



The Epistle to the Romans

Lesson Number 18



ONLY TWO MEN

5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus 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 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. ¹⁵ But 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. ¹⁶ And 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. ¹⁷ For 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.) ¹⁸ Therefore, 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. ¹⁹ For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. ²⁰ Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, ²¹ so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 5:12-21 ^{NKJV}

INTRODUCTION

The truth of Christ's atoning sacrifice is so significant and needful, the Spirit will elaborate extensively upon it. This involves a Divine principle, and does not conform to the world's wisdom. When, therefore, the world's pattern of thought is extensive, a special initiative is required to penetrate the heart with the powerful

truth of the Gospel. While there were strong believers in Rome, they were located in a citadel of worldly power and wisdom. There was a conflict between the Roman way of thinking (political and philosophical)



and the manner of the heavenly kingdom. With spiritual skill, the Apostle uses his spiritual weaponry to throw down the philosophical bastions of thought that

From heaven's point of view (which is the true view), there are only Two Men. Everything hinges on them—by Given O. Blakely

dominated that region.

At the time Paul wrote Romans, Epicureanism, Stoicism, Skepticism, and Neoplatonism were the main philosophical schools in the Western world. These patterns of thought were primarily concerned with ethics and religions. The Apostle Paul encountered some of this kind of thinking in Athens (Acts 17:18). In order to show the relevance of these philosophies to our time, I beg your indulgence as I give a brief synopsis of them. This section is provided for those with an interest in seeing the remarkable likeness our society bears to the thinking of the heathen world at the time Romans was written. This kind of thinking has had a remarkable impact on the religious thought of our time.

EPICUREANISM. The essential doctrine of Epicureanism is that pleasure is the supreme good and main goal of life. Intellectual pleasures are preferred to sensual ones, which tend to disturb peace of mind. True happiness, Epicurus taught, is the serenity resulting from the conquest of fear of the gods, of death, and of the afterlife. The ultimate aim of all Epicurean speculation about nature is to rid people of such fears . . . **In biology, Epicurus anticipated the modern doctrine of natural selection.** He postulated that natural forces give rise to organisms of different types and that only the types able to support and propagate themselves have survived . . . **Epicurean psychology is thoroughly materialistic.**

The modern acceptance of the theory of evolution, and an emphasis on the seen are expressions of this philosophy.

STOICISM. Stoicism was the most influential philosophy in the Roman Empire during the period preceding the rise of Christianity. The Stoics, like the Epicureans, emphasized ethics as the main field of knowledge, but they also developed theories of logic and natural science to support their ethical doctrines. **Their most important contribution to logic was the discovery of the hypothetical syllogism . . .** According to them the human soul is a manifestation of the Logos. **Living according to nature or reason, they held, is living in conformity with the divine order of the universe.** The importance of this view is seen in the part that Stoicism played in developing a theory of natural law that powerfully affected Roman jurisprudence . . . the four cardinal virtues of the Stoic philosophy are wisdom, courage, justice, and temperance, a classification derived from the teachings of Plato . . . Thus, before the rise of Christianity, Stoics recognized and advocated the brotherhood of humanity

and the natural equality of all human beings.

The exaltation of human wisdom and logic, so dominant in the academic and religious world, is a form of stoicism.

SKEPTICISM. The principles of skepticism were first explicitly formulated by the Pyrrhonists, a school of Greek philosophy deriving its name from its founder, Pyrrho of Elis. Pyrrho, whose primary concern was ethics, maintained that human beings can know nothing of the real nature of things, and that consequently the wise person will suspend judgment . . . During the Renaissance the influence of ancient skepticism was reflected preeminently in the writings of the 16th-century French philosophical essayist Michel de Montaigne. The greatest exponent of modern skepticism was the 18th-century Scottish empiricist philosopher David Hume . . . **Elements of skepticism may be found in other modern schools of philosophy, including pragmatism, analytic and linguistic philosophy, and existentialism.**

Systematic theology, the exaltation of language expertise, and the denial of the miraculous order are all forms of this view.

NEOPLATONISM. Neoplatonism is a type of idealistic monism in which the ultimate reality of the universe is held to be an infinite, unknowable, perfect One . . . **Salvation for such a soul is still possible, the Neoplatonist maintains, by virtue of the very freedom of will that enabled it to choose its sinful course.** The soul must reverse that course, tracing in the opposite direction the successive steps of its degeneration, until it is again united with the fountainhead of its being. The actual reunion is accomplished through a mystical experience in which the soul knows an all-pervading ecstasy.

