

ROMANS REALIZED

A SURPASSING RECONCILIATION

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Romans 5:12-19

INTRODUCTION: 5:12-14

1. God reconciled the world to himself through Christ.
2. To reconcile us, God had to overcome the effects of Adam's sin.
 - a. Sin entered through Adam.
 - b. Death entered through his sin.
 - c. Death passed to all men, because all sinned.
3. The reconciliation which we have in Christ supersedes every evil effect we suffer in Adam.

PROPOSITION: Some aspects of man's surpassing reconciliation.

- I. THE POWER OF ADAM'S SIN IS COMPLETELY OVERCOME IN CHRIST. 5:15
 1. The power of Adam's sin brought the death penalty to all.
 2. Christ has power to reverse the death penalty and to provide escape from our own sins.
- II. THE SENTENCE OF ADAM IS ECLIPSED BY THE CONTRASTING GIFT OF CHRIST. 5:16
 1. Adam's sentence came because of one sin, which brought condemnation to all men.
 2. Christ's gift brings justification from many sins.
- III. THE REIGN OF DEATH THROUGH ADAM'S SIN IS WONDERFULLY OVERTHROWN IN CHRIST. 5:17
 1. Because of the trespass, death reigned through the one man.
 2. Because of the free gift, they that receive it shall themselves reign in life through Jesus Christ.
- IV. THE EFFECTS OF ADAM'S SIN ARE CONTRASTED WITH THOSE OF CHRIST'S GIFT. 5:18-19
 1. Through the trespass, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.
 2. Through the one act of justification, the free gift came to all men, bringing justification and life.
 3. This is explained in the fact of imputed conditions.
 - a. The many were made sinners in Adam.
 - b. The many were made just in Christ.

CONCLUSION

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Introduction

“Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned:—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, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam’s transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come. But not as the trespass, so also is the free gift. For if by the trespass 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, abound unto the many. And not as through one that sinned, so is the gift; for the judgment came of one unto condemnation, but the free gift came of many trespasses unto justification. For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ. So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous.” Romans 5:12-19

1. In Christ Jesus God was reconciling the world unto himself. Mankind had made itself an enemy to God because it had rejected its creator. But God “reconciled us to himself through Christ,”¹ and “we can rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”²

2. One of the deepest gulfs that God had to span to reconcile us to himself was the gulf created by the violation of Adam.

a. Through this one man Adam, sin entered into the world. Sin is any violation of God’s law, and, of course, it makes a man a criminal in the sight of God. Adam’s eating the forbidden fruit brought this terrible fact of sin, and all its penalties, into the world.

b. Death entered through that sin. With Adam’s disobedience came its penalty, the death of the body of man. The question will inevitably come up, “Was not the death that came upon Adam (and through sin, upon us) SPIRITUAL death?” Our reply is that while Adam’s sin certainly had spiritual effects upon him, the only death spoken of for him in the Scriptures is physical death. He lived 930 years “and he died.”³ And if it be objected that it had to be spiritual

1. II Cor. 5:18.

2. Romans 5:11.

3. Gen. 5:5.

death because God said he would die "in the day that thou eatest thereof."¹ Let us remember that although he may have been dead that day in trespasses and sin, God's grace later allowed that these sins be covered by sacrifices. As for his physical death, the Scriptures plainly tell that he did not die that very day, but that God in his grace allowed him to live to bring into being "the seed of the woman"² by which they would all be redeemed from the curse of death, "the seed" of course referring to Christ. Furthermore, Paul's words in verse 14 about "death reigning from Adam to Moses"³ most certainly refer to physical death. Also, other passages will show us that the death that came into the world through Adam's sin must surely be only physical death.

c. This death passed to all men, because all sinned in Adam. This must be the meaning of the statement, "so death passed to all men, for that all sinned."⁴ Adam is our progenitor; he is the head of the human race, and by God's decree we as children of Adam all suffer the effects of his sin with him. That is the reason why we die. Of course, our own sins *would* bring death to us, but Adam's sin is THE cause of physical death to mankind. If this be doubted, that we all die because all sinned in Adam, let us remember the period of time from Adam until Moses. There was sin in the world during that time. The Sodomites all died because of their iniquity. But what about their infants who died? They did not share the penalty of death because of the guilt of their wicked parents. There was no law that would transfer the penalty of parents' guilt to the children.⁵ But many of these surely died. The only explanation is that physical death spread to them, as to us, because they all were in Adam. Death had full sway during that period, reigning like a king over small and great. None of these person's sins affected their posterity, as did Adam's, but all died, showing that death spread to all in Adam. If one finds this hard to understand, let him remember that the Scriptures say that the Levitical priesthood paid tithes to Melchizidek, whom they had never seen, because Abraham, their distant ancestor,

