

EXPLANATION OF 45TH BIBLEBOOK

ROMANS 5:12-21 (April A.D. 67)

INTRODUCTION

Romans 5:1-11 summarised some of the blessings of being justified.

Romans 5:12-21 emphasises the Christian's *legal state*, namely that he is justified in the eyes of God.

OUTLINE

(II) 5:12-21. The effects of salvation triumphs over the effects of the fall into sin.

a. The universality of sin and death (5:12-14).

b. God's grace unto salvation is much greater than God's judgement to doom (5:15-17).

c. Salvation (justification) is based only on Jesus Christ (5:18-19).

d. God's grace is much more abundant than the sin aroused by the law (5:20-21).

EXPLANATION

(II) 5:12-21. The effects of salvation triumphs over the effects of the fall into sin.

Sin entered the world through Adam, but grace consisting of salvation became available through Christ. *The effects of salvation greatly surpass the effects of the fall into sin. God's grace exceeds man's sins.* God's grace not only deals with man's problem, namely sin, but also deals with the many consequences of sin, namely, guilt, shame, corruption, disasters, death and judgement. God's grace gives forgiveness, restores honour, builds holiness of life, gives eternal life and creates a glorious new universe and a new earth.

a. The universality of sin and death (5:12-14).

5:12. Therefore, it is *just like*¹ (this): through one man (Adam) sin *once for all* entered (viaa) the world, and death through sin, and in this way² death *once for all* came (spread)³ (viaa) to all men, because (for this reason, in connection with this)⁴ all have *once for all* sinned (viaa)(have fallen into sin, that is, in solidarity with Adam).

5:13. for until the law (of Moses), sin was *continually* (viia) in the world. But sin is not charged to one's account⁵ (vipp) when there is (vppa) no law.

5:14. Nevertheless, death reigned (viaa) from (the time of) Adam to (the time of) Moses, even over those who did not sin (vpaa) in the way of the transgression of Adam (i.e. they did not sin by transgressing an express command of God as Adam did), who is (vipa) a pattern (a type)⁶ of the one to come (to be about to ...come)⁷ (vppa) (Christ).

God does not simply deal with people on the bases of their *individuality*⁸, but also on the bases of their *solidarity* with either Adam or Christ⁹.

There is a striking analogy between the fall of *all people in solidarity with Adam* and the restoration of *all believers in solidarity with Christ*. The justification of all believers in Christ is *illustrated* by the fall of all people in Adam.

The combination: 'sin → condemnation → death', in which all members of the human race are involved, *can never be explained* in purely individualistic terms (individual sin), but only in solidarity with Adam!

Likewise the combination: 'righteousness → justification → life', in which all Christians share, *can never be obtained* on purely individualistic terms (individual performance), but only in solidarity with Christ!

All people have sinned in solidarity with Adam (5:12).

- The wrong translation of Romans 5:12. It is not correct to say that only the personal sins of a person lead to his condemnation¹⁰. Some Christians think that Romans 5:12 says, "Just as Adam ... so also his descendants". They think Romans 5:12 is a comparison between the sin and death of Adam in the beginning of history on the one hand and the sin and death of all Adam's descendants throughout history on the other hand. They think that Adam's sin and death is *only an example* of all other people's sin and death. They conclude that all people die, not because of Adam's sin, but only because of their own sin.

They reject *the principle of solidarity and replaced the principle of solidarity by the principle of individualism*. But this rejection has very serious consequences: because when they reject the solidarity relationship to Adam, they also reject the solidarity relationship to Christ!

¹ G: hósper

² G: kai houtós

³ G: dierchomai

⁴ G: ef hó

⁵ G: ellogeó

⁶ G: tupos

⁷ G: melló

⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:10

⁹ Romans 5:12-19

¹⁰ That is the teaching of Hinduism: karma-samsara: the individual's deeds lead to the individual's place in the endless cycle of rebirths

They conclude that just as each individual dies for his own sins (his own personal sin as the ground for his own fall and condemnation), so he is also justified by his own performance (his own personal faith as the ground of his own justification).

They generally assume that the Bible teaches universal grace: that Jesus Christ died and made atonement of sins for all people that ever lived. And they assume that, since every individual has already received God's grace, every individual's salvation is then only dependent on that individual's free will and choice to believe or not to believe.

This explanation is wrong.

- The correct translation of Romans 5:12. "Therefore, it is *just like* (this): through one man (Adam), sin *once for all* entered the world, and death through sin, *and in this way* death *once for all* came (spread) to all men, because all have *once for all* sinned (that is, have *once for all* fallen into the sinful state in solidarity with Adam)."