The overstatement of the power of the human will, together with a virtual denial of Divine intervention, are related to this view.

WHY SO LITTLE IS BEING SAID ON THIS SUBJECT

The subjects of justification by faith, receiving a righteousness from God, and a vicarious atonement are rarely mentioned in our time. This is because they contradict the contemporary way of thinking. It is certainly not because of any lack of revelation on the subject. Nor, indeed, is there a lack of extensive teaching on these matters by the Holy Spirit. As we have found in the book of Romans, a considerable emphasis is even placed on these subjects. Not only are they themes of Apostolic development, they are among the primary ones. Where these are missing, faith cannot survive.

LESSON OUTLINE

- I. THE ENTRANCE OF SIN THROUGH ONE MAN (5:12)
- II. A PARENTHETICAL THOUGHT (5:13-17)
 - A. Until the Law (5:13)
 - B. Nevertheless Death Reigned (5:14)
 - C. The Gift Is Not Like the Offense (5:15)
 - D. The Gift Is Not Like the Result of the Offense (5:16)
 - E. The Reign of Death and the Reign of Life (5:17)
- III. ONE MAN EFFECTS ALL MEN (5:18)
- IV. DISOBEDIENCE AND OBEDIENCE (5:19)
- V. ABOUNDING OFFENSE AND ABOUNDING GRACE (5:20)
- VI. THE REIGN OF DEATH AND THE REIGN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (5:21)

I am going to wax bold concerning the reason for the prevailing ignorance on the matter of a righteousness from God and the vicarious atonement of Jesus. It can be traced to two key factors, both of which are firmly rooted in the flesh.

- ⊗ First, the carnal, or natural, mind is being given the ascendancy in religion. The wisdom of men, together with the external disciplines of learning, have been assigned the greater weight in learning the truth of God.
- ⊗ Second, the truth of the Gospel is being sifted through humanly developed theologies. The Scriptures are being read with crystallized theological views in mind, rather than in faith.

As a result, the truth of the Gospel has been forfeited, and a grossly deficient church has gained prominence. I am aware these are most serious charges.

The Western world is now living in an age when religion is dominated by the purveyors of human wisdom. Academia and human logic have displaced faith, and natural reason is sitting upon the throne.

THIS WILL BECOME APPARENT

These conditions will become very apparent in the section now before us.

The reasoning will sound foreign and flawed to those who have not embraced the truth of the Gospel. However, this is the reasoning of the Holy Spirit.

If we were not speaking of salvation, the reception of a righteousness from God, and Divine acceptance, perhaps we could be more tolerant of the wayward thinking of men on these matters. We might consider being more patient if we were speaking of dietary practices, political persuasions, and economic considerations. But that is not the case.

We are rather speaking of the fall of men and their utter impotency to correct their condition on their own. We are also

confronted with a Divine analysis of the situation, and are being exposed to what God has done through Christ to reconcile the world to Himself. The Holy Spirit has confronted us with the inevitability of standing before God Himself, before whom not a single righteous or good person can be found apart from faith in Christ. That is His assessment, and we are obliged to accept it in faith. All of this is associated with the following.

- ▶ God has sent His Son into the world to address our situation (1:3; 8:3).
- ▶ In due time, Christ died for the ungodly (5:6).
- ▶ Righteousness is imputed to those who believe on Him who raised Jesus from

the dead (4:24).

- ▶ The forgiveness of iniquities, the covering of sin, and the refusal of God to impute sin to the individual (4:6-8).
- ▶ Having peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (5:1).

We are dealing with weighty matters, and it behooves every person to gird up the loins of their mind and take hold of what the Lord is saying. Profit will come from giving heed to these things. God will show us that the presence of sin and the presence of righteousness are both traced to a single origin. At the root of the matter, one person stands for all who proceed from that one. As we will see, this is a significant truth.

THE ENTRANCE OF DEATH THROUGH ONE MAN

“5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.” Sin made a single entrance into the world. In the beginning, it was not here. It had a beginning, or genesis, in this world.

