

Paul's epistle to the Romans is one of the most organized and systematic of his writings. We have come to a major new division beginning with verse 12. The men who divided the scriptures into convenient chapters and verses for our easy reference seem to have missed the rather subtle, but major, change of subject here, or they would have begun a new chapter. The change? Paul now takes up the subject of **sin**. From chapters I through 5:11 he has taught us about **sins**, our personal acts of lawlessness and our personal trespasses against God's specific commands. All have sinned . . . , Romans 3:23 and he has presented God's merciful gracious response to our sins the blood of His own Son shed for us that we might be justified by faith (not works). He has brought us into undreamed of blessings, not only now in the present but future for all eternity. Chapter 5:1-11 opens our eyes to some of these.

But there remains a problem with us while we remain here on earth. We who have been justified by faith find our redeemed selves still committing sins. We find ourselves now unpleasantly surprised by urges from within and temptations from without that lead us to sin. Why?

Paul proceeds to teach us about mankind's **sin** nature, the inborn principle in all of us that moves us to **commit sins**. As the first few chapters demonstrate, we all sin and have sinned, personally from birth and historically down through history. We were content to let ourselves be driven by sinful urges and influences. But now we have realized that we were lost and needed a savior. We know and have believed that God sent His one and only begotten Son to die for our sins. We, having trusted in Him, have been justified, counted righteous before God Himself. Consequently God has shed His love abroad in our hearts and sent His Holy Spirit to dwell in us. We joy in these blessings and others named in chapter 5. But there is still sin in us, sin in the flesh. It leads us to continue sinning. Paul goes back to our beginning to show us why we are sinners. "By one man sin entered into the world." Adam. God had given him one single command. Not a command to do something for God but simply to avoid doing one little thing. Obeying God would demonstrate that he honored and respected his Creator as his rightful Sovereign Creator and God. There was a stated consequence for disobedience. "Dying thou shalt surely die." A very serious consequence indeed.

When Adam sinned death entered the destiny of mankind. Death passed upon all Adam's descendants. Why? Because "all have sinned." People don't die today directly because of the sin Adam committed. We each have sinned and deserve to die in our own right. We sin and subsequently die because we have inherited Adam's fallen nature. A nature that generates sinful urges from within our very selves, and which also readily responds to sinful

temptations from without. Sins that dishonor our Creator and harm His creatures and His whole Creation. Some men today are becoming aware of the damage their acts are causing the environment and the ecology (the terms they substitute for the Creation of the God most of them stubbornly refuse to recognize). However they are making a god of nature and ignoring the God who created it and sustains it and will judge them. They seem less aware of the harm their agenda of immorality is causing.

The next few verses (12 - 17) seem to be properly a parenthesis and are so marked in many translations. The train of thought begun in verse 12 resumes and continues in verse 18. In the parenthesis Paul explores the tremendous contrasts between the two heads of their respective races of mankind. We will learn in-depth what we are in Adam and what we are in Christ.

Before exposing us for what we are in Adam Paul places the Law of Moses in its proper historical role. As we learned in chapter 4 Abraham believed God and was counted righteous by faith centuries before the Law was given the Children of Israel through Moses. Sin was not imputed (recorded, tallied up) when there was no Law. Nevertheless even before Moses, mankind had a relentless, irrefutable witness against their sinfulness. DEATH. Death reigned, from Adam on down to Moses. It still reigns but now God has given His Law that condemns all under it as well. Before the Law was given every person was still accountable to God for their actions and inactions. Each has an inborn consciousness of God and had the handed-down history of the Creation and man's sin, and each had a conscience gained by Adam when they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and of evil. So they were accountable and liable to judgement as revealed in chapter one.

Of course not every one in those early days disobeyed a direct command of God as Adam had. They couldn't, for before Noah there were no other commands given. There were only two or three given to Noah, and only one of these with a direct punishment. But they all died, millions upon millions. Many died "natural deaths," due to the Fall. Disease and old age, and some to accidents and even to violent acts of animals and humans, Genesis 4:8; 4:23, all took their toll. Then because of mounting spreading corruption and violence God destroyed the whole population in the worldwide Flood, except for Noah's eight safe in the ark. But Abel, called a righteous man, Hebrews 11:3, was the first in history to die. Murdered for his faith. The next man of faith recorded is Enoch. He didn't even die but was translated, and that even before Adam himself died. What an encouraging sign for faith and hope that is.

