



BETHEL
PRESBYTERIAN

MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Volume 21 Issue 19

May 8, 2022

Christ: The Savior of His People

Romans 5:12-21

Romans 5 is one of the more complicated passages in the book of Romans. We are tipped off to the theme with the “therefore” in v. 12 which refers back to vv. 10, 11 where Paul writes:

We shall be saved by His life. Romans 5:10

Through whom we have now received the reconciliation. Romans 5:11

With this salvation in mind, he wrote, “Therefore” — essentially “In light of this salvation...” Accordingly, Paul is talking here about the work that Christ did as our Savior beginning with a comparative statement, “Therefore, just as [ὡσπερ (*hōsper*)] through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin...” At this point his teaching took a significant turn with two important digressions.

Exegetically speaking, the latter part of v. 12 does NOT complete the comparison Paul began in the first part of the verse,¹ “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world...” In fact, he won’t finish the comparison until v. 18 where he essentially repeats the opening thought of v. 12. Notice the text:

So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men [~v. 12a], even so [οὕτως καὶ (*houtōs kai*)- that’s the phrase we’re looking for which completes the comparison] through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. Romans 5:18

Accordingly, vv. 12b-17 is a large digression containing two different points.

- In vv. 13-14 Paul focusses on The Condition of Man that Necessitates a Savior- which we are going to consider today.
- In vv. 15-17 he focusses on The Superiority of Christ as our Savior.

A Disposable Age

We live in a disposable age. We have disposable dishes, diapers, cameras, razors, and so much more! The result is that we tend to think that the world is expendable: if your job is giving you a hard time, quit. If your marriage gets difficult, walk away. If you don’t like your parents, divorce them.

Now sadly this attitude has entered the church.

- Churches are more and more viewed as disposable. If you don’t like the body that you’re at, shop for another church that will meet your needs. This isn’t a family, it’s a product to be consumed.
- Preachers are disposable. The average stint in the pulpit today for evangelical pastors is less than three years.
- Truth is disposable. If you don’t like the opening chapters of Genesis, you don’t have to accept it. The Ten Commandments? Most Bible believing churches today only hold to six/seven!

As detrimental as this attitude is, it is much more dangerous when it becomes our disposition toward Christ! Many of the difficulties and pain that came upon God’s people in Redemptive History occurred when they took God for granted. Think of it!

- Eve took God’s word for granted and so ate the forbidden fruit, Genesis 3.
- The priests of the Old Testament took their call for granted and so participated in all sorts of wickedness, Malachi 1.
- Peter took his relationship with Christ for granted and denied the Lord, Matthew 26:69-75.
- Ananias and Sapphira took God for granted and so lied to the Holy Spirit, Acts 5.

Paul did NOT want this to happen when it came God’s people which is why he wrote the text before us. We are looking at Paul’s first digression in which he demonstrated that Christ is an essential Savior. We see this first in the fallen state of man.

As Seen in the Fallen State of Man, v. 12b.

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men.” Romans 5:12b

In a couple of weeks, we are going to address the first part of this verse (known as the Protasis). For now, notice what this first digression tells us about the condition of all men outside of Christ; man is in a state of DEATH — “death spread to all men”! Adam was commanded by God this way:

From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die. Genesis 2:17

It is this death that is spoken about here. Through Adam “...death spread to all men...” What specifically does this mean? In the Bible “death” is used four different ways. It can refer to:

- Spiritual death, Ephesians 2:1-2; 4:18; 1 Corinthians 1:18; 2:14. This refers to the death of the soul and its consequent enslavement to Satan.
- Moral Death, Col. 3:9-10; Ephesians 4:24. This is the loss of conformity to God’s character- His righteousness, holiness, and knowledge.
- Physical death, Hebrews 9:27. This is the separation of the soul from the body.
- Eternal death, Revelation 21:8. This is the “second death” which speaks of eternal separation from God.

