



**Romans 5:12-21**

I certainly did not follow politics when I was in high school but one thing I will never forget is the live TV news coverage of the assassination attempt of Ronald Reagan. The other thing that stands out in my mind about Reagan is that he said in a speech that people were basically good. In fact, President Bush recalled this in his eulogy of Reagan in 2004. "He believed that people were basically good and had the right to be free."<sup>1</sup> I remember thinking that was strange because even though I had been a Christian for less than a year, I knew that people were not basically good. I knew that the Bible taught about original sin. It was also odd because Reagan professed to be a Christian and should have known about this fundamental doctrine. On the other hand, what is the likelihood that a politician is going to announce that all people are sinners bound for hell without Christ. That doesn't make for good political speeches, does it?

You and I don't need to be political but we do need to be Biblical. A cursory reading of Scripture will tell you that man has a fallen nature as sin is on full display all through the Bible. But nowhere do we have a more complete picture of the ravages of sin that in the second half of Romans 5.

*12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— 13 for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.*

*15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, **much more** have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ **abounded for many**. 16 And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. 17 For if, the judgment following one trespass brought*

condemnation, **much more** will those who receive the **abundance** of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. 19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. 20 Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace **abounded all the more**, 21 so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

As far as the doctrine of the EFCA goes, statement number three summarizes our understanding of man's sinful condition.

*We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.*

Do you see how this statement aligns with verse 12?

<b>Romans 5:12</b>	<b>EFCA Doctrinal Statement #3</b>
<i>Therefore, sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin</i>	<i>human beings are sinners by nature</i>
<i>so death spread to all men because all sinned.</i>	<i>and by choice</i>

This immediately establishes the Bible's message about sin. Committing acts of sin does not make us a sinner. Rather, we commit acts of sin because we are a sinner. Sin came into the world through one man--Adam. We inherited a sinful nature through Adam. Even before we actually commit a sin, we possess this sinful nature. There are several theories as to how this happened but the important thing is to take this passage at face value. "Death came into the world through one man, and death through sin."

We inherited a sinful nature but then we also commit acts of sin--*so death spread to all men because all sinned*. I think our doctrinal statement accurately sums up this teaching. "Human beings are sinners by nature and by choice. That is about as straightforward as you can get.

But this seems to contradict what Paul taught in chapter four. Rom. 4.15--*For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression*. This sounds a bit like verse 13. *for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law*.

So is Paul saying that everyone who lived in between Adam and Moses did not have their sin counted? That they didn't actually commit a transgression? Verse 14 clears up any confusion. *Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come*. How many laws did God give to Adam and Eve? Just one. Don't eat the fruit from the tree of good and evil. One law and they disobeyed it. Adam did not transgress the law of Moses but he did transgress the law of God. One law and he blew it. So even though everyone who lived between Adam and Moses did not sin in the same

way that Adam did, nevertheless, death reigned during that entire time. This matches what Paul taught in chapter two. "For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law."

The rest of the chapter make it abundantly clear that we sin by nature and by choice.

Sin/Death/Judgment/Condemnation/Trespass
<i>If <b>many</b> <b>died</b> through <b>one man's</b> <b>trespass</b></i>
<i>the <b>judgment</b> following <b>one</b> <b>trespass</b> brought <b>condemnation</b></i>
<i>the <b>judgment</b> following <b>one</b> <b>trespass</b> brought <b>condemnation</b></i>
<i>as <b>one</b> <b>trespass</b> led to <b>condemnation</b> for <b>all</b> <b>men</b></i>
<i>as by the <b>one</b> <b>man's</b> <b>disobedience</b> the <b>many</b> were made <b>sinners</b></i>
<i>where <b>sin</b> <b>increased</b></i>
<i>as <b>sin</b> reigned in <b>death</b></i>

Because every person is a sinner by nature and by choice, this has endless implications for our lives. First of all it affects our parenting. When Ryan was born, obviously it was the first time Karen gave birth and the first time I watched a live birth. As expectant parents, you have all kinds of expectations about the birth process. Probably from watching movies and TV, one thing I expected was for the doctor to make the official announcement: "It's a boy! or "It's a girl!" So this is what I expected when Ryan was born. But Ryan popped out and the doctor didn't say anything. I waited for a moment and wondered, "Is he going to say anything?" So I decided to break with movie and TV tradition and make the announcement myself. "It's a boy." But according to this passage, what I should have said was, "Look, a beautiful bundle of original and potential sin!" I can say this not just because it was Ryan but because he was human. Like everyone, he came into this world with a sinful nature.

