

ROMANS 5 -THE ISSUES

HARVEST INSPIRATION DISCOVERIES LECTURE SERIES

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
SO WITH ALL DUE CAUTION AND CARE, LET US ADDRESS OURSELVES TO ONE OF THOSE DIFFICULT PASSAGES, ROMANS 5:12–19.....	2
SO WHERE IS THE PROBLEM? HOW IS THIS SCRIPTURE BEING USED AS THE CORNERSTONE OF A FALSE THEOLOGY?.....	4
First or the Second Death?	4
Go to the Spirit of Prophecy. That is what it is for.	4
What did not pass?	6
Beyond Belief-by Jack Sequeira	6
Substitutionary Atonement.....	6
Sequiera’s false theology is built upon three main pillars.....	6
The first pillar is his misuse of Romans 5, as already noted.....	6
The second pillar is a rejection of the substitutionary atonement, which we will consider next.....	6
The third is a total rewriting of the gospel into the incomprehensible gibberish of metaphysical language.	6
Metaphysical Gibberish.....	7

INTRODUCTION

READ--We cannot say that we have not been warned. The apostle Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, warned us very clearly:

"Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; As also in all of his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things *hard to be understood*, which they who are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, *unto their own destruction*." 2 Peter 3:15, 16.

READ--What shall we do then, with the writings of Paul? Shall we just lay them aside? Certainly not, they are scriptures, and we need them. But let us not approach them carelessly, and let us carefully abide by our basic rule of all Bible study, that a passage which is not clear to us at first reading must be understood in the light of other passages on the same subject. Thus the Bible interprets itself to us, and we do not place a private interpretation on the Bible. And since the Holy Spirit is the ultimate author of the scriptures, it follows

that *all* Spirit inspired writings should be included in our study. Peter did not say that some of Paul's writings are *impossible* to understand—he just said that they are *difficult*.

SO WITH ALL DUE CAUTION AND CARE, LET US ADDRESS OURSELVES TO ONE OF THOSE DIFFICULT PASSAGES, ROMANS 5:12–19.

Many people have started to read this scripture, and after a few verses have given it up and gone on to the next chapter.

--But just now this passage is being placed before us as the cornerstone of a false theology. We are going to be hearing a great deal about this false theology, and if we do not have an understanding of Paul's message in these verses, we are in danger of being deceived.

--We note in passing that false teachers quite customarily seize upon obscure passages as a vehicle for their errors, but we do not have time to enlarge on that point and cite examples just now.

In Romans 5:12 Paul sets up a comparison, which might be called *The Comparison of the Two Ones*, since he uses the term "one" repeatedly, and in the comparison itself does not use names. Then he does something a bit out of the ordinary. Before finishing his comparison, he stops in the middle of it to make some explanations and state some qualifications. Having done this in verses 13–17, he then returns to his comparison and completes it in verses 18 and 19.

The King James translators took note of this unusual circumstance, and put verses 13–17 in parentheses, as you will see if you look at them carefully. Paul himself also took note of it, and used a word in verse 18 which, in the Greek language, signifies a return to a line of thought which has been interrupted. This is not indicated in the King James translation, where verse 18 is introduced with the word "therefore." But Paul did not use the single word *ara*, which means "therefore." He used the compound form, *ara oun*, which means "therefore, to return to my interrupted subject." (Refer to any Greek-English lexicon.) (Get my info from Romans 7 lecture)

Phillip Schaff offers this comment:

"The Apostle might have spared the commentators a great deal of trouble, if he had, according to the ordinary rules of composition, first stated the comparison in full, and then given the explanations and qualifications." Quoted in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, 529.

Having now made ourselves aware of Paul's arrangement of his ideas, let us read the comparison in full, in verses 12, 18 and 19, passing by, for the moment, the explanations and qualifications in verses 13–17:

"¹²Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned . . . ¹⁸Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life; ¹⁹For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

Let us make a list of the comparisons and contrasts between the accomplishments and influences of "*The Two Ones*," who are obviously Adam and Christ:

<i>One (Adam):</i>	<i>One (Christ):</i>
·Sin	·Righteousness
·Condemnation	·Justification

·Death	·Life
·Disobedience	·Obedience
·Many made sinners	·Many made righteous

Now we understand his comparison, so let us go back and examine the explanations and qualifications that Paul had put in verses 13–17.

	Explanation of vs 12
" ¹² Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned	¹³ For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

Verses 13 and 14 are an explanation of what he had said in verse 12: "*and so death passed upon all men.*"

Nothing else that he had said in verse 12 called for any explanation, but this did. How did death pass upon all men? How about the Gentiles, who had not had the law? Were they not exceptions? If not, why not?

