

Romans Session 6g

Christ and the Reign of Life 2

Romans 5:15-21 (NASB77)

¹⁵ *But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression 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 to the many.*

¹⁶ *And 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.*

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.*

¹⁸ *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.*

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.*

²⁰ *And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,*

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

Paul continues his analogy of Adam and Christ, showing how the life that was made possible for all men by Christ's atoning sacrifice is illustrated antithetically by the death that was made inevitable for all men by Adam's sin.

It is the truth the apostle summarizes in his first letter to Corinth.

1 Corinthians 15:22 (NASB77)

²² *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.*

As noted before, the only truly analogous factor between Adam and Christ is that of one man/one act. That is just as the one-man Adam's sin brought sin to all mankind, so the one-man Jesus Christ's one sacrifice made salvation available to all mankind.

In the present passage, as if to examine every facet of this marvelous analogy, Paul explores five essential areas of contrast between the condemning act of Adam and the redemptive act of Christ.

1. Different in effectiveness (v15)
2. Different in their extent (v16)
3. Different in their efficacy (v17)
4. Different in their essence (vv18-19)
5. Different in their energy (vv20-21)

THE CONTRAST IN EFFECTIVENESS

Romans 5:15-21 (NASB77)

¹⁵ *But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression 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 to the many.*

The contrast here is between **the free gift** of Christ and **the transgression** of Adam. He shows that these acts were totally opposite.

By definition, all gifts are free, but *charisma* (**free gift**) refers to something given with special graciousness and favor, and therefore could also be appropriately rendered "**grace gift**".

When used of what is given to God, the term refers to that which is right and acceptable in His sight; when used of that which is given by God, as here, it refers to that which is given completely apart from human merit.

In regard, to Jesus' atoning sacrifice, both meanings are involved.

Going to the cross was Jesus' supreme act of obedience to His Father and therefore was wholly acceptable to the Father. His going to the cross was also the supreme act of divine grace, His free gift offered to sinful mankind.

Transgression is from *paraptoma*, which has the basic meaning of deviating from a path, or departing from the norm. By extension, it carries the idea of going where one should not go, and therefore is sometimes translated "**trespass**".

The one sin of Adam that was bequeathed to all his posterity and that brought the reign of death on the world was a **transgression** from the one command, from the single norm for obedience, that God had given.

The impact of **the free gift** and of **the transgression** are distinct to themselves.

By the transgression of the one, that is, Adam, the many died.

Perhaps for the sake of parallelism, Paul uses **many** in two different senses in this verse.

As we will see, he uses the term **all** with similarly distinct meanings in verse 18.

In regard, to Adam's act, **many** is universal and inclusive, corresponding to the **all**, in verse 12.

Because all men, without exception bear in themselves the nature and mark of sin, they are **all**, without exception, under the sentence of death (as he has made clear in earlier chapters).

By eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam departed from God's standard and entered a divinely forbidden realm.

Instead of becoming more like God, as Satan had promised man became more unlike his Creator and separated from Him.

Instead of bringing man into the province of God, Adam's **transgression** delivered him and all his posterity to the province of Satan.

The heart of Paul's comparison, however, is that Christ's one act of salvation had immeasurably greater impact than Adam's one act of damnation.

Paul says, **Much more, he says, did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.**

The divine provision of redemption not only is an expression of **the grace of God** the Father but of **the grace of God** the Son, **the one Man, Jesus Christ.**

The sin of Adam brought death. But **the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ**, did more than simply provide the way for fallen mankind to be restored to the state of Adams original innocence.

Jesus Christ not only reversed the curse of death by forgiving and cleansing from sin but provided the way for redeemed men to share in the full righteousness and glory of God.

John Calvin wrote, "Since the fall of Adam had such an effect as to produce the ruin of many, much more efficacious is the grace of God to the benefit of many; in as much as it is admitted, that Christ is much more powerful to save, than Adam was to destroy (Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979], p. 206).

