

Romans 5:18-21

18 *Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.*

19 *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

20 *Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:*

21 *That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Romans 5:18

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

Verse 18 is not teaching the idea that because Adam sinned, we are inherently guilty. We understand that we have inherited a *nature* from Adam, but we are not naturally guilty because of *his* sin. We have the nature of a sinner, but it is our own sins that result in our guilt and condemnation before God.

From Romans 2 in learning of the principles of judgment, we saw God's judgment is according to men's deeds.

Romans 2:5-9

5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile...

Romans 5:18

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

Neither is verse 18 teaching that all men prior to Christ were condemned; we previously discussed in Romans 3:25 how God remitted men's sins in times past, based upon that which He had revealed up to that point. We saw that Abraham, in Genesis 15, simply believed that God would give him an heir and a multiplied seed, and God counted it to him for righteousness.

All Paul is saying here is that through Adam, as the father of the human race, came condemnation to all, as we were all *in him*. Now, by Christ's perfect obedience and righteousness, we have the opportunity to receive the free gift of justification.

Notice that Romans 5:18 says "Even so by the righteousness of one the *free gift* came upon all men unto justification of life."

The Scriptures clarify for us again and again that, though by our deeds we are found guilty, salvation from the debt and penalty of our sins is a free gift.

The exact phrase free gift shows up three times in this chapter: in verses 15, 16, and here in 18. Salvation as a *gift* is also mentioned in Romans 6:23, and God's grace is spoken of as a gift in 2 Cor. 9:15, Eph. 2:8, and Eph. 3:7.

Verse 18 is again contrasting Adam and Christ and making the point that if *by one man* all could be made *something*, then the same principle is valid for the opposite. If by one man all were made sinners, then why couldn't the inverse be true?

There is inconsistency in regards to this in some people's thinking: they acknowledge that by Adam all are made sinners, even though they didn't personally do anything to deserve that, but then reject the idea that God can similarly gift a new identity of righteousness through Jesus Christ. But if the principle is true for Adam, it can also be true for Christ.

You did nothing to earn the nature you were born with—it was by inheritance. And since you personally did nothing to “earn” the nature you inherited, you could say it was obtained by grace. In like fashion, God offers the solution by one man and by grace. And to those who accept the work Christ performed on their behalf, this results in justification of life—meaning, your very right to live is justified before God, both now and forever.

Romans 5:19

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Again, take careful notice of what is said here—it does not say that by one man's disobedience we were *made to sin*, it says we were *made sinners*. This speaks, not to our actions, but identity.

Our culpability before God depends on our actions, the things we do, but that is not the point of this passage.

We know that sin resides, not just in our deeds, but in our very hearts, that is, in who we are.

Jesus calls His disciples attention to the reality of where sin resides in Matthew 15:

Matthew 15:17-20

¹⁷ Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?

¹⁸ But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

¹⁹ For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

²⁰ These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

We are not sinners because we sin, but we sin because of *what we are*.

And that is the point the Scriptures here are making by contrasting Adam and Christ, that we, by inheritance, have obtained a *new identity*.

By the obedience of one, shall many be *made* righteous. It is not something we strive to achieve but something that is given to us through Christ.

I said in the previous lesson that the focus now is going to shift from sins, plural, as in the individual deeds we are personally responsible for, to sin, singular, as a principle within us. This is what we received by inheritance from Adam.

This issue of identity is the core of our sanctified life. Thus it is fitting that in making the shift from the issue of justification to sanctification, the Scripture would begin to address our very *identity*, both in time past in Adam, and now presently in Jesus Christ.

We often understand without problem that our justification is by grace through faith, but what is often less understood is that our sanctification was also *gifted* to us through this new identity and that this identity is accessed and appropriated through faith entirely as well. Our sanctification is not put into effect by our effort, or by the flesh, but by faith in what God has said He has done in us.

5:20

Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound...

We see here in verse 20 the purpose of the Law—it was not to restrain sin, for it had no power to do so, as it relied on the power of the flesh.

The Law, Galatians will say, was added because of transgressions.

Galatians 3:19

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

The way we typically read this is that God added it in an attempt to *restrain* sin. But that is not what Romans teaches.

Consider Romans 6:14:

Romans 6:14

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

We will discuss this at length in chapters 6 and 7, but the Law actually put Israel under the functional dominion of sin. Remember, where there is no Law, there is no transgression, thus, the Law worketh wrath (Rom. 4:15).

Consider also Romans 7:5:

Romans 7:5

For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

We see that the Law did not and could not restrain sin. All we have to do is go read Israel's history in the Old Testament to see this. The Law, relying on the power of our flesh, has no ability to restrain sin or fix the problem that exists in us, for it is an issue that resides in our very identity in Adam.

Romans 5:20 says that the Law entered that the offence—not that it would be restrained, but that it would *abound*. And we've seen already that the word abound means to excel, exceed, *overflow*.

And so when Galatians says that the Law was added because of transgressions, we must understand that statement in the doctrinal context of Paul's epistles.

5:20

Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound...

This is the fifth and final "much more" statement of this chapter.

In verses 8-9 we saw that much more than justification unto eternal life, we shall be saved from God's wrath.

In verse 10 we saw that much more than God reconciling us when we were His enemies, now that we are His children, we shall be saved by His life.

In verse 15 we saw that, much more than Adam's offense by which many are dead, is God's grace and the gift by grace, which has abounded unto many, which results in life.

In verse 17 we saw that 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*.

And now in verse 20 we see how much more God's grace abounds over sin.

A summation of the benefits of these "much more" statements is as follows:

- Saved from wrath
- Saved by His life
- Grace abounds unto many unto life
- Much more than the reign of death is the reign of life
- Grace abounds over sin

As we've discussed, some of these statements, by nature being much more than being justified from sins, have practical, functional implications. We saw that through abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness we are able to reign in life. This has implications for our daily walks and lives. The word *reign* implies a sovereign rule, or something that prevails over another subject. As the life of Christ is lived in and through us, we reign in life itself, in power over sin and over the trials we encounter in life.

Similarly, not only does grace abounding over sin have implications for our positional standing in Christ—that is, that His work and the grace it provided more than sufficiently secures forgiveness for all sins—but it has implications for our functional walk, as grace as a principle that works in us *abounds over* the principle of sin.

Romans 5:21

That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Grace, not only as a manner of pardoning sin and gifting that which the work of Christ procured and merited for us, also is a sovereign power.

If we think of what it is to reign, we often think of the reign of a king or queen, or emperor or other sovereign power. What we are beginning to be introduced to is the reality of the power of grace as an operating principle.

God gifted us a new identity in Christ that we received by grace when we trusted His finished work. Now that we have been justified and positionally sanctified, God reveals through His word spiritual truths that must be known and reckoned, as the scripture will say, that we may have our minds renewed, that we can then present ourselves as living sacrifices, that we might prove the will of God (Rom. 12:1-2).

God gifted us a perfect sanctification the moment we believed by giving us a new identity in Christ. As we will see in Romans 6 and onward, there is no old man and new man residing together within you—the old man was crucified. What remains is the unrenewed mind of the flesh, and the physical body, but your soul and inner man is an entirely new creation. We must get the truths of what God did when we believed in our understanding that it would renew our minds, so that by faith we can appropriate those truths—for that is what will bring forth fruit holiness.

In this way, grace will reign through righteousness unto eternal life.