



# ROMANS Part 42

Chapter 5:15-19

## Greater Than Adam, Part 1



**But not as the offense, thus also the grace. For if, by the offense of the one, the many died, much rather the grace of God and the gratuity in grace, which is of the One Man, Jesus Christ, to the many superabounds. And not as through one act of sinning is the gratuity. For, indeed, the judgment is out of one into condemnation, yet the grace is out of many offenses into a just award.**

**For if, by the offense of the one, death reigns through the one, much rather, those obtaining the superabundance of grace and the gratuity of righteousness shall be reigning in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Consequently, then, as it was through one offense for all mankind for condemnation, thus also it is through one just award for all mankind for life's justifying. For even as, through the disobedience of the one man, the many were constituted sinners, thus also, through the obedience of the One, the many shall be constituted just.**

**F**or five weeks during the summer of 1999, five other friends and I did a live, call-in radio show in Cleveland, Ohio at the Christian radio station WCCD which broadcast (according to them) “for the soul of the city.” We dedicated one week to the topic of eternal torment, calling it “Hell Week.” We took a huge risk tackling this topic because, besides human free will, eternal torment is the darling of the Christian profession. How long would it take them to throw us off the air? How long before Caiaphas showed up? The city police? How long until the illicit trial in the middle of the night sent us to a lonely hill to die between other criminals? Before proceeding, allow me to briefly define some terms.

### FREE WILL

Human free will is the Christian teaching that humans can make decisions and do things independently of everything, including God. Yes, I said “including God.” For a will to be free, it must by definition operate independently of influence. If even God influences a person’s decision, then that person can no longer be called free. Christians will condemn other people for “not believing in Jesus,” and it is common for them to blame Satan, as in, “the devil got into that person.” Well, if the devil did get into that person, it only proves again that that person was not free, because not even Satan can influence a will that is free; otherwise that will would not be free. (Don’t panic; I make sense for a living.) What I am trying to say and am successfully saying is this: A free will must exist in a vacuum of influence. If it is free, then a human will cannot be influenced by God, Satan, its parents, its grandparents, Adam, its gender, its race, its neighborhood, the weather, the fact that it’s dying, the state of its underpants, or what it ate for breakfast.

Of course, those who embrace, fondle and fornicate with the uninfluenced human will distance themselves from the above bold and bald definitions because these definitions get to the point. Ouch. Getting to the point is the death knell of happiness and comfort to those wishing their own realm of sovereignty, and who at the same time wish to speak of God's "total sovereignty" (that's how they put it) over this planet, other planets, and the entire human race, which of course would include them. In other words, God is sovereign over people who are sovereign. It will be obvious to the objective reader that these are mutually exclusive sovereignties. If God is sovereign then humans are not, and vice-versa. It would be like God saying to the humans, "I am in charge of you," and the humans saying to God, "No, but we are in charge of *you* and, frankly, we do not enjoy confessing this so boldly and baldly to you because we are unwitting hypocrites on this topic, but you have pushed us into it



**“Getting to the point is the death knell to those wishing their own realm of sovereignty.”**

by insisting in so many Bible passages that you control *us*; *really* now.”

Somebody has to be wrong, and I'm betting it's the humans. But the saying goes that, in His sovereignty, God decided to give every human being born into this world his and her own sovereignty. That would be fine, except that it would be the last sovereign decision God ever made. From that point on, he'd be opposed, violated, dominated, trumped and trapped by his own creation. From that point on, his hands would be tied and the best he could hope for would be to race around the universe salvaging bits of the disaster he'd wrought. He

could do little about it, however (Christians claim that god saves only a small percentage of humanity), because a will that is free cannot be affected from without. God is left to sit around with his big fat fingers crossed, hoping that some people will like him and join him in his air-conditioned, heavenly offices. Here is a fantastic thought, just now arrived at: If the people who say they are free could only admit that god is no longer free to do whatever he wants because he has given away his sovereignty, then I'd be the first to applaud their consistency. If only they'd say, "God *was* sovereign, but then he surrendered his sovereignty to every single person, and thus screwed himself from ever affecting anyone ever again," I could clap my hands rapidly at such an honest pronouncement. I would laud that statement with laurel wreaths, stirring anthems, and a medal or two. But no such honesty exists. For even though god gave away his sovereignty, he somehow, according to the Christians, still has it. Yes! How about that! This is what they say. God gave away his sovereignty to every human, and yet he still retains his sovereignty!

