

Romans 5:12 Speaks of Spiritual Death, Not Physical.



In the past I had a problem when it came to the term “spiritual death” as related to Reformed Theology. And then had problems when it came to “physical death” concerning Romans 5.

“Spiritual death” simply means a “moral and relational separation from God” which comes about by sinning, and never has to do with infants. Infants do not come into this world morally and relationally separated from God. The Bible teaches that infants and young children are morally innocent and should not die for the sins of the parents (Deut. 24:16; 2 Kings 14:6; 24:4), that children are born innocent with no knowledge of good or evil (Rom. 9:11, Ecc. 7:29, Duet. 1:39). The kingdom of heaven belongs to infants and young children (Matt. 19:14 Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16).

Question: How do you explain the fact that humans die?

Man physically dies because they have no access to the tree of life. Jesus himself was under this condition. Like all humans, he had cells that reproduced and died. He lost his baby teeth. He lost hair and grew more, needed to trim his nails, he got hungry, he thirsted, he grew tired and needed sleep. He was in all ways like us. (Heb. 2:14; 17) If Jesus were allowed to live to a ripe old age, he would have died of old age.

We have this idea that Adam was created immortal, which the Bible says he was not (1 Cor. 15:47-50). 1 Tim. 6:16 tells us it is God alone who has immortality. This means that Jesus the Messiah was not God, but a mortal man like us, capable of experiencing death, which he did! God cannot die. Human beings die. Furthermore, if Adam and Eve had to eat from the tree of life to become immortal, then they were created mortal to begin with! No one comes into this life immortal. Saying that all souls come into this world immortal has its roots in pagan philosophy.

Now, if “physical death” is referred to in Romans 5:12 as a result from Adam’s sin, then it can no longer be a result from “**personal**” sin. In Romans 5:12 it states,

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.

The death in Romans 5:12 deals with **personal transgression...** “for all have sinned.” Can we honestly say that babies are sinners? Do they come out of the womb as sinners? The word “have” indicates an activity on every individual’s part since sin is voluntary. *All that have sinned are the ones who have sinned.* Babies do not sin for babies cannot make moral choices. However, when a person comes to maturity where he knows the difference between *good* and *evil* and does evil, he sins and consequently

comes under the wrath of God as a result of misusing his free will. (Rom. 1:18-21; 2:12-15; Rom. 6:16). So the type of death that comes upon individuals for their *own personal sin* is not physical death (all are going to eventually die physically), but spiritual (Eze. 18:4, 20). This spiritual death, meaning a *severed relationship with God*, comes by personal disobedience to light. (James. 4:17; Heb. 7:26; 1John 1:5) It is this type of death that passes upon all men, for that all have sinned (v.12). Not in Adam! It does **not** say “all have *sinned in Adam*.” This is why there was a group of people who were spiritually dead between Adam and Moses (v.14). So death (spiritual) still reigned over those who had NOT *sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression* (v.14), meaning they were sinning against the law of their conscience (James 4:17).

Sin is optional, not a necessity of nature. All who choose to sin sever their relationship with God (spiritually). But just as a person may choose to sin (which we all have) they must also choose to reject the created habits. This is possible through the freedom of the will and God given nature (Ecc. 7:29; Rom. 2:14). If sin were physical (as Gnostics teach) this would not be true. How can a person feel responsible for something that does not spring from his choice but rather *governs* his choice? But sin is moral so the *will* is always in play – always able to choose vice or virtue – otherwise we’re robots.

Michael Pearl, as well as others, teaches that Roman 5:12 is referring to [physical] death and that [physical] death is the condemnation that went out upon all of Adam’s descendants, but Romans 5:12 is speaking of a death that comes upon all men **for their own personal transgression** (“for all have sinned”). And it is only upon a person sinning that they can experience condemnation (Eze. 18:4,20; Eph. 5:5-7), since condemnation and justification are completely conditioned upon a person’s personal choices, not Adam’s. Those who decide by free will to follow *Adam’s example* are spiritually dead in their sins (i.e. separated from God relationally **Isa. 59:2**), without righteousness (Rom. 6:20) and will be destroyed (2Thess.1:9; Rev.21:8). BUT, those who choose to follow Christ’s example will be spiritually alive (reconciled relationally to Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21) without sin (Rom. 6:7; 11,13; 8:10) and will receive eternal life in the kingdom to come (Mk. 10:30).

