

## Romans Part 18 – Chapter 5

Sunday, July 10, 2022

With input from Bibleref.com, John Piper

### Romans 5:12-21:

*Therefore...* Last week we finished up the first 11 verses in chapter where Paul presents new truths, after defining the purpose of the law, to the Jews in his audience and now confirms eternal security - kept by God because He's faithful. Peace with God, standing in grace, hope of glory, possession of love, certainty of deliverance, and finally, our joy in God. He also touts the access to God which we as believers have, because of Christ.

*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all mankind, because all sinned—<sup>13</sup> for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not counted against anyone when there is no law.*

*<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the violation committed by Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.*

*<sup>15</sup> But the gracious gift is not like the offense. For if by the offense of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many. <sup>16</sup> The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one offense, resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the gracious gift arose from many offenses, resulting in justification.*

*<sup>17</sup> For if by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*

*<sup>18</sup> So then, as through one offense the result was condemnation to all mankind, so also through one act of righteousness the result was justification of life to all mankind. <sup>19</sup> For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.*

*<sup>20</sup> The Law came in so that the offense would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, <sup>21</sup> so that, as sin reigned in death, so also grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The main point of the text is that what Christ has done for all who are in him is far greater than what Adam did for all who were in him.

- The obedience of Christ is parallel, but vastly superior, to the disobedience of Adam.
- The righteousness imputed to those who are in Christ is parallel, but vastly superior, to the sin imputed to those who are in Adam because of his disobedience.
- The life that comes to us who are in Christ through that imputed righteousness is parallel, but vastly superior, to the death that comes to those who are in Adam through that imputed sin.

The obedience of Christ - the obedience unto death, as Paul says in **Philippians 2:8** *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross,* is the foundation of the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ in the act of justification.

In other words, the overarching theme of the letter to the Romans from 1:17 onward has been the doctrine of justification through faith apart from works - that believers are declared to be in good standing with God not on the basis of our inherent righteousness, but on the basis of Christ's righteousness received by faith alone.

In this paragraph, Paul draws this same teaching to a climax by explaining it more fully through the comparison and contrast between the effect of Christ's obedience and the effect of Adam's disobedience.

Why would he do this? Why involve himself in such a complex argument as we find in this paragraph?

In verse 14 there is a hinge on which the whole paragraph swings. Adam is a "type" of him who is to come. Adam is a type of Christ.

What does "type" mean? The NIV says "pattern." Adam was a pattern of Christ who was to come. He was an example, or a foreshadowing, or a prefiguring of Christ. Paul says he is going to view Christ in comparison and contrast with Adam. That makes Adam a type or a pattern. And the aim is to see more clearly and more fully and more deeply the work of Christ and how he became the foundation of our justification.

Why take this approach? Because Adam is the father of every person.

Paul explains the obedience of Christ as the remedy for the damage done by the disobedience of Adam, because he wants us to see that the doctrine of justification by grace through faith is not limited to any one people group or any one place or any one time period of history, but is relevant and essential for all people in all times and all places.

Wherever there are descendants of Adam, there is a need for the truth of justification by faith. The damage done by Adam's sin affects every human being in every place in all times. And now we see by this comparison that the obedience of Jesus Christ and imputing of that obedience to all who believe is the remedy for the damage done to all human beings everywhere. There is no other remedy. There is no other salvation for the fatal damage done through Adam to all human beings.

The implications of this are staggering. One is that Jesus Christ is very great and worthy of our greatest admiration and trust and love and praise. Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised and his greatness is unsearchable. He and he alone has lived and died in such a way that it can remedy the deepest problem of sin for any human being anywhere who trusts in him.

Another implication of this comparison between Christ and Adam is that Jesus Christ is not a tribal deity. What this means for missions and evangelism is immense. Jesus Christ is not a Christian god alongside the Muslim god and the Hindu gods and the Jewish God. He is the universal Lord and Savior, and there is no other Savior.

Another point of the comparison with Adam is to show that there is one fundamental problem in the human race that began with Adam at the beginning: Sin. And the burden of this text, expressed over and over and over again, is that the problem with humanity is not most deeply our individual sinning that might seek out individual remedies; but our problem is the connection that we all have with Adam's sin.

- Verse 15: "By the transgression of the one [Adam] the many died."
- Verse 16: "The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation."
- Verse 17: "By the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one."
- Verse 18: "Through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men."
- Verse 19: "Through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners."

So the problem with the human race is not most deeply that everybody does various kinds of sins - those sins are real, they are huge and they are enough to condemn us. Paul is very concerned about them. But the deepest problem is that behind all our depravity and all our guilt and all our sinning, there is a deep mysterious connection with Adam whose sin became our sin and whose judgment became our judgment.

