

The Hope Of Glory & Power For Today (Romans 5, Part II)

In verse twelve of Romans chapter five, Paul shifts to a new topic. Paul probably does not use the word 'therefore' (v. 12) in its usual sense, but to simply transition from one topic to the next. It doesn't really seem to point back to anything specific, but instead indicates a loose relationship between what has come before and what follows (C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 110). This section points us forward to chapters 6-8 and introduces the concept of our positional freedom in Christ. Paul will develop the benefits of this new position with God more fully in chapters 6-8. In Christ, by faith, we are no longer subject to our old, sinful nature. Our old nature has been rendered inoperative and we are now aided by the Spirit of God Himself, who is now dwelling in us.

Verses 12-21 can be outlined in the following way. In verse 12, Paul begins a thought that he will not complete until verse 18b. In 18a he restates what he said in 12, and then completes that thought in 18b. Verses 13-17 are parenthetical to his main point, which again is initiated in verse 12, but stated fully in verse 18. Though verses 13-17 are parenthetical, they are extremely important for Paul in expounding on this topic. There are two obvious parenthetical thoughts in 13-17, and then Paul restates his main point and completes the section in verses 19-21.

Verse 12 and the last half of 18 (18b) read as follows:

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned-- (Romans 5:12, NASB)

even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men (Romans 5:18b, NASB).

For Paul, the point of this section is foundational to our walk with the Lord once we've been justified. The truth elucidated in the last half of chapter 5 is the foundation of chapters 6-8. It is the foundation of our hope of glory and a victorious walk with Jesus now. So let's go through it verse by verse!

Verse 12 is pretty straightforward: Through Adam's transgression, sin came into the world, and death came through sin. Because death spread through sin, death spread to all of humanity because the sinful nature spread to all of humanity through Adam, the first man. "Because all sinned" (past tense) probably means because all sinned "in Adam", that is, that the sinful nature that Adam took on after his transgression was passed along to all subsequent generations. We all sinned "in Adam", that is we (the whole human race) were "in Adam" genetically when he sinned by disobeying God's explicit command not to eat of the forbidden fruit. When Adam sinned, he sinned for the whole human race.

Sin has indeed spread by individual, personal sin from one generation to the next. But, that is not what Paul is saying here. Paul means that the entire human race was included in Adam, so that when Adam sinned, all sinned (Hendricksen, NTC, p. 178).

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive (1 Cor. 15:22, NKJV).

...by the one man's [Adam's] offense [the] many died... (from Rom. 5:15)

Paul is going to go on to say that just as the entire human race is included in Adam's sin, the entire Church is included in Christ's righteousness (vs. 18, 19, also see 2 Cor. 5:19, Eph. 1:3-7, Phil. 3:9).

Now, on to verse 13. Remember, at the end of verse 12 Paul said, "because all sinned". He then departs from his train of thought to a new subject.

for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come (Romans 5:13-14, NASB).

In verse 13, Paul makes his first digression. "Speaking of sin", he might have said, "sin was in the world from Adam to Moses, it just wasn't counted as a transgression, a disobedience to an explicit command of God. But, sin was still in the world and the consequence for sin was still being suffered, that consequence being death (Gen. 2:17, Rom. 6:23)." If death reigned over all from Adam to the giving of the Law through Moses, then sin reigned over everyone, because death came through sin. Sin produces spiritual death first, and later, physical death.

So, sin and death reigned over all humanity, even though the Law of God had not yet been given, even though people didn't break an explicit command of God like Adam did. Paul must have felt that some of the Jewish Christians would have needed this explanation before they could continue on with Paul contrasting Adam and Christ.

Paul's second point in this parenthetical thought is in verse fourteen. Paul indicates that Adam is a type of Jesus. Christ is the anti-type that replaces the type, Adam. Adam is the foreshadowing of the one to come, Christ. Paul's saying something like, "speaking of Adam, he foreshadows Christ."

Adam is typical of Christ mostly by contrast. Paul will illustrate this contrast at length for the remainder of the chapter. But the two are similar in one fantastic way. In Adam is imparted sin and death, to all that are in him (which is all of humanity), and in Christ is imparted righteousness and eternal life to all who are in Him (by grace through faith in Him).

All of humanity that ever was, is and ever will be, is in one of two camps. I am either in Adam or in Christ. I am either in God's Kingdom or Satan's. I am either in the Kingdom

of light and life, or the kingdom of darkness and death. I am either in sin or in righteousness. We are born in Adam, and we must be born again to become “in Christ”. Which camp are you in? Are you a slave to sin or a former captive, freed by Christ? “Well, I’ve got a lot of cleaning up to do before I can get myself into Christ’s Kingdom”, one might say. On the contrary, exit from darkness and entrance to light is only attained by calling on the name of Jesus for salvation. Call on Him and receive His forgiveness right this second, and be freed from sin and death today, and enter into life in Him today and forever. Step out of the death inherited from Adam, the first man, and step, by repentance and faith, into the righteousness of Christ which brings life everlasting.