Paul denies that they are exceptions, though conceding that they had not sinned "after the similitude of Adam's transgression," that is, not in defiance of a direct and specific command, such as God had given to Adam about the tree of good and evil. Nevertheless he holds them accountable for such light as they had, insisting that "death reigned from Adam to Moses," even over the Gentiles who did not have the written Law of Moses.

"For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." Romans 5:13, 14.

Paul is arguing that the Gentiles, even though they were not being held accountable for disobeying the laws of Moses, which they had not known, were nevertheless being held accountable in the manner that he had already described in **Romans 2:14–16**:

"For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves . . . their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another. In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."

This is a reflection of the same truth that had been expressed by the Apostle John in John 1:9:

"[Jesus] was the true light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

Having thus explained in verses 13–14 what he had meant by the words, "*death passed upon all men,*" in verse 12, he moves on to state, in verse 15, a qualification of his comparison of "*The Two Ones,*" using the words "but not," and "much more:"

¹⁵ *But not* as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one, many be dead, *much more* the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, had abounded unto many."

He recognizes that his comparison is lopsided, because the act of God in Christ is so much greater than the act of Adam, so he puts in this *much more* qualification, then follows it by another qualification of a similar nature in verses 16–17:

"¹⁶ *And not* as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. ¹⁷ For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; *much more* they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."

So the act of Adam and the act of Christ are not equal, even though both brought far-reaching results. The saving act of Christ far surpasses and transcends all other acts, and can only be compared with them if qualifications are stated. Having made this clear, he now returns to his comparison, and finishes it, in verses 18–19, which we have already examined.

The tragic act of Adam brought disobedience, sin, condemnation, death and the making of many sinners. The glorious act of Christ brought obedience, righteousness, justification, life, and the making of many righteous.

SO WHERE IS THE PROBLEM? HOW IS THIS SCRIPTURE BEING USED AS THE CORNERSTONE OF A FALSE THEOLOGY?

First or the Second Death?

The problem is in the short phrase in verse 12: "*and so death passed upon all men.*"

Is this referring to the first death, or to the second death? We remember that the first death comes to all, as a result of Adam's sin. We pause to reflect that others die as a *result* of Adam's sin, not because they are *responsible* for it. Your cat, your dog, and your horse will all die as a *result* of Adam's sin—not because they were *responsible* for it.

We remember that the second death is *total annihilation*. This creates a question: How could death pass from an annihilated person to other persons? Can annihilation be passed from one to another?

And in verse 15 Paul writes: "For if through the offence of one *many be dead.*"

Obviously these persons were already dead when Paul was writing, *but had they been annihilated? No. And carrying this point a step further, Had Adam himself been annihilated? Again we must answer, No. If we choose to believe that the death referred to in Romans 5 is the second death of annihilation, we are confronted with insurmountable difficulties. How could an annihilated Adam pass on annihilation to others? Impossible.*

Yet some theologians and some among us are arguing for that position. What shall we do when confronted with a problem like this?

Go to the Spirit of Prophecy. That is what it is for.

And if someone casts the senseless accusation at us, that we are putting Ellen White above the Bible, just look them in the eye and firmly set them straight.

We are not putting Ellen White above the Bible, we are putting her above all earthly interpreters. We are saying that Ellen White had a better understanding of the Scriptures than anyone else since the Apostle Paul.

As quickly as we turn to her writings, we find that she understood clearly the difference between the first death and the second death, and that she understood which death Paul was referring to when he wrote in Romans 5:12 that "*death passed upon all men.*"

She discusses the matter on pages 533 and 544 of *The Great Controversy*. She quotes certain scriptures on page 544, including Romans 6:23: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." She then writes:

"The death referred to in these scriptures is not that pronounced upon Adam, for all mankind suffer the penalty of his transgression. It is the 'second death' that is placed in contrast with everlasting life."

That makes sense. It would hardly be sensible to place eternal life in contrast with the earthly, temporary death. To contrast *eternal* life with *eternal* death would be much more logical. Then she enlarges on the subject of the first death, and in a precise parallel with Romans 5:12 she writes:

"In consequence of Adam's sin, *death passed upon* the whole human race."

Here she uses three of Paul's words, "*death passed upon.*" On page 533, dealing with the same subject, the first death, she uses a longer quotation from Romans 5:12:

"While '*death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,*' Christ 'hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.'"