Immediately a bit of theological nonsense is exposed and cast violently down to the ground. Some teach the earth was occupied before Genesis 1:1. Because of some decadent generation, men assume, it was judged and a new creation started with Adam. Still others believe that sin entered the world through Satan, and before Adam. Other kindred speculations are put forward by men who place reason before faith, and analysis before believing.

Neither position is true. The Holy Spirit certainly knows how to speak *“expressly.”* Additionally, He *“searches all things, yes, the deep things of God”*^{NKJV} (1 Cor 2:10). The Spirit, then, is qualified to speak on the subject of the origin of sin in this world. He will also inform us of the inception of death, confirming it did not exist in any form until after man sinned. **He will show us how to think on this matter.**

SIN ENTERED THROUGH ONE MAN

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world . . .” There is a form of reasoning here that must not elude us. In order to confirm the greatness and effectiveness of our salvation, the Spirit will show us how and why we fell into sin.

With great effectiveness, the Spirit will now show us how all men came to be sinners. Although *“all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”* (3:23), that is not the root of the matter. Rather, it is the evidence of something that occurred prior to individual transgression.

The Proposition

Remember, the proposition that is being proved true is this: righteousness comes from God, through Christ, and by faith. Those without understanding remonstrate at this. They imagine that God deals with each person upon the basis of individual merit. While there is an element of truth to this, it is far from being the whole of the matter. We will now see why the principle of a vicarious atonement—one dying for the many—is effective and according to Divine law and righteousness.

The Explanation

With great effectiveness, the Spirit will now show us how all men came to be sinners. Although *“all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”* (3:23), that is not the root of the matter. Rather, it is the **evidence** of something that occurred prior to individual transgression. The human conditions that are being explained are *“ungodly”*(5:6), *“sinners”*(5:8), and *“enemies”*(5:10). How did men come to be unlike and hostile to the Living God? Why do men sin? Why are they enemies to God? This passage explains those conditions.

Through One Man

Sin made its entrance into the world through *“one man.”* That man is identified in verse fourteen as *“Adam.”* One might wonder why it does not say *“Eve,”* for she was the first to partake of the forbidden tree, and was the one deceived (Gen 3:6; 1 Tim 2:14). Our text is viewing Adam as the progenitor of the race, not merely as an individual. He is the federal head of humanity. They all bear his likeness, and have come from him. As it is written, *“From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth”*^{NIV} (Acts 17:26). We have all *“born the image”* of Adam, as affirmed in First Corinthians 15:47-49. In this matter, one stands for the many, and the many bear the likeness of the one.

A Single Transgression

Sin did not enter the world in a flood-like manner, but through a single transgression. This passage will refer to that deed as “sin,” “transgression” (5:14), “offense,” “fall” (5:15,17,18), and “disobedience” (5:19). The deed is described in a single verse of Scripture—a deed which is the precise point at which sin “entered into the world.” “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (Gen 3:6).

The full nature of sin was in that first transgression. Satan was its fountain, and his “wiles” were the means of Eve being deceived. God’s Person and word were ignored, and self-interests were sought. To the flesh, the transgression of reference appears inconsequential and unworthy of harsh judgment. It consisted of eating a piece of fruit. The deed through which sin entered into the world was not the murder of Abel. Sin did not enter through the violence and murder of Noah’s day. It was not brought in by the molestation of Dinah, sister to Simeon and Levi. It came into the world by eating a piece of fruit!

The **nature** of sin is what makes it so bad. To sin, people must forget God, listen to the devil, and blot the thought of heaven from their minds. The word of God must be thrust away and fleshly interests must become dominant. Sin is rebellion against God and the exaltation of self. It is the ultimate act of thanklessness and selfishness.

Given a Chance, Sin Will Dominate

Our text will confirm the real nature of sin. Once it makes an entrance, it rapidly gains the dominance. When sin penetrates, it at once gains a foothold. That is its nature. Those who do not learn from the Scriptural account of Adam and the entrance of sin, will not be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Once sin had “entered into the world,” nothing or no one on earth could stop its infectious expansion. Only God can stop the spread of sin, or negate its consequences. Four thousand years of human history confirmed this to be the case. Had not God intervened in Jesus, sin would still

have been ruling the world uncontested.