Now here is where we need to be very careful. If Paul were *not* speaking of “spiritual death” (relational separation) in Rom. 5:12, he would then be teaching what is known as “**positional righteousness**” in Rom 6, 7, 8. WHY?

Knowing this that our old man was crucified with Him that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

(Pay close attention because here it is.)

For he who has DIED has been freed from sin.” (Rom. 6:6-7)

The problem is, if Paul were referring to [physical] death in Rom. 5:12, then he is also referring to [physical] death here in Rom. 6:7. Therefore Paul would have been teaching

(which he did not) that a person must [physically] die to be “freed from sin!” This then makes Rom. 6, 7, 8 all POSITIONAL, rather than PRACTICAL. **This is a very dangerous teaching!!**

Likewise you also reckon yourselves dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 6:11)

This must be done positionally (counting yourself dead to sin) since sin will be with you until you [physically] die according to Michael Pearl and many others who teach the physical death position. (Rom. 6:7)

The question must be asked. How can someone be “set free from sin” (Rom. 6:18), but still NOT be set free from sin, since you have yet to [physically] die? (Rom. 6:7)

This is where imputed righteousness comes in to play. Romans 7:5, 14-25 must also all be taken in positionally since you must [physically] die to be “free from sin.” So many have fallen for this false teaching, myself included, that one will not be set free from sin until they die! This is wrong.

Michael Pearl rejects Rom. 7:14-23 as being the normal Christian life (since it was directed at unsaved Jews, Rom. 7:1, and I agree), but by teaching there is only *one type of death* in the scriptures (i.e PHYSICAL), he cancels out his commentary and refutes his own position of Paul’s penmanship. How? Simple – by teaching that Rom. 5:12 is speaking of [physical] death necessitates Rom. 6:7 to be speaking about [physical death]. Pearl rejects the sin nature (and I do as well), but His position on the meaning of “death” leaves the sin nature in tack (somehow) since you cannot be freed from sin until you [physically] die! This is where I see a problem with a teacher who rejects original sin and holds on to a doctrine like Jesus’ imputed righteousness. The Bible never says we are imputed with Jesus’ righteousness. We are warned about such teaching by John.

“Little children, let no one deceive you. He who does righteousness is righteous, even as he [Jesus] is righteous.” 1 Jn 3:7

The same condemnation that is found in Rom. 5:16, 18 is found in Rom. 8:1. Since the condemnation is due to Adam’s transgression and is referring to physical death (as Pearl says) that was unconditionally imputed to all his descendants (that is condemnation was imputed), then there is in fact condemnation for those who are in Christ since they are **physically still alive!** (Rom. 5:18; 8:1) This might be another reason why Pearl holds to imputed righteousness....the blood must cover, not purge.

Romans 8:6 says,

For to be carnally minded is [physical] death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Huh? How? If death only has one meaning, how does Pearl explain this verse?

For if you live according to the flesh you will [physically] die... (Rom. 8:13) ???

There are people who live according to the flesh and live well up to their 80's and 90's and sometimes more. So this is the problem of Romans. 5:12 - with death being 'physical', it necessitates *positional righteousness* and the "Once Saved, Always Saved" comes into play.

The context of Romans 5:12-21, Paul speaks of condemnation and justification. The condemnation is referring to spiritual death, for those who are **justified still die physically!**

If "death" in Romans 6:23 means physical death, being justified would mean that we **would not die physically!** It is "spiritual death" in Rom. 5:12, not physical. I see the influence and effects of Adam's sin led unto the condemnation of all people – that is – upon all those who choose to sin by their own free will and follow Adam's example will come under the wrath of God.

