

Lesson 1
MAN'S CONDITION

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"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.

1. What proceeds from the heart according to Matthew 15:19?
2. What is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked? See Jeremiah 17:9.

Self-help groups have an appearance of help, but they can only put a band-aid on a cancerous condition. We need God's perspective on the origin and nature of our problems, so we can deal with the root cause. To understand man's problem more fully, read Romans 5:12-21. In this passage, God tells us that there are only two types of people: those who are "in Adam" and those who are "in Christ." Herein lies man's condition and God's remedy.

OUR CONDITION "IN ADAM" (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. Death is an intruder, and all of us one day are appointed to die. The Bible teaches that it is God's judgment for sin. So when we read Romans 5:12-14, it refers us back 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 (*2 Corinthians 11:14 tells us it was the Devil in physical form at that moment*), both Adam and his wife, Eve, ate of the forbidden tree and sinned.

According to Romans 5, the entire human race is 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.

One Step to Freedom

Chapter 2: Initial Restoration

Adam's 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 inherited a corrupt, sinful nature.

EVERY PERSON IS NATURALLY SELF-CENTERED

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, every single person is fully motivated in the direction of what pleases his or her 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 pleasing God and others.

This is our inherited inclination as descendants of Adam. Sin actively works against us from within us. 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. Jesus tells us 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. Without God's Holy Spirit, we are spiritually dead and powerless.

Man was created to reflect the image (or likeness) of God through a loving personal relationship with Him. Instead, we are more concerned about our own 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, emptiness and a fear of death. All unbelievers are bound for eternal destruction. **But** physical death is not the end; the soul (consciousness) of man will exist throughout all of eternity.

So death literally rules over those "in Adam" as king. Its rule is inescapable apart from some outside supernatural, miraculous provision—Jesus Christ.

GOD'S REMEDY

"Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:18-19).