The words "It is just like" in verse 12 is only the first half of Paul's comparison (trespass → condemnation → death), which is then interrupted by two clarifications in verses 13-17. The complete comparison is made in verses 18-19. The first part of the comparison is 'trespass → condemnation → death' (5:18a,19a) and the second part of the comparison is 'righteousness → justification → life' (5:18b, 5:19b). In Romans 5:12 the original Greek does not say: "Just as ... so also"¹¹, but "It is like ... and so (in this way, consequently)"¹²(5:12).

Paul does *not compare* the sin and death of Adam with the sin and death of his descendants. Paul does not regard the sin of Adam *only as an example* of the sin of all Adam's descendants. Paul does not say, "Just as sin came to the world through one man and death came through sin, *so also* death came to all men (throughout history), because all men sinned (throughout history)." Paul is not saying that death came to all people because of their own personal sins throughout history.

- The enormous consequences of one man's sin. Paul shows the enormous consequences of one man's sin. He teaches, "It is *like (this)*: Sin came to the world through one man (Adam) and death came through sin. *And so (consequently)* death *once for all* came to all people, because all (people) *once for all* sinned (through/by/in solidarity with Adam; *not: throughout history*)"! Paul is saying that sin and death came to all people, because all people sinned (have fallen into the sinful state) *once for all* (at the fall). *When Adam sinned, then* all people sinned! The entire human race was included in Adam. When the process of death began to ruin Adam, it immediately affected the whole human race. Sin and death of all people in the world is a consequence of one man's trespass (Adam's fall) (5:15)! This is the first part of the comparison: 'trespass (of one man) → condemnation (of all people) → death (of all people)'.
- All people sinned once for all time in the past. The translation of Romans 5:12b is *not*: "Because all people have done sins (throughout history)". The correct translation of Romans 5:12b *is*: "Because all people sinned *once for all time* (in the past when Adam sinned)"! The original Greek word does not stand in the imperfect tense, which would mean: "All people were accustomed to sin", but stands in the aorist tense, which means: "All people sinned *once for all time* in the past." They sinned when Adam sinned!

This means that in Romans 5:12-19 God does not simply deal with people on the bases of their *individuality throughout history*, but

- on the bases of their *solidarity* with Adam *at the beginning of human history* (when he fell into sin) and
- on the basis of their *solidarity* with Christ *at the first coming of Christ* (when he died and was resurrected to save from sin)!

God's plan of creation (and condemnation) works through the first Adam and his plan of recreation (salvation) works through the last Adam (5:14)¹³. Both Adams are representatives: the first Adam is the representative of all human beings and the last Adam (Christ) is the Representative of all believers.

Even if it is a fact that people in history have sinned throughout history and that all people do sins throughout their lives (3:10-12,23), this is not what Paul is saying in Romans 5:12! In Romans 5:12 Paul is not saying that "all people sinned individually in many individual actions throughout their lives". He is saying that "all people have *once for all in history* sinned" through or by (in solidarity with) Adam!

The apostle Paul teaches that all people in the world have the same kind of relationship with their human ancestor, Adam, as all Christians have with their Saviour, Jesus Christ. Just as all people in the history of the world sinned in solidarity with Adam as their representative head and are consequently condemned in solidarity with Adam, so also all believers in Jesus Christ throughout history die and are resurrected in solidarity with Christ their Representative

¹¹ G: hós or hósper ... houtós kai)(as in verse 18-19

¹² G: hósper kai houtós

¹³ cf. 1 Corinthians 15:45

Head (6:4-5)¹⁴ and are consequently justified in solidarity with Christ on the ground (basis) of Christ's completed work of salvation¹⁵!

¹⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:5-6

¹⁵ cf. 1 Corinthians 15:22

The false belief that individuals are condemned only for their personal sins has as its antithesis another false belief, namely, that individuals are also justified only by their personal good works (their personal act of faith and their personal acts of evangelical obedience). These false beliefs are based on the principle of pure individualism only and refuse to see the principle of solidarity with Adam and with Christ.

It is noteworthy that ‘salvation’ (or liberation) in all other religions in the world is based on individualism. A person is regarded as slowly ascending in the endless cycle of reincarnations (samsara) on the basis of his individual ‘good works’ (good karma). Or a person is regarded as going to paradise on the basis that the scales weighing his good and evil works are tipped in his favour¹⁶.

What Paul is teaching in Romans 5:12-19 is that God deals with people on the principle of solidarity and not only on the principle of individualism. Just as all people sinned and are condemned in solidarity with Adam, who is the representative head of the human race, so also all believers in Christ are justified in solidarity with Christ, who is the Representative Head of all believers!

