

Romans 5:12-21

¹²Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—

Therefore- This is a continuation of thought. Mr Barnhouse believed that the purpose of this whole chapter was to show that salvation in Christ provides life and power NOW. It provides **present prevailing righteousness, dynamic effective life** and **irresistible invincible dominion**. And I believe that he is right.

Up to this point in the book of Romans we have seen humanity divided into two categories- under Sin and under Grace. He has told us that Jews and Gentiles alike are, **naturally**, all under sin. 3:9 He has also told us that Abraham is the "father of us all" through **faith**. 4:16. The **first group** is under the state of **sin, guilt and wrath**. The **second** group is under the state of **Grace and Faith**. John Stott makes the point that in the passage that we are entering this morning, the **former** are **in Adam** and the **later** are **in Christ**. Stott goes on to say that (I quote) "having been justified and reconciled, all of us are enjoying peace with God, standing in grace, rejoicing in present sufferings and future glory, assured of final salvation, and exulting in God through Christ by whom these blessings have become ours."

The "therefore" in our text means that Paul is still building on the previous text. What comes next is a second way of explaining our state of salvation that was explained in verses 1-3. This text also serves as a transition into what comes next. When I first began to study the text I looked at it as a simple explanation of the federal headship of Adam and Christ and what each produced. But I completely missed the under-lying point of the use of comparison and contrast to display the **enormity** of what Christ accomplished.

Vs 12- just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—

First note the language in the context. When you begin a sentence with a "just as" statement, you end it with some kind of

“even so” statement like you see in verse 18. It looks to me like the New King James has used parenthesis well in an attempt to show how this is written. Paul starts with his “just as” statement and takes a side road in verse 13 into explaining something he sees the need to explain. Then he comes back to his initial statement by rephrasing it in verse 18. He has laid the logical ground work to do so. And then he adds the “even so” statement at the end.

Now back to the content of verse 12.

Just as through one man sin entered the world. The “just as” means something will come later that is “just as” this event. Adam’s work will be compared to Christ’s work in some way. But not yet.

through one man sin entered the world

Sin did not have its beginning in Adam. Satan sinned well before Adam. But sin **did** enter the world of people **through Adam**. When Adam ate of the fruit he did it knowing full well that he should not have done so. He knew what God had said and he transgressed. And while technically his was not the **first** sin committed by a human, it is the **first** sin that counted for all mankind. Sin did not enter the world through Eve. It entered through Adam, the federal head.

and death through sin,

Death was not part of this planet’s functioning until Adam sinned. Adam was told that if he ate of the fruit he would die. He ate of the fruit and he was sure to die. And the rest of creation bore the same evil fruit of his sin. Adam was our federal head. As such, he gave us the State of Sin. He firmly placed all humanity under sin and its **grave** consequence... **grave** in both senses of the word.

and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—

Paul is about to expand upon this. He will depart from his initial sentence to explain some things. Then he will come back to finish his initial thought. Because of Adam’s sin, death spread to everyone. The reasoning is **not** that because everyone

committed sin for themselves they will die, although that would also be true. But Paul is making the point that the **sin of Adam** doomed all men to death. He emphasizes this in the next verse. If this is not his point, his next sentence makes no point... no sense.

Paul is saying here that all sinned when Adam sinned.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones said about this- I quote- "God has always dealt with mankind through a head and representative. The whole story of the human race can be summed up in terms of what has happened because **of Adam** and what has happened and will happen **because of Christ.**" End quote.

There are two passages that are frequently used to show that this type of idea is not without parallel in scripture.

Heb 7:9 The first passage regards Abraham paying tithes to Melchizedek. ⁹Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes **through** Abraham, so to speak, ¹⁰for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. So the writer of Hebrews is saying that Levi can be said to have paid tithes to Melchizedek because Abraham, his forefather paid tithes to Melchizedek. Levi paid tithes in some sense when Abraham paid tithes. Abraham was Levi's representative in some sense.

The second example of something like this is when Achan stole the treasure of Jericho we see Achan, one man, representing all of Israel. Joshua 7:1 1But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of the Lord burned against the children of Israel.

Joshua 7:11 11Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put it among their own stuff.