And the Savior from this condition and this damage is one Savior, who stands in Adam's place as a kind of second Adam (or "last Adam," **1 Corinthians 15:45**: *Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.*) In one great life and death of obedience he undoes what Adam did. In Adam all men were appointed sinners (verse 19), but all who are in Christ are appointed righteous. In Adam all received condemnation (verse 18), in Christ all receive justification.

Do not think that the doctrine of justification by grace, based on the imputation of the obedience of Christ through faith apart from works, is a mere concoction of a western European worldview that got off the ground with the guilty conscience of a monk named Martin Luther. It can't be true, because it is the historical remedy in the person of Jesus Christ for the historical damage in the person of everybody's first ancestor.

The doctrine of justification by grace through faith cannot be replaced by a redemptive analogy. If Paul had merely said for example, "Sin is like drowning in the ocean, and salvation is like being pulled out of the water into a boat by a strong man," then you might go to a people group somewhere far from oceans and boats and say, "Sin is like sinking in quicksand and salvation is like being pulled onto a firm rock by a strong man." That's fine. But you can't do that with this doctrine of justification.

Paul has connected it with Adam. And Adam is the historical ancestor of every people group on the face of the earth. This is not a myth; it's not an analogy; it's not an illustration. It is historical fact. Adam, the first human being, sinned and in him all human beings sinned, and all died and all are condemned. And the remedy for that is another historical Person - the God-man, Jesus Christ, who came into space and time to undo what Adam did. He trusted and obeyed God perfectly, so that all who are in him by faith have that obedience imputed to them and become right with God forever.

### **The righteousness of Jesus is relevant to each of Adam's children**

That historical truth is relevant and applicable to every people group on the face of the earth and every person you know in the United States of America. Someone might say, "But what if you come to a people group that has no categories or thought forms for understanding this sort of thing - a corporate connection between humanity and its ancestors, or the possibility of our sinning in the sin of another, or our being counted righteous with the righteousness of another? You know what? We are that people group who has a problem with this. We don't have any categories for that in modern America. Many

third world peoples have far less difficulty with this text than we do. We would say we can't sin in Adam. We can't be identified with him in his guilt and condemnation. Somebody else can't obey for me to make me right with God. We can't have the righteousness of another imputed to us.

But notice what this text is saying:

- that the Bible says that your deepest problem is your connection with Adam's sin and condemnation - that you share in it as part of the human race;
- and that the only remedy in all the universe for this condemnation is the justification that comes by the work of Jesus Christ who was perfectly obedient even unto death;
- and that faith in Christ is the one and only way to be united to him and justified and accepted before God.

Now someone might say, why does this matter? Doesn't Romans teach in 3:23 that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" individually? And doesn't [Romans 6:23](#) teach that the "wages of sin is death"? And so if our judgment and condemnation are what the sins we do every day deserve, why does it matter if you can find a deeper cause of our guilt and death and condemnation – namely our union with Adam in his sinning at the beginning?

I think it is the answer to that question that made Paul stop here at the end of verse 12 and break off his comparison so that he could clarify what he means by "because all sinned." What's at stake here is the whole comparison between Christ and Adam. If we don't understand "because all sinned" as "because all sinned in Adam," the entire comparison between Christ and Adam will be distorted and we won't see the greatness of justification by grace through faith for what it really is.

If you say, "Through one man sin and death entered the world and death spread to everybody because all sinned individually," then the comparison with the work of Jesus could be, "So also through one man, Jesus Christ, righteousness and life entered the world and life spread to all because all individually did acts of righteousness." In other words, justification would not be God's imputing Christ's righteousness to us, but our performing individual acts of righteousness with Christ's help and then being counted righteous on that basis. When Paul saw that as a possible misunderstanding of what he said, he stopped to clarify.

But what does it say about the work of Christ, if we take the words, "because all sinned" to mean "because all sinned in Adam"? Then it would go like this: "Just as through one man sin and death entered the world and death spread to everybody because all sinned in Adam and his sin was imputed to them, so also through one man Jesus Christ, righteousness entered the world and life through righteousness, and life spread to all who are in Christ because his righteousness is imputed to them." That is the glory of justification by grace through faith. The basis of our vindication and acceptance before God is not our righteous deeds, but Christ's righteousness imputed to us. But this would be all distorted if the words "because all sinned" at the end of verse 12 meant "because all sinned individually," and not because all sinned in Adam and his sin was imputed to us.

The parallel Paul wants us to see and rejoice in is that

- just as Adam's sin is imputed to us because we were in him,
- so Christ's righteousness is imputed to us because we are in him.