That is why Paul calls Adam ‘a pattern’ (type) of Christ (5:14).

All people suffer death on account of the law given to Adam (5:13-14a).

- The one transgression of Adam was the cause of the fall of all mankind (5:13-14). Romans 5:13-14 is the first parenthesis (interlude, grammatically not connected to the previous sentence). It explains that the one transgression of Adam was the cause of the fall of all mankind. The fact that people died long before the written Law of Moses was given in about 1407 B.C., proves that not the personal individual sins of people, but the one transgression of the law by Adam, was the cause of their fall. Adam is therefore *the representative head* of all people in the history of the world. Because he fell into sin, the whole human race fell into sin. Adam was *a pattern or type* of the one to come, namely, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is likewise *the Representative Head* of all believers in the history of the world. *Adam and Christ are the two historical figures of God’s redemptive revelation: Adam made redemption necessary and Christ accomplished and secured redemption.*

Romans 5:13-14 show that Paul is *not* making a mere comparison between Adam on the one hand and his descendants on the other hand. He is making a comparison between Adam and Christ (5:14b). Paul does *not compare* the sin and death of Adam to the sin and death of all other people. He rather *contrasts* the sin and death brought by Adam to all people in the world, to the righteousness and life brought by Jesus Christ to all believers in Christ in the world!

It is not a comparison between Adam and all people. It is a contrast between Adam and Christ!

Romans 5:13 says that where there is no transgression of the law, there sin is also not ‘taken into account’ (imputed). However, the fact that people died long before the written Law of Moses (the Old Testament) came (1407 B.C.), proves that there was transgression of some law and punishment by death right from the beginning of the world!

The questions then are: “On account of which law did all people in the history of the world suffer death?”

And “On account of whose transgression are all people in the history of the world punished by death?”

It was on account of *God’s law given to Adam in Genesis 2:15-17* that all people in the history of the world suffered death. And it was on account of *Adam’s one trespass (disobedience) in Genesis 3:6,17-19* that all people in the history of the world are punished with death!

It was not on account of the written Law of Moses (the Old Testament) that all people were condemned to death, because the people living between Adam and Moses did not yet have the Law of Moses and therefore could not yet transgress the Law of Moses. Nevertheless they all died! Therefore it could not have been on account of their individual and personal sins when they transgressed the written Law of Moses. It was also not on account of the moral laws written on every human heart (2:14-15) that all people were condemned to death, because the people living between Adam and Moses *sinned continually* by transgressing the laws written on their hearts, while in Romans 5:12 they *sinned once for all* and not continually!

These people were punished by death and all other people in the history of the world are punished by death on account of the one expressly revealed law of God which God gave to Adam in Genesis 2:15-17 and on account of the one trespass of this law by Adam in Genesis 3:6,17-19.

Therefore, it is CORRECT to say that the one sin of Adam led to the condemnation of all people in the history of the world. Paul teaches that just as all people in the history of the world sinned in solidarity with their representative head, Adam, and are consequently condemned in solidarity with Adam, so all believers in Jesus Christ die and are resurrected in solidarity with Jesus Christ (cf. 6:3-4) and are consequently justified in solidarity with Jesus Christ!

Of course, all people did *not literally and actually* sin through Adam, and neither did believers in Christ *literally and actually die with Christ*. But the one sin of Adam was *legally and effectively made* to be the sin of all people of

¹⁶ The teaching of Islam and humanists

the human race. Likewise the death of Christ was *legally and effectively made* the death of all believers in Christ and the resurrection of Christ was *legally and effectively made* the resurrection of all believers in Christ.

In the Bible God deals with people as a community and not just as individuals! For example, God deals with all the nations and not just Israel¹⁷, with all the descendants of Abraham and not just Abraham¹⁸, with all the descendants of Judah¹⁹, with all the Israelites²⁰, with all the godless and wicked Canaanite nations²¹, with all the offspring of David²², with all the children of believers and not just the believers²³ and with all the members of Christian households²⁴: the old and the young, and the free and the slaves.

This is what Paul says in Romans 5:15-19, “All people are punished with death on account of Adam’s one trespass” (5:12,15). “All people (descendants of Adam) are *made or legally constituted, regarded and treated*²⁵ as sinners on account of Adam’s one act of disobedience” (5:19a). And “all believers in Christ are *made or legally constituted, regarded and treated* as righteous on account of Christ’s one act of obedience” (5:19b)!

Romans 5:17-19 is thus Paul’s own explanation of the words “all sinned” in Romans 5:12.