Although Adam is a type of Christ in that through him (one man) came death and through one man (Jesus Christ) came life, there is a great difference between Adam’s sin and God’s gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ. And the result of God’s gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man’s sin. For Adam’s sin led to condemnation, but God’s free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:15-17, NLT).

Here, Paul qualifies the typological relationship by stating the vast difference between Adam and Christ. The difference between Adam’s sin and God’s gracious gift is great, and the result is greatly different, as well. Disobedience brought sin and death, but even greater is God’s wonderful grace and His gift of forgiveness. God’s grace far outweighs the trespass and is far more effective. Death turns to life. Sin is not just removed, righteousness is gained. Eternal separation from God becomes not just eternal dwelling with God, but sharing in His glory as co-heirs with Christ forever (Rom. 8:17). “His gift of righteousness” (v. 17) is justification, but Paul must be thinking of sanctification and glorification as part of that act, since those are assured at the moment of justification and are the promised and sure effects of it, as well (see Romans 8:29-30).

So then, as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous (Romans 5:18-19, NASB).

“The obedience” (v. 19) refers to Jesus’ obedience to the Father in going to the cross for the sin of the world, and includes His entire ministry and life that led up to it. Again, the one act of disobedience is condemnation for all, and the one act of obedience is life for all who believe. Note also that when Paul says “all”, that includes Gentiles, as well as Jews. To Paul, that is always an important truth to defend. No one is excluded from receiving Christ’s forgiveness through faith. Jesus died for the sin of the whole world (John 3:16).

“The many will be made righteous” speaks of sanctification to glorification, not the act of being declared righteous or justified. Paul has established that thoroughly in the first four chapters, but here he speaks of actually being made righteous, which is our hope of sharing in God’s glory, being made into the image of Christ forever.

until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13, NIV).

In conclusion, Paul anticipates more questions on why the Law of Moses was necessary and what its function and purpose accomplished.

The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 5:20-21, NASB).

Paul has spoken of the purpose of the Law in previous chapters. The Law has several purposes, one of which is to reveal sin to humanity. And in Galatians 3:19 & 24 he says,

...it [the Law] was added because of transgressions... the Law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

In Romans 5:20, Paul adds another reason that the Law “came in beside” “the sin in Adam”: to increase the trespass by intensifying the seriousness of the sin (Moo, p. 348). Because of the Law, sin has become transgression of God’s command, making it even more sinful. And the Law is spiritual (of the Spirit of God), so it reveals how sinful sin really is to God. Furthermore, because of how sin uses the Law, sin increased when the Law came in beside our sinful nature passed along from Adam. God’s intention in giving the Law was to make sin apparent to all and to lead us to repentance and forgiveness, to the righteousness that is by grace, through faith in Christ.

The Law turns a sin into a disobedience of God’s command. As sin increased, the grace of God abounded (overflowed superlatively) so that no matter how much the sin increased, the grace (the goodness and power of the Holy Spirit) is always more powerful and more abundant to justify the sinner and to free the sinner from his or her sin. And the more we understand how sinful our sin is, the more we know just how abundant God’s grace truly is. This thought of God’s greater power given to us anticipates chapters 6-8, which assures us of our future glory with Him and explains how to walk in victory in Christ until we are with the Lord in His Kingdom, changed completely, perfected forever. When we go to be with the Lord we will be fully glorified and righteous, not just in spirit but in mind and body, as well.

Sin reigned in death, which is the victory of sin, and now grace reigns through righteousness (imputed by God) to eternal life. Grace meets sin head-on and defeats it. Eternal life is that quality of life that lives in step with God here and now, yielded to His work in your life. And that life continues everlasting, through our Lord’s sacrifice.

Those who receive the gift of verse seventeen transfer from the dominion of death to the domain of righteousness. And all of this is through Jesus Christ our Lord!

If you are a Christian, grace is reigning. Whether it feels like it or not, it is. Even as we struggle with sin trying to work in our mortal bodies, we will see in chapter six that our old nature is dead, crucified with Christ on the cross. Grace reigns now, not sin, and we need to walk in that knowledge, stand in that grace by faith and allow the Holy Spirit, who is in us, to make us and mold us into the image of Jesus. We were changed at the moment of faith/obedience in Christ, the old man is dead and the new has come. As we live out our lives on earth, we are being changed, step by step, by the Holy Spirit. This is sanctification, until the day we are with Him when we are made righteous through and through, sharing in our Creator's glory.

O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God-- through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 7:24-25a, NKJV)!