Here we see that what Achan did he did representing the whole nation of Israel. So while it may be unusual for **us** to think this way in our western culture, it was not at all unusual for the Hebrew mind to understand this. Adam represented us as our

federal head. He represented all mankind when he sinned. You could say that what he did he did **on behalf** of all mankind and **to all mankind**. Now at this point we could seek to make an argument with God about this being unfair. Yet we all know by our own experience that we all would have done exactly the same thing. While this verse is not speaking about the fact that every person alive commits sin, there are plenty of others that do. From a hound's perspective, that tree is not worth barking up. When Adam sinned, we all sinned.

¹³(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

¹³(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

Sin= Hamartia- to miss the mark

Transgression= parabasis A violation of the law

Imputed- Philemon 1:18 explains this word well by its use there. Paul when speaking of the expenses that Philemon created says "Put that on my account" Put that on my tab and I will pay it. So if a person does something that the law forbids but does not know that it is something that is forbidden, it is not held to that person's account. It is not imputed. In a court of law you could not be convicted of transgressing a law that does not exist at the time you committed the act. It would not be imputed to you. It would not be held against your account.

Paul is saying there was plenty of sin in the world. People were surely straying from what God created them to be. People were guilty of sin and in the state of sin. But they were not guilty of intentionally defying that which God had said. They were not guilty of transgression. They could not have blatantly rebelled, technically transgressed, against a law that they did not know. So they could not have been guilty of transgression to the

revealed law of God. So do they get off scott free due to their ignorance? No! And why not?

14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam-

Reign- to be the king- to exercise kingly power. To exercise the highest influence or control.

I'd like to take a little aside here. The word for reign is used 4 times in this chapter and the next. A similar word dominion is used 3 times in chapters 6 and 7. Dominion means to be the Lord of, to rule over, to exercise influence upon.

There is a theme running through chapters 5,6 and 7 about what is **in charge** of our lives.

We find here and in verse 17 that the effect of Adam's sin was that death now reigns over all the unregenerate sons of Adam. **Death is their king** and exercises absolute control over them. I say this because scripture says that the unregenerate are completely powerless spiritually. They are powerless to chose in a Godward direction. Death reigns supreme.

The regenerate people have a different thing reigning, and the situation is a little different. In Romans 5:17 we see that **through** Christ **we** reign over our wills, or another way of saying this is that **Grace** reigns. Romans 5:21

We learn in Chapter 6 vs 9 that Death no longer has dominion over Christ since Christ **resurrected** from death. We then get a **therefore** later in chapter 6 verse 12 that says that we should not **LET** sin reign. Can you see what is happening here? In a believers life there is a battle. The will has been set free to choose in a godward direction. We are no longer dead to God. We are alive. We still coexist with sin. But sin does **NOT reign** necessarily. It does not reign by necessity. It is clear that we can **allow** it to reign at any given instance. We can submit to its advertising, to its power of influence. We can say yes or we can say no when we are aware that it is sin that is influencing us. We did not have this power when we were in Adam and death

reigned supreme. But now we can and we must, by faith in Christ, reign over our wills.

We must be very clear here. Scripture is clear that a true believer in Christ obeys Christ. It is clear that sin is not the driving force in a believer's life. A believer does not continue to knowingly practice, knowingly choose to commit a known sin. According to scripture he cannot continue in that state as a believer. At the same time it can't be denied that a believer has the capacity to chose to sin. The thing is, a believer has **no reason** to chose to sin. And Christ will prove Himself victorious **over sin** in every believer's life. So we can never become comfortable with sin. We can never accept it as a life pattern or even a reasonable choice. We must by faith resist the devil. If we chose not to, we may at any point prove ourselves to have never really loved Christ to begin with. That is the danger. What comes into question is not God's willingness or ability to forgive sin. What comes into question is whether we are **in Adam** or **in Christ**. If we continue in rebellious activity toward God we prove that sin is truly our master and our first love and everything else is a show.

Believers are free to say "no" to sin. What a tremendous blessing and responsibility that is!

Now back to our text.

Why did death reign? Why were the people from Adam to Moses still guilty of sin if they were not guilty of transgression? How could they be in the state of sin if they had not transgressed the law?