Adam is a type or pattern of Christ (5:14b). The apostle Paul teaches that every person in the world stands in a certain relationship to both Adam and Christ. Because of the one trespass of Adam, *all people* in the world stand condemned in God’s eyes. And because of the one righteous act of Christ, that is, his death and resurrection, *all believers* in Jesus Christ are justified. All unbelievers remain condemned. This means that people in the world either stand condemned or stand justified in God’s eyes. There is no middle road.

Romans 5:12 has been interpreted differently by people mainly because people hold different views about the relationship between the acts of their ancestors and its consequences for their descendants.

- Our modern age tends to emphasise individualism. In this age of individualism, people reject the idea that there is any relationship between the sins of their ancestors and its consequences for them as their descendants. They hold that every individual is *only* responsible for his own personal evil deeds and as a consequence suffers *only* for his own personal sins (cf. karma-samsara philosophy of Hinduism).

Illustration. When a car with five people crashes due to the negligence of the driver and all die, they think that the passengers die, not due to the negligence of the driver, but due to the sins each passenger committed at other times in his or her life. Their individualism forces them to believe in reincarnation (i.e. the believe that after death the soul passes on into a new body). And when a child becomes an alcoholic or an angry person, they think that it has nothing to do with its parent also being an alcoholic or angry person. The individualism of one religion²⁶ forces its adherents to believe that every individual begins his life with the burden of all his previous incarnations! The individualism of another religion²⁷ forces its adherents to believe that every individual is born with a clean slate (i.e. he stands on the neutral line between justification and condemnation).

Therefore, individualists interpret Romans 5:12 as follows: The first man to commit a personal sin was Adam and therefore he deserved to die. Sin and death entered into human history for the first time through Adam. They believe that Adam’s sin only had a bad effect on Adam himself. Adam’s descendants followed his example, also committed personal sins and as a consequence died. Their sins only had a bad effect on themselves and not on anybody else. So every individual sinned on his own accord and dies as a consequence of his own sins.

The Bible teaches both our solidarity with one another as well as our personal responsibility. According to the Bible, there is definitely a relationship between the sins of our ancestors and its consequences for us as their descendants. There is also a relationship between our personal sins and its consequences for our own descendants, namely our children. The Bible teaches that every individual is responsible for his personal evil deeds and its consequences, not only for himself, but also for his contemporaries and his descendants!

The Bible gives several examples:

- The sins of king Jeroboam affected his son, his whole family and all of Israel. They were all murdered because of Jeroboam’s sin²⁸.

¹⁷ Genesis 12:3

¹⁸ Genesis 17:7

¹⁹ Genesis 49:10

²⁰ Exodus 6:6-7

²¹ Deuteronomy 7:1-2

²² 2 Samuel 7:11-16; cf. 1 Chronicles 17:11-14

²³ Acts 2:39; 1 Corinthians 7:14

²⁴ John 4:53; Acts 11:14; 16:15,31; 18:8; 1 Corinthians 1:16

²⁵ G: *kathistémi*

²⁶ Hinduism

²⁷ Islam and humanism

²⁸ 1 Kings 14:15-16; cf. 15:26,34

- King Ahaziah of the kingdom of Judah walked in the evil ways of his grandfather Ahab and mother Athaliah who both came from the kingdom of Israel. His mother encouraged him in wrongdoing and so he did what was evil in the eyes of God just as the evil the house of Ahab had done. The house of Ahab became his advisors, however, to his undoing. He followed their counsel. When Ahaziah died, his mother began to destroy the whole royal house of Judah²⁹.

On the one hand, God emphasises the solidarity of every individual with other people in the human race. The Ten Commandments encourage us that our personal obedience of God's commandments will certainly have great positive results for our descendants. In Exodus 20:6, God says, "I show love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments." But the Ten Commandments also warn us that our personal disobedience of God's commandments will certainly have serious consequences for our descendants. In Exodus 20:5, God warns, "I punish the children for the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me." Children become much like their parents (compare Genesis 5:3 with Genesis 5:1; and compare 2 Chronicles 26:4 with 2 Chronicles 25:2).

On the other hand, God emphasises the personal responsibility of every individual for his own sins. The Israelites living in exile in Babylon blamed the sins of their ancestors for their present misery in exile. They said, "The fathers eat sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." Although it was true that the exile in Babylon was God's punishment for the sins that their fathers had committed in Israel³⁰, the prophet Ezekiel emphasises the individual sins and the personal responsibility for its consequences! Every sinner will certainly die for his personal sins and not only for the sins of their fathers or ancestors³¹.