Pearl's rejection of original sin but acceptance of imputed righteousness would be like me teaching the sin nature and telling people to obey God. It DOESN'T WORK. If you're born a sinner, you MUST have **Jesus'** imputed righteousness (which is not scripturally correct 1 John 3:7); however, if you're born morally innocent, then you must obey from the heart! (Rom. 6:16-17; Gal. 5:6; 1 John 3:7)

Take Romans 5:16:

And not as it was by the one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification.

The two examples and their work are yet again being contrasted. Adam's influence and sin resulted unto condemnation while Christ obedience resulted in a free gift unto justification. Let me point out that it does not say that the sin of one condemned them all, but rather that the sin of one led to the condemnation of them all. This is because condemnation and justification are both **CONDITIONAL**, not unconditionally universal as Pearl says. Condemnation can only come upon personal transgression, while justification comes freely through the process of repentance and faith. (Acts 11:18; 20:21; 2 Cor.7:10-11)

While we are alive, we can use our body as instruments for "righteousness" or "unrighteousness" (Rom. 6:13). Yielding our instrument (flesh) to sin leads to death while obedience leads to righteousness (Rom. 6:16). If Adam's sin has caused the whole human race to physically die, **then how does our personal sin lead to physical death, again?** (Rom. 6:23)

King David who fell into murder and adultery with his beautiful neighbor Bathsheeba (2 Sam. 11-12) is said by many to have only lost his joy of salvation or maybe some loss of rewards but not his spiritual state with God. It is said David could grieve the spirit, but never quench it and was secure in his salvation. However, Ezekiel said something totally different.

But when a righteousness man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? [The answer to this question has eternal consequences.] All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die. (Eze. 18:24)

How could Ezekiel be referring to physical death when Judaism teaches man is **created mortal** and which the Bible supports? This is how we know that King David was NOT in a safe “spiritual” condition until he found godly sorrow in Psalms 51. Hence, David lost his justification and fell back under condemnation DUE to the fact he transgressed. Although King David was still alive (since he was physically walking about) his *communication with God was severed* (Isa. 59:2) for those 8 months until he found repentance.

Can the spirit die? Jesus said it could. But remember, when speaking of “spiritual death,” it simply means a “**moral and relational separation from God.**”

...for this my son was dead [morally and spiritually] and is alive [relationally] again. (Lk.15:24; 32)

...He that...believeth...is passed from [moral and spiritual] death unto life [relationship].” (Jn. 5:24)

Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead [moral and spiritual], and Christ shall give thee light.” (Eph. 5:14-16)

...yield yourselves unto God, as those that are [relationally] alive from the dead [moral and spiritual].” (Rom. 6:13)

And you being [morally and spiritually] dead in your sins...hath he made [relationally] alive together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” (Col. 2:13)

We know that we have passed from [moral and spiritual] death unto life [relationship].” (1Jn. 3:14)

Spiritual death means being out of touch with God and righteousness, which means that a person who is out of touch with God has no righteousness (Rom. 6:20) and therefore

must reinforce only unrighteousness. And since all unrighteousness is sin (1 Jn. 5:17) the unrighteous are sinners (1 Jn. 3:7-10), and must by necessity be separated from God (Heb. 7:26) due to their wicked works (Col. 2:13), not birth!

So “spiritual death” comes ONLY by sinning. Since sin is a moral issue which is a transgression of the law and conscience, and babies are not able to make moral decisions, they are morally neutral. (2Kings 14:6; Deu. 24:16; 2Chr. 25:4; Eze. 18:2-4; Eze. 18:19-20) Babies are innocent. Children are neither guilty of evil, nor worthy of praise until they are able to make their own decisions (Rom. 9:11). They have to come to the age of maturity where they know the difference between good and evil. This sin is not by necessity, but rather by choice. (James. 1:13-15). This is why every human is responsible for the “things done in the body” and is judged “according to what he/she has done, whether it be good or bad.” (2 Cor. 5:10)

The founder of Calvinism said we were born “lumps of sin” (i.e Augustine of Hippo). Basically, Calvinism is modern day Manicheanism, which is Gnostic. Denial of man’s “free will” is a heathen belief, just like dualism! (i.e. the “sinful nature.”) If man cannot respond to God, then man is not a man but rather a preprogrammed robot. If mankind can’t repent no more than ice can burn, God is a liar. (Mk. 1:15; Lk. 13:3,5; Acts 11:18, 17:30; 26:18-20) If man is OSAS (Once Saved Always Saved), the Son of man was a liar (Matt. 10:22; Lk. 13:24).