Paul presents here some comparisons between Adam and the Lord Jesus and their respective races. Some of these comparisons are similarities and some are by way of contrast. In these couplets he leads us to the KEY to the

blessing of deliverance from the power of sin. **Jesus has become Head of an entirely New Race of human beings.** A race like the risen glorified Christ, not like Adam's fallen sinful race. Those who trust in Him as Savior are made part of that new race.

First, Paul cites a similarity, v.14. Adam was a figure of One to come. Adam's headship over the Human race prefigured the One who would be Head of a new Human race. He was to be the Woman's Seed, Genesis 3:15. He was the one and only man ever to be born of a virgin. He did not inherit Adam's sinful nature. Who? **Jesus!** "In Him was no sin," 1John 3:5; "He knew no sin," 2Corinthians 5:21; "He did no sin," 1Peter 2:22. Paul presents Him as the "last Adam," and the "Second Man" in 1Corinthians 15:45,47.

Next he cites another similarity, but one with a twist, v. 15. Because of **one offence of one man, many** are dead. The first head of the human race was responsible for bringing death upon the whole race he fathered. The first sin ever committed was enough to cause that. We don't know exactly how biologically, but death came upon all men as a result of the first ancestor's single sin. God changed something in our makeup and some things in the earth's environment, and so death has been passed down through men ever since. But . . .

But, the grace of God has abounded to **many** through the gift of grace brought us by **one Man**, the Lord Jesus Christ. Note the references to "**one**" and "**the many**."

The third comparison, v 16, is not direct but entails contrasting acts and opposite consequential results. One man's, Adam's, **single** act, (independently of God) brought condemnation and judgement while by one Man, Jesus (fully and voluntarily dependent upon God) God's grace and free gift of grace has justified believers from **many** (millions of) **offences**. The term "many" is not relative in the sense of "many, but not all" but that one man's act cursed many men and one Man's act justified many men from many, many sins.

To review:

[15] Both the offence and the free gift affect many. These are alike in that one action of a single man (Adam then Jesus) continues to affects many.

These differ in that the **offence** of one man (Adam) leaves many dead (therefore worse than useless to God or man) but the grace of God and the **gift by grace** by one single Man (Jesus) abounds to many in life (a life of grace and good God intended for mankind).

[16] However the outcomes of the sin of one single man (Adam) and the gift of one single man are vastly different, as different as judgement and condemnation differ from justification. For (**just one**) sin brings judgement and condemnation upon whoever sins, but the one free gift brings, (to whoever receives it) justification covering **all** our offences.

[17] Also the outcome of the offence of one man (Adam) was that **death reigned** upon his whole race, comprising all of his descendants. But rather much more those who choose to receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall **reign in life** by one, Jesus Christ.

So one can easily see the vast superiority of belonging to Jesus' justified race compared to Adam's fallen race, and the vastly different outcomes that befall them or are bestowed upon them because of the actions of each Head.

Now lets look at what Paul says, skipping the parenthesis. The KJV text is as follows:

"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: . . .

. . . 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"

(The symbol > will be used to mark successive outcomes.)

[12] by one man (Adam) **sin** entered the world > **death** by sin > all men (for all have sinned).

[18] one man's offense > **judgment** upon all > to **condemnation** > all one mans's righteousness > **free gift** > all > unto **justification of life**.

[19] one mans's disobedience > many > made **sinners**. one man's obedience > many > made **righteous**.

[20] **law** entered > offence might abound. sin abounded but **grace** > much more bounded.

[21] sin reigned > unto **death**. grace reigns > through righteousness > unto **eternal life** > by Jesus Christ our Lord.

The contrast between the heritage of sin and death that besets fallen Adam's race and the heritage of blessings and life bestowed upon the crucified Christ's race of redeemed saints is vast. Laying hold upon the heritage and the position we have as members of the new race of man redeemed with the blood of Jesus Christ will deliver the justified from the **power of sin** in them. Chapter 6 addresses that.

By Ron Canner, September 19, 2007