

DISCUSSION GUIDE: Romans 5:12-14

August 20, 2017

Romans 5:12-21 is a central passage in Romans. In it, Paul makes the argument that all humanity lives in one of two realms: the realm of sin and death brought in by Adam or the realm of grace and life brought in by Christ. This week we begin by looking at Romans 5:12-14, which teaches the universal sinfulness and subsequent state of spiritual death that all mankind participates in through our first representative or head—Adam.

1. Romans 5:12 says that sin came into the world through one man (Adam) and death spread to all through sin.

—Discuss with your group the concept of sin. The Bible often describes it as “lawlessness.” (See Titus 2:14, Romans 4:7, Romans 6:19, 2 Corinthians 6:14). How does seeing sin as “lawlessness” help us to define sin in relation to God and his holiness?

—Discuss with your group the concept of death. It seems clear that Paul does not just mean physical death here but also spiritual death. What are some implications of mankind’s spiritual death?

2. Romans 5:12b is one of the more important statements in all of the Bible in helping us understand human nature. Essentially, it is saying that not only did Adam sin in the Garden but, as our representative, we all sinned with him and the consequences of his sin (spiritual death) was imputed or transferred to us as well.

—To our Western culture sensibilities that often values individualism above all else, the fact that we are corporately guilty in Adam is hard for us to stomach. Discuss this with your group. Consider how our rugged individualism might be at odds with what the bible says about humanity.

—Consider the objection that some might have that this is unfair. How would you answer that objection?

3. Romans 5:13-14 can be a little confusing on the surface. It may seem that Paul is saying that before the law (referring to the Mosaic Law), people were not held accountable for their deeds. But that is not the case because in verse 14 he states that the consequence of sin (death) reigned even before the law was given

through Moses. So, the law didn't bring in sin and death, it only served to more explicitly identify it. Paul's point is that people have been sinful and spiritually dead from the beginning—from Adam to the present day. And ultimately, Adam is a type of Christ in that he is a representative of humanity. Those in the realm of sin and death are represented by Adam, those in the realm of grace and life are represented by Christ.

—We are prone to blame our predicament on external influences (i.e. - bad environment, insufficient education, etc). While these things may contribute to our predicament, they are not the cause of it. Discuss the biblical truth that we are “by nature” sinful (see Ephesians 2:1-3).

—How should this impact how we view a fallen world around us?

—How should this impact how we understand salvation and grace?