



Romans 5:12-21 Handout

Christ's Supreme Gift

Context: The previous verses of chapter 5 lead one to ask, “How is Jesus able to extend such benefits (love, justification, reconciliation) to humankind?” Paul begins in v. 12 with the linking word *Therefore* demonstrating the connection between what has come before and the lesson he is about to begin.

* **The Reign of Death (Romans 5:12-14)**

¹² 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— ¹³ for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. ¹

- **Sin > Death > Spread to All.** We see that Adam’s sin (“one man” v. 12) leads to death not just for him but for all of humanity. Paul claims that all die because all have sinned. The idea of all of humanity bearing the consequence of Adam’s sin has made many recoil in offense throughout history (i.e. Pelagius in the 5th century)
- Paul uses the idea of _____ in chapter 5 for both Adam & Jesus Christ.
- Once God gives the Law to Israel sin can now be _____ (or held against) the offender because the way of righteousness has been made clear. However, humanity has experienced physical death even before the Law was made known.
- Adam is a type of Christ (v. 14). Though Adam comes first chronologically, Jesus Christ is the far superior “one Man” and the fulfillment of the “type”.

“There can be but one explanation. All died because all sinned in and through Adam, the representative or federal head of the human race.” – John Stott²

* **The Transgression & the Gift (Romans 5:15-17)**

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 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.

- In this section Adam’s sin is identified as “the transgression”. Adam gives his children death through his transgression.
- Here we are presented with juxtaposition between the gifts of Adam and Jesus. We see the repetition of the words gift and grace in the text because Jesus offers those who bear His name the undeserved, free gift of eternal life.

“That one single misdeed should be answered by judgment, this is perfectly understandable: that the accumulated sins and guilt of all the ages should be answered by God’s free gift, this is the miracle of miracles, utterly beyond human comprehension.” – Charles Cranfield³

¹ All Scripture quotations taken from New American Standard Bible (NASB), Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by [The Lockman Foundation](#)

² Stott, John R.W. [The Message of Romans](#). The Bible Speaks Today. IVP. 1994.

³ As quoted in Stott, John R.W. [The Message of Romans](#). pg 181 (Google Books) The Bible Speaks Today. IVP. 1994.

* **Contrasting Disobedience & Obedience (Romans 5:18-21)**

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** The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- The disobedience of Adam, by necessity, leads all of humanity to be condemned (death & judgment). The obedience of Christ grants the free gift of righteousness to all who believe which leads them to the manifold blessings of eternal life.
- The Law increases transgression by making the righteousness standard of God evident. The inherited, sinful nature of Adam causes everyone to continually disobey the explicit Law of God. The Law is God's grace to us because it makes us aware of our inability to be good by mere effort and our need for "eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 21)
- Some argue that Paul is presenting evidence for _____ in Romans 5 because he refers to "all men" & "many" regarding both death through Adam and life through Christ.
 - "Universalism involves the affirmation of universal salvation and the denial of eternal punishment. Universalists believe that ultimately all humans are somehow in union with Christ and that in the fullness of time they will gain release from the penalty of sin and be restored to God."⁴
- Reasons Romans 5 does not encourage universal salvation:
 1. **Context** - Paul repeats the concept that men & women are only justified by faith (Romans 5:1)⁵
 2. **Headship** – All people are under Adam's headship by nature of being born human. However, to be under Christ as your head you must experience new birth through faith. This is seen in Romans 5:17 reads, "those who receive the abundance of grace" not everyone receives this grace. ⁶
 3. **Ethnic Unity** - "All" can also serve as a unifier meaning that all people no matter heritage (Jew or Gentile) have received death through Adam and may receive life through Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: Those who have been "justified by faith" (5:1) escape the consequences of Adam's sin through the gracious gift of Christ. He has secured eternal life through his righteousness and obedience which are imputed to Christians as a free gift.

Discussion Questions:

- Do you believe that everyone is born a sinner? Is it fair that God judges us for a sin (Adam's sin) we did not commit?
- What does Christ accomplish for those who believe?
- Have you struggled with the idea of universalism?

⁴ Grenz, S., Guretzki, D., & Nordling, C. F. (1999). In Pocket dictionary of theological terms (p. 118). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁵ Stott, John R.W. The Message of Romans. The Bible Speaks Today. IVP. 1994.

⁶ Ibid.