The “death” spoken about in this text and in Genesis 2:17 refers to ALL of this. Upon the Fall of man, this fourfold death spread to all men- with no exception. And thus, we read this:

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins... Ephesians 2:1

Outside of Christ, all live in a state of death! Christ said:

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgement, but has passed out of death into life. John 5:24

What does it mean to be saved? It is when someone passes from death to life! Thus Paul called the child of God to:

Present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead... Romans 6:13

When a person comes to Christ, they immediately are delivered from three fourths of the death that came upon man at the Fall. In Christ we are revived spiritually, morally, and receive eternal life, yet we await that glorious day when “there shall be no more death” (Revelation 21:3-4)! Yet such is NOT the case for the non-Christian. They live in a state of death. Their souls are dead, they lack God’s righteousness, holiness and knowledge, their bodies are slowly decaying unto death, and the expectation that they have upon death is eternal separation from God! Dr. John MacArthur put it this way:

No truth is more self-evident than the inevitability of death. The earth is pock-marked with graves, and the most incontestable testimony of history is that all men, whatever their wealth, status, or accomplishments, are subject to death. (MacArthur, 1991, p. 290)

Against this horrible backdrop of the fourfold tyranny of death, listen to a most glorious message of hope and consolation, speaking of Christ.

Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through *fear of death* were subject to slavery all their lives. Hebrews 2:14-15

As we’ll see in the coming weeks, that is the teaching of our text. Though “death has spread to all men” such that all are subject to its tyranny, the point of this text is that:

- IN CHRIST “...we shall be saved...” (v. 10) and...
- BECAUSE OF CHRIST “...we receive the reconciliation” (v. 11)!

Thus, if man is going to overcome the state of death and live for the rest of eternity, it will ONLY be through CHRIST! Truly, Christ is an ESSENTIAL SAVIOR! Yet Paul is NOT finished. Notice as seen in the guilt of man.

[As Seen in the Guilt of Man, vv. 12c-14.](#)

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. Romans 5:12c

At the outset, let me identify what Paul means by this, and then we'll look at the support he gives for this statement. The word Paul used for "sinned" here is in the aorist tense in the Greek, which is the past tense of completed action! That means Paul here has in mind NOT the various and sundry sins of a man throughout his lifetime, BUT one particular sin, a sin all are born guilty of! Consider the fivefold repetition of this truth in this section:

- v. 15: "...by the transgression of the one the many died..."
- v. 16: "...the judgment arose from one transgression..."
- v. 17: "...by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one..."
- v. 18: "...through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men..."
- v. 19: "...through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners..."

Clearly the "disobedience," "transgression," and "sin" that is being spoken about in this text is one particular sin which all people in all places and at all times are guilty of!

Now the Rabbinic Judaism of Paul's day would have rejected this statement, specifically that all men at all times are born sinful. Yet Paul would say, "Such are the brutal facts..."

For until the Law [Paul is speaking here about the Law of Moses] sin was in the world... Romans 5:13a

This would have been viewed as a radical statement in Paul's day, as it is still today. Understand what is being said here. The Jews of Paul's day agreed that all are sinful because all are guilty of violating the Mosaic law. Yet Paul here said that sin was in the world PRIOR to Moses!

Again, the Jews of Paul's day would have taken issue with this... as many do in our day! It is the belief of many that *"Men are NOT born guilty of sin. They are sinful because they disobey the law of God!"* Paul himself wrote earlier in this epistle:

Where there is no law, neither is there violation. Romans 4:15b

Understand what this means. There can be no sin without a law to sin against! Accordingly, find a person who has NOT received the law of God- like those in the deepest and darkest jungles of Africa- and you naturally will think that they must therefore NOT be *guilty* of sin. Yes, they sin. But God doesn't hold them accountable to it since they don't have the law! Baptists hold this view when it comes to babies dying in infancy.

Now, as a master apologist, Paul referenced this very point in the next statement.

But sin is not imputed² when there is no law. Romans 5:13b

Again, as sin is a transgression of the law AND as we don't get "Law" until Moses and the Ten Commandments, how can we talk about sin and mankind prior to the giving of the law? But here is where Paul's treatment takes a masterful turn. Notice the observation Paul made:

Nevertheless death reigned [this carries with it an absoluteness. Death's dominion over man was utterly complete...] from Adam until Moses, even [this is emphatic] over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam. Romans 5:14

This is a significant observation. What is the ULTIMATE cause of death in Scripture? It is SIN.

- The soul who sins will die. Ezekiel 18:4b
- For the wages of sin is death. Romans 6:23
- Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin. Romans 5:12a

Well, if death is the result of sin, then for death to "reign" over man before the giving of the Mosaic Law there can be only one conclusion: mankind prior to Moses had to have been accounted as sinful, otherwise they would NOT have died!

What's to explain this?

The people of God prior to Moses did NOT have the Ten Commandments! The only possible answer is that mankind therefore must be guilty of violating another law that existed prior to Moses! What is that law? The law God gave to Adam in the Garden- which is Paul's point in Romans 5:12.

Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death through sin. Romans 5:12

The sin that is addressed here is Adam's rebellion against God in the Garden of Eden. When God created Adam, the Lord gave him this commandment:

And 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 shall surely die. Genesis 2:16-17

What did Adam do? He rebelled against this commandment and so sinned! And here is

the kicker: this rebellion was credited NOT ONLY to Adam BUT to his descendants and so, all of mankind. Speaking of Adam's sin, Paul wrote this:

So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men...
For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners...
Romans 5:18z, 19a

Clearly, God established Adam as the Federal Head of mankind through which Adam's first (original) sin became the sin of the entire human race. This is why:

1. "Death reigned from Adam until Moses [and beyond]" and
2. Why all are born guilty of violating the Law of God! Adam violated the first commandment God ever gave — and ALL of MANKIND have paid the price ever since!!!

But herein is the beauty and glory of the work Christ did as our Savior — the very point Paul is making in this passage.

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. 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.
Romans 5:18-19

This practically means for all in Christ: Because of Adam's sin and Christ's Redemption, we do NOT look to our performance as the basis of our acceptance before God — whether that be obeying the Ten Commandments or any other law! RATHER we look to Christ's performance as the basis for us to stand blameless before God!

From this we conclude with Paul: Christ is an ESSENTIAL SAVIOR! Because all are born guilty of sin, all are subject to death! No performance on the part of man can take away God's wrath and displeasure!

We are talking here about Original Sin which came about because of Adam's Federal Headship — the fact that he represented us in the Garden such that his sin became our sin!

Now it is my observation that this Doctrine (Original Sin and Adam's Headship) typically elicits one of three responses: either we'll (1) reject it, (2) ignore it, or (3) live according to it. To those who would REJECT IT:

In light of the teaching of this text you might be tempted to say, *"I never asked Adam to represent me! So why am I being judged for what Adam did? It is not fair!"* Yet let me exhort you: NOT ONLY is it fair, BUT this doctrine is essential if any are to be saved!

Think of it this way: What if God, bowing to the complaint of man who say, "Unfair!", did away with the principle of representation? Instead of creating one man as the representative of mankind and placing him in the Garden with the charge not to eat the forbidden fruit, upon our birth God placed each of us in the Garden of Eden with the charge NOT to eat the forbidden fruit.

Initially you might like this, yet what do you suppose would happen? All would still disobey God! Listen, if the perfect man could NOT measure up to God, a perfect Doug or Mary or Leonard ALSO will fall short of His standard. See the Fall does NOT teach us that Adam was a weak loser! RATHER it teaches that man, perfect man, cannot fulfill God's demands, he will always fall short of God's glory! Only God can fulfill His demands! That is why God became a man in Christ. Herein is the Good News and Paul's point with this first digression:

- Christ/God came to this earth in order to fulfill the law which Adam disobeyed and so brought death NOT ONLY upon himself BUT all mankind! So, Christ fulfilled the law which Adam violated!
- But then, BECAUSE OF THE PRINCIPLE OF REPRESENTATION, Christ received our death giving us His life!!!

Now, do away with the Principle of Representation and you do away with the salvation we have in Christ! And so, rather than rejecting this doctrine, let us gratefully accept the Principle of Representation and praise God that, by grace through faith, Christ is now our Representative!

A second response we see today is that of IGNORING this doctrine. Yet how dangerous... There is no more miserable person in the world than the child of God who ignores the teaching of this text. Because Christ is our Representative, no longer is our performance the basis for God's approval/disapproval or acceptance/rejection of us! How we need to hear this!

Paul asked the Galatian believers, "...having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:3b) Why did Paul ask this? Because that is our tendency, it is to accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior BUT then *IGNORE* the work Christ did on our behalf and so continue to relate to God on the basis of our performance!

And lest you think you would never do this, let me give you seven signs that you are ignoring the Doctrine of Christ's Vicarious Death:

- Being critical of God's providences.
- Feeling the need to defend yourself before others.
- Having a pride that is frequently wounded.
- Being hyper-critical of others.

- Feeling incredibly distant from God.
- Frequently questioning your salvation.
- Having limited or no joy before the Lord.

Relating to God on the basis of your performance will lead to a sense of entitlement in our walk where we look down upon others and criticize God when things don't go our way. On the flip side, when we fall short of our religious expectations, the performance ethic will lead to a sense of doom, fear, and insecurity before God. *"God could not love me! I'm too sinful!"* Truly, we can't afford to IGNORE this doctrine! It is the difference BETWEEN despair and insecurity in our walks AND living with the joy of the Lord!

