

## Romans 5:12-17

<sup>12</sup> *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:*

<sup>13</sup> *(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.*

<sup>14</sup> *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.*

<sup>15</sup> *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, hath abounded unto many.*

<sup>16</sup> *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.*

<sup>17</sup> *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.)*

Chapter 5 has been detailing that which goes beyond our mere justification, thus we see the phrase *much more* appearing in the argumentation. Chapter five, though not entirely leaving the issue of justification all at once, begins to shed light on elements of sanctification.

We are going to see today a shift from the individual and his sin to the corporate issue of sin systemic in humanity from Adam. You could say then that the issue goes from "sins," *plural*, that is, our personal guilt and responsibility before God, to "sin," singular, as a universal principle working in mankind that was set into motion by Adam.

Paul is going to make a statement in verse 12, and then from verses 13 to 17 give a parenthetical explanation:

---

**5:12** - *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...*

Many today find the notion of a “Savior,” and Jesus Christ in particular, foolish, antiquated—a religious appendage of superstitious man that has persisted in the face of our “superior modern intellect.”

This isn't a novel position; Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:23 that the preaching of Christ crucified was to the Greeks *foolishness*. The reason for this is because they are fundamentally ignorant of what man *is*. When one abandons the truth of God uniquely creating *one perfect man*, and the truth of this *one man's* fall into sin, one abandons *the need* of a savior, because they abandon the truth of what they are as a sinner. They are fundamentally ignorant of their state as fallen beings. This is why the Law is used to bring men to an awareness of their guilt.

When they abandon the truth of the creation and fall, they abandon their need for a *Last Adam* and a *New Man*. These terms are not synonymous; they describe two aspects of Christ's work and thus, though embodied in One, are fundamentally different. Jesus was the *last* of something, of which Adam was the progenitor; He is also the *First* of something new, and we who have trusted the gospel are the offspring of this New Man, hence we are instructed later in the Pauline curriculum to *put on the new man* (Eph. 4:24) in our functional walk in Christ.

---

Paul makes the comparison between Adam and Christ again in **1 Corinthians 15**:

**45** *And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.*

**46** *Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.*

**47** *The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven.*

We see the first Adam and the Last Adam in verse 45; and we see the first man and Second Man in verse 47. The Second Man is the New Man Paul will speak of in Ephesians and Colossians.

Paul, in verse 12, calls our minds back to the fall. Sin itself as a damning and operative principle alive in mankind resulted in universal death for mankind, something God did not intend in creation.

---

**Romans 5:13** - *(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.*

This verse is not teaching that men prior to the Law were not held accountable for their sins. Chapter 2 has already taught us that men are accountable because of the natural law of conscience, and that, in even this, when judged by their own standards, they would be found guilty of some of the very things they condemn, thereby condemning themselves.

---

**Romans 2:12-16**

**12** *For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;*

**13** *(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.*

**14** *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:*

**15** *Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)*

**16** *In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.*

Men's conscience bears witness with God's Law, and this is a Law unto itself.

---

This is *how* "nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses."

**Romans 5:14** - *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.*

Even though men were not transgressing special revelation, they were transgressing that which was naturally discerned and were accountable to that which they discerned. Sin and death, as a Law, worked within man independent of any special revelation from God. This is why Paul writes in verse 14, *Even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.*

---

Adam's transgression was one that *directly contradicted* Divine Command:

**Genesis 2:16-17**

**16** And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

**17** But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

A similitude is something *similar*; something that bears a likeness or resemblance to something else that's used for reasons of comparison. So, even though men from Adam to Moses did not sin in exactly the same manner as Adam, that is, they did not transgress a direct, Divine command, they still violated the knowledge of right and wrong within their own soul.

Romans 5:14 ends by saying that Adam was the figure of Him who was to come. Again, we see the comparison between Adam and Jesus Christ. Adam was the figure of Jesus Christ, or what we call the *type*. Adam would be the type, in that he *typified* or *symbolized* Christ, and Christ Himself would be the *anti-type*, or that which the type points to.

To minimize, obscure, or undermine the literal, historical reality of the account of Adam in the garden *in any way* is to pervert the truth, image, and necessity of Jesus Christ. Adam is a historical *reality*. *Nothing* in the Bible indicates that the accounts of Adam and Eve or Genesis are in any way figurative or allegorical.

We have two choices: we can accommodate the wisdom of this world and shrink in the face of modern science and try to explain the clear narrative of Scripture away as symbolic, or we can believe what Scripture teaches.

In Mark 10:6, Jesus says,

*..But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.*

---

If Adam was the figure of Jesus Christ, then we should expect to see parallels, and in fact we do.

- Both were directly created by God
- Both are called sons of God (Mark 1:1, Luke 3:38)
- Both are the head and representative of the human race
- Both were "put to sleep"
- Both had their sides opened up to form a "help"
- Both "cleave" unto their wife (Eph. 5:30-32)
- Both produce offspring bearing their image
- Adam took from the tree; Jesus gave Himself to the tree
- Adam's sins resulted in thorns (Gen. 3:18), Jesus bore the crown of thorns
- Both were tested in a garden
- Both ate, one in disobedience, one in obedience (Matt. 26:26)
- Adam sought to be as a god (Gen. 3:5), Jesus as God became a man
- The first Adam was naked and received clothes. (Genesis 3:21), the Last Adam had clothes but was stripped naked. (Matthew 27:28)

There are probably more parallels that could be made, but these sufficiently illustrate the point.

