

# Sermon Growth Guide

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## One Man | Romans 5:12-21

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**Key Verse:** Romans 5:18. “Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.”



### Foundations

In Romans 5:12–21, Paul takes on the topic of original sin. We read how sin and death first entered the world when Adam and Eve chose to disobey God’s command in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Through this one act of disobedience, the sin-death connection was established and humanity was alienated from God. The bad news is that, as Adam’s descendants, all of humanity has inherited Adam’s sinful nature along with its consequences—condemnation and death (physical death, spiritual death, and if left unchecked, eternal death). Not only do we enter the world already estranged from God at birth (Psalm 51:5), every one of us also freely and personally chooses to engage in our own sinful behavior (Romans 3:23). The net result is that, in Adam, everyone stands guilty before God for our sin.

That is the bad news. The good news is that we have a new representative—a new Adam in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus’s perfect life, His substitutionary death, and His glorious resurrection have provided the necessary remedy for the consequences of Adam’s fall. Jesus has succeeded where Adam failed. Jesus has secured all of the blessings of obedience—peace with God, access to the Father, transformation of suffering, hope, sonship, and eternal life—not solely for Himself, but to share with all those who trust in Him. The good news is that, in Jesus, all who repent and believe stand justified before God.

In this passage, Paul compares and contrasts Adam and Jesus. The two are opposite, but they are not equal. Where Adam’s sin abounds, Jesus’s righteousness abounds even more (v. 20). God’s grace more than exceeds the sins of humanity. Evil is completely overwhelmed. Death is soundly defeated. But there still lies a choice before each one of us: All people stand behind either one of two figures—Adam or Jesus. Whom do you choose to follow?

### Understanding God’s Word

What are the consequences of Adam’s act of disobedience for the rest of humanity? What are the blessings of Jesus’s act of obedience for all who believe in Him? How does understanding the way in which sin and death entered the world through Adam shed new light on how life and peace can be granted through Jesus Christ?

### Applying God’s Word

What does it mean that believers are “in Jesus?” How can that beautiful truth help you combat and overcome sin in your life? God’s grace super-abundantly exceeds all sin (v. 20). How does that understanding change how you face guilt, shame, and regret in your own life?

### Witnessing God’s Word

Based on our study of Romans 5:12–21, what needs to be communicated to the outside world about the human predicament and about God’s power to save humanity?

There is a pretty robust debate out there about which generation is the “Me” generation. What do you think? The Boomers got this label first. You guys were spoiled, growing up in the peace and prosperity of the post-war period. Then they called the Millennials the Me, Me generation. Double me. Guess what? The rising generation is called the Me, Me, Me Generation! Too much online. Worried about image. Living for clicks and follows. Me, me, me, me, me. I’m generation X. We’re just straight narcissists, but we know how to hide it. In Greek mythology, Narcissus was a beautiful young man who fell in love with his own reflection in a pool of water. He loved seeing his own face so much, he couldn’t turn away. It turned out great for him, as I remember. It’s all about me. Jesus said it was all about him. Why is that not narcissism? In our series, Like Him We Rise, today we see the unique role of Jesus Christ in the history of salvation. It is right to turn our attention to him. One Man.

Palm Sunday is a special day. Holy Week is a special week. Taking time to remember this week on the church calendar is good for the soul. Palm Sunday. Holy Monday, clearing the Temple. Fig Tuesday, cursing the fig tree. Spy Wednesday, Judas’ plot. Maundy Thursday. Good Friday. Holy Saturday. Easter Sunday. Palm Sunday is when Jesus rode into Jerusalem for Passover, fulfilling a pile of prophecies about the Messiah, down the Mount of Olives and up to the East Gate. Jesus was probably the only one in the crowd on the back of a donkey. Most were walking. He alone is up (not that high up, but up) riding in through the crowds into the city of David, the city of God, the place where Abraham almost sacrificed his son Isaac, where David bought the threshing floor, where Solomon built the Temple—the Temple Mount. People cut palm branches and waved them like banners or put them on the path in front of him as if a king or conquering general were riding in at the front of a parade. “Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, ‘Hosanna!’ ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of

the Lord!’ ‘Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!’ ‘Hosanna in the highest heaven!’” (Mark 11:9-10) Look to this one man. See this one man. Why? How can one man be so important? This man, Jesus, is like no other man.

Winston Churchill declared after the Battle of Britain, “Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.” A few key leaders can make a difference. Surely a great person can impact the world in an outsized way. Never were there two more influential men than Adam and Jesus Christ. The church in Rome was stuck on the idea of two types of people, Jewish and Gentile. Paul said, yeah, there are two types of people all right: those who are in Adam and those who are in Christ. “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.” (Romans 5:12) Etc. Original sin. Maybe you know the story. Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden to tend and cultivate it. Life was good. Food was plentiful. The marriage was solid. It was a honeymoon existence. There was one tree in the garden that stood as an emblem and reminder, God is God and you are not. The serpent tempted Eve, Eve encouraged Adam, together they decided, “Let’s make this about me.” If she had a phone, Eve would have selfied her bite and made a reel of Adam’s. “You shall be as gods.” That’s what the devil offered. “That’s what God doesn’t want. God doesn’t want to share the spotlight, but you deserve the spotlight. Me, me, me!” that’s what the devil whispered in their ears, and that’s what Adam and Eve took. God separated them from another tree, the Tree of Life. With sin came death.

