

Lesson 30 - DEATH IN ADAM; LIFE IN CHRIST (2) *Romans 5:17-21*

(5:17) - *“For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one”* - If the sin of one man brought the whole human race under the reign of sin and death, think how *“much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”* Adam (*“the first man”* - *1 Cor. 15:47*) was only a man who existed in the garden before the Fall in the righteousness of a man. And although Adam had no sin before his fall, he existed in a state of mere human righteousness which in its very nature was subject to change. Adam being *“the figure of Him that was to come”* (*Rom. 5:14*), shows that this was God’s plan and purpose all along. It was all perfectly consistent with God eternal purpose and plan for the ages. This included Adam’s fall, and the fall of the whole human race in and by Adam. Salvation by God’s grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*“the second Man”* - *1 Cor. 15:47*, and *“the last Adam”* - *1 Cor. 15:45*) was no afterthought or “plan B” with God. It was all foreordained before the foundation of the world. So we who saved by God’s grace are saved by one who is not only a perfect and sinless man, but who is also God in human flesh without sin. Christ is the Godman, and His righteousness (which He alone worked out for us in His obedience unto death as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer) is the very righteousness of God freely imputed to all His people and which gives them the abundance of life over death (*Rom. 1:16-17; 6:3-7,17-18; 8:10; 10:1-4*).

(5:18) - *“Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”* - *“All men to condemnation”* describes all whom Adam represented in the fall. Because of our fall in Adam, and because of our own personal sins, we all deserve and have earned *“condemnation”* (eternal damnation and death). *“All men unto justification of life”* describes all whom the Lord Jesus Christ represented as their Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer when He died on the cross and arose from the dead. It is *“by the righteousness of ONE”* - This is the righteousness of God worked out for God’s elect by the obedience unto death of Christ. This is the righteousness that God has imputed to His people. It is a totally *“free gift”* that insured them all blessings and benefits of salvation freely by God’s sovereign grace (*Rom. 8:32*). All whom God justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus shall have spiritual and eternal life from Him. Christ’s righteousness imputed to them is the ground of their legal justification before God, and it is the source of spiritual and eternal life. We know our fall in Adam because of our sins (*Rom. 3:23*). We can know our justification before God, that Christ’s righteousness has been imputed to us, by spiritual life given to us in the new birth by Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. This life is known by the gift of faith evidenced by our believing in Christ for all salvation and by our repenting of dead works and idolatry.

The question may be raised - Were God’s chosen people brought under God’s just sentence of condemnation because of Adam and by his fall into sin and death? This verse states literally that as the representative of the whole human race, Adam’s one sin brought a sentence of condemnation. But the apostle has already made a distinction of God’s sovereign love and grace that applies to God’s chosen people in Christ - *“But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (*Rom. 5:8*). When did God begin to love His people? The Bible tells us that God has ALWAYS loved His people (*Jer. 31:3; Eph. 2:4-7*), and His love never changes and is based on a just ground - the righteousness of His Son (*1 John 4:10*). This is the ground of the salvation *“which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began”* (*2 Tim. 1:9*). So, technically speaking, although God’s elect fell in Adam into a state of sin and death, and even though they all deserve to be condemned because of sin, they were never sentenced by God to be condemned unto eternal

death because God chose them from the beginning to salvation in Christ. By nature, they are no better, and deserve nothing better, than **“the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction”** (*Rom. 9:22; cf. Eph. 2:1-3*), but they have always been **“vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory”** (*Rom. 9:23*). The sentence of condemnation that they deserved and have earned, by God’s grace, fell upon Christ.

(5:19) - “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners,” - By Adam’s sin, **“many”** (all whom Adam represented in the Garden) were constituted (rendered, designated, appointed) as **“sinners.”** Their connection with Adam is known by their unbelief and all of their sins (*Rom. 3:10-12; Eph. 2:1-3*). **“So by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous”** - By Christ’s obedience unto death, **“the many”** (all whom Christ represented on the cross) were constituted (rendered, designated, appointed) as **“righteous”** (justified before God). Many deny this truth because they claim it is unfair that we should be held accountable for the sin of Adam. But we must understand that if we were to fall in ourselves without a representative, there would be no possibility of being saved eternally. Consider the angels that fell with Satan. There is no possibility of them being saved because they cannot work out perfect righteousness that cannot be removed or corrupted. It takes the righteousness of God found only in the Lord Jesus Christ to save sinners eternally with no possibility of falling. So, having fallen by a representative (Adam), salvation can only be attained by being saved by a representative (the Lord Jesus Christ). This is the whole basis of salvation by God’s grace through the representative work of Christ as Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people. Without Christ representing us before God, we are on our own, and this would be a certain death and damnation.

(5:20) - “Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound” - If salvation cannot be attained by our obedience to the law, then why was the law given? It was given to show the extreme sinfulness of sin and the impossibility of salvation being attained by our works. It was given to show our need of God’s grace based on the righteousness of the law found only in the glorious Person and finished work of Christ (*Gal. 3:19*). **“But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound”** - This is the assurance God gives to all who turn to Christ for salvation. No matter how sinful a person may be, there is no one so sinful that God’s grace cannot save by Christ. Where sin overflows us like a flood (lit. swimming in a sea of sin), God’s grace washes all sin away and abounds unto righteousness for us. This shows that not only are those who think themselves **“good enough”** to be saved in unbelief, so are those who consider themselves **“too bad”** to be saved. Both are a denial of Christ and the grace of God.

(5:21) - “That as sin hath reigned unto death” - All sin deserves and demands death, and before we are brought to believe in Christ and repent of our dead works, sin and death have dominion over us in our consciences (*Rom. 6:23a*). **“Even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord”** - Righteousness deserves and demands eternal life (*Rom. 6:23b*). Righteousness can only be found in the Lord Jesus Christ and in no one else. Therefore, for any sinner to be saved from sin and truly be declared righteous in God’s sight, it must be the product of God’s grace and based on the merits of Christ’s obedience unto death (His righteousness imputed). Where sin has been purged by the blood of Christ (legally put away, taken away), and where righteousness has been established by Him and imputed to His people, there will be eternal life. Where sinners have been justified before God based on Christ’s righteousness imputed (*Rom. 6:7*), they will be liberated by faith in Christ from the dominion of sin in their consciences (*Rom. 6:17-18*).