This is when the Christians officially become nutjobs. It is at this point that they are institutionalized. Now they must eat mush for breakfast, lunch and dinner, wear slippers all day, and hope that people visit them on Sundays. From this point on, the Christians must be spoken to softly and sent to bed with tranquilizers and oversized pajamas. This is when the Christians lose the respect of any thinking person. At this point, no one should ever visit the Christians, no, not even on Sundays. (One may look through the bars at them, but it would be dangerous to step into their realm.) This is why millions of still-intelligent people are driven from organized religion. Organized religion has organized its nutjobs and its nutty teachings into systems that have dug basements, built altars, lit candles, hired singers, fashioned collection baskets of wicker, fed the poor, and outlawed thinking. Some people do manage, however, to ask probing, sensible questions. For these poor people, the Christians have hammers, nails and tall wooden crosses.

#### EXPOSING FREE WILL

Thus, the teachings of human free will and the sovereignty of God collide head on, full speed, like two freight trains on the same track. The best hope for the advocates of human sovereignty *and* the sovereignty of God is for the crash to happen in the middle of the night, at a remote location. Thus, the smoking debris can be cleared before dawn and the dirty business of wrecking perfectly good trains may proceed as usual with no one the wiser. Yet here I

am, the World's Most Outspoken Bible Scholar, broadcasting from the scene of the accident, sending images to the world with my spotlights, microphones, television cameras, snappy broadcasting attire, and commercial-free format. I am a great annoyance to hypocrites, believe me. I do this for a living, and would not recommend it to anyone.

I have thought long and hard about this. The human sovereignty crowd wants everything. They want to sound spiritual while at the same time maintaining masterhood of their own fates. How nice if both things could be true, that both God and they could be sovereign. How nice if at least both things could appear true, or could at least be



believed as true. It has to happen in the dark to have any chance at all, for light exposes the impossibility of the first two things, that is, being true and appearing true. As for the third thing, anyone can believe anything is true, including magical kingdoms, flying monkeys, leprechauns and fairies. Who wouldn't want to sound spiritual by repeating Christian mantras such as, "God is sovereign," while still thrusting one's fist, like a pirate, into the treasure chest of one's own untouchable domain ("Mine! All mine!").

This happy thrusting never occurs in public, of course. (Not even pirates do it in public; they are always in the dark hold of a ship, or in a cave.) In public, the whitewash is piously pronounced ("All is of God;" "God is sovereign," "Jesus saves"; *Jesus saves? Really? Then why the altar calls?*). The doctrine of human free will executes, with no fanfare, the false miracle. It whitewashes the term "master of my

own fate" with gob-loads of "all is of God," "Jesus is my Savior," "God is sovereign" and other nifty, stained-glass sayings that are true as they stand, but false when uttered by those unconsciously believing opposite things simultaneously. Whitewash dresses up the dry, dead bones. It did the same thing in Jesus' day. Nothing has changed. The whitewash only becomes whiter. For human free will to be true, there must be 8 billion free wills in the world and one poor deity who *used* to have it. (Who do *I* feel sorry for? The former deity.) There can be only one free will in the universe, however. This is a logical thought, which explains its unpopularity.

### "YOU MAY NOW ATTACH YOUR HORSE BLINDERS"

In deference to the free will people, the teaching of eternal torment helps drive normal people into wacko religious institutions, not to mention wrecking perfectly good trains, that is, quacking about how sovereign God is but how they are free to choose their eternal fates—sans God—simultaneously. (Calvinists are not normal people, a disturbing yet delicious fact to be discussed momentarily.)