Why did death reign supremely. Why did every single person die during that period. (except Enoch)

The answer is found in Adam. Death reigns because Adam, who had only one law, sinned. Since Adam was guilty of technical transgression, everyone following him was now born into the state of sin, the state of fallen-ness.

A person could make an argument in the defense of the people who lived during this period of history. He could say, "how can they be held guilty of sin, of missing the mark, if they had no

law.” The answer, says Paul, is that Adam, who represented their race- the human race- transgressed. And they were in Adam when he did. So they are now born into the same state of sin that Adam entered into when he sinned. The human race is guilty due to the actions of their federal head.

Not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam- Adam knew the one thing that God had said but he defied it. He knowingly went against it. The people who lived during the period when there was no law could not have sinned in the same way that Adam did. They didn’t sin the sin of transgression- knowing disobedience to a command stated by God.

who is a type of Him who was to come.

Type- Tupos When Thomas asked to see the print of the nails in Christ’s hands, the print is the word Type used here. It is a pattern, a model. Here again we see that Christ will be something like Adam. Adam is a print, something similar, to what is to come.

¹⁵But the free gift *is* not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. ¹⁶And the gift *is* not like *that which came* through the one who sinned. For the judgment *which came* from one *offense resulted* in condemnation, but the free gift *which came* from many offenses *resulted* in justification.

Along with the similarities there are differences. There are similarities of how both Adam and Christ represented mankind, but there are differences in what they accomplished. Here the emphasis is on contrast, not comparison. First the negative emphasis is on what Adam did, **Adam’s action**. The second was on that which came through **Adam’s person**, the conduit, the person that lived on after his sin. It is that which came through the one who sinned.

The emphasis here is that they are different in effect. The offense brought the onset of death to **the many**.

"Many" means just what it says. Many, much. The offense brought on **death to the many**. What a horrible effect it had on humanity. It takes that which was created for eternity and limits it to a finite time, a beginning and an end. It brings limits and constraints to life. It inflicts life with death.

The gift that **God gave**, as opposed to the offense that man gave, **abounded to many**.

Abounded- to exceed a fixed number of measure, to be left over and above a certain number or measure. Matthew 14:
¹⁹Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. ²⁰So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that **remained**. The word for remained is the same word in our text for abounded. It is more than is needed. More than can be counted. And that is what God's gift of Grace is like.

Application Point- Adam's sin was sufficient to damn all humanity. It was enough to do us in. But what Christ did for His children, for those who will be **in Him**, was not only sufficient but it abounded. It was way more than enough. It accomplished the job at hand and did so much more. **Oh that we could see our situation in Christ for just one day.** Oh that we would grasp **by faith** where we sit in Christ. To believe this truth is to be set free from fear and doubt. We all sit as princes endued with every grace needed to live every moment in victory in Jesus. We are set free to walk on the waves rather than be swallowed by the storm. We are free to rejoice while facing trials of many kinds instead of shrinking back because of what fleshly sight would tell us of our condition. We can believe, while facing the greatest darkness in our situations that we are solidly in the light of Christ. We are abounding in Grace. His grace is all sufficient. We have everything we need for life and godliness. Oh how blessed we are? Will we believe in this when our emotions tell us otherwise?

I am committed to believing this in 2010. There are things I know that I cannot do. I have succeeded in not doing them for 51 years. I am now fully convinced that I cannot do them. But I am also convinced that Christ through me **can do** them. And I am committed this year to living more by faith than I have previously. Please help me in this. Remind me that God's grace has abounded through Christ. There is more than enough for all of us.

Now, let's go back to the text. Next we see another difference in the effect of **what Christ did** to the effect of what **Adam did**.

For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification.

The **offense** brought **death** and the **judgment that came from the offense** resulted in **condemnation**. Worse than dying is the curse that came **with the death**. We are judged in Adam by God's righteous judgment and we are condemned. By Adam's single transgression we are damned to God's disfavor and God's punishment of sin. **Death** is bad enough. **Death and judgment** is far worse. We, in Adam, will stand before God in His great disfavor and taste of his wrath... and rightly so. That is what Adam did for us.

