

What A Difference It Makes!

Text: Romans 5:12-21

Series: Book of Romans [#07]

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Theme: **Being Related To Christ Makes All The Difference.**

Introduction

Last week we looked at the first part of Romans chapter 5. These are great verses with grand truths. God's full salvation brings a full life. We considered and celebrated the blessings of being justified by faith.

Today's section flows from this theme, laying out some basics of the why and how of our justification. This section has been called

- “the great central feature and focus” which “gives organic life to the entire [letter].”
- And the section that “stands at the very heart of the development of Paul's thoughts.”²
- And again, “one of the most crucial passages in the Word of God, the central theme of the [letter] to the Romans.”³

And yet, you may have noticed as we read it, this section is detailed and difficult. We could wish that Paul had given us a road map of it. Paul's compact structure, use of technical terms, not filling in all the details and, once again, starting a thought and not immediately completing it, lead to this difficulty.

But the basic message is clear. Paul states some of God's principles behind providing our redemption as he draws comparisons and contrasts between Adam and Christ. Adam, who plunged the human family into sin and death and Christ, who provides justification and life. Every person is related to Adam by birth and share his legacy. Through Christ we can be adopted into God's family and share Christ's legacy. If we are only related to Adam, the picture is bleak. But if we are related to Christ, the picture is bright.

As we look at the contrasts, the difference between the legacy of Adam and the legacy of Christ is striking. It is said that some things “make all the difference in the world.” Of course, there usually is at least a bit of overstatement in that claim. But here we can truly say that Christ's legacy not only makes all the difference in the world, but all the difference for eternity! *“What A Difference It Makes!” Being Related To Christ Makes All The Difference.*

This morning we will look at three parts of Adam's legacy and Christ's legacy. We begin with...

The Legacy Of Being Related To Adam By Birth.

Verse 12 opens with “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world...” The first thing Paul tells us is that Adam's disobedience brought sin into the human family.

Sin existed prior to this. Sin goes back to when Satan and the angels who followed him rebelled against God. Because of that choice in their test, their character became sinful, and their judgment was sealed. There is no redemption for them.

This concise statement is about sin entering the human family and its results. Recall the record of this in the first three chapters of Genesis. God created Adam without sin, but with a will, or the ability to choose. He was without sin, but not tested. Adam's testing is introduced in Genesis 2. God placed him in a garden He created for him (2:8, 15). Then we read,

“The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.’” (2:16-17)

Satan tempted Adam and Eve. Eve was deceived and disobeyed God. Adam was not deceived and disobeyed God (1 Timothy 2:14). Adam, the head of the human family, failed the test. Sin entered the human family through his disobedience.

We move on from this tragedy to the next part of our legacy from Adam. Sin brings death. Verse 12. “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men...” Let's go back to Genesis. God created Adam for fellowship and service. The Bible makes it clear that this relationship involves conforming to God's character and, key at this point, being obedient and holy, not disobedient and sinful.

God meant exactly what He said to Adam, “... from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” When Adam ate from it he sinned, he died. Fellowship with God was broken—spiritual separation or death. His body began the process of dying.

Now, here in Romans 5, Paul tells us death entered into the world through sin and spread to everyone (12). Go down to verse 15, “by the transgression of the one the many died.” Move ahead to verse 17, “by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one.” And then the last verse, verse 21, “sin reigned in death.” In the next chapter, verse 23, “the wages of sin is death.”

“Sin brings death.” This includes physical death, as we see in verse 14. It also includes spiritual death, as we see in verses 16 and 18. Sin brings death—physical and spiritual death.

Now we move to the third part of our legacy from Adam. Verse 12, in its entirety. “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—” In most English versions this verse does not end with a period, but with a dash. That is because Paul begins a comparison with “just as” at the beginning of the verse, but then moves on to some explanations before finally returning to the “so also” part of the comparison in verse 18.

It might surprize you to learn that enough words have been written about the three words “because all sinned” to help the bottom line of those who sell paper, ink and publish books. What is Paul referring to when he writes “because all sinned”? Why is God’s death sentence pronounced on all people? To many it seems straight forward enough. He is referring to the personal, voluntary acts of sin in our lives, much as in 3:23, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Many others think he is referring to everyone sinning in and with Adam because we all were in some way united with him in that one defining sin.