One of the best reasons for thinking this is what Paul meant is to look at verse 18 where he really does complete the comparison he started here. "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." In Adam we all were condemned; in Christ we all are justified. Adam's transgression was imputed to us; and Christ's righteousness is imputed to us (remember 1 Corinthians 15:22: *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*) But all that would be lost if at the end of verse 12 the words "because all sinned" referred to individual sins and not to our sinning in Adam.

So he stops to clarify: verses 13-14: "For until the Law [of Moses] sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses. . ." What is he saying? Something like this: 1) Sin was in the world before Mosaic Law (verse 13a); he concedes that personal sin was prevalent in the world before Moses, not just Adam's sin. 2) But sin is not imputed (not counted, not punished) where there is no law (verse 13b). 3) "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses" (verse 14a). That is, everybody died. Everybody was punished.

Now what's the implication Paul wants us to see? He wants us to see that universal human death was *not* owing to individual sins against the Mosaic Law but to their sinning in Adam. That is what he is trying to clarify. Verse 12 says that "death spread to all because all sinned." So Paul argues and clarifies: But people died even though their own individual sins against the Mosaic law were not the reason for dying; they weren't counted. Instead, the reason all died is because all sinned in Adam. Adam's sin was imputed to them.

But now there is an objection at this point to Paul's argument, and Paul can see it coming. The objection is that even before Mosaic Law there were commands of God to Noah and Abraham and others, so maybe their death was owing to disobeying *those* "laws," not because they sinned in Adam. And not only that, the objection would go, Paul himself said back in Romans 1:32 that all people – even Gentiles outside Israel – in their consciences *"know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death."* So there seem to be two exceptions to Paul's argument: Yes, there is no Mosaic Law to sin against before Moses, but there are personal revelations; and there is the law written on the heart. So, did Paul really shown that the people between Adam and Moses died for sinning in Adam and not for their own individual sins against these laws?

Notice in verse 14, Paul doesn't stop by saying, "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses. . ." He goes on to add the very crucial words, "Death reigned even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam." In other words, yes he concedes that there are other kinds of laws before the Mosaic Law, and yes people broke those laws, and yes, one could argue that these sins are the root cause of death and condemnation in the world. But, he says, there is a problem with that view, because death reigned "even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam." There are those who died without seeing a law and choosing to sin against it.

Who are they? I think the group of people begging for an explanation is infants. Infants died. They could not understand personal revelation. They could not read the law on their hearts and choose to obey or disobey it. Yet they died. Why? Paul answers: the sin of Adam and the imputation of that sin to the human race. In other words, death reigned over all humans, even over those who did not sin against a known and understood law. Therefore, the conclusion is, to use the words of verse 18: "through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men."

This is Paul's clarification: At the end of verse 12 the words, "death spread to all men, because all sinned" mean that "death spread to all because all sinned *in Adam*." Death is not first and most deeply because of our own individual sinning, but because of what happened in Adam.

Now here is the all-important question: Why did Paul, exactly at this place – at the end of verse 14, right after saying that death reigned over those who did not sin personally against a known law like Adam did – why exactly here did Paul insert the all-important words, "who is a type of Him who was to come"? Why, precisely here at this point, did Paul say that Adam is a type of Christ?

Because this is your life. Right here he says that Adam is a pattern for Christ because the all-important parallel is seen here. What? The parallel here is this: The judicial consequences of Adam's sin are experienced by all his people not on the basis of their individually doing sins like he did, but on the basis of their being in him and his sin being imputed to them.

As soon as that becomes clear in Paul's argument, he brings in Christ as the parallel: The judicial consequences of Christ's righteousness are experienced by all his people not on the basis of their doing righteous deeds like he did, but on the basis of their being in him and his righteousness being imputed to them.

The deepest reason why death reigns over all is not because of our individual sins, but because of Adam's sin imputed to us. So, the deepest reason eternal life reigns is not because of our individual deeds of righteousness, but because of Christ's righteousness imputed to us by grace through faith.

Aren't you glad Paul wrote these verses? He did it for the sake of our faith and our assurance and our joy. He did it to underline the fact that our right standing with God and our freedom from condemnation is *not* based on our righteous acts but on Christ's righteous acts.

This is the foundation of the great Biblical truth of justification by grace alone through faith alone. It has rescued thousands of saints from the despair of legalism and the paralyzing fear of imperfection. Christ became obedient even unto death so that in him we might become the righteousness of God!

Paul writes in **2 Corinthians 5:21**: *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Christ is our righteousness. Trust him. Trust him. Trust him.