Likewise, the commandment that we love our neighbour as ourselves means that we are responsible for the effects or consequences which our personal evil deeds have on our neighbour. Genesis 4:9 and Leviticus 19:16 and 18 holds us personally responsible for doing anything that might endanger our neighbour's life. Thus, our personal sins certainly endanger the lives of our neighbours and our children. Every day we can see the effects that the sins of parents (or friends or others in society) have on children. Children are very much affected in the following areas: divorce; the abuse of alcohol, drugs and sex. They are affected by the consumption society, overeating, materialism, spending too much time gaming on the Internet, chatting on mobiles, writing apps and sms's and watching too much TV. They are constantly affected by sexual immorality, violence, criminality, racism, hatred and religious fanaticism! It is simply not true that the children are only suffering because of their own individual sins.

There is therefore solidarity between us and our children and our children's children, and also solidarity between our neighbours and us. The Bible not only teaches the personal responsibility of each individual, but also teaches the solidarity of each individual with his family, with his neighbours, with his religious group, with his community, with his whole nation and even with the whole world. What happens to other people in the community definitely effects what happens to the individual! And what happens to the individual definitely effects what happens to other people in the community!

Solidarity affects one's human nature, inclination to follow and legal position.

How should we view *solidarity*?

Solidarity with Adam is more than merely following Adam's *sinful (disobedient, rebellious and independent) example*. It means receiving *the same sinful human nature* as one's representative, Adam. Job says that no one can bring what is pure from the impure³²! David says that he was born with a sinful nature³³. Solidarity with Adam means that Adam's *sinful human nature* was passed on to all his descendants in the human race!

And solidarity with Adam also means that Adam's *sinful legal position* (his wrong standing with God) was also passed on to all his descendants in the human race (5:12-19).

Likewise, solidarity with Christ is more than merely following Christ's *good (righteous and holy) example*! It means receiving *the same righteous and holy human nature* as one's Representative, Christ. The believer in Christ is once for all clothed with Christ's *new nature of righteousness and holiness* (6:6-7)³⁴. When a believer is born-again, the Spirit of Christ comes to live in his body and sanctify his body³⁵. Throughout his life the believer puts to death the misdeeds of his body in dependence on the Holy Spirit (8:12-14). Throughout his life the believer's human nature has fellowship with Christ's divine nature³⁶. Thus, solidarity with Christ means that Christ's righteous and holy nature is passed on to all believers³⁷.

²⁹ 2 Chronicles 22:3-5,10; cf. 33:22

³⁰ Jeremiah 16:10-13

³¹ Ezekiel chapter 18:1-32

³² Job 14:4; 15:14,16; 25:4

³³ Psalm 51:5

³⁴ Ephesians 4:23-24

³⁵ John 3:3-8; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19-20

³⁶ 2 Peter 1:3-11

³⁷ Colossians 1:27

And solidarity with Christ also means that Christ's *righteous and holy legal position* (the perfect right standing with God) is also passed on to all believers: Christ is the believers' state of righteousness, holiness, salvation and wisdom from God³⁸. Note all the Bible passages that speak about what the believer possesses 'in Christ'³⁹. The righteousness by which a believer is justified is always and only embodied in Jesus Christ and never in the believer himself. It is never embodied in the law or keeping the law. It is also never embodied in the Church or in a particular denomination or in another human being (guru or prophet). Only Jesus Christ is our righteousness. His righteousness is imputed (ascribed, reckoned) to us only when we are united to Christ through faith. We can never possess that righteousness apart from Jesus Christ.

b. God's grace unto salvation is much greater than God's judgement to doom (5:15-17).

5:15. But the gracious gift (consisting of redemption)⁴⁰ (is) not as the trespass. For if by the trespass of the one (Adam) the many *once for all* died (viaa), how much more did the grace⁴¹ of God and the gift (consisting of righteousness)⁴² that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, *once for all* overflow (viaa) to the many!

5:16. Again the gift (consisting of God's grace)⁴³ (is) not as (the result of) one man's sinning (vpaa): For the judgement (following) one (trespass) led to (brought)⁴⁴ condemnation (doom), but the gracious gift (following) many trespasses led to justification.

5:17. For if, by the trespass of one (man), death *once for all* reigned (viaa) through that one (man), how much more certain will those who *again and again throughout history* receive (vppa) God's abundant provision of (overflowing fullness of) grace and of the gift of righteousness reign (vifa) in life through the one (man), Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:15-17 is the second parenthesis. It explains that the similarity between 'the fall into sin' and 'salvation from sin' is not completely parallel. *The gracious work of Christ is much greater in scope (the purpose, intention and range of benefits) and in direction (positive justification instead of negative condemnation) than the destructive work of Adam.*

The gracious work of Christ is much greater in scope than the destructive work of Adam (5:15-16)! A 'trespass'⁴⁵ is a sin in the sense of a deviation from the path of truth and righteousness. In Romans 11:11 it refers to Israel's rejection of the gospel, which affected so many in Israel. In Romans 5:15-16 it refers to Adam's disobedience to God's command, which affected every human being in history.