1. Gen. 2:17.

2. Gen. 3:15.

3. Rom. 5:14.

4. Rom. 5:12.

5. This I take to be the meaning of "but sin is not imputed where there is no law," and "had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression." Certainly there was law at that time, and with a death penalty attached for certain sins. cf. Gen. 9:6. But there was no law that would transmit such penalty to offspring, as did Adam's. When we come to the time of Moses, there MAY be such a law and penalty. cf. Ex. 34:7; 20:5; Dt. 5:9.

so did. "And so to say, through Abraham, even Levi who receiveth tithes, hath paid tithes; for he was yet in the loins of his father (Abraham) when Melchizidek met him."¹ In the same way, we participate in the effects of Adam's sin, because we were in him, as surely as the sons of Levi participated in the effects of Abraham's act.

3. God looked down upon us, and saw us doomed to die physically, because all are in Adam whose sin affected those after him, and all doomed to die spiritually because all will sin. God saw that to save us he must supply one who would affect those after him, as Adam affected those after him, but who would affect them for good, not evil, and who would do it in such a way as to overcome every evil thing we suffer in Adam. MY PROPOSITION is that the reconciliation which we have in Christ supersedes every evil effect we suffer because of Adam's sin. I submit Paul's demonstration of this proposition to you:

I. The Power of Adam's Sin Is Overcome in Christ.

Paul observed that Adam was a type of Christ because his act had effects upon those who followed him. But he had scarcely expressed this thought when the contrasts between the two struck him as being the more prominent. And so he says immediately, "but not as the trespass, so also is the free gift."² The power of the two is vastly different, both in their aim and their degree. We notice the power of the act of each one.

1. Note the power of Adam's trespass upon us. Because of that one violation, the many died. By "many" Paul evidently means "everyone," and it is in this sense he uses the term all through his argument of the surpassing reconciliation which we have in Christ. The power of Adam's sin was to bring death to everyone, beginning with himself, to his own children, and down to our very selves.

2. Be the power of Adam's sin so great, a comparison with the gratuitous gift of Christ makes it seem weak. For because of the free gift of Christ, the Holy Spirit, through Paul, says, "Much more did the grace of God, and gift by the grace of the one man Jesus Christ abound unto the many."³

God's favor because of Christ's death abounded first of all to redeem us all from the grave. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."⁴ But what would it profit us to be raised from the death we suffer in Adam, ready only to face God as criminals sentenced to death for our own sins? This makes it necessary

1. Heb. 7:9-10.
2. Romans 5:15.
3. Tim 5:15.
4. I Cor. 15:22.

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for the gift of Christ, to be sufficient, to do more than redeem us from the grave.

God not only graciously provides in Christ the reversal of the effect of Adam's sin, but also makes a way in him to wash away our own sins. Thus it becomes MUCH MORE powerful than Adam's sin. To summarize, Adam's sin has power to bring death to all. Christ's gift has power to reverse the death we suffer in Adam, and "much more" to provide the escape from the penalty of our own sins. Truly the power of Adam's sin is much more than overcome in Christ.

II. *The Sentence of Adam Is Eclipsed by the Contrasting Gift of Christ.*

The Scripture says, "And not as through one that sinned so is the gift."¹ This passage makes very little complete sense in itself, without understanding it in the light of its explanation which says, "for the judgment (or sentence) came of one (sin) unto condemnation."² Therefore we believe that it is Paul's exact thought to say, "The sentence pronounced upon the one that sinned is not like the (outcome of the) gift." The sentence or the judgment of Adam is eclipsed by the entirely different gift of Christ.

1. The sentence through Adam was pronounced because of one sin unto condemnation. One act condemned all to die. Not that we are guilty with Adam of that sin, but our relationship with him causes us to suffer his fate. A foolish helmsman on a boat may be the cause of the sinking of a ship during a storm. Just as he may perish in the sea for his folly, so will the passengers, though they are innocent. So we, being as it were "in the same boat with Adam," he being the progenitor of the race, suffer the sentence or judgment of death with him.

2. But lo! Take a glance at what happens through the gracious gift of Christ. Whereas Adam's one sin brought condemnation to many, Christ's act takes people, bearing the sentence of Adam's sin, and brings them to justification. In God's sight people who are in Christ are "not guilty." We saw that Christ's gift had power to reverse the death which passed to all in Adam's sin, and furthermore, it had power to do "much more." Now we can see even more plainly than previously what that "much more" is. It is that power to take us, with the sentence of Adam's sin upon us, and many of our own sins, and make us just in God's sight.