Many people, even some Christians, do not like to think of their newborns as sinners. I am not suggesting you put this fact on facebook in your baby announcement. When a child is born there should be pure joy and celebration. I don't want to skew your perfect notion of your perfect newborn. Now by the time that child becomes a toddler, no Christian parent in their right mind would deny that this child is a sinner by nature and by choice. They see it lived out in the defiance and disobedience of their child.

So how do you parent a bundle of original and potential sin? Like it or not, you are God's representative to them. For a very young child, you are like God to them. This is why so many adults can have a negative view of God the Father. Your human father cannot help but impact your view of your heavenly Father. If your father was harsh and authoritarian, you will tend to see God the Father through this same lens. If your earthly father was aloof, absent and unengaged, this can cloud your view your heavenly Father. But the same is true for a good

father. A good father can demonstrate so many of God's attributes to his children. If he is engaged in their life, he teaches them the presence of God. He can teach God's unconditional love through his fathering. He can live out both love and mercy as well as appropriate justice and discipline.

Not only do parents have the role of God in their children's lives but since they are sinners by nature and by choice, this greatly impacts how you parent them. In other words, your goal is not merely to turn them into nice people. Your goal is to work the sin nature out of them. If you do not understand the sin nature of your children, you will never parent them effectively. You can do lots of things right and still miss the impact of their sin nature. For example, a good parent will attempt to teach first time obedience. It is vital for young children to obey the first time their parents ask them to do something. But as parents, we get lazy. We count to ten. We repeat ourselves and raise our voice each time we repeat our instructions to them. But even if you are very effective at first time obedience, you may still may not be training the sin out of them. You may be engaged in behavior modification but not sin killing. But the same goes for us as well. If we, as parents do not understand our sin nature, we will never parent effectively.

A couple of passages are instructive here.

1 Peter 2:11 is --*Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.*

James 4:2--*You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.*

You and I are in a constant battle with our sin nature that wages war against us. Our sinful desires drive us to do ungodly things. You and I are in a battle and our kids are in a battle. This is what makes parenting, and life in general, such a challenge. Of course we must be continually aware of our sin nature and the sin nature of our children, but that is not enough, is it? We also must have the gospel inserted into our parenting. We must have gospel-centered parenting.

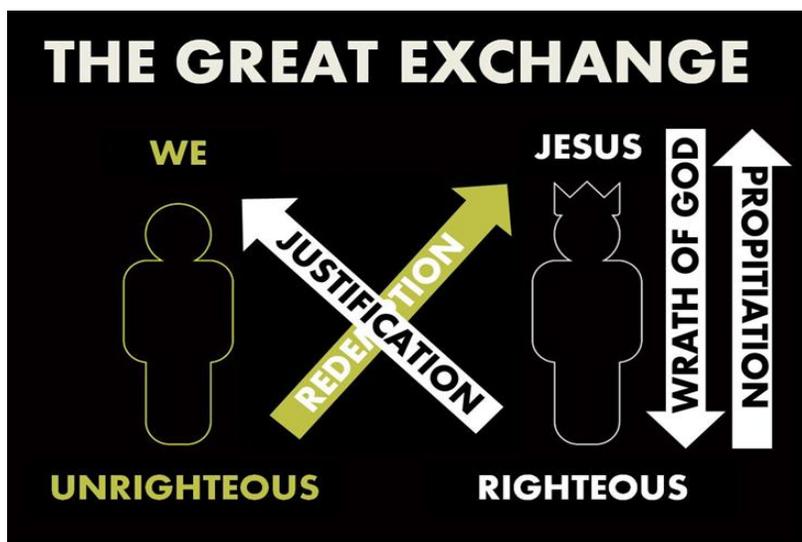
And this is the very reason that Paul included this chapter in his letter to the Romans. he did not write this long instruction just so that we know we are sinners by nature and by choice. He wrote it so that we might see the gospel more clearly. Verse 14 is a key transition. *Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.* What did Paul mean when he said that Adam was a type of Christ? Is that like saying a t-bone is a type of steak? Or that a greyhound is a type of dog? Not exactly. In the Bible, a type is kind of like a foreshadowing. Adam is a type of Christ. Adam prefigures Jesus in some key way. And we don't at all have to guess what that is because Paul spells it out for us repeatedly. We have already read the passage but see how it looks in chart form. Sin and death are in the left column and grace and justification are in the right column.