This brings us to the final response is to ACCEPT the Doctrine of the Christ's representation and so live in light of the fact that right now in your relationship with God — regardless of your sin — God receives you as He receives His Son, Jesus Christ! Do you understand what this means?

- What is God's disposition toward Jesus Christ?
- How pleased is God with Christ?
- How deep and unending do you suppose is God's love for Jesus?

Now don't miss it! What God's disposition is toward Christ, on account of Christ's Federal Headship, that is God's disposition toward you at all times! Talk about joy, glory, and power!

The story was told of an elderly man made an invalid by a mining injury early in his life. The result was a lifetime of struggle. Yet through it all he abounded in faith and joy in the Lord! A younger man visiting him inquired as to the reason for his faith. The old man responded thus:

Sometimes Satan comes to my bedside. He points out my window to friends with fine homes, growing families, and healthy bodies. Then, he taunts me by asking, 'God loves you?!'

The younger man was shocked at the man's honesty and asked, "What do you say to Satan, when he says that?" The Old man replied, "I take Satan by the hand to a hill called Calvary. There, I point to the thorns on Jesus' brow and to the nails in hands and feet, and I say to Satan, 'Behold, how much God love me!'"

If we live our lives on the basis of our religious performance, truly we will live with insecurity and fear. BUT if we live in light of Christ's work on our behalf, then we need never doubt God's love or intentions.

End Note(s)

¹ For explanation, I refer you to my systematic theology professor in seminary, Dr. Robert Reymond, “As we begin our own exposition of Romans 5:12–19, we note that the expression διὰ τοῦτο (*dia touto*, ‘because of this’) commencing verse 12 refers back to the expression ‘in his life’ in verse 10. It is plain that the following ὡσπερ (*hōsper*, ‘just as’) introduces a protasis. Where is its apodosis? Some expositors have urged that the apodosis is also to be found in verse 12, commencing with the καὶ οὕτως (*kai houtōs*, ‘and so’). But when Paul introduces his apodoses after ὡς, *hōs*, or ὡσπερ, *hōsper*, he regularly does so, not with καὶ οὕτως, *kai houtōs*, but with οὕτως καὶ; (*houtos kai*, ‘so also’), as in verses 5:15, 18, 19, 21; 6:4; and 11:30. Where then is the apodosis after the ὡσπερ, *hōsper*, if not in verse 12? It is the οὕτως καὶ, *houtos kai*, of verse 18 with the original ὡσπερ, *hōsper*, clause of verse 12 introduced again in different language by the ὡς, *hōs* of verse 18. The thought would then be:

Verse 12: Because of this [being in Christ], *just as* by one man sin and death entered the world, and death came upon all men in that all sinned—

(Verses 13–17: An excursus commences [verses 13–14] on the ‘all sinned’ phrase at the end of verse 12 in which Paul makes it clear that he means ‘all sinned in Adam’s transgression’; then a second excursus [verses 15–17] follows in which he shows that while Adam is indeed a ‘type’ of Christ [end of verse 14], Christ and God’s gift of grace through him achieve far more than Adam’s failure by reversing the operation of divine judgment not only against Adam’s sin but also against ‘many trespasses’ [verse 16])—

Verse 18: So then [having disposed of certain questions in the two excurses], *as* through one transgression [judgment came] unto all men [in Adam] unto condemnation [note: this is a rephrasing of the ‘just as’ clause of verse 12], *so also* through one act of righteousness, [the free gift came] unto all men [in Christ] unto justification of life.

Verse 19: [Paul now summarizes the whole] For *just as* through the disobedience of the one man [Adam] the many [in Adam] were made sinners, *so also* through the obedience of the one Man [Christ] the many [in Christ] were constituted righteous.” (Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* [Nashville: T. Nelson, 1998], pp. 434-435)

² The imputation spoken about here is not that of Adam’s, but that which came upon the people of God when they were organized into a theocracy and so took upon themselves the obligations of the case laws as well as the ceremonial laws of the Mosaic/Davidic covenants. Even though there may have been many genuine and faithful servants of God throughout this era, nevertheless they suffered on account of the sin of the nation, a sin which was imputed to them such that they themselves were guilty of violating the Covenant. This is why Daniel prayed as he did in Daniel 9:4ff. He included himself in his confession on behalf of the fallen nation.