

Anglican Church Noosa
July 5, 2026
Romans 5:12-21
The Two Adams
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We're over half way through this series now, and I hope it's proving helpful for you. Thank you Bruce, for bringing the message last week. I've heard rave things!

Today we're basically going to be doing a compare and contrast experiment. Where we look at the pros and cons of two particular systems, work out where **we** are, and whether that's ok.

We're going to be looking at Adam and Jesus as Paul explains to us in the second half of Romans 5.

Actually contrasting Adam and Jesus.

I've drawn up this table, which I hope will help you to see what we're looking at throughout this sermon.

CLICK

	ADAM	CHRIST
Action	One trespass / disobedience	One act of righteousness / obedience
Result	Condemnation	Justification
Reason	Law and human failure	Superabundant, free grace
End	Death reigns over humanity	Believers reign in eternal life

Here's a quote from the great John Stott - he says ...

"This immediately prompts the question how one person's sacrifice could have brought such blessings to so many. It is not that (in Winston Churchill's famous saying) so many owe so much to so few; it is rather that so many owe so much to only one person. How can that be? Paul's answer is contained in his analogy between Adam and Christ. For both demonstrate the principle that many can be affected, for good or ill, by one person's action."

John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 148–149.

Now imagine you are playing a team game.

And the captain has made really bad choices, and he lost the game for everyone.

But, a new captain comes and is the best player ever. He steps in, takes the blame, and wins the whole game for you.

Pretty much, Romans 5:12-21 is about two captains.

The first is Adam.

The second is Jesus.

And Paul shows us how our team changed.

So we could call Adam, the captain of Death.

Look at v.12. "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned".

It's not good news is it?

How did this happen? Well, basically Adam didn't keep God's rules. Because of Adam, sin entered the human family. And with sin came death.

It's a bit like a water pipe from the reservoir that goes into a city. If poison gets into the main pipe, everyone who drinks from a tap gets sick.

When Adam sinned, it's as if the human water supply was poisoned. We sin, not just because we make mistakes, but because we have that "sin-sickness" inside us.

I've got it. And how do I know that I've got it?
Well, it's pretty easy really.

I don't have to think too long about it because I know that my basic default position is selfishness.

What about for you? Have you got the 'sin-sickness' too?

It is not just that we copy Adam's bad example.
We are born with a broken spiritual DNA.
We inherit a nature that is fundamentally turned away from God.

Paul says "death reigned." It's there in verse 14. Isn't that an interesting word? An interesting way to explain it.

Death reigned.

It means that Death is the king.
It means that death rules over every human being.
I haven't seen much change in the stats lately. I'm pretty sure it's still one out of one who dies.

From the littlest toddler who tells a lie without being taught how to, to the teenagers and adults who know how to manipulate other people, to the oldest who feel the aches and pains of a decaying body, we all bear the mark of Adam.

We all have the sin-sickness and it leads to death.
And Adam was the captain who got us there.

Thank goodness the story doesn't end there. Cause if the story did end with Adam, we would have no hope.

But look at verse 15: "the free gift is not like the trespass."

Paul loves to use the phrase "much more" in this passage. He is saying that God's grace is far bigger than Adam's mess.

Adam's one choice brought death. But Jesus' one choice brought life.

If Adam poisoned the water pipe, Jesus is the fresh, pure, rushing river that cleans all the poison away.

So let's look at Jesus. We could call him the Captain of Life.

Verse 19: "For just as through the the disobedience of the one, the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one, the many will be made righteous."

How are these two captains different?

- Adam acted for himself. He chose to disobey God. And the result? Judgement and death for all of us.
- Jesus acted **for us**. He is the perfect "second Adam". Who didn't make the same mistakes. He lived a perfect life, and He died on the cross in our place. He took our punishment.

Theologians call this imputation. It's a big word, but it's a simple idea.