Sin/Death/Judgment/Condemnation/Trespass	Grace/Justification/Righteousness/Obedience/Life
<i>If <b>many</b> died through <b>one man's</b> trespass</i>	<i><b>much more</b> have the <b>grace</b> of God and the <b>free gift</b> by the <b>grace</b> of that <b>one man</b> Jesus Christ <b>abounded</b> for <b>many</b></i>
<i>the <b>judgment</b> following <b>one</b> trespass brought <b>condemnation</b></i>	<i>but the <b>free gift</b> following <b>many</b> trespasses brought <b>justification</b></i>

the <b>judgment</b> following <b>one trespass</b> brought <b>condemnation</b>	<b>much more</b> will those who receive the <b>abundance</b> of <b>grace</b> and the <b>free gift</b> of <b>righteousness</b> reign in life through the <b>one man</b> Jesus Christ.
as <b>one trespass</b> led to <b>condemnation</b> for <b>all men</b>	so <b>one</b> act of <b>righteousness</b> leads to <b>justification</b> and <b>life</b> for <b>all men</b>
as by the <b>one man's</b> <b>disobedience</b> the <b>many</b> were made <b>sinners</b>	so by the <b>one man's</b> obedience the <b>many</b> will be made <b>righteous</b>
where <b>sin</b> increased	<b>grace</b> <b>abounded</b> <b>all the more</b>
as <b>sin</b> reigned in <b>death</b>	<b>grace</b> also might reign through <b>righteousness</b> leading to <b>eternal life</b> through Jesus Christ our Lord

Adam is a type of Christ. His sins are imputed to us just as the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us when we place our faith in Christ alone. When we are born, Adam's sin is credited to our account. Adam was our representative in the garden and his sin becomes our sin. But when we believe that Christ alone can rescue us from our being a sinner by nature and by choice, we do not become righteous in the sense of becoming sinless. We are credited with his righteousness. Remember, this is an accounting term. Righteousness is put in our ledger. As we grow in Christ likeness, we become more righteous in our actions, but we will not be fully righteous until we reach heaven. In the same way that righteousness is credited to our account, the sin of Adam is credited to our account even before we actually sin. When we do commit the first act of sin, this confirms the fact that we have a sinful nature.

But some of you might be thinking, "Well that's not fair at all! Why do I have to pay for Adam's sin? Why were his sins credited to my account. That's hardly fair." Two answers to that objection. First, we all sin by choice. Our sinful choices confirm the fact of our sinful nature. Even if we try to squirm out of original sin, we all sin all the time, so we know it's true. Second, if you don't think it's fair that Adam's sin was credited to your account then you should also think that it's not fair that the righteousness of Christ was credited to your account.



Remember the Great Exchange from chapter three? Through simple faith in Christ, my sins were credited to Jesus' account and his righteousness was credited to my account? In what way was it fair for the Creator of the universe to give up his rights, lay down his life, become my sin bearer and transfer his righteousness to my account? That's not fairness, that's mercy. That's grace. That's love. We need to be very careful when we ask for fairness because the

saving grace of God was not fair. It was a gift.

So the left column explains why we are the way we are. Children and teens, this is why you disobey your parents. This is why you don't clean up your room. This is why you pick on your brother and sister. This is why when you see the new toy that your friend has, you need to have that toy. maybe you will just desire and covet that toy. (And for teens, your "toys" are laptops, smartphones, clothes, cars, etc.) Maybe you will wish it belonged to you. Maybe you will become jealous that your friend has this and you do not. Maybe you will become discontent and bored with your own toys because it is not what your friend has.

When I was about four years old, I was at my friends house playing with his Lincoln Logs. I loved Lincoln Logs at that age. I had my own Lincoln Logs at home so I was not really jealous or mad that my friend had them and I did not. But as we played I noticed that he had a certain piece that I did not. He had a plastic windows and doors. Sure, I could make a window or a door by leaving an empty space there. Now understand that I was perfectly content making windows and doors in this way. I had made hundreds of windows and door like this before. I was content until I saw his plastic windows and doors. I didn't know it at the time, but my sinful desires began to wage a war within my soul. I desired something that I could not have, so I coveted it. And then when my friend walked out of the room, I stole it. I was old enough to know it was wrong. I felt guilty about it. But the level of my guilt and sorrow were not strong enough to overcome the level of my sinful desires. A war was waging in my four year old soul and the sinful nature won the battle.

