



# One Act Can Shape an Entire Humanity

**“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Romans 5:19).**

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“And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. 12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: 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 to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. 15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. 16 And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. 17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) 18 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. 20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: 21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 5:11-21).

## Introduction

This message highlights the **potentials and power of a single act** on the entire humanity. A single act for good or evil can change the trajectory of the human race for good or evil respectively. No act is a stand alone activity. Each has its consequences on humanity in one way or the other. That is why we need to always carefully consider the long term implications and impact of every action we take in life. You may have heard the adage that “a single axe can fell a giant iroko tree”. The axe may be small and the iroko tree gigantic. It is not a question of size but of impact.

The modern world is deeply concerned with *origins* and *outcomes*. We ask: *Why is the world broken? Why do good intentions so often end in failure? Why does injustice persist despite education, technology, and law?*

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Roman church, addresses these questions at their root. In Romans 5:11–21, he presents humanity’s story through **two representative men: Adam and Christ**. One introduces **sin and death**; the other brings **grace and life**. Paul’s argument is not merely theological—it is profoundly practical, speaking directly to the condition of humanity in every age, including our own about the reign of Grace.

## 1. One Act Can Shape an Entire Humanity

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

Paul teaches the Biblical truth that Adam acted as a **federal head**—a representative for all humanity. His disobedience did not remain private; it had corporate consequences. Sin entered the world, and death became universal.

This principle is consistent throughout Scripture:

- **Genesis 3:6–19** – Adam’s sin brings curse, toil, and death.
- **Psalms 51:5** – “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity.”
- **1 Corinthians 15:22** – “For as in Adam all die...”

Modern society often insists that problems are purely environmental, educational, or systemic. While these factors matter, Scripture declares a deeper issue: **the human heart** (Jeremiah 17:9— “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”) This explains why progress alone cannot save us. Technology advances, but violence persists. Education grows, yet corruption remains. **The problem is not merely out there—it is in us.**

Consider environmental pollution. A single toxic discharge upstream can contaminate an entire river system for generations. Likewise, Adam’s sin polluted the human condition, affecting all who followed.

## **2. A Call Into Shared Responsibility, Not Comfortable Spectatorship**

“Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here? And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel...?” (*Numbers 32:6–7*).

Moses confronts Reuben and Gad because they desired to settle comfortably on the east of Jordan while their brethren still faced battles ahead. Moses reminds them that such behaviour mirrors the unbelief of their fathers at Kadesh-barnea, which delayed Israel’s inheritance by forty years - “Thus did your fathers, when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land.” (*Numbers 32:8*).

Their reluctance did not merely affect themselves—it threatened to **discourage the entire nation**. This principle aligns directly with Paul’s teaching in this text (Romans 5). Just as Adam’s disobedience affected many, and Christ’s obedience blesses many, **individual choices still carry corporate consequences.**

- **Romans 5:18** – “By the offence of one judgment came upon all men...”
- **1 Corinthians 12:26** – “Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.”
- Joshua 6—Achan’s sin resulted in the defeat of the Israelites.


Faith is never purely private. Modern culture strongly promotes personal comfort and individual success: “*Look after yourself first.*” Yet Scripture teaches communal responsibility. In today’s Church, some fight spiritual battles—serving, praying, giving, evangelising—while others remain spectators. Moses’ question echoes across generations: “**Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?**” This confronts spiritual passivity.

Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem’s wall with one hand holding a trowel and the other a sword (Nehemiah 4:17). Everyone had a role. No one was exempt.

Similarly, Esther was told - “If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (*Esther 4:14*). **Silence and inaction carry consequences.**

During World War II, Winston Churchill famously said, “*We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.*” Victory required collective effort; comfort for some while others fought would have been unthinkable. The same principle applies spiritually.

**Grace does not merely save us from something; it saves us to something.** Paul says grace now



*reigns* (Romans 5:21). That reign calls believers into active participation in God's purposes, not detached observation.

- **Romans 12:5** – “So we, being many, are one body in Christ.”
- **Galatians 6:2** – “Bear ye one another's burdens.”