God's grace is greater than man's sin. Not only is it greater than the one original sin of Adam that brought death to all men but it is greater than all the accumulated sins that men have ever or will ever commit.

It might be said that Adams sinful act, devastating as it was, had but a one-dimensional effect, it brought death to everyone.

But the effect of Christ's redemptive act has facets beyond measure, because He not only restores man to spiritual life but gives him the very life of God.

Death by nature is static and empty, whereas life by nature is active and full. Only life can **abound**.

Now, contrary to its use in the beginning of this verse regarding Adam, the term **many** now carries its normal meaning, applying only to those for whom Christ's gracious gift of salvation is made effective through their faith in Him.

Although Paul does not mention that qualifying truth at this point, He has just declared that believers are "**justified by faith**" and are introduced "**by faith into this grace in which we stand (5:1-2)**

That of course is the cardinal truth of the gospel as far as man's part is concerned: and it is the focus of Paul's teaching in this epistle from 3:21-5:2.

Many of the Puritans and Reformers ended their sermons or commentary chapters with a statement about the passage's, "practical use"

The practical truth of Romans 5:15 is that the power of sin, which is death, can be broken, but the power of Christ, which is salvation, cannot be broken.

Listen to Paul and he writes to Timothy;

2 Timothy 1:10 (NASB)

40 but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

Jesus broke the power of sin and death, but the converse is not true.

Sin and death cannot break the power of Jesus Christ.

The condemnation of Adam's sin is reversible, but the redemption of Jesus Christ is not.

The effect of Adam's act is permanent only if not nullified by Christ.

The effect of Christ's act, however, is permanent for believing individuals and not subject to reversal or nullification.

We have great assurance that once we are in Jesus Christ, we are in Him forever.

THE CONTRAST IN EXTENT

Romans 5:16 (NASB77)

¹⁶ *And 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.*

The second contrast is in extent, then between the one act of Adam and the one act of Christ. In that regard, just as in effectiveness, Christ's justification is far greater than Adam's condemnation.

In verse 15 Paul speaks of the transgression of the one, whereas in verse 16 he speaks of **the one who sinned**, that is, the one who transgressed.

In the first case the emphasis is on the sin, in the second it is on the sinner.

But the basic truth is the same.

It was the one sin by the one man at the one time that brought God's **judgment** and its **resulting condemnation**.

But **the gift** of God's grace through Jesus Christ **is not like that**.

God's **judgment** on Adam and his posterity **arose from but one transgression**.

On the other hand, however, **the free gift arose** not simply because of that single transgression but **from many transgressions**, and its result is not simply restoration but **justification**.

John Murray offers a helpful observation: "The one trespass demanded nothing less than the condemnation of all. But the free gift unto justification is of such a character that it must take the many trespasses into its reckoning; it could not be the free gift of justification unless it blotted out the many trespasses.

Consequently, the free gift is conditioned as to its nature and effect by the many trespasses just as the judgment was conditioned as to its nature, and effect by the one trespass alone" (The Epistle to the Romans [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965], p. 196).

This verse contains two very practical truths that are closely related.

1. God hates sin so much that it took only one sin to condemn the entire human race and separate them from Him. It was not that Adam's sin was worse than others he committed or worse than men have committed since. It was simply that his first sin was sin. At the time, eating the forbidden fruit was the only sin that Adam and Eve could have committed, because God had placed but one restriction on them. But had it been possible, any other sin would have had the same effect. In the same way, any sin that any man has ever committed would be sufficient to damn the whole human race, just as Adam's one sin did. A very sobering thought.
2. The other truth in verse 16 is still more amazing and incomprehensible, and is as heartening as the first is sobering. Greater than God's hatred for sin is His love for the sinner. Despite the fact that God hates sin so much that any one sin could damn the human race, His loving grace toward man is so great that He provides not only for the redemption of one man from one sin but for the redemption of all men from all sins. Jesus Christ took upon himself the sins of the whole world.

2 Corinthians 5:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ *namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*