If people who do not believe in God really do burn forever, then surely we must rescue the Deity from this horrid responsibility. Scripture *does* say that God hardens whom He will (Romans 9:18), but this verse is inconvenient and must be ignored or, if pressed upon us, explained. Scripture *does* say that humanity is helpless to save itself (Romans 5:6), but this verse will be shoved into a closet and the door bolted. Speaking of bolted doors, Scripture *does* say that all humanity is locked up in stubbornness (Romans 11:32), but that sounds too radical for a god as nice as ours, so let us modify it and say that only some people are locked up in stubbornness. Scripture *does* say that not one is seeking out God (Romans 3:11), but we all know that some people use their free wills to seek out God, so this verse must not be true; maybe Paul just got too excited there and exaggerated a wee bit.

Scripture *does* say that God saves *sinner*s (Romans 5:8), but we all know that some people are able to stop sinning long enough to choose Jesus, so how can it be that God saves sinners? Paul must have meant that God saves "sinners" (he forgot the quotation marks) who can at least stop sinning long enough to make a wise decision to accept Jesus. This, of course, would mean that God no longer saves actual sinners, but rather those who can

stop sinning long enough to believe in Him. In other words, God saves believers, not sinners. But why would *believers* need to be saved since they're already believers? Hmm. This is getting complicated. Why don't we just say, "God is a mystery," and hire a better guitar player for the Wednesday night Bible service? Scripture *does* say that a man's steps are ordered by God (Psalm 37:23), but this is probably wrong, because then God would control everything that people do—we know *that* can't be true—and how respectful would *that* be of people's free wills, which we already know they have? Scripture *does* say that only God gives faith (Romans 12:3), but this would eliminate humans offering to God *their* own faith, so let's ignore this verse, along with all of the others, and re-carpet the sanctuary.

Thus, God is relieved of His deity if only to protect Him from His own careless statements, listed above. Unless we are Calvinists, we will *not* have a God Who predestines people to eternal torment, and we will thus thrust from our minds verses having to do with the inconvenient truth of predestination, as outlined (unaccountably, we might add) in Romans 8:29 and Ephesians 1:5.

## CALVINISTS

At least the Calvinists (a theological viewpoint named after John Calvin) are decent enough to acknowledge the predestination verses listed above, and all of the "sovereignty of God" verses listed before that. That's nice of them, I think. I think the Calvinists must gather in secret conclaves at night to encourage themselves, saying, "We *must* believe these Bible verses because, well, because these verses are in the Bible!" I do admire them for this, that they believe things written in the Bible. These are brave people, the Calvinists. So admirable. My admiration falters, however, because of what the Calvinists do next. The only problem with the Calvinists (to call this "a problem" is like calling a plane's wings falling off at 30,000 feet "a problem") is that now the Calvinists must make God responsible for billions of people being burned in hell for eternity. Bummer! Here is where the Calvinists become nutjobs and are placed, alongside the free will people, into padded vans by white-frosted professionals, condemned for the rest of their lives to eat with plastic forks.

If God is the giver of faith (Romans 12:3), and demonstrates time and again the ease with which He "faiths" a person (it is noiseless, odorless, colorless, tasteless), then why doesn't He lay this faith on everyone? If God locks up all together in stubbornness (Romans 11:32),

and only He can unlock them (Romans 11:32), then why does He unlock only a few and keep the majority shut up in their God-inspired stubbornness until He can burn them in hell forever? Romans 3:11 says, "Not one is seeking out God." If this is true (and I believe it is, since God wrote it), then obviously, in order to save *anyone*, God has to override the default setting of human helplessness and sin (Romans 5:6, 8), the very default setting with which He has saddled all humans. "The creation was subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him Who subjects it." That's Romans 8:20. I did not write it. Why does God override this default setting in some, but not in others?

