—he was not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. By an act of his own free will, Adam chose to eat the forbidden fruit from that very tree, and through that single act of disobedience, sin entered the world. The doctrine of imputed sin outlined in Romans 5:12-21 indicates that that original sin of Adam is now put to the account of every member of the human race.

Ever since that terrible act, mankind—including Christians—has complained that the doctrine of imputed sin is totally unfair, saying, “It was Adam that sinned, not me! I did not sin and disobey God in the Garden of Eden, so why do I have to suffer because of Adam's sin?”

Let's begin to analyze this complaint by reading the following simplified version of the Apostle Paul's words in Romans 5:12-21 written in *The Living Bible*:

When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. His sin spread throughout the whole world, so everything began to grow old and die, for all sinned. [We all know that it was Adam's sin that caused this] because although, of course, people were sinning from the time of Adam through Moses, God did not in those days judge them guilty of death for breaking his laws—because he had not yet given his laws to them, nor told them what he wanted them to do. So when their bodies died it was not for their own sins since they themselves had never disobeyed God's special law against eating the forbidden fruit, as Adam had.

What a contrast between Adam and Christ who was yet to come! And what a difference between man's sin and God's forgiveness!

For this one man, Adam, brought death to many through his sin. But this one man, Jesus Christ, brought forgiveness to many through God's mercy. Adam's one sin brought the penalty of death to many, while Christ freely takes away many sins and gives glorious life instead. The sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to be king over all, but all who will take God's gift of forgiveness and acquittal are kings of life because of this one man, Jesus Christ. Yes, Adam's sin brought punishment to all, but Christ's righteousness makes men right with God, so that they can live. Adam caused many to be sinners because he disobeyed God, and Christ caused many to be made acceptable to God because he obeyed.

The Ten Commandments were given so that all could see the extent of their failure to obey God's laws. But the more we see our sinfulness, the more we see God's grace forgiving us. Before, sin ruled over all men and brought them to death, but now God's kindness rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

With this simplified version from *The Living Bible* behind us, let's now analyze the Apostle Paul's words in Romans 5:12-21, verse by verse, from *The NIV Study Bible*

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and see if we can come up with a better understanding of this seemingly unfair “doctrine of imputed sin.”

Romans 5:12: Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—

The NIV Study Bible footnote for Romans 5:12 says that “the context of this verse shows that Adam’ sin involved the rest of mankind in condemnation (verses 18 and 19), and death (verse 15). We do not start life with even the possibility of living it sinlessly; we begin it with a sinful nature (see Psalm 51:5; 58:3 & Ephesians 2:3)”

Romans 5:13: —for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law.

The NIV Study Bible footnote for Romans 5:13 says that “In the period when there was no Mosaic law, “breaking a command” (verse 14) was not charged against man (see Roman 4:15). Death, however, continued to occur (verse 14). Since death is the penalty for sin, people between Adam and Moses were involved in the sin of someone else, namely, Adam.”

Romans 5:14: Nevertheless, 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, who was a pattern of one who is to come.

The NIV Study Bible footnote for Romans 5:14 says that “Adam by his sin brought universal ruin on the human race. In this act he is the prototype of Christ, through one righteous act (verse 18) brought universal blessing. The analogy is one of contrast.”

Romans 5:15: 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 of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to many!

The NIV Study Bible footnote for Romans 5:15 says “*God’s grace* is infinitely greater for good than is Adam’s sin for evil.”

Romans 5:16: Again, the gift of God is not like the result of one man’s [Adam’s] sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.

The NIV Study Bible footnote for Romans 5:16 says that “*the many trespasses* refers to the sins of succeeding generations.”

Romans 5:17: For if, by the trespass of the one man [Adam], death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

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The NIV Study Bible footnote for Romans 5:17 says that “those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life are the future reign of believers with Jesus Christ (see 2nd Timothy 2:12).”

Romans 5:18: Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

The NIV Study Bible footnote for Romans 5:18 says that “life for all men does not mean that everyone will be saved, but that salvation is available to all. To be effective, God’s gracious gift must be received.”