My study leads me to conclude Paul is saying that *we all sinned in Adam, and so we all die*. This begins to emerge with the tone and content of the section and some basic questions such as, “Why do all people, without exception, sin?” And, arising from verses 18-19, “How can it be that Adam’s one sin in Eden is the reason for all people being condemned?” The Bible tells us repeatedly that we all sin and the wages of sin is death. But our personal acts of sin are not the fundamental reason for death, nor are they Paul’s subject here.

A good question at this point is, “So what’s the big deal? After all, any and all sin brings death.” It’s important because we need to do our best to understand the meaning of every statement in the Bible. It’s important because the meaning of “because all sinned” is key to understanding Paul’s main point in this section, the immeasurable difference between the legacy of Adam and the legacy of Christ.

Let’s walk through a condensed version of why “because all sinned” means we all sinned in Adam. First, it emerges as we put both parts of the initial contrast between Adam and Christ in verses 12 and 18 together.

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—[verse 18] So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so [*here’s the contrast*] through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.” (12, 18)

One transgression resulted in condemnation to all men, just as one act of righteousness resulted in justification.

Second, in the series of contrasts between Adam and Christ Paul repeatedly highlights the one person, the one act. For now, look at the statements about Adam. Verse 16, “the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation.” Verse 17, “by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one.” Verse 18, again, “through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men.” Verse 19, “through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners.” The word *made* has the idea of constituting, establishing. Through Adam we were constituted, we were established as sinners, and so we are legally guilty before God. “Because all sinned” meaning all of us individually choose to transgress God’s law in our own time and lives does not line up with these statements.

Third is Paul's point in verses 13-14. Verse 13,

“for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses ...”

God did not charge or impute transgressions against the Mosaic Law to people before it was given, yet all died. Yes, we know, as Paul has told us in 1:20, that God has revealed Himself sufficiently so that no one has an excuse. But also note verse 14, “death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam.” Those who did not choose to voluntarily transgress God's law still died. An obvious example here are little babies who do not know and cannot understand God's revelation, but still die. “All sinned in Adam, and so all die.”

The fundamental reason we die is because we were united with Adam in that one character defining sin. This in no way diminishes the deadly devastation of our own sins, which is dealt with frequently in the Bible.

Paul does not tell us how our unity or solidarity with Adam was constituted. He makes no reference, for example, to Adam be our representative or to us actually being in him as his descendants. That is a matter for theology, and another time.

All of us, all people are related to Adam. We have a legacy from him, the tragic, bleak legacy of sin and death. But we can be related to Christ. And His legacy is a totally different picture. *Being Related to Christ makes all the difference!* And so now we turn to ...

The Legacy Of Being Related To Christ By The New Birth.

Look at verse 14.

“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.”

Adam and Christ are alike, and Adam is a type of Christ, in one specific way: Adam is the head of all people who by birth are sinners and under the reign of sin and death; Christ is the head of all people who by the new birth are freed from the reign of sin and death. One act of each of them affected all their members.

But, of course, Adam and Christ are different in many ways, in fact, in every other way. These contrasts between Adam and Christ concentrate on the differences of the results or effects of their significant one act. Rather than walk through each point of contrast in results, we will focus on three overall parts of the legacy that believers have in Christ, just as we looked at three parts of Adam's legacy.

The first part of Christ's legacy to note is that His love brought super-abounding grace. Part of Paul's personal testimony is found in Galatians 2:20,

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

Christ’s love was demonstrated by His grace in action. Redemption, salvation is by God’s grace through faith. In verse 15 Paul says the gift of Christ’s grace abounded to the many, to all those who received His grace through faith. And in verse 17 he speaks about “the abundance of grace.”

You see, the grace in the one act of Christ of dying and being raised for our justification did not just offset or cancel out the effects of Adam’s one act, but went way beyond them! God’s grace abounds, overflows, extends way beyond them in quality, in quantity and in certainty.

Let’s walk through Paul’s reference to this super-abounding grace in this section. We start at the middle of verse 15, “much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.” Go on to the end of verse 16, “the free gift [that’s righteousness] arose from many transgressions resulting in justification.” Verse 17,

“For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.”

Drop down to the last part of verse 20, “but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” And then, verse 21, “so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” *What a difference it makes!*

We are saved by grace, we live by grace, we are kept by grace, we will see Christ face to face and be with Him forever by grace. It is all by God’s super-abounding grace as part of the legacy we have in Christ.