On page 544 she continues in the same vein, stating what happens *after* the first death:

"In consequence of Adam's sin, death passed upon the whole human race. All alike go down into the grave [the first death]. And through the provisions of the plan of salvation, all are to be brought forth from their graves. 'There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust;' (Acts 24:15) 'for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' (1 Corinthians 15:22) But a distinction is made between the two classes that are brought forth. 'All that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.' (John 5:28, 29) They who have been 'accounted worthy' of the resurrection of life are 'blessed and holy.' 'On such *the second death* hath no power.' (Rev 20:6) But those who have not, through repentance, and faith, secured pardon, must receive the penalty of transgression,—'the wages of sin.' They suffer punishment varying in duration and intensity, 'according to their works,' but finally ending in *the second death.*"

So God's inspired messenger answers our questions about Romans 5, and clears away our problems, just as she did in the early Bible conferences of our pioneers, and in countless other situations where divine insight was needed to protect God's people from scriptural error. Now we know beyond question that the death described in Romans 5 that began with Adam and passed upon all men, is *the first death*, not the second death of annihilation.

What did not pass?

Another simple means of determining what passed from Adam to others is to pose the question, What *did not pass* from Adam to others?

Ellen White, with crystal clear consistency, deals with this question in *The Great Controversy*, 533, 534:

"Adam could not transfer to his posterity that which he did not possess . . . Had man after his fall been allowed free access to the tree of life, he would have lived forever, and thus sin would have been immortalized. But cherubim and a flaming sword 'kept the way of the tree of life,' (Genesis 3:24) and not one of the family of Adam has been permitted to pass that barrier and partake of the life-giving fruit. Therefore there is not an immortal sinner."

A prominent Seventh-day Adventist theologian, one of those who were trying to introduce the falsehoods of Calvinism into Adventism, posed this question: If guilt is not passed from Adam to his children, why do babies die? He obviously was not familiar with the above passages from the scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy, or else just did not accept them.

Beyond Belief-by Jack Sequeira

It is even so today. Those who refuse to permit God's chosen messenger to correct their thinking, and protect them from misunderstanding the scriptures, go blindly on, stumbling from one error to another, blundering in the darkness of their own presumed wisdom.

An outstanding example may be seen in the recent book, *Beyond Belief*, by Jack Sequeira. In a chapter entitled *The Two Adams—Romans 5*, he argues most strenuously for six and a third pages that the death referred to in Romans 5 is *the second death*. Thus he firmly rejects the Spirit of Prophecy, placing his own judgment above the light that has come to us from God, and uses this as a foundation pillar in a fearfully false theology.

Substitutionary Atonement

Sequeira's false theology is built upon three main pillars.

The first pillar is his misuse of Romans 5, as already noted.

The second pillar is a rejection of the substitutionary atonement, which we will consider next.

The third is a total rewriting of the gospel into the incomprehensible gibberish of metaphysical language.

But before I share with you anything from this book, I must caution you that the book abounds in inglorious self-contradictions. Whatever you read from it to a friend, you must be prepared to have the friend say, "Oh no, that is the opposite of what he believes," and then actually read to you, from a different page, the exact opposite of what you read. We will have reason to note this as we go along.

Sequeira's false theology's rejection of the substitutionary atonement, the great truth that Christ took *our* punishment and died for *our* sins, is found on pages 39–49 of his book, *Beyond Belief*. There we find the following remarkable statements, attributed to Catholic scholars (but with no documentation):

"No law allows one person to assume the guilt or punishment of another. Righteousness cannot be passed from one person to another." *Beyond Belief*, 39.

"It is a fundamental principle of all law, God's or man's, that guilt or punishment cannot be transferred from the guilty to the innocent, nor can the righteousness of one person be legally transferred to another." Ibid., 40.

"No law of God or man will allow guilt or righteousness to be transferred from one person to another . . . Law simply will not allow sin to be transferred from the guilty to the innocent." Ibid., 42.

What then of the following scripture?

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; *and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all . . . he shall bear their iniquities . . . he bare the sin of many.*" Isaiah 53:5, 6, 11, 12.

I just made a quick scan of the writings of Paul, and counted sixteen references saying that *Christ died for us*. Are these all in error? And what of the sanctuary service, which is entirely built around the concept of a transfer of sin and guilt from the sinner to a sin bearer, *a substitutionary atonement*? Is this all nonsense?

I have just counted seventeen references in the Spirit of Prophecy which use the word *transfer* in describing how our guilt is laid on Jesus, and His righteousness is credited to us. Here is a sample:

"The iniquity is *transferred* to the innocent, the pure, the holy Son of God; and man, all undeserving, stands before the Lord cleansed from all unrighteousness, and *clothed with the imputed righteousness of Christ.*" *Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, 1178.

There are more than five hundred passages where Ellen White uses the word *substitute* in a similar manner. She firmly believed in the substitutionary atonement, that *Christ took our punishment and died for our sins*. Sequeira with equal firmness *denies* this, except as the word substitution is defined by himself as something other than substitution. See page 48, where he contradicts himself in a single paragraph. In a similar self-contradiction, he refers to Jesus as our sin-bearer, after redefining the term as something other than sin-bearing. (See pages 14, 124, 131, *et. al.*)

We have now noted two of the basic principles, the foundations, or pillars, upon which Sequeira's false theology is based: the misuse of Romans 5 and the denial of the substitutionary atonement. We have noted that he contradicts himself in regard to the substitutionary atonement. He also contradicts himself in regard to the second death, advancing the argument that Romans 5 applies to *both* the first and the second death.