Christians are saved, not only from the consequences of Adam's *one transgression*, but also saved from the consequences of all their own *innumerable transgressions*, such as: guilt, shame, defeat, sickness, condemnation, death, and eternal punishment!

God's righteous judgement in the beginning of history took into account only *the one sin* of one man (Adam). But God's gracious justification in the salvation work of Jesus Christ takes into account *the innumerable sins of innumerable people* who become believers in Jesus Christ (all believers). God could have chosen only to forgive *one sin* or the first sin of every believer. Instead he forgives *all their sins*, which they committed and still commit during their whole life! The scope of the gracious work of Christ is much greater than the destructive work of Adam!

The gracious work of Christ is much more positive in direction than the destructive work of Adam (5:17).

Adam's one transgression caused everything to move in *a negative direction (downwards): to righteous condemnation and death*. But Christ's one righteous act caused everything to move *in a positive direction (upwards): to gracious justification and everlasting life!* This proves that God takes much more pleasure in bestowing grace than in executing judgement (5:15,20)⁴⁶.

Paul recognises that the operation of *judgement works relentlessly*. Many died! But he also recognises that *the abounding plus* in the operation of grace not only negates the negative operation of judgement (and thus brings people back to the neutral line), but it abounds unto the opposite, *justification is perfect and life is eternal!* Many are justified!

Christ's completed work of salvation did not just restore man's legal position in God's eyes from the absolute negative to the neutral line, from which man must then make every effort to earn his salvation by his individual faith, good works or religious works. Christ's completed work of salvation restored man's legal position from the absolute negative to the absolute positive, where man does not need to perform any good or religious works in order to be saved. He is already perfectly saved by what Christ did!

³⁸ 1 Corinthians 1:30

³⁹ Ephesians 1:3-7

⁴⁰ G: charisma

⁴¹ G: charis

⁴² G: dórea

⁴³ G: dóréma

⁴⁴ G: eis

⁴⁵ G: paraptóma

⁴⁶ Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11

Sin reigned through condemnation unto death, but grace reigns through righteousness unto life (5:21)! God's *judgement has great negative effects*, but God's *grace has much greater positive achievements!* We are not only *saved from death and meaninglessness*, but are *saved to attain eternal life*, which includes an eternal meaningful life and task!

Thus God's mercy triumphs over God's judgement⁴⁷!

c. Salvation (justification) is based only on Jesus Christ (5:18-19).

5:18. Consequently (so then)⁴⁸, just as⁴⁹ one transgression (of Adam) led to⁵⁰ condemnation for all people (bound to Adam), so also⁵¹ one righteous act (of Christ) resulted in⁵² justification that issues into life for all people (bound to Christ).

5:19. For just as⁵³ through the disobedience of one man (Adam) the many (all people in history except Christ) were once for all made (legally constituted)⁵⁴ (viap) sinners, so also⁵⁵ through the obedience of the one (man)(Christ) the many (all believers in history) will certainly be made (legally constituted)(vifp) righteous.

Romans 5:17a,18a,19a explain the negative part of the comparison: 'Adam's trespass → condemnation → death' and Romans 5:17b,18,19b explain the positive part of the comparison: 'Christ's act of righteousness → justification → eternal life': "Just as we are condemned in Adam, so we are justified in Christ". Just as the sin of Adam set in operation the inevitable consequences of condemnation and death for all people on earth, so the righteousness of Christ set in operation the inevitable consequences of justification and life for all believers in Christ!

Grace and salvation is not universal (5:18). This forms the crux of the argument: just as *all people* are condemned on the ground of what one man (Adam) did, so *all believers* in Christ are being declared righteous on the ground of what another Man (Christ) did. However, the Bible does not teach that all people in the world will be saved.

Romans 5:18 says, "Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men." *If this verse is taken out of context*, it would seem that it teaches that just as all people who have ever lived in the world are legally condemned because of Adam's one sin, so also all people who have ever lived in the world are legally justified because of the one act of righteousness of Christ. This would mean that the Bible teaches *universal grace*, and salvation would depend on the free will of man to believe or not. Or it would even mean that the Bible teaches *universal salvation* no matter how anyone on earth lives!

This interpretation of verse 18 taken out of its context is wrong, because the word 'all' in the Bible does not always mean *every individual who ever lived* on earth without exception.