But the free gift did something just the opposite. It caused us to move from one end of the spectrum to its very opposite. In **Adam** we stand before God and God would be unjust if He **did not** punish us in his wrath. In Christ, we stand before God and God would be unjust if He **would** punish us. That is how complete and how opposite what Christ did is from what Adam did. And it does not matter how many transgressions we may have committed. While one transgression was enough to damn us, many transgressions cannot keep us from being justified if Christ died for us.

¹⁷For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)

This is the second mention of death reigning. And we should make no mistake about it. When we are in Adam, death reigns. **Spiritual death** and **physical** death reign. No man can overcome the government of death. No coup can sweep it out of power. No invention by man will end it. No one can open his own eyes to God. No one can give himself spiritual life. Death reigns supreme in Adam.

But again we see the wonderful contrast. Those who God awakens to Himself, those who by faith receive abundance of Grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life through Christ.

abundance of grace

Abundance- perisseia superabundantly, superfluously This word is expressive of God's provision similar to the word we looked at for abounding. There is no shortage of God's grace. There is never a lack of it available for us. In this life we constantly work with limited resource. We have limited time, limited money, limited talent, limited tools, limited friends, but we never ever reach the limits of God's grace. It is limitless.

the gift of righteousness

Like Mike has frequently said, only as we recognize the problem of our sin do we appreciate what Christ came to give us. There are lots of folks that do not want a gift of righteousness because they do not see their **lack of it** as a problem. But to those who are pierced by their own evil, those who understand that we deserve every bit of the hell the devil has in store for him, **only those people** can rejoice in the glory of a gift of righteousness. To imagine that we, born in Adam and showing our genetic disposition to follow his lead, can receive righteousness. That would be too good to be true if God Himself had not said it.

Remember that the theme of Romans is **revealed righteousness**. Here we see another picture of God's righteousness revealed.

reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ

Notice that in this verse it says that **death** reigned. But look who **reigns** in **life**? It does not say **life reigns** as we might expect it to. God is very careful to say what He means. It says **those who receive** abundance of grace **reign**. WE REIGN. We reign in life through Christ. Mr Barnhouse has a wonderful quote I would like to read. "Formerly I looked upon the Christian life as something almost apart from the center of my own being and will. I still have an old adamic nature, but I also have the life of Christ. Almost unconsciously, perhaps, I thought the two were so alien to each other that I must hope for the best but expect old Adam to share the throne from time to time at least. It is possible to be almost tolerant of the old nature. When I understand, however, that the prerogatives of royalty are mine; that the right of royalty is given to me; that I, the very center of my being and will, am to take the throne that Christ has wrested from death; and that I am to reign much more abundantly, not only in heaven but on earth today, through Jesus Christ, I see every detail of Christian living vastly heightened in importance and value.... I am to reign. I am to appropriate the grace that has been given to me and channel it into all my life. If I grasp the truth that **I myself am to reign**, then I can give the Lord Jesus Christ that for which His heart yearns- a creature in which He can produce resurrection life. Thus during my life here I can sing- not of eternity but of time

There's a land that is fairer than day

And by faith I can enter it now

With my will freed from death I can say

"Ex King death, leave the throne, leave it now."

¹⁸Therefore, as through one man's offense *judgment* came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act *the free gift* came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

At this point it looks to me like Paul, after adding some things that he thought were important to his explanation, backs up to

get another run at it. He starts again with his "as" statement and adds an "even so" to give the comparison.

Through one man's, (Adam's), offense, judgment came to all men. One man committed one sin that resulted in an effect to all men. In the same way, one man, Christ, committed a righteous act. The act was His submission to death on the cross. And as a result his free gift came to all men.

Now the "all men" can pose a problem to theologians. And if this were the only verse in scripture it would be a solid verse for universalism, the idea that God is going to save everyone. But we have already seen in Romans that the righteous are saved by grace through faith and that not all are or will be saved. Paul will go on to make an even stronger argument in that regard.