Consider just one example, the life we now have in Christ, as described in a few familiar verses. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul wrote, “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” In Galatians 2:20, that we looked at earlier, he tells us,

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

And we remember what Jesus said in John 10:10, “I came that they [those who believe in Him] may have life and *have it abundantly.*”

Now, if these truths about the life you have because of God’s super-abounding grace

don't excite you, check your pulse, make sure you are still alive! In His matchless, measureless love for us, Christ has given us the legacy of super-abounding grace.

The second part of Christ's legacy is that His obedience brought the gift of righteousness. Go to verse 19. "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous." Think about this contrast between Adam and Christ. God told Adam, "You shall not eat", but Adam ate. He disobeyed God.

Jesus told us, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work" (John 4:34). And, "He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him" (John 8:29). And again, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love" (John 15:10). Then, as Paul tells us in Philippians, Christ "Being found in appearance as a man, [He] humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:9).

Now, look at two other verses here in Romans 5. Verse 16,

"The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification."

Then verse 18 again,

"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,"

to all who believe, who receive His gift as we read in verse 17.

Our justification, our righteousness, our standing fully acquitted and accepted before God is based on Christ's obedience. Step back and see how this all hangs together. Just as it was not our personal sins that brought this condemnation on us, so also it is not our personal acts of righteousness that brought righteousness to us.

"By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works..."
(Ephesians 2:8-9)

What a wonderful legacy. Christ's *obedience* brought the *gift* of righteousness.

Then final part of Christ's legacy: His gift of righteousness brought the gift of reigning in life. Paul refers to this in verse 17,

"For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace

and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.”

First, note if Paul was keeping a strict consistency in this contrast, he would have said “as death reigned through Adam, so also life will reign in Christ.” But at this point his emphasis is on *us*, those who are in Christ. *We* will reign in life.

What does that mean? What does it mean to “reign in life”? Many think it refers to our future reign with Christ on earth as expressed in the great praise song in The Revelation chapter 5, “You [Christ] have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth” (10).

While it refers to that, it also refers to here and now. Here and now sin no longer reigns over us, but we reign in life through Christ. Turn ahead to chapter 6, verse 14, “sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” Now drop down to verse 17,

“But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness” (17-18).

There are many more features of reigning in life through Christ right here and now. Last week we looked at the blessings of God’s full salvation in the first part of this chapter. They include

- having peace with God,
- having a firm standing in the realm of God’s grace,
- having a certain, joyful hope of sharing God’s glory,
- having a new perspective and purpose for our troubles,
- having been saturated to the core with God’s love,
- having the permanent presence of the Holy Spirit within us,
- and having the certainty that we are saved from God’s wrath.

As we stand and live in these blessings we *reign* in life!

What a difference it makes! Being related to Christ makes all the difference!

Conclusion.

Research has been done on how to give sight to blind people. One technology involved linking a small camera mounted on a pair of sunglasses to a small computer on a belt pack that then goes to electrodes surgically implanted on the brain cells that control sight. The first recipient was able to see rough images of large objects, whereas before he could see nothing. To him *it made all the difference in the world*.

As wonderful as the effects of that technology were for him, the difference he experienced doesn't begin to compare with the difference of being related to Christ, of seeing, experiencing the blessings, the legacy He gives.

As you take the next few quiet moments to reflect on this truth, remember, all of us are related to Adam by birth. His legacy and the picture for us in him is bleak. Bleak, but not hopeless because we can be related to Christ by the new birth, and the legacy of Christ is more than bright. The key question is "Am I related to Christ?"

All of us entered this world as sinners and have sinned. We know that. You have the choice to believe Jesus when He said "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6), and trusting in that, to experience the reality of his legacy, as He put it, to "not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Make that choice today and you will know that being related to Christ makes all the difference for you.

For we who are related to Christ by the new birth, thank and praise God for this today, and not just today, but everyday. Tell God again that you will live your life so others will see His legacy in you, will see that He has changed you. Tell Him again that you will speak to others about Jesus and how they too can be adopted into God's family.

¹ Thomas, W. H. Griffith. *Commentary On Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications) 1974, p. 155, 154.

² Harrison, Everett F. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol 10*, Frank E. Gaebelin, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 1976, p. 61.

³ Barnhouse, Donald Grey. *Romans, Vol III*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Company), 1982, p. 15.

⁴ Dobelle, William H. "Artificial Vision for the Blind by Connecting a Television Camera to the Visual Cortex." *ASAIO Journal*. 46(1):3-9, January/February 2000. 18 November 2009. <<http://web.archive.org/web/20050517075603/www.artificialvision.com/downloads/article.pdf>>.

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