The Calvinists feel no need to explain this. They simply look out the window, watch the wings of their airplane fall off at 30,000 feet, shrug their shoulders, smile lamely, say, "Oh, well," and order another martini from the flight attendant. They are content to rest in a God who purposely brings billions of people into the world knowing that, because of His unwillingness to grant the entire human race faith, billions of His created beings will forever burn in



hell beneath His apparently uncaring gaze. Can you even imagine the scene? The universe, being fully apprised of God's sovereignty and His Christ (that is, His ability to send a Son to save the world) will point to Him and say, "This horror is Your fault!" Like a good Calvinist, God will shrug, smile lamely, say, "Oh, well," and order another martini.

I will say this for the free will people: even though they, themselves, are nutjobs, they fully recognize the exceeding nutjobbery of the Calvinists. (For the record, the theological position of the human sovereignty folks is called Arminianism, named after a certain Joseph Armin, a famous free will guy who smashed trains for a living.) The free will (Arminian) people simply cannot swallow a God Who purposely ushers billions of people into this brief, miserable life in order to cast them into an interminable, even more miserable life in hell. Anxious to relieve God of the responsibility of this horror, the Arminians at least have the decency to ignore hundreds of



**“The Calvinists must now make God responsible for billions of people being burned in hell for eternity. Bummer!”**

Scripture verses testifying to God's sovereignty. This puts them into an embarrassing position, of course. You really do have to feel sorry for them because now they are forced to say things like, "God hardened Pharaoh's heart because Pharaoh hardened his own heart." I have heard them say it. It makes me want to cry for them. Poor people. Now back to the Calvinists, if you can stand it.

The Calvinists, wanting to keep God in control of His own universe (how nice of them), can nevertheless sleep at night (they must have really comfortable pillows) realizing (in their own dark, stupid minds) that God purposely brings humans into the world to whom He knows

He will not give faith. The Calvinists watch friends, family members and loved-ones go to hell forever in a God-inspired stubbornness that He refuses to undo. The Calvinists wave bye-bye to their friends, family members and loved ones, then return to their amazingly comfortable pillows and hope to hell that *they* have been chosen, because none of them can really be sure. Bummer.

## NUTS IN A NUTSHELL

To sum up this nightmare: the god of free will is unable to save, while the god of Calvinism is unwilling to save. The god of Arminianism can't, while the god of Calvinism won't. The free will people have one thing right: salvation is for everyone. (The Calvinists get that wrong; they think that salvation is only for the elect, the chosen.) The Calvinists have one thing right: human beings are so locked up in stubbornness, unbelief and sin, that they can't get out of it no matter how hard they try; faith must be granted to them from without, and only God possesses the power to do this. There is one common denominator of error in both of these teachings—the error that makes the god of each teaching a small “g” god, though in different aspects—and that is the error of eternal torment.

## ETERNAL TORMENT

Eternal torment is a demonstrably false teaching. There are several passages in the Bible that appear to teach it, chiefly Mark 9:43, "Come away into hell"; Luke, chapter 16, "The Rich Man and Lazarus"; Matthew 25:46, "eternal punishment." But there are even more passages in the Bible that appear to teach that God will eventually reconcile not only all humanity to Himself, but everything ever created. Among these passages are 1 Timothy 4:10, "God is the Savior of all humanity"; 1 Corinthians 15:22, "As in Adam all are dying, thus also in Christ shall all be vivified"; Romans 11:36, "All is out of, through, and into God"; Colossians 1:20, all "created in Him" shall be "conciliated to Him;" Philippians 2:10, "Every knee shall bow and every tongue acclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord," and the passage under consideration, Romans 5:15-19, "Consequently, then, as it was through one offense for all mankind for condemnation, thus also it is through one just award for all mankind for life's justifying."

Scripture cannot contradict itself. The reason that both of these brands of passages are in the Bible is so



that God can make it apparent who loves truth, and who does not. The truth lover will see apparent contradictions and look for an answer, while the hater of truth will camp on one side of the fence and ignore the other side, that is, all of the other verses. Haters of truth camp on the eternal torment side of the fence because eternal torment “tickles the hearing” (2 Timothy 4:3) of people who want the stubborn and lawless of this world (people unlike themselves, don’t you know) to eventually get what’s coming to them. The last thing they want to hear is that Jesus Christ will eventually save everyone.