Imagine you have a massive credit card debt. And you cannot pay it. And it's ruining your life. Suddenly, a billionaire steps in and pays it all off, but not only that, he also transfers his perfect credit score into your name.

That is what Jesus does. He takes our sin, our guilt, and in exchange, He puts His perfect righteousness into our account.

Through Adam, humanity inherited sin, condemnation and death.

Through Jesus and his act of obedience on the cross, believers receive grace, and justification and eternal life.

Now, whether we like it or not, all people are represented either, by one or the other by Adam, or by Jesus.

So, how do you see yourself?

Everyone who is born physically belongs to the family line of Adam. And that is a lineage that is flawed - it's marked by sin, and consequential to that - death.

But those who are born by the Spirit of God are united with Jesus, and that means being part of a family line defined by grace, by righteousness and by eternal life.

It's basically one man's act, versus another man's act.

And Paul is making a bold theological claim.

Adam acts as the head and representative of all humanity. When Adam deliberately disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, he wasn't acting as an isolated individual. He acted as our representative. When he fell, humanity fell with him.

Paul is saying that Adam is a pattern of the one to come. That Greek word for pattern means a shadow, or a type. You see Adam was a precursor.

Just as humanity was bound up in Adam, God appointed a new and better 'type'. He gave us a new captain - Jesus Christ.

And the difference lies entirely in their actions.

Adam's action was one of wilful disobedience.

Jesus' action was one of perfect, willing obedience to his Father - even to the point of death on the cross.

Just as Adam's sin was imputed to us, Jesus's perfect righteousness is imputed to the believer. Justification is a legal verdict from the judge of the universe. When we repent and place our faith in Jesus, God declares us righteous. It is as though we have never sinned, because the penalty has been paid and the righteousness of Christ is placed on our record.

But I've glossed over something that is pretty important.

What do you make of v.18 where it seems to draw a direct parallel between 'the trespass condemning all people' and 'the righteous act of Christ bringing justification and life for all people?'

It seems to be teaching that all people are justified and saved, which is what we call universalism. If you want to understand that a little more, I encourage you to read Chris' blog in E-News on Thursday.

Maybe one day we'll get a chance to sit at the feet of Paul and ask him exactly what he meant by this, however I think it does make sense in his overall argument if we interpret it as all people without distinction.

Especially without distinction between Jew and Gentile, without distinction between race, gender, age, or in any other way people might think of themselves.

So Paul is saying, just as the one trespass brought condemnation for all people without distinction, so the one righteous act makes justification available to all without distinction.

It's available to everyone, but you have to receive it by faith. And receiving it by faith is one of Paul's main arguments in Romans up to this point, isn't it? We've seen it every week.

So we need to interpret v.18 in a way that is consistent with the whole of Romans. And I think we should read it as simply reinforcing this overall contrast between Adam and Christ.

So let's move on to verses 20 and 21, Paul concludes with a stunning revelation about the Law and grace:

"The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Paul speaks of death as a ruthless king. From Adam to Moses, and continuing to this day, death has reigned over humanity. Physical sickness, pain, and eventual physical death are the constant reminders that sin reigns.

But here is the glorious climax of the gospel:

"Where sin increased, grace increased all the more."

Jesus has dethroned death. Through His one act of righteousness, a new Kingdom has been established.

And in this Kingdom, grace reigns.

Grace is not merely unmerited favour; it is the active, reigning power of God in the life of the believer, and it leads to eternal life.

So, my friends, where do you stand today?

The Scriptures tell us that humanity is divided into two groups: those in Adam and those in Christ.

Who is your captain?

Are you stuck on Adam's team, carrying the weight of guilt and death?

Or are you on Jesus' team, where there is no more condemnation, only grace and life?

This is a beautiful place today, for us to prepare our hearts to receive communion together.

Let's give thanks to God for our representative, our Saviour, our Lord Jesus, who turned what Adam ruined into glorious, eternal redemption.

Amen.