Give No Place to the Devil

It is no wonder we are admonished, “Neither give place to the devil” (Eph 5:27). To give him a “place” is to provide an opportunity^{NASB} for him, make room for him^{NRSV}, or make provision for him to gain a foothold.^{NIV} If you wonder what he will do, consider Adam and Eve. The dominance of sin and its ruthless rule over the children of men is traced back to a single point in time. It all began when Adam provided an area in which Satan could work, and work he did! The day he ate from the forbidden tree at the behest of his wife—even though he himself was not deceived—sin entered into the world like a mighty torrent. Now, six thousand years later, it has, and continues, to ravage every rational being until liberation from it is realized in the salvation of our God.

individual. **All men die because Adam sinned.** His sin is what brought the curse of death upon humanity. When sin entered, the right to live was forfeited, for the bond with Deity was broken. There is no true life where there is rebellion against God.

Spiritual Death

God told Adam he would die “in the day” he ate from the forbidden tree (Gen 2:17). On the surface, it did not appear as though that occurred. Adam did not die until 930 years later (Gen 5:5). Death, however, is no more simplistic than life. In the very day Adam ate, he died spiritually, and was therefore driven out from the presence of the Lord (Gen 3:24). He and Eve were separated from God, for death means separation.

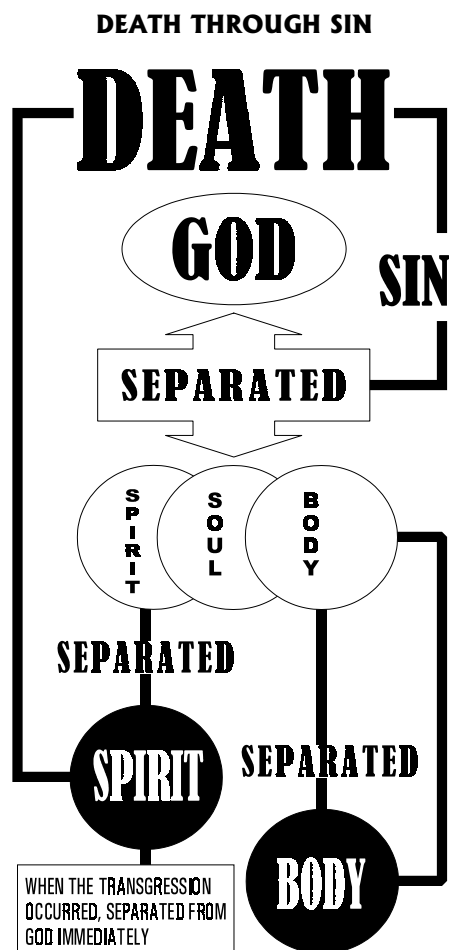
In this spiritual death, the spirit of man became “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1). There was no longer accord between God and man—no unanimity, or fundamental agreement. In a sense, man became fragmented and divided in his nature.

Death in its totality entered a realm where it did not exist previously. That is a staggering thing to consider! The ultimate death was experienced—separation from God. Death also took place in the human nature—the dissolution of the union forged in creation by the Almighty Himself. The seen and unseen part of men could no longer live in harmony, and would eventually be separated from each other. This “death” in sins was the result of being separated from God, who alone is the Source of life.

Death in the Flesh

The very moment sin entered into the world, the process of fleshly deterioration began. Ultimately, the body would be separated from man’s unseen part. The effects of the “tree of life” may account for the longevity of life that existed until the time of Abraham. However, it seems more likely to me that long life was a token of mercy from the Lord to allow for the expansion of mankind both before and after the flood. This is, of course, a matter of conjecture.

The only way for any person to avoid death is by Divine intervention. In such a case, consignment to physical



The wages of sin (Rom 6:23) are traced more to Adam than to the

death would be suspended. We have three instances of such a suspension. Two have already taken place, and one is yet to come. Enoch was “translated” without experiencing, or “seeing,” death (Heb 11:5; Gen 5:22-24). Elijah was carried up into heaven in a whirlwind without experiencing death (2 Kings 2:1,11). In both cases, no body was left behind. All of the involvements of these two incidents are not known, and it is not wise to speculate upon them in carnal curiosity.

The other, and future, incident of the suspension of death will occur when the Lord comes again. At that time, there will be an entire generation that will not experience death in the ordinary manner. They will be “changed” in an instant, without a dying process (1 Cor 15:51-52). The thought of this great change is refreshing to consider.