- The universal term 'all' must be limited by the necessary condition connected with the blessing. Romans 5:17 says that the condition for justification is "to receive God's grace and gift of righteousness." Likewise, the rest of the Bible teaches that only those people who "believe in Jesus Christ" will be saved⁵⁶. Thus, the Bible does not teach universal salvation. The condition for salvation is faith in Jesus Christ. Because not everyone believes, not everyone will be saved!
- The universal term 'all' must be limited by the nature of the subject or by the context. For example, not all people in the world "were looking for Jesus"⁵⁷; not all people in the world "were amazed at the teaching of Jesus"⁵⁸; and not all people in the world "held John to be a prophet"⁵⁹. Therefore, the term 'all people' must be limited to all the people mentioned in the context.

Likewise, in Romans 5:18, "all the people who are condemned" must be limited to those who descended from Adam by ordinary generation. Jesus Christ himself is the great exception. He came from God⁶⁰ and was perfectly sinless⁶¹.

And likewise, "all the people who are justified" must be limited to those who are connected to Christ through faith⁶². All non-Christians and unbelievers are exceptions⁶³. Paul is not thinking of the numerical extent, but of the way God's plan operates! God condemns all people connected to Adam, but he justifies all people connected to Christ.

⁴⁷ James 2:13

⁴⁸ G: ara oun

⁴⁹ G: hós

⁵⁰ G: eis

⁵¹ G: houtós kai

⁵² G: eis

⁵³ G: hósper

⁵⁴ G: kathistémi

⁵⁵ G: houtós kai

⁵⁶ John 3:16,18

⁵⁷ Mark 1:37

⁵⁸ Mark 5:20

⁵⁹ Mark 11:32

⁶⁰ John 3:31

⁶¹ 2 Corinthians 5:21

⁶² cf. 1 Corinthians 15:22-23

⁶³ John 3:18,36

- The universal term ‘all’ is used to combat the sinful attitude of exclusiveness of the Jews in general. The sinful attitude of exclusiveness of the Jews in general is noted when they say that only they are God’s people and they are better than the Gentiles (the non-Jews). Paul emphasises that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile (non-Jew): “all people” who are condemned, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, “have sinned through Adam” (5:12) and “all people” who are saved, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, will be saved in the same way, namely, only through Jesus Christ (2:11; 3:22; 10:12)⁶⁴! Whoever believes in Jesus Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, has eternal life⁶⁵, but whoever does not believe in Jesus Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, stands condemned already⁶⁶.

Salvation is exclusively bound to faith in Jesus Christ (5:18-19). Just as all people are condemned in Adam, so all believers are justified in Christ.

Not a comparison between the sin and death of Adam and that of his descendants (5:18). The comparison, which was started in Romans 5:12, is completed in Romans 5:18-19: “Just as ... so also”⁶⁷.

The first part of the comparison: ‘trespass (of one man, Adam) → condemnation (of all people) → death (of all people)’ is followed by the second part of the comparison: ‘righteousness (of one man, Christ) → justification (of all believers in Christ) → life (for all believers in Christ)’. Romans 5:18-19 explains the whole comparison: “Just as we (as human beings) are condemned in Adam, so we (as believers) are justified in Christ”. Just as Adam’s transgression (his fall into sin) led to the condemnation of all the descendants of Adam (all human beings in history), so the righteousness of Christ (his death and resurrection) led to the justification of all who by faith receive God’s gracious gift of righteousness (all believers in Christ). Just as all human beings descended from Adam in history are condemned, so all believers in Jesus Christ are justified. Just as Adam’s disobedience caused God to regard and treat all people as sinners, so Christ’s obedience causes God to regard and treat all believers in Jesus Christ as completely righteous.

Paul does not compare the sin and death of Adam with the sin and death of his descendants, but compares the one sin of Adam (his fall) with the one righteous act of Christ (his death and resurrection)! He teaches, “Just as (through) one transgression (of Adam) led to the condemnation of all people (bound to Adam), so also (through) one righteous act (of Christ) led to the justification of all people (bound to Christ). In the second part of this verse Paul is not speaking of ‘all people in the history of the world’ (universal salvation), but of ‘all believers in Christ, because he records the condition for their salvation in the context: they must receive God’s grace and the gift of righteousness (5:17b).

All human beings are legally constituted sinners. All believers are legally constituted righteous (5:19). When the representative of mankind (namely Adam) fell into sin, all mankind were *once for all* made (legally constituted) sinners. But after the representative of all believers in Christ (namely Christ) fulfilled the righteous requirement of God, all believers are one for one made (legally constituted) righteous the moment they believe in Jesus Christ.