I don’t know what you think of the idea of Original Sin. Why should I have to pay for what Adam did? We are so individualistic, we can’t conceive of bearing responsibility for another’s decisions. Other cultures view life more collectively; the family is the family and owes what it owes. Adam is our progenitor, our family. Science still contends that the

many races of mankind all stem from one genetic source. One blood. One of the greatest leaders you have never heard of died two weeks ago, a man named John Perkins. Born into sharecropping, Mississippi in 1930, he grew up under Jim Crow and suffered a world of abuse, but John Perkins never, for a minute, gave up on the truth that we are all one blood, one race, saved by one Savior Jesus Christ. His books *With Justice for All* and *One Blood* are inspirational. One blood. Good news and bad news. We are one human race, and we are one with Adam, the sinner who also taught us to sin, the self-server who taught us to serve ourselves. I never had a hard time accepting that I too am selfish, rebellious and sinful like him. Through Adam sin spread to all, and sin means death—eternal separation from God.

“God looks out from the heavens upon the children of Adam, To see if there is a discerning person who is seeking God. All have gone astray; each one is altogether perverse. There is not one who does what is good, not even one.” (Psalms 53:2-3) This is the state of mankind in Adam. This is the trespass. But there is also a gift. “But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!” (Romans 5:15) One man caused so much trouble. One man has come to set it right. If one man can drop us all into selfishness, sin and ultimately death, what can one man do to put it right? Adam sinned once and from that disobedience spawned an unquantifiable starfield of sins. Think about that. Jesus doesn’t have to deal with one sin, but all the sin that all the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve have ever committed through all history. His gift brings forgiveness. “Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man’s sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.” (Romans 5:16) One man.

Yes, it is an extraordinary gift. Jesus is able to take on this immense body of human sin all stemming from the first disobedient transgression. Because of sin, death reigned, death had rule over us. Watch this now. The gift is not just that Jesus will reign instead of death. That would be good. It would be good, if we are under a king called Death to be rescued and come under a king called Jesus. The gift of this one man Jesus is not only that we are freed and have him as our Savior and Lord and King, but also that we reign. He gives authority to us to reign in life. “For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!” (Romans 5:17) Jesus rode in like a king on Palm Sunday to give a gift that would one day mean that you and I ride like kings in life. I don’t think we understand. What does this mean? How free has Christ made us? “Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:18-19) Or as Paul wrote in another letter, “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:22) All who call on him in faith. The salvation brought by Jesus Christ is every bit as large, larger even, more substantial, than the death brought by Adam.

So, are you in Adam or are you in Christ? The gift Jesus gives, the one act, is the cross. The gift Jesus gives is himself. God always said he would come save. “I myself,” God said. Many religions offer a pathway to salvation, a road to walk, five pillars to follow, seven ways to pursue; Christianity says something different. This is not a way for you to go to God; this is a way that God has come to us. Here I am. I myself come into your city. I myself come to save.

I myself will tear open the curtain of heaven and come down. I will do it myself. Genesis 46, to Jacob, "I myself will go with you." Exodus 3 to Moses, "I myself have come down to rescue my people." Isaiah 41, "For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you...I myself will help you," declares the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." (Isaiah 41:13-14) Jeremiah 23:3, "I myself will gather the remnant of my flock." Ezekiel 34, "For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them...I will rescue them." (Ezekiel 34:11-12) God always promised to come, himself. I myself will come. God has come. Jesus is God come to save you. He is the ultimate generation me, look to me, look at me. Why is that not ugly narcissism? Because this "me," this "I myself," is God. And this me, in Jesus, gives himself away.

Are you in Adam or in Christ? Adam acted out of selfishness, asserting himself as most important. Jesus acted in selflessness, giving himself away as an atoning sacrifice for sin. Adam said, "Me first. You die so I can live." Jesus said, "Take me. I die so you can live." In Adam, one act of disobedience spawned a billion sins. In Christ, one act of righteousness pays for all sin indemnifying all sinners who call on him. Are you in Adam or are you in Christ? "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 bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 5:20-21) We are in Adam by birth into original sin. We can be in Christ by new birth, rebirth, when we put our faith in him. One man.

It is not automatic. Until you turn to Jesus, you are in Adam. His selfishness rules, it runs through your veins. Jesus says, Look to me. "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." (John 12:32) Look to him. Watch this week how our Lord enters Jerusalem. How our

Lord demonstrates his firm resolve to give his life away. How our Lord cleanses the Temple in zeal. How our Lord tearfully loves his friends. How our Lord prays to pass the cup of wrath but also resolves to drain it to the dregs. How our Lord is betrayed, unjustly saddled with false charges, is beaten and crucified and laid in a tomb. Watch. Look. "I myself. Me." It is right for Jesus to be at the center. This one man is our Lord and our Savior. The disobedience of Adam brought the curse on all people; the obedience of Jesus brought salvation. Why is this one man so important? Because he was, and is, the one man who can save.