1. Rom. 5:16.

2. Rom. 5:16.

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Some will probably have noticed that the power of Adam's sin and the sentence that came through him amount to one and the same thing, physical death to the whole human race. But the value of considering these various aspects of the disobedience is found in the fact that each view of it gives new light upon the surpassing qualities in Christ's work of reconciliation.

III. *The Resulting Reign Through Adam's Sin Is Wonderfully Overthrown in Christ.*¹

A still more striking contrast between the free gift of Christ and the trespass of Adam may be seen in the resulting reigns which came through the two acts.

1. Because of the trespass of the one man, DEATH reigned through that one man. In his action death found a channel through which to exercise its dominion. We have suggested this thought previously, and now it is stated plainly.

2. However, because of the free gift of Christ, they that receive the abundance of grace and the abundance of the gift of justification shall themselves "much more reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ."² Notice that through Christ WE shall reign, not death. Death's dominion over us is wonderfully overthrown in Christ. Not that we do not die, but death has no power to hold us, and, if we receive the abundance of the gift of justification, WE shall reign in life, when once we be resurrected, and redeemed once for all from death's kingship. Death is overthrown, and we are no longer of them "who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."³

IV. *The Effects of Adam's Sin Are Contrasted with Those of Christ's Gift.*

Paul began his comparison of Adam's sin with the reconciliation which we have in Christ in verse twelve. In entering into the discussion of Adam's sin, however, his main thought was interrupted, and not really picked up again till verse eighteen. If we connect verse twelve with the last half of verse eighteen we get the main thought of this entire Scripture. "As through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin," "even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification to life."⁴ Verse

1. Although vs. 17 is introduced as though it were explanation by Paul, I treat it as a third comparison, as do authors MacKnight and Sanday.

2. Rom. 5:17.

3. Heb. 2:15.

4. I translate this "justification to life," rather than "of life" with the common versions.

eighteen not only completes the argument, but it sums up all the contrasts that have been presented about the power, the sentence, and the resulting reign through Adam's sin, and tells HOW these came about.

1. Through one trespass, Adam's act of eating the forbidden fruit, "judgment came upon all men to condemnation"¹ of death. This summarizes all that has been said about the power, sentence and reign through Adam.

2. However, just as judgment came upon all men through Adam's act, even so "through one act of justification the free gift (of Christ) came unto all men to justification to life."² Incidentally, this verse proves positively that the death which the human race suffers in Adam is ONLY physical death, because it is stated unequivocally that as surely as Adam's sin condemns everyone, so does Christ's act save everyone from that condemnation. Of course, we know that no unbeliever will be saved, and so this passage must be understood to say that Christ justifies everyone to physical life, and not to spiritual or eternal life.

3. But how does it work out that a single act on the part of both Adam and Christ completely affects all men, one for bad and the other for good? It was by God's appointment that it is so. In the case of the former decision, God was eminently just, and in the case of the latter, unbelievably gracious.

a. No man sinned personally in Adam. How could anyone have done so? But the Scriptures say that through the one man's disobedience the many, meaning ALL, as in verse eighteen, were MADE sinners. You cannot MAKE a sinner out of a person when he is one already. So it was that in Adam, we, not having sinned personally, were made or constituted sinners by God's appointment, and were imputed the sentence of his disobedience. THUS we were made sinners, in suffering the effect of his act with him. Any other interpretation makes verse eighteen pronounce universal and unconditional salvation, which the word emphatically denies.

b. But God, the just and the justifier, also imputes a righteousness or justification to us, which will enable every man to stand alive before the presence of God in the last day. For "through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous,"³ that is, justified from the eternal power of Adam's penalty. Then shall those who have received the Lord Jesus find themselves eternally alive; and free from all sin, and not merely raised to suffer eternal punishment, the second death, for their own sins.

1. Rom. 5:18a.

2. Rom. 5:18b.

3. Rom. 5:19.

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Conclusion

The power, and the sentence, and the resulting reign because of Adam's act are changed, through Christ, from facts bringing everlasting doom to us. If we receive the abundance of God's grace, and the abundance of Christ's gift of justification we have no need to fear the fleshly state we are in; for as surely as death may have reigned over us, we shall reign in life through Jesus Christ. It is no far away theological vagary. This is life itself. And thanks be to God for the unspeakable gift!