God has so finely balanced the Scriptures. He makes it easy for verses to be twisted. In order to “prove” eternal torment, one has to twist Scripture, but alas—there are many Scriptures available for twisting. God has made sure of it with poor translations, somewhat ambiguous phraseology, and uninspired chapter headings. Why are there so many versions of the Bible? Has that ever frustrated you? God did it on purpose. Which translation is true? Go and find out. God wants you to go and find out. In the meantime, He made sure that concordances

were produced, and more accurate translations. See? If you want to find out, you can. God makes the tools available. God made sure that, when He closed a door—when He produced a bad translation to misdirect the careless masses—He opened a window, that is, He inspired someone to make a concordance so that inspired words could be sought in context and properly defined.

Finding truth means desire and a little work. If one is not so vitally interested in truth and is therefore careless or hasty with the Word, then he or she will happily swallow the easy error, thus demonstrating to the world and to heaven that he or she prefers tradition over truth. “For it must be that there are sects among you,” the apostle wrote (1 Corinthians 11:19), “that those who are qualified may be becoming apparent among you.”

Those who love the truth will seek and find. Those who don’t love the truth will accept the popular, mainstream teaching. These people, it will be seen, love popularity and acceptance more than they do truth. They fit the classic category Jesus spoke of, “You love the traditions of men more than the truth of God” (Mark 7:8).

## ETERNAL FOMENT

The teaching of eternal torment depends on the Greek word *aionian* being mistranslated “eternity.” Any Greek concordance will prove, by inspired contexts, that the word has to do with time, not eternity, and ought to be translated either “eon” or “age,” as it is in several versions (The *Concordant Literal New Testament*; *Young’s Literal New Testament*, and the *Dabhar* translation, to name just three). To uphold the false teaching of eternal torment, the word “hell” must be mistranslated, and is. Jesus never uttered the word “hell,” and neither did any Bible writer. Jesus said, *hades* and *gehenna*. Peter said *tartarus*. These three distinct Greek words have all been translated “hell” in common Bible versions done up for mainstream consumption and thus mainstream blinding. What did these words mean to the original writers? This is the question of the year, but few people ask it. Even a quick glance into any concordance will show the honest seeker that these words have nothing to do with endless torment in flames for living people. (See my book, *Martin Zender Goes to Hell*.)

To uphold the false teaching of eternal torment, the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus must be taken as real, and not a parable. Objectors say, “But it is not called a parable.” True, it is not called a parable in Luke chapter 16, where it appears, but it is called a parable in chapter 15, where Jesus beings telling the Pharisees a series of five parables (Luke 15:3). “Yet apart from a parable He did not speak to them” (Mark 4:34). If the Rich Man and Lazarus is not a parable, then 1) everything the Scriptures taught previously on the state of the dead is reversed, 2) Lazarus is literally sitting on Abraham’s chest, 3) people easily converse in fire, and 4) salvation is based, not upon Christ, but upon being abused in this life and having dogs lick your sores. This is only the beginning of the problems when one makes this passage literal, rather than a parable.

## THE RESULTS ARE IN

The Arminians are correct in that the sacrifice of Christ is for everyone. The Calvinists are correct in that only God can give faith. Eliminate the common error shared by these professions—namely eternal torment—and the best of each profession produces truth: God will eventually give faith to everyone.

Where does this leave the teaching of predestination, that is, that God does call out an elect company of people? It stands as written in Romans 8:29 and Ephesians 1:5: God does choose certain people now. The mistaken assumption is what He does with the rest. The mistaken as-

sumption is that He chooses some people now, and damns the rest to hell for eternity or—at best—annihilates them. Scripture testifies to nothing of the sort. That fact of the matter is that God chooses some people now for a special purpose—to rule and to reign with Him; to work with Him during future glorious time periods—and saves the rest later. It’s a timing thing. It’s an extra-glory thing.