If Reformed Theology (filled with pagan philosophy) have it right, then that means God must by necessity save people in their sins. Since they are *incapable of responding* to the call of repentance proven by deeds and faith working by love, they would have to be compelled [by God] and forced against their own will [by God] to do something they never wanted to do – that being of course – love God. Calvinism is heresy!

Keep in mind the day that Adam sinned against God he “spiritually died” (Gen. 2:17 Again, meaning his relationship with God was not the same). Spiritual death comes by personal sin, not Adam’s. If one were to say that physical death is a result from Adam’s sin, then it would stand to reason that we do not physically die for our own personal transgressions...but yet

She that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. (1Tim. 5:6)

Is she physically dead or spiritually dead? Can you even be physically dead while you’re physically live? How is she dead while she still lives? This can’t mean physical death, but spiritual separation from God. This is precisely what happened in the garden. God said,

You shall not eat from the tree for IN THAT DAY you shall surely die. (Gen. 2:17)

Did Adam physically die the moment he ate from the tree? No. Scriptures say Adam lived to be 930 years old and then he died. (Gen. 5:5) So the death God was speaking of in Gen. 2:17 must have been referring to the relational ends of things - spiritually. Adam and Eve eventually died physically because they, along with his posterity, no longer had access to the tree of life which sustained their mortal fleshly bodies. We suffer the *consequences* of Adam's sin, but are *not guilty* of his sin.

Sin is not a substance that can be transferred from one person to the next. Sin is not a substance since there are no morals in substance.

Sin is a choice, not a constitution. Sin is a transgression of law (1 John 3:4) and conscience (James 4:17). If sin is a choice it cancels out constitution, if sin is in our constitution it cancels out the choice

Adam, by his own free will, chose to transgress and consequently brought *sin into the world*, and spiritual death comes by *personal transgression*. (Rom. 5:12) It is speaking of [spiritual] death through Adam. How? Not by imputation, but by following his **EXAMPLE** of disobedience. So "[spiritual] death passes upon all men for that all *have sinned*." (V.12)

The verse in Romans is speaking to the influence and effects of Adam's sin which led to the condemnation of all men, upon all those who choose to sin by their own free will. There is no such thing as universal condemnation. Again, notice in Rom. 5:16 it does NOT say that the sin of one condemned them all, but that the sin of one led to the condemnation of them all. Condemnation is conditioned upon personal transgression and justification is conditioned upon repenting and believing. Man can only be condemned for their own personal sins (Eze. 18:20-28; 1Cor. 6:9; Rev. 21:8) and reconciliation requires a personal choice (2 Cor. 5:20). Condemnation is the wrath of God that comes upon the sons of disobedience. (Jn. 3:36; Eph. 5:5-7) Romans 8:1 says,

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.

Again, condemnation is **CONDITIONED** upon a person's walk, it is not universal apart from choice. Condemnation is shown to be spiritual death, for if you live according to the flesh you will [spiritually and morally] die (Rom. 8:13), since being carnally minded is death. (Rom. 8:6)

Another question worth pondering is this. If the carnally minded are dead but still walking around, how are they dead? If condemnation is physical, and a person gets born again, are they still condemned since they are still in the flesh and condemnation is physical? How could there be no condemnation? (Rom. 8:1)

Thus it can be clearly seen that Romans 5:12 speaks of spiritual death. In fact, much of Scriptures speak of spiritual death unless the context calls for physical death.

