

Current Positional Truth: Protasis of Rom 5:17, Adam's Lapse Results in Spiritual Death to All; the Prohibition in Gen 2:17; Decision to Eat Resulted in Spiritual Death; Act of Eating Began the Process of Physical Death; Difference between Everlasting Life & Eternal Life

**Romans 5:17** - For if by the transgression of the one [ Adam's original sin ], death [ spiritual ] ruled through the one [ Adam; and it did ]; much more they who receive in life the surplus of grace [ escrow blessings in time ], and the gift of righteousness, they shall reign through the one, Jesus Christ.

- (1) Paul again employs an a fortiori rationale introduced by the conditional particle **εἰ (ei)** which with the indicative mood of the verb **βασιλεύω (basileuō)**: to rule, indicates a first class condition and is translated, "For if."
- (2) The protasis makes reference to the original sin and its results. The word "transgression" is the singular noun **παράπτωμα (paraptōma)** and it actually refers to the fall and specifically to the "lapse."
- (3) *Paraptōma* is the basis for the lapsarian controversy. The Latin noun *lapsus* is the word for "falling." It comes into the English as "lapse": "to fall from an attained and usually high level (as of morals or manners) to one much lower. To depart from an accepted pattern or standard."<sup>1</sup>
- (4) Paul is emphasizing Adam's original sin which is the result of his lapse, i.e., deviation from the divine standard: "... from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die" (Genesis 2:17).
- (5) Paul uses *paraptōma* to indicate Adam's lapse in Genesis 3:6b, "... and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate."
- (6) Paul's use of *paraptōma* in Romans 5:17 instead of **ἁμαρτία (hamartia)**, the word translated "sin," is addressed in this excerpt:

Paul in Romans 5:15a b, 17 f. describes the sin of Adam as **παράπτωμα**. The singular is justified, since Paul undoubtedly has in view the one actual sin of Genesis 3. **Παράπτωμα** is thus equivalent to **ἁμαρτία**. Romans 5:20 ["The Law came in so that the transgression (**παράπτωμα**) would increase; but where sin (**ἁμαρτία**) increased, grace abounded all the more."] shows that the apostle ... makes it apparent that **παράπτωμα** and **ἁμαρτία** are synonyms. As **ἁμαρτία** was in the world before the Law according to Romans 5:13 [For until the Law sin was in the world ...], so was the synonymous **παράπτωμα** according to 5:20. The Law simply caused it to increase. Hereby the distinction between **παράπτωμα**, **ἁμαρτία**, and **παράβασις** [*parabasis*] is established. **Παράβασις** implies transgression of a commandment. **Παράπτωμα**, however, goes further; it refers directly to the disruption of man's relation to God through his fault.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v.: "lapse."

<sup>2</sup> Wilhelm Michaelis, "παράπτωμα, παράβασις," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 6:172.

- (7) Thus the singular noun *paraptōma* in verse 17 makes reference to Adam’s lapse – the fall or the original sin. In so doing, Adam instantly lost his human spirit, severed fellowship with God, became dichotomous, and in need of regeneration through faith alone in Messiah alone.
- (8) The subject of the protasis is the singular noun **θάνατος (*thanatos*)** translated “death.” In the singular it refers to spiritual death. This references the first of the two deaths noted in:

**Genesis 2:17** - but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely [ Qal infinitive absolute: מוֹת (*moth*) ] die [ Qal imperfect: תָּמוּת (*ta-muth*) ].”

- (9) Verse 17 ends with a penalty clause for violating the mandate: “you shall surely die.” However, this translation misses the impact of this dreadful consequence. We get help from Wilhelm Gesenius:

The infinitive absolute [ מוֹת *mōth*] occurs most frequently in immediate connexion with the finite verb of the same stem, in order in various ways to *define more accurately or to strengthen the idea of the verb.*

The infinitive absolute used *before* the verb to *strengthen* the verbal idea, i.e. to emphasize in this way either the certainty or the forcibleness and completeness of an occurrence. In English, such an infinitive is mostly expressed by a corresponding adverb, but sometimes merely by putting greater stress on the verb; e.g. Genesis 2:17 תָּמוּת מוֹת [*mōth ta-muth*] *thou shalt surely die.*<sup>3</sup>

- (10) The doubling of the verb is designed for stress or to define more accurately the idea of the verb. The best English rendering of this Hebrew construct is, “dying you will die.”
- (11) Gesenius indicates that the verse stresses two deaths were forecast for violating the prohibition against eating the forbidden fruit.
- (12) The Qal infinitive absolute, מוֹת (*mōth*), refers to spiritual death while the Qal imperfect, תָּמוּת (*ta-muth*), refers to physical death as the inevitable result:

**Genesis 2:17b** - from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it dying spiritually [ Qal infinitive absolute: מוֹת (*moth*) ] you will die physically [ Qal imperfect: תָּמוּת, *ta-muth* ] .

- (13) By violating the prohibition Adam and Ishah sinned and as a result experienced spiritual death. Adam did not die physically for another 900 years so we may conclude that the emphasis from the infinitive absolute is on the sentence of spiritual death which then caused physical death.
- (14) This concept is brought out by the Qal imperfect: תָּמוּת (*ta-muth*), “you will die.” We return to Gesenius for further explanation:

<sup>3</sup> Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 2d English ed., ed. E. Kautzsch, rev. A. E. Cowley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1910), 342.

The *imperfect* denotes the *beginning*, the *unfinished*, and the *continuing*, that which is just happening, which is conceived as in process of coming to pass, and hence, also, that which is yet future.<sup>4</sup>

- (15) Thus the Qal imperfect indicates that spiritual death, caused by sin, is the catalyst that initiates the process of physical death. When Adam and Ishah sinned they died spiritual death immediately but something else was *just* happening. Spiritual death started a *process* that would *continue unfinished* until a point *yet future*. So we read:

**Genesis 2:17** - from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it dying spiritually [ Qal infinitive absolute: מוֹת (*mōth*) ] you will begin a process that will continue until you die physically [ Qal imperfect: תָּמוּת (*ta-muth*) ].

- (16) Thus the root meaning of *paraptōma* is “lapse” while the specific death referred to by *thanatos* is “spiritual,” giving us this expanded translation for as far as we have gone:

**Romans 5:17** - For if [1CC ] by the lapse [ παράπτωμα (*paraptōma*) ] of one man [ Adam ] spiritual death [ θάνατος (*thanatos*) ] ...

- (17) Spiritual death originated in the garden as a result of the original sin of Adam. His point of contact with the integrity of God prior to this critical decision was the Father’s personal love.
- (18) Personal love can be virtuous only when it is directed toward a perfect object which Adam was so classified having been created by Jesus Christ in Genesis 2:7.
- (19) The creative acts of perfect God must logically be perfect as well. This perfection provided for Adam and his wife everlasting life.
- (20) Everlasting life is not to be regarded as a synonym for eternal life as these definitions confirm:

Everlasting: lasting or enduring through all time; continuing for a long time or indefinitely.<sup>5</sup> Everlasting: Indefinitely durable, that will “never” wear out. For all future time, in perpetuity.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 125n1.

<sup>5</sup> *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.v.: “everlasting.”

<sup>6</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v.: “everlasting.”