I am convinced that there is a sense in that Christ's death was for all mankind. I am also convinced that there is a sense in that it is only for those who will believe. Parsing out those senses can get pretty difficult and it is not something I am very good at. Christ's death was certainly **sufficient** to save **all** mankind. It is also clear it is **effective** at saving **some** of mankind. For me the verse does not create a problem. When we put it with other verses we know for certain that the Christ's sacrificial death for those who believe results in justification of life. At this stage it looks to me like justification of life is speaking of more than just atonement. It looks to me like it is speaking of more than sins being forgiven. This **justification of life** is power for living a new life in Christ. This is more than justification of our record. It is justification of life as we know it.

Notice the alternatives here; judgment or the free gift. Adams offense brought judgment with condemnation. Christ's death brought the free gift with justification. Which do you want? You are showing with your life which you want, which is yours.

¹⁹For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

Again we are looking at the comparison of what each of these men accomplished. One man sinned and many became sinners, even before they committed any sin. What a hideous result. What an accomplishment to be remembered by. Adam- the man that made all his offspring sinners.

And then the other man, instead of disobeying he obeyed in the one thing that would change the spiritual direction of every man who believed in Him, who was elect by Him. And these many will be made righteous, not just in the legal sense but in the visible sense. In the end their works will reflect the effectiveness of the powerful work that Christ did, and is doing, in their lives.

²⁰Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,

Paul had used the period of time when there was no law as an example to show how effective Adam's work was. Men were sinners simply because they were from Adam's loins, even when there was no law to break. Now he mentions one of the purposes for the law being provided at a later time. It entered so that sin was not only seen with greater clarity but that it would escalate sin as a result of man knowing exactly what he can rebel against. Since God says "A" they will more quickly choose "B". The offense would abound. The effects of Adam's fall would become clearer and clearer. And what effect would that have on what Christ did? Christ's grace would surpass it in abundance. There will be more sin. There will be much more grace.

The first **abound** is pleonazo- to super-abound, to exist in abundance. When law comes, sin exists in even greater abundance.

The second abound is huperperisseuo- to abound beyond measure, abound exceedingly

The second abound takes the first abound and does it one better. The effect is that no matter how much sin abounds, **Grace** abounds much more. The work of Christ is victorious over the work of Adam. The work of Adam will cause a person to sin

and when he finds out what God wants, it will cause him to sin even more. The work of Christ will first provide forgiveness for that previously committed sin and even more than that, it will cause that man to turn around, to repent, and to obey God in sheer gratitude for what Christ has done. No matter what the effects of Adam's offense, the grace of Christ does much much more in a God-ward direction.

Hodge says of this verse that the Grace of God has proved itself much more **efficacious in the production of good** than sin in the **production of evil**.

²¹so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Here comes another comparison. Sin and grace both reign. But the contrast is in kind. Sin reigned in death. We discussed this earlier. Sin had a monarchy and death was everywhere in everything. From the first day a man was born he was dead in the most important way. And there was no uprising that would free man from that reign. It made communism or dictatorships look totally ineffective in comparison.

And just as sin reigned, now grace reigns in the life of a believer. And it doesn't reign through death. It reigns through righteousness. It reigns through rightness, through justice. Paul is very careful to explain each point he makes in terms of God's righteousness. Grace reigns, not through some kind of legal loophole. Grace is extended to us in such a way that it squares completely with God's absolute righteousness. When Grace reigns things **get** right and things **are** right. When Grace reigns, people live forever and it is righteous that they do so. And how does grace reign? Through Jesus Christ our Lord. I think the words Grace and Christ could be used interchangeable in these sentences because in the end, it is Christ reigning in our hearts that accomplishes all this.

Matthew Henry says this about this text:

But grace reigns to life, eternal life, and this through righteousness, **righteousness- imputed** to us for **justification, implanted** in us for **sanctification**; and **both** by Jesus Christ our Lord, through the power and efficacy of Christ, the great prophet, priest, and king, of his church.

Mr Barnhouse summarizes it by saying "The work of God came to us by the Lord Jesus Christ, in righteousness, and the end product is eternal life."

We are now solidly in a new year with its new start. Let's take territory back from Adam in our lives this year. Let's walk in a bold faith that believes what God says about the reign of Grace. Let's say no to the devil and yes to Christ. And let's accept no compromise with our old selves. Are we willing to commit to do such a thing?