In these three instances, although death is not experienced in the ordinary way, there is a “change,” wherein the individual is adapted for glory. In the latter case, we will receive immortal bodies. We do not know of the details of change that occurred in Enoch and Elijah.

Nature Died Also

When sin entered into the world, not only did man die spiritually, and his physical constitution begin to decay, there was also a death sentence passed upon all creation. Scripture apprizes us of this extensive judgment. *“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God”* (Rom 8:20-22). The shroud of death has been thrown over the entirety of the natural order. It is all headed for demise. Whether we ponder the massive universe in which our small world exists, or the unimaginable vastness of celestial bodies beyond human view, everything is dying. Like man, and because of the sin of man, nature is groaning under the weight of corruption, which is the prelude to death.

Adam and Nature Rejected!

Because sin separated man from God, all that was created for man was also consigned to death. This means the entire

natural order has been written off. **There is a sense in which it cannot be salvaged—either man or the environment in which he is found.**

This condition is precisely why Jesus said, *“You MUST be born again”* (John 3:7). It is also why God promised, *“Behold, I make all things new”* (Rev 21:5). This is why there will be *“a new heavens and a new earth”* (Isa 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet 3:13). The *“new creation”* is necessitated because of the total rejection of the old.

Sin is a principle that is antagonistic toward God. It moves men to commit transgression, and quickly gains preeminence over them. The universal presence of death is undeniable confirmation that sin is “in the world.” Our text affirms it is here because of what the first man, Adam, did.

When assigning values and priorities to matters, the truth just stated must be brought into our thinking. **Anything that can be ultimately traced back to Adam or the natural creation cannot be allowed the place of prominence.** The death sentence has been passed upon all such things. Whether it is fleshly appetites, money, earthly wisdom, or places and things, all are to be subordinated to a quest for the new creation. Ultimately, the entire natural order will *“pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”* In view of this, the Spirit solemnly asks us, *“Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?”* (2 Pet 3:10-12).

Without dwelling upon the matter, it should be noted that a phenomenal amount of contemporary religion has its foundation in the natural order. All such religion will go up in flame, together with the foundation upon which it rests.

And All Because of Sin!

The remarkably extensive curse of death came in with sin! It did not enter with an abundance of sin, but with a single transgression! If we are ever tempted to minimize sin, or pass it off as common, we must consider its consequences. It should be abundantly evident that anything capable of causing such universal and unwavering demise, must be firmly resisted. Nothing is of any value whatsoever until a remedy for sin and its curse is realized.

Sin is a principle that is antagonistic toward God. It moves men to commit transgression, and quickly gains preeminence over them. The universal presence of death is undeniable confirmation that sin is *“in the world.”* **Our text affirms it is here because of what the first man, Adam, did.**

FOR THAT ALL HAVE SINNED

Here, the Spirit is looking at the end from the beginning. The point is that *“all have sinned”* because they possess a sinful nature. Adam’s offspring cannot rise higher than himself. In fact, there is a degradation in his progeny rather than improvement. Thus, our text is saying, **the justification for God passing death upon all men is seen in their natural tendency toward, and preference for, sin.**

“All have sinned” because *“all”* are by nature sinful. This truth is beyond all controversy as confirmed by the universal requirement, *“You must be born again”* (John 3:7). While men may argue about whether or not the term *“total depravity”* (an expression NOT used by the Spirit), is proper, we must agree on the facts in the case. First, *“all have sinned,”* and second all have been consigned to death.

THE REASONING PRESENTED

The reasoning of our text is most profound. In summary, this is what the

Spirit will develop. **If sin and death can enter through one man, much more can righteousness and life enter**

through One. The Spirit will show us that no descendant of Adam can rise higher than him. Another Man **MUST**

appear on the scene, else the whole race will be lost. Salvation in all of its greatness is not a novelty, but a necessity!

** A PARENTHETICAL THOUGHT **

“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 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.¹⁵ But 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.¹⁶ And 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.¹⁷ For 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.)

The Spirit now enters an extensive parenthetical thought. This is an

amplification of verse twelve—an explanation of a profound utterance. [*“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”*]. In this explanation, the Spirit is addressing the objection that sin is not possible if there is no law to transgress.

The novice might reason that the cause of death being passed upon Adam is, indeed, obvious. He violated a specific command, and thus received his just dues. “How,” flesh reasons, “could death enter into the world upon the trespass of a single person? Should not everyone be judged on their own merit, without regard to Adam’s transgression?”