What happened to Adam has a profound impact on the whole human race. The whole human race fell into sin in solidarity with Adam. The whole human race has been made sinful in solidarity with Adam. Consequently the whole human race is *condemned to die in solidarity with Adam*.

What happened to Christ at his death and resurrection has a profound impact on everyone who believes in Christ. The whole Body of Christ died and was resurrected in solidarity with Christ.

*The whole Community of believers in Jesus Christ is made righteous in solidarity with Christ. Consequently all Christians are pronounced righteous in solidarity with Christ. This explains the term ‘in Christ’. This is the true identity of every Christian: he is chosen in Christ before the creation of the world; he is predestined in Christ to be adopted as God’s sons and daughters; he is redeemed in Christ; he is forgiven in Christ; he is blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ*⁶⁸.

That is why Paul calls Adam *a type or pattern* of the one who is to come, namely Jesus Christ. The personal sin of Adam and its consequence of death affected every individual of the human race. Likewise, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ affects every individual who believes in Jesus Christ.

d. God’s grace is much more abundant than the sin aroused by the law (5:20-21).

5:20. Moreover, the law came in as a side issue⁶⁹ (viaa)(NIV added) in order to increase (multiply)⁷⁰ (viaa) the trespass. But where sin increased (viaa), grace was present in much greater abundance⁷¹ (viaa),

⁶⁴ Acts 10:34-35

⁶⁵ cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

⁶⁶ John 3:18,36

⁶⁷ G: hós/hóspēr...houtós kai

⁶⁸ Ephesians 1:3-7

⁶⁹ G: par-eis-erchomai

⁷⁰ G: pleonazó

⁷¹ G: huperperisseuó

5:21. so that, just⁷² as sin *once for all* reigned (viaa) in death, so also⁷³ grace might *once for all* reign (vsaa) through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The law was added to increase sin (5:20). The 'law' here stands for the whole written Law of Moses, the whole organised system of the Old Testament. *Between the time of Adam and Christ the written law was added (in about 1407 B.C.), not with the purpose to be the means of gaining eternal life, but to be the means of realising the extent and ugliness of sin and death and the necessity of salvation⁷⁴.*

The more knowledge man has of the law, the greater is his responsibility (4:15). The more the law works in the heart and mind of man, the more man's aversion against God is aroused and causes him to transgress God's righteous commandments (7:8,11,13). Thus, the only influence of the law in the time between Adam and Christ was to *multiply transgressions and sins*. It definitely did not function as the means of gaining righteousness!

The increase of sin brings about the much greater increase of God's grace (5:21). God's plan was to bring good out of evil (cf. 8:28). His design was to allow man's sin to abound so that God's grace may even super-abound! All the many sins in the world (for which God is not the cause and also not responsible) nevertheless became the occasion of the most wonderful display of God's grace.

The law is still a very effective means to multiply the evil people do, because the sinful nature in man has become an ally of the sinful world and of Satan.

By nature man is all the time inclined to do what is forbidden and to neglect what is commanded⁷⁵. But God's grace working through Jesus Christ has become a far more effective means to produce both righteousness and life in believers, because God's grace transforms the believer's nature and causes the believer to become an ally of God's people and of God instead of remaining an ally of the sinful world and Satan!

Although the influence of evil on the world is still very great and causes death in the fullest sense of the word, God's influence of righteousness on the world is far greater and causes life in the fullest sense of the word. The beneficial influences of God's grace infinitely transcend the evil influences of sin in scope and in direction. *In scope: the one sin of Adam is condemned, but the innumerable sins of believers are forgiven! And in direction: the sin of Adam resulted in death, but the grace of Christ resulted in everlasting life!* God's grace is producing far more good in this world than the evil which sin produces in this world. God's grace super-abounds, not necessarily in *the number* of people that are saved, but certainly in *the scope* (the range of benefits: the forgiveness of all sins, the acceptance into God's family; the transformation of character, the good works performed, the uncountable people of all nations that are saved, the inheritance of the new earth) and in *the direction* (justification instead of condemnation, everlasting life instead of everlasting death) that grace has in the lives of people. Adam's influence of evil on the world is far outweighed by Christ's influence of good on the world! Some of the benefits mentioned in Romans chapter 5 are: peace with God, access to God's grace, perseverance, character, hope and love (5:1-5); reconciliation with God and salvation from God's wrath (5:9-11).

Thus, God's mercy triumphs over God's judgement⁷⁶!

⁷² G: hósper

⁷³ G: houtós kai

⁷⁴ Galatians 3:24

⁷⁵ cf. Genesis 6:5; Psalm 14:1-

⁷⁶ James 2:13