Grace produces responsibility. In contemporary terms, Moses' rebuke asks:

- Will you enjoy peace while others struggle?
- Will you benefit from grace while withholding encouragement?
- Will you sit comfortably while souls are perishing?

**Never forget that spiritual discouragement spreads just as easily as faith.** Paul therefore exhorts in Hebrews 3:13 - “Exhort one another daily...” We are either strengthening the body—or weakening it. Jesus made it very clear in Matthew 12:30 - “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad”. Which side do you belong?

As Adam's failure affected all, so, Christ's obedience restores all who believe. And now, those redeemed by grace must walk together, fight together, and encourage one another toward the inheritance God has promised. **Grace reigns—but it reigns through committed people.**

### 3. Sin Reigns Through Death, Even Without the Law

“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression” (*Romans 5:14*). Paul clarifies that sin existed **before** the Law of Moses. The Law did not create sin; it revealed it.

- **Romans 3:20** – “By the law is the knowledge of sin.”
- **Galatians 3:19** – The law was added “because of transgressions”.

Many today believe morality is relative or socially constructed. Yet death—both physical and spiritual—remains universal, proving sin's reality regardless of legal or cultural frameworks. In the Bible, Cain killed Abel **before** the Law (Genesis 4). His conscience convicted him, demonstrating that moral accountability predates legislation.

Secularly, in courts today, ignorance of the law does not remove consequences. Likewise, humanity cannot plead innocence before God simply because it lacks formal religious knowledge (Romans 1:20—“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse”). This humbles us. We cannot save ourselves through moral effort alone. **Sin is not merely a behaviour problem; it is a condition.**


### 4. Christ Is the Greater Adam

“But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many” (*Romans 5:15*).

Paul emphasises **contrast**: Adam's act brought death; Christ's act brings overflowing grace. Where sin abounded, grace superabounded.

- **John 1:16** – “Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.”
- **1 Corinthians 15:45** – Christ is the “last Adam”.

We live in an age marked by guilt, shame, and performance pressure. Many believe they must earn acceptance—from society, from others, even from God.



In modern employment law, one person's outstanding performance can secure benefits for an entire workforce through negotiation. Similarly, Christ's obedience secures righteousness for all who are in Him. Salvation is not achieved; it is received. Grace is not a reward for the worthy, but a gift for the undeserving (Ephesians 2:8–9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast").

### 5. Law Exposes Sin, but Grace Overcomes It

"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (*Romans 5:20*). In the light of Biblical truth, the Law magnifies sin by revealing its true nature, but it was never intended as the final solution.

•**Hebrews 10:1** – The law is "a shadow of good things to come".

•**Romans 7:7** – "I had not known sin, but by the law."

Legalism still tempts the Church today—measuring spirituality by rules rather than relationship. In the Bible, the Pharisees meticulously kept the Law yet missed Christ (Matthew 23:23— "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone").

A medical diagnosis may reveal a disease, but diagnosis alone cannot cure it. Grace is the cure the Law could never be. Grace does not excuse sin; it conquers it. It transforms hearts, not merely behaviour (Titus 2:11–12: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world").

### 6. Grace Reigns Unto Eternal Life

"That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (*Romans 5:21*). **Grace is not passive—it reigns.** Believers move from the dominion of death into the kingdom of life.

•**Colossians 1:13** – Delivered from darkness into Christ's kingdom.

•**John 10:10** – "I am come that they might have life."

Many live under fear—of death, failure, irrelevance. The gospel proclaims a new reign: grace, life, and hope beyond the grave. Just as a change in government changes the laws under which people live, conversion changes the authority governing a believer's life. Christians are no longer defined by Adam's fall but by Christ's victory. This gives confidence, humility, and purpose in a fractured world.

### Conclusion

Romans 5:11–21 tells us that humanity's story is not ultimately about failure, but redemption. We were once *in Adam*—condemned, broken, and dying. But through faith, we are now *in Christ*—forgiven, restored, and alive.

The question for every contemporary hearer is this: **Which man represents you—Adam or Christ?** Romans 6:23 reminds us that "... the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (*Romans 6:23*).

**Grace reigns. Life is offered. Christ is sufficient.**