---

**Romans 5:15** - *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, hath abounded unto many.*

"Not as the offence, so also is the free gift." This verse shows that the work of Jesus was the exact *opposite* in nature but *identical* in terms of *efficacy*. Thus it says, "*not as, so also.*" If something is "not as," but at the same time is "so also," it is identical in some aspect and yet opposite in another.

It is not the same in terms of *effect*, because the effect itself is *exactly* opposite, but it is the same in terms of *how effective* it was. Not only is it diametrically opposed in effect, but the mechanical means by which it was accomplished is opposite, thus we see certain things

paralleled in the type/antitype of Adam and Christ. Adam took of the tree, the tree took of Jesus Christ. One chose disobedience in a garden, the other chose obedience in a garden. Adam disobeyed once, Christ perfectly obeyed in all things. From Adam came the curse, Jesus Christ took upon Himself the curse.

And so we see that Jesus Christ is the answer to Adam. He is the solution to Adam and all the consequences of that one man's disobedience.

---

Verse 15 says that through the offence of Adam, *many be dead*. We begin to see the Holy Spirit explain to us the nature of the death Adam died.

In **Genesis 2:15-16**, God told Adam,

*16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:*

*17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

When we read the account of the fall, however, we see that Adam did not die in the day he ate of the tree as we would expect him to. And yet he did die. We tend to think of life as consisting of breathing, eating, moving—carnal things. But there is another death, a spiritual one that renders one functionally dead to God. Understanding this “death” will be the key in understanding what Paul means by his use of the word in the ensuing chapters. This is not speaking of merely death in a physical sense. This is speaking of more than that—a functional death that renders one effectively useless to God. Adam was to be the son of God who ruled over the earthly creation with God as a son, that is, an heir of all things. Instead, he sinned and became first functionally dead to God, and because of being divorced from the eternal life of God through sin, would later experience physical death.

Notice Paul did not say here that many *die*. He said, many *be dead*, present tense. This is speaking not only to physical death but also to our functional ability to live for God. We are born into life “in Adam” and are born functionally dead to God. We cannot please Him, we cannot live for Him. Even those who, in the strength and energy of their flesh, try to appease God's sense of justice, cannot, for *they that are in the flesh cannot please God* (Rom. 8:8). This is because there is something inherently wrong with who and what we are.

As we have seen the gospel in relation to our justification in the last several chapters, what we are going to begin to learn from here on out is how the gospel relates to our sanctification. If the gospel was able to provide for our sins, surely the gospel is able to provide for our sanctified life now that we're saved. There is *much more* for us now that we've been reconciled to God when we were yet enemies.

And so, as a result of Adam's transgression, we all, who were quite literally *in Adam* when he sinned, experience the same effects as Adam experienced, and reap the same consequences. Thus, *many be dead*.

---

**Romans 5:15** - *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, hath abounded unto many.*

Romans 5:15 contains the third of the 5 "much more" statements of this chapter.

The first we saw in verses 8 and 9, and said that much more than justification unto eternal life, we *shall* be saved from God's wrath.

The second we saw in verse 10, and showed us that much more than God reconciling us when we were His enemies, now that we are His sons, we shall be saved by His life. This cannot be speaking of being saved from the penalty of our sin because it is "much more" than being reconciled when we were enemies.

Now, in verse 15, *much more* than the offence of Adam is the gift of grace by Jesus, and it now is able to abound unto many. If it abounds, it *exceeds*. The English word *abound* comes from the Latin *abundare*, which means to *overflow* or *run over*.

When it says that the grace of God and the gift by grace is *much more* than the offence of Adam, what it is saying is it not only catches up to, but *overtakes* and permanently *overcomes* the offence. The cross has eternal results and consequences. It *exceeds* Adam's transgression.

---

**Romans 5:16** - *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.*

We see similar language in this verse as the previous—*not as, so is*. The work done by Christ is *not as* the work of Adam, meaning it is essentially opposite in effect.

The judgment came by Adam to condemnation. But the free gift is of many offences unto justification. These many offences are the collective trespasses of mankind which Jesus bore in His body when He took on the debt and penalty of mankind's sins on the cross. This exchange is accessed directly by faith in what He performed and results in the justification of life.

---

#### **Romans 5:17**

*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.)*

This is the fourth of the five “much more” statements that Paul makes in this chapter.

*Much more* than the reign of death through Adam is the abundance of grace and gift of righteousness which allows us to *reign in life*.

We see that by one man's offence death *reigned*. In verse 15 we saw that through one man's offence many *be dead*, present tense. This refers not only to the casualties of physical death, but those who are physically still alive and who are alive unto sin, and yet dead unto God. They cannot live for God, nor please God.

Now we see that though this functional death reigned by one, now through the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness we can *reign in life*.

This is speaking to the experiential reality of the believer by the life of Christ Himself being made manifest in us, that we would, through Him, reign in life. Both presently and eternally. This means that this grace, whatever it is, has an element of power in it that allows us to *reign*.



This is not explained right away, but this will become more clear as we work through the next several chapters.

We have seen the gospel explained thus far in relationship to our sins, our need for forgiveness and justification before God. What we are going to begin to see expounded is how it relates to what we *are*.

One author describes it this way:

“The blood deals with what we have done, whereas the cross deals with what we are.”

Just as Christ is our substitute on the cross for forgiveness, he is also our substitute *within* for our victory.

The blood for justification is mentioned in 3:25 and 5:9; our being crucified with Him however becomes the focus onward past 5:12, with mention of this fact in 6:6.