Not everyone comes into salvation at once. 1 Corinthians 15:22 bears this out, “For even as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified. Yet each in his own class.” 1 Timothy 2:6 also witnesses to the *eventual* salvation of all humanity: “For there is one God, and one Mediator of God and mankind, a Man, Christ Jesus, Who is giving Himself a correspondent Ransom for all, the testimony in its own eras.”

These eras are technically known as “eons,” a word that appears (along with its adjective form, “eonian”) over 170 times in the Greek Scriptures, yet a word that has suffered such damage by bad translations that few have ever heard of God’s “purpose of the eons” (Ephesians 3:11, *Concordant Literal New Testament*.) The King James Version translates this verse, “God’s eternal purpose,” which, when one stops long enough to think about it, is senseless. Does God continue purposing for eternity, or does He eventually complete His purposes to happy result? The King James version and other common translations are wildly inconsistent with this important Greek word, going so far as to translate the same Greek word, *aion*, as “eternity” in one place, and “age” in another. How can a single word have opposite meanings? Can one word mean both time and non-time? No. There is a theological bias afoot here that would preserve a popular yet erroneous teaching at any cost, including sound translating principles.

We, as believers and careful students, have the privilege of believing all of God’s Word. How wonderful to not have to sweep one set of passages under a rug in order to believe another set. When God’s Word is properly translated, when figures of speech are grasped, and when passages are analyzed in context, light shines. Nothing contradicts anything else. No passage obliterates another one. Each has its place.

**“Eliminate the common error shared by Arminianism and Calvinism, and the truth shines forth.”**

Scripture speaks of many judgments, but these all lead to glorious goals. No judgment is an end in itself. None of the evils that people endure in this life—evils that eventually lead souls in desperation to the Savior’s feet—are eternal. Evil, sin, death, estrangement from God—all of these are “eonian,” not eternal. The life won for the world by Christ as the cross, however, *is* eternal, not because the Greek word translated “eternal” ever means that—in *any* passage where it appears—but because “this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:53). Immortal people cannot die. Does God eventually make everyone immortal? Paul insists that He does (1 Corinthians 15:22).

BACK TO STUDIO B, WCCD  
AM 1000, CLEVELAND, OHIO

I figured out the night before how I would begin Hell Week. Here we came into the studio, Monday evening, 7 p.m. Our theme music began, then faded. My friend Mike Telep, sitting across from me, looked nervous. A moment of silence ensued, followed by me inching ever closer to the microphone and saying to the city of Cleveland on live radio: “We here at this table this evening have a very, very shocking belief. I need to get this out in the open right now. Tonight. This belief is so shocking that I’m not even sure I’m allowed to say it on the radio.” I looked at producer Ricardo Sanchez through the studio glass. “Ricardo, are we on a seven-second delay?” He told me through my studio earphones that we were certainly not on a seven-



**In the studio. Hell Week.  
Cleveland, OH. 1999.**

second delay. He looked panicked. He begged me with his eyes. He seemed near crying. I continued.

“Very well,” I said. “Apparently, we are not on a seven-second delay, or any kind of delay. I really don’t care. I’m still going to say what I need to say. It’s too important that

you know. So here it goes. Are you ready? We believe ... *we believe* ... that Jesus Christ is greater than Adam.”

Ricardo practically wet himself in relief. Ha! *He* thought I was going to detail some weird, unpopular, un-Christian teaching that hardly anyone believed except radicals. He smiled at me through the glass. By the end of the week, he would not be smiling. In fact, by the end of this night’s broadcast, he would refuse even to enter Studio B to shake our hands and say good-bye. In the next two hours, I explained just what it meant to profess such a thing as the superiority of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice over the mere eating of a piece of illicit fruit. Though millions of professing Christians would fall over themselves agreeing with the *wording* of our apparently orthodox belief, none of them would follow us to the logical conclusion—apart from a handful of stones.

The orthodox world of Cleveland Christian radio was about to explode.

In Romans 5:15-19, the apostle Paul describes for us, in rich detail, the superiority of Christ over Adam. The explosion—via pen rather than microphone—occurs in verse 18. The future now becomes bright for every human ever born into Adamic flesh. —MZ

(... *To be continued next week.*)

