

One Step to Freedom
Chapter 2: Initial Recovery

Lesson 1 Part 1
Man's Condition and God's Remedy

“O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:24-25a).

What is the underlying problem of man and the remedy? If we fail to understand the nature of the problem, we will misdiagnose it. Jeremiah, the prophet, rebuked the false prophets of his time for overlooking the seriousness of the people's problems. He wrote, “They have also healed the hurt of my people slightly, saying ‘Peace, peace!’ when there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6:14).

We want to avoid giving superficial help that does not get down to the matters of the heart (see Matthew 15:19 and Jeremiah 17:9).

Self-help groups have an appearance of help, but they only put a band-aid on a cancerous condition. We need God's perspective on the origin and nature of our problems, which is given to us in Romans 5:12-21. There are only two classes of people, as far as God is concerned: those who are “in Adam” and those who are “in Christ.”

Our Dilemma “in Adam” (Read Romans 5:12-14.)

Death is unnatural; it has not always existed. This really hits home when we experience the loss of a loved one through death. All of us are appointed to die. Death is an intruder. The Bible teaches that it is God's judgment for sin. Romans 5:12-14 is referring to Genesis 2:15-17 and Genesis 3:1-6.

Adam was a perfect man, living in a personal relationship to his Creator. Since real love is not forced, Adam had the choice to remain obedient to God or to pursue “self enlightenment” through the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Upon being tempted by the serpent (the Devil in physical form at that moment, 2 Corinthians 11:14), both Adam and his wife, Eve, ate of the forbidden tree.

According to Romans 5, the entire human race was represented in Adam. One person's action affected all who were related to him. When Adam sinned, it affected every single one of his descendants. All of us were in the loins of Adam; therefore, his action of disobedience was imputed to our account before we were even born. All men and women are guilty of Adam's sin because Adam is the head (or representative) of the human race.

Adam's original sin corrupted him. Originally, he loved to please God; however, his inward person (that is, his nature) was marred by sin. From then on, his natural inclination was to please his flesh independent of God. All of us as Adam's descendants have also inherited a corrupt, sinful nature.

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In the garden, God-centeredness was replaced with self-centeredness, self-interest, and self-desire. Then death through sin was introduced (Romans 5:12). Now, we all by nature are fully motivated in the direction of what pleases our flesh, instead of being motivated to please God. You have probably heard it said, “If it feels good, do it.” We are motivated to do what suits self first in spite of others and God.

This is our inherited inclination as descendents of Adam. Sin actively works against us from within us. How? The law proves this. How many of us have been told not to do something and wanted to do it even more? Have you seen the sign that reads “Maximum Speed 65”? When a police car is not present, most of us suit ourselves instead of obeying the law. In addition, we usually have a justification (or excuse) for why the law should not apply to us. According to the Bible, sin controls us and we cannot escape this control on our own. According to Jesus, we are all slaves to sin (John 8:34).

Romans 5:17 says that death reigns (or rules) over our lives because of our relationship to Adam. First, it refers to physical death, and secondly, it refers to spiritual deadness where we are unable to relate to God. This is why people are so bound and broken. Our lives are dead in trespasses and sins. Man was created to reflect the image (or likeness) of God through a loving personal relationship with Him. Instead, we are concerned about our own image (self image).

We seek an identity apart from God on our own—but man is incomplete apart from a personal relationship with God. This is why we experience loneliness, dissatisfaction, an inward emptiness and a fear of death. Everyone who is still related to Adam (unsaved) when they die is bound for eternal destruction. Physical death is not the end; that is why they fear death. The soul (consciousness) of man will exist throughout all of eternity.

After this life, there will be no way to change one’s eternal destiny. So death literally rules over those “in Adam” as king. Its rule is inescapable apart from some outside miraculous provision—Jesus Christ.