

By One Man, Jesus Christ

Romans 5:12-21

REVIEW

An immoral woman goes for water, meets Christ, and learns of living water. A blind man cries to see, meets Christ, and gains spiritual sight. A man dies, meets Christ, and not only is raised to physical life but also shall be raised up again on the last day. What are *our* stories?

A glorious truth of Christianity is that for all who come to Christ,

- Life is not defeat.
- Life is not a draw.
- Life is not even *mere* conquering.

Let's review the flow of thought here in Romans 5. After four chapters of mostly abysmal news – all the human race sinful and condemned – Romans 5 provides a spring from which flow wondrous glories, one after another! Blessings for those who have been reconciled to Christ include:

- :1 – justification
- :1 – peace with God
- :2 – access into grace
- :2 – hope of the glory of God
- :3 – victory in tribulation
- :5 – love of God
- :5 – Holy Spirit
- :9 – eternal security
- :11 – joy

Then why did we take such a left turn last week with Romans 5:12, where we read of sin and death? To explain the mechanism behind our blessings in Christ. If we understand how we got entangled in sin, we can understand how we can escape it. If we understand the cause and certainty of curses falling on those who are in Adam, we can understand the cause and certainty of blessings falling on those who are in Christ.

And again, the overarching theme is that the benefits of being reconciled to God in Jesus Christ FAR EXCEED the effects of having sinned in Adam.

“The design is to exalt our views of the work of Christ by comparing them with the evil consequences of the sin of our first father and showing that the blessings in question not only extend to the removal of these evils but more! so that the grace of the gospel has not only abounded, but superabounded.”

This theme is reinforced by the repeated phrase: “much more” – already seen in :9, :10, and now in :15, :17, and :20. *Superabundance* is the theme. See, for example: “But where sin abounded, grace did *much more abound*.” (:20)

This theme will come to its climax in Chapter 8 and especially :37 – “Nay, in all these things we are *more than conquerors* through him that loved us.”

Whatever blows suffered from our enemies sin and death, grace much more abounds. Effects flow from Christ which are more beneficial than the former effects were ruinous. As written by Isaac Watts: “In him the tribes of Adam boast / More blessings than their father lost.”

How can such things be? Paul's answer: it all has to do with the concept of federal headship. To review, as federal head, Adam acted as a representative of the human race. When he sinned, God imputed the guilt of that sin to the entire human race.

As stated by the theologian, W. J. Woods, in the *Biblical Illustrator*, “Adam was the head of our race. He could neither stand nor fall alone. That which we see upon a small scale when the fortunes of a family depend upon the conduct of some member, or when the history of a nation is determined by some one statesman's decision – that took place upon the vastest scale when Adam was placed upon his probation in Eden. What was the tragic issue we all know. The head of the family gambled away his fair inheritance, bequeathing only to us the bitter entail of his corruption and death. The forbidden fruit turned out to be a deadly poison, and the pale infection has spread through all the race. Adam had been created in the likeness of God. But when Adam begat a child, it was in the image of a depraved and fallen man. The perversity which appears in early childhood, the proneness to error even of the wisest and most virtuous, the callous indifference to the will of Heaven which characterizes the majority, the common selfishness and the black list of daily crimes are witnesses of the curse that broods over the nations. Moreover, there is in the conscience of every one of us the knowledge that we have our own sad share in the inheritance of the fall.”

Now here's the good news: sinful man can switch federal heads. See Rom. 5:17, I Cor. 15:21-22. The same rules apply: Our standing before God is in keeping with our head's. That is, our standing in terms of guilt or innocence, sinner or saint, alien or citizen, foe or friend, outcast or son, bankrupt or rich, cursed or blessed, saved or lost, dead or alive – all are determined by the standing of our head! The great question is: Is our federal head *Adam* or is it *Christ*?

The particulars of this federal headship system occupies the remainder of Romans 5. It is time to examine those verses.

- :13-14 – Assures us that sin has been in the world since Adam, including those 2,500 intervening years before the Law was given to Moses. Granted, if there were no laws there would be no sin. And granted, people did not have God speak to them out loud as did Adam. But they had another witness, that being their conscience, as shown in 2:14-15.
- :15 – Note the unusual expression: “But not as the offense, so also is the free gift”? It points to the fact that the parallel between Adam and Christ is not perfect in that in each instance, Christ's provision is *better*. Here, Adam's offense of committing one sin to corrupt all is less remarkable than Christ gathering all sins ever committed unto Himself to bless all.
- :16 – A second point of contrast is introduced with similar wording. The issue: To go from innocence to guilt is as easy as breaking a law; to take all mankind from guilt to innocence is an unfathomably more difficult undertaking.
- :17 – The theme of death is reiterated. Cf. :12, :14, :15. See also: 1:32, 6:16, 6:23, 7:5, 7:10, 7:13, 7:24, 8:2, 8:6, 8:13. By “death” is meant that train of evils which have been introduced by sin, that extinguishing of all that men regard as life, that destruction that extends not just to body but soul, and not just in the present but the future world. This death casts a shadow over natural man's

pleasures, ambitions, expectations, satisfactions, and struggles to find meaning. It casts a pall on hopes to know and please God, to feel clean and innocent, and to hope for heaven. Note that in Adam “death *reigned*,” like a cruel, indiscriminate dictator. So also we read that those in Christ shall reign in *life*. All pleasures, ambitions, expectations, satisfactions, and pursuit of meaning in life are found and realized in the person of Christ, the new federal head.

:18-21 – Summary statements

:18 – Note the stress on “all men” in both cases. See:

“The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.”
(John 1:7)

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” (Heb. 2:9)

“Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (I Tim. 2:6)

“And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”
(I John 2:2)

:20 – What's the purpose of the Law then? That sin might abound in its obvious offensiveness, but even there, the superlative nature of what Christ did is seen, His grace super-abounding.

:21 – So now super-abounding grace abounds!

Remember our theme as stated in the beginning?

An immoral woman goes for water, meets Christ, and learns of living water. A blind man cries to see, meets Christ, and gains spiritual sight. A man dies, meets Christ, and not only is raised to physical life but also shall be raised up again on the last day. Let's ask it again: What are *our* stories? Do we have this “much more” life with Christ? Do we know what it is to be not survivors, not even conquerors, but more than conquerors through our Lord Jesus Christ?

REVIEW

1. In what ways is the Lord a “much more” God?

2. In what ways should we be a “much more” people?