Metaphysical Gibberish

There is a third principle of his false theology which is made necessary by these two. This third basic principle is a virtual rewriting of the plan of salvation into the incomprehensible gibberish of metaphysical language. (Metaphysical means part physical and part nonphysical.) Consider these examples:

"All three aspects of our salvation—justification, sanctification, and glorification—have already been accomplished in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ." Ibid., 30. (Then why are we still here? Glorified persons are in the kingdom of God.)

"All mankind, as a corporate unit, participated in Adam's fall." Ibid., 36. (Jesus, according to Sequeira, was a part of corporate humanity. Did Jesus participate in Adam's fall?)

"In Him we lived a perfect life. . ." Ibid., 43. (Before we were born?)

"In Him we died the penalty for sin." Ibid., 43. (Were we our own saviors?)

"All humanity corporately obeyed the law in one Man, Jesus Christ." Ibid., 48. (Then why are they called sinners?)

"Every baby is born subjectively under the reign of sin, condemnation, and death because of Adam's fall." Ibid., 61. (What happens if they die soon after birth? And what about the baby Jesus?)

"Our eternal destiny depends on which humanity we have chosen." Ibid., 62. (Are there two humanities, and do we have a choice?)

"Thus the life we receive at birth is a life that has sinned." Ibid., 63. (Is this reincarnation?)

"On the cross, Christ actually experienced the second death on behalf of fallen humanity." Ibid., 75.

(This statement is not qualified, so it must include *annihilation*. Did Jesus experience annihilation? Ellen White indicates that Jesus did in a certain manner experience the anguish of the second death (See *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 74.) but she does not introduce that concept into Romans 5.)

"The whole human race, which originated in the first Adam, died in Christ, the last Adam." Ibid., 86. (But there are still seven billion of us here.)

"God will never help the flesh to be good, because the flesh is Satan's domain, and unalterably opposed to God." Ibid., 94. (What about the flesh of Jesus? For the shocking answer, read on.)

"Christ's flesh, being our corporate sinful flesh, *lusted after sin*." Ibid., 147. (Is that clear enough? Ellen White says that the flesh, of itself, cannot sin. *Adventist Home*, 127.)

"A believer is no longer under the law's authority." Ibid., 164. (Then how can we sin? and what about James 2:12: "So speak ye and so do as they who shall be judged by the law of liberty?")

"I believe the Bible teaches that God actually and *unconditionally* saved all humanity at the cross." Ibid., 8. (But the conditions are stated in the next sentence.)

We could go on, but is it necessary? In a statement that is exceptional for its accuracy, Sequeira writes in his preface:

"This book presents the plan of salvation in a new light and, therefore, will require the reader to put aside all preconceived ideas in order to appreciate its message." Ibid., 7. (It will also be helpful to put aside your reasoning faculties. This is tacitly conceded on page 8.)

"In studying the truth of the gospel, you will discover much that contradicts human reasoning." Ibid., 8. (This is emphatically true of Sequeira's gospel, but not of the true gospel.)

If one should put one or more of these questions directly to Sequeira, there will be an immediate and fluent answer, but the answer will be just as incomprehensible as the statements themselves. We are reminded of Ellen White's response to persons who asked her to explain the writings of John Harvey Kellogg in his pantheistic book, *The Living Temple*. *They cannot be explained*, she said. *They are unexplainable*. All in all, Sequeira's book is a tragic conglomeration of false reasoning, contradictions of scripture, contradictions of the Spirit of Prophecy, and even contradictions of itself. What is strongly affirmed on one page is with equal firmness denied on another. The book appears to be bringing about a striking fulfillment of the solemn warning by Ellen White:

"God will arouse His people. If other means fail, heresies will come in among them, separating the chaff from the wheat." Testimonies to the Church, vol. 5, 707.

The heresies are here, pouring forth from our publishing houses and being preached from the pulpits of our churches. How can we hope to analyze them all and decipher their incomprehensible mysteries? Here is a practical suggestion. Don't bother with the intricate arguments, the convoluted concepts, the false reasoning. Just look at the bottom line. If the bottom line tells you that you don't need to stop sinning, that is all that you need to know. Throw the book away, even if other pages tell you that you should stop sinning, and do not pollute your mind with its mixture of truth with falsehood. Then fortify your soul by drinking from the pure fountains that flow from the throne of God, the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. Here are the strong towers in which we may find safety. May God be with you.