Romans 5:19: For just as through the disobedience of the one man [Adam] the many were made sinners, so through the obedience of the one man [Jesus] the many will be made righteous.

The NIV Study Bible footnote for Romans 5:19 says that “made righteous is a reference to a standing (status) before God (see 2nd Corinthians 5:21), not a change in character. The latter (the doctrine of sanctification) is developed in chapters 6 through 8.”

Romans 5:20: The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more,

The NIV Study Bible footnote for Romans 5:20 says that “the law that was added was not to bring about redemption, but to point up the need for it. The law made sin even more sinful by revealing what sin is in stark contrast to God’s holiness.”

Romans 5:21: so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 5:12-21 Summary

In Romans 5:12-21, Dr. Jack L. Arnold in his article, *In Adam And In Christ*, says that the Apostle Paul’s point is that death in Adam has been conquered in Christ. The main thought of these verses is the imputing of the sin of Adam to every member of the human race. That God would hold humanity responsible for the sin of Adam is beyond human reasoning, but we are dealing with divine revelation. Surely God’s ways are not our ways. The imputation of Adam’s sin to the human race is not popular among men, even men who profess to be Christians, but it is scriptural. Apart from understanding imputed sin, there can be little appreciation of the salvation provided in Christ.

The following comments from other Biblical ministries make this unfair “doctrine of imputed sin” seem a little more fair:

1. *Into Thy Word Ministries* says these paraphrased words about Adam’s original sin becoming our imputed sin: “If everyone who ever lived

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was tested by God in the Garden of Eden as was Adam, they would have disobeyed and sinned against God just as he did.”

2. Joshua J. Masters, in his writing entitled *Brownies and Original Sin*, has these words regarding Adam's original sin becoming our imputed sin. “Aside from Jesus, no one has lived a perfect life without sin, so to blame Adam's *original sin* as an unfair condemnation of the individual is merely a distracter from one's own sin. Let's suppose brownies represent sin and that your doctor has told you that you will die if you eat brownies. Now let's suppose Adam brings a plate of brownies into the room and you eat them. It's Adam's fault that the brownies are there, but you are responsible for eating them. It's this way with sin too. Adam brought sin into the world. It's his fault that sin is available to us, but—like the brownies—everyone has partaken of it freely.
3. Dr. Jack L. Arnold, writes these paraphrased words: “The human race was actually seminally present in Adam when he chose to commit that first sin.” Note that Webster defines the word “seminally” as “having the character of the original source.”

Does every Bible scholar believe that Roman's 5:12-21 teaches that that original sin of Adam is now put to the account of every member of the human race? The Berean Christian Bible Study Resource's article, *Original Sin*, objects to this Biblical interpretation by saying that “The Biblical concept of *original sin* is not the *imputation of the guilt of Adam's sin* to his descendents, but rather the passing on the *sinful nature* through the flesh. Augustinian theology, which is inherent both in Catholicism and Reformed Theology (Calvinism and Lutheranism), portrays God as unjustly reckoning people guilty for things they have no control over, namely the sins of their ancestors and likewise presumes salvation from the guilt of such sins through the act of water baptism—apart from faith in Christ—to be reckoned born-again and members of the Church (though they are without faith).

“Romans 5:12 reads: **Therefore, just as *sin* entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through *sin*, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned**—Defenders of Augustinian theology use only a few words or phrases in this verse to defend their theory. With respect to the *imputation of the guilt of Adam's sin* idea, they presume that the word *sin* is referring to guilt rather than the *sinful nature*, and that the phrase *because all sinned* means that all sinned in Adam rather than the idea that the committing of sin is so common, that it lends credence to the idea of human nature being sinful. To those of an Augustinian theology I exhort, ‘Don't blame your guilt on Adam. Blame it on yourself for sinning. Your sinning is your fault!’”

Is mankind also guilty of Adam's sin? And if mankind is guilty of Adam's sin, could any one individual, if he could shed that one imputed sin of Adam, claim to be sinless? And finally, does it really matter if an individual could reduce the thousands and thousands of sins committed during his lifetime by one single sin? You be the judge!