Parents, this is what happens in the hearts and minds of your children every day. But guess what? It happens to you and me as well. Every time your children lose the battle that wages war within themselves, that immediately draws you into your own battle, doesn't it? Let's say your kids get into a classic sibling battle. Let's say that your daughter took a toy away from her brother so the brother stretched out his hand and whacked her on the arm. Now what just happened? Your daughter had an internal war of coveting that overcame what she knew to be the right thing to do. Your son responded with an immediate sinful coping mechanism, unable to control himself. Now comes mom or dad into the scene. What is the war raging inside of you at that moment? Maybe you are angry and disappointed at your kids for falling into this pattern for the umpteenth time in a row. Their fight may have pulled you away from something that you needed or wanted to finish, so you are angry for that. Just look at that family. All of them sinners by nature and by choice. It's a wonder we ever get along with one another with so many competing desires, isn't it? Both kids want the same toy. You want peace and quiet and no one has what they want and everyone is losing the battle within them.

We all know that sin happens. But it's still good to call it what it is. Sometimes as parents and very often with ourselves, we excuse away our behavior. We say things, "Oh, I'm just tired." I've done that.

But do you see what happens when we pass the blame? If we pass the blame onto someone or something else, then I have no way out of the problem. If my parents are to blame for what I do now, then there's no solution. I can't go back and change the way I was parented, so I am stuck doing what I have always done. I guess I will always be this way. Maybe I sin because of bad genetics. Maybe I have an anger gene. Or a lust gene. Or a gambling or alcoholic gene. Or an

"I'm addicted to facebook gene." Or the "Sorry, honey, I forgot to pick up the milk again on the way home gene." It's not my fault that I do these things. Or the real kicker--God made me this way. It must be his fault. The way you were raised will have an impact on your behavior. It is possible that there are genetic components of things like alcoholism. It is true that nature and nurture have a very large impact upon us. But if I blame someone or something else, then it may relieve me of responsibility and guilt for a while, but there's no solution available. If someone else is always to blame for your problems then nothing can be done. You are hopeless and helpless. But if you are a sinner by nature and by choice, there is a solution for that.

Finally, let's get to the right column. When you look at the chart above, you see that Paul says essentially the same thing several times in slightly different ways. He wants us to see that our problems are sin problems but more than that, he wants us to see the gospel solution.

<i>If <b>many died</b> through <b>one man's trespass</b></i>	<i><b>much more</b> have the <b>grace</b> of God and the <b>free gift</b> by the <b>grace</b> of that <b>one man</b> Jesus Christ <b>abounded</b> for <b>many</b></i>
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One man did this to you. You inherited your sin nature from Adam but now one man can fix you--that one man Jesus Christ. And what is given to us is a free gift of grace but I want us to see what kind of grace. Grace that abounds for many. It is abundant grace. Abundance is a word of plenty. You have more than enough grace. You have more grace than you need. There is no sin too deep that God cannot forgive it. If you think that your sin goes deep, the grace of God goes deeper. It is abundant grace.

<i>the <b>judgment</b> following <b>one trespass</b> brought <b>condemnation</b></i>	<i><b>much more</b> will those who receive the <b>abundance</b> of <b>grace</b> and the <b>free gift</b> of <b>righteousness</b> reign in life through the <b>one man</b> Jesus Christ.</i>
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The one trespass of Adam brought condemnation. Condemned. Guilty. That's how many of us feel. That's how some of us view God. Always condemning. Always heaping guilt upon guilt. But what does the "gospel column" say? *much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.* There's that abundant grace again.

<i>where <b>sin</b> <b>increased</b></i>	<i><b>grace</b> <b>abounded</b> <b>all the more</b></i>
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I want us to see the third time the word abundance or abounded is in this passage. Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more. But unfortunately, every translation misses something vital here. The first two times this word is in here, it is simple abundance. Abundance is more than enough. In one sense, you can't get more than abundance, can you? If I've got more grace than I need right now, why would I need more than that? But just to make sure we get the point, Paul used the word superabundance. It doesn't translate that way. A few translate it as grace abounded all the more. The NIV says grace increased all the more. You can see the increase of grace but you miss the actual word--superabundance. We don't just have grace. We don't just have an abundance of grace. We have a superabundance of grace. We have super grace.

So we've got sin in the left column and superabundant grace in the right column. This week I would encourage you to write down one of your besetting sins and then take some of these truths from the right column and apply it. We can't deny or explain away our sin. We need to own it. Confess it. If necessary, confess to another person if they were hurt by you. Now apply the blood of Christ to that sin--his superabundant grace. Is your sin too large? Impossible. is your sin too dark and complicated? It can't happen because superabundant grace overcomes all things. It is more than enough.

Rich Maurer  
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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A34393-2004Jun11.html>