In addressing this objection, we are not to understand this specific objection was formally raised—although here and there that is no doubt true. Rather, this is the manner in which the flesh reasons. Frequently the Spirit anticipates what flesh will say, whether or not it has been expressed audibly or in writing. Just as the Spirit reasons in a certain way, so does fallen man. Both forms of reasoning

are consistent, and never depart from their manners. Examples of the Spirit anticipating this type of reasoning are found in the following texts: *“And do you think this, O man . . . You will say to me then . . . But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? . . . You will say then . . . But someone will say . . . But someone will say.”* (Romans 2:3; 9:19,20; 11:19; 1 Cor 15:35; James 2:18).

There is such a disparity of thought between God and man that whatever truth is made known by the Spirit, flesh will object to it. That is precisely why God said to the most externally cultured people in the world, *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts’* (Isa 55:8-9).

The argument will also confirm that death did, in fact, enter the world when **Adam** sinned, and that it reigns universally. If we are to understand vicarious atonement, it is essential that we understand the principle taught here.

1. UNTIL THE LAW

“¹³ For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.” The Spirit now addresses the period of history BEFORE the Law. He has already told us that the Law brought the knowledge, or consciousness, of sin: *“for by the law is the knowledge of sin”* (Rom 3:20). Although sin had not been defined and judged through a Divinely written code, i.e., the Law, yet the curse of God remained upon it.

SIN WAS IN THE WORLD

When sin entered the world *“by one man,”* Adam, it remained in the world, infecting every person by virtue of their

relation to Adam. Sin was not *“in the world”* as an influence external to man, but as corruption resident IN man.

The presence of sin in the world is confirmed by several historic incidents. It is seen at the individual, family, city, national, and global levels.

- ▶ The murder of Abel (Gen 4:8).
- ▶ Lamech kills a man (Gen 4:23).
- ▶ Violence filling the earth prior to the flood (Gen 6:11).
- ▶ The attempt to build the tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-7).
- ▶ The grievous sin of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:20).

- ▶ Esau despising his birthright (Gen 25:31-34).
- ▶ Joseph’s brothers selling him into slavery (Gen 37:28).
- ▶ The lie of Potiphar’s wife against Joseph (Gen 39:17-19).
- ▶ The oppression of Israel by Egypt (Ex 1:14).
- ▶ The sins of the heathen nations Israel displaced when they entered into Canaan (Deut 9:4-5; 12:2-3).

The point to be seen here is that sin really did infect the entire race of man. *“Sin was in the world”* before the Law which defined and cursed it!

The Point Being Made

Candidly, we are dealing with a very profound verse—an example of lofty spiritual reasoning. **The Spirit is teaching us concerning the effectiveness of Christ’s vicarious death.** He is going to trace the effectiveness of the imputation of righteousness to ONE MAN—Jesus Christ. In order to show the validity of this reasoning, he is confirming that the dominance of sin is equally owing to ONE MAN—Adam.

Although “*sin was in the world*” without the presence of Divine law, that sin does not account for the presence of death. **Death does not occur because Adam’s progeny sinned, but because Adam sinned!** Death entered when Adam sinned, being passed upon all of his offspring. The reign of death cannot be accounted for by the depravity of men, or the presence of reprehensible sins like idolatry and sodomy, as outlined in the first chapter of Romans.

SIN IS NOT IMPUTED WHERE THERE IS NO LAW

This parallels the expression found in 4:15; “*for where no law is, there is no transgression.*” The One NOT imputing the sin is the Lord Himself. Transgression assumes the presence of law, without

which sin is not credited to men. How, then, can we account for the fact that “*all have sinned*” and are under the sentence of death? If they have not transgressed a law, when can it be said they are sinners?

Some have reasoned on this verse in this manner. “If sin is not imputed where there is not law, then the fact that sin was

evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17). Because he transgressed a law, sin as imputed to him. But it was not imputed ONLY to him. It was also passed upon all his family—everyone who came from him. **Thus, one stood for all,** which is the point being made by the text.

Although “*sin was in the world*” without the presence of Divine law, that sin does not account for the presence of death. Death does not occur because Adam’s progeny sinned, but because Adam sinned! Death entered when Adam sinned, being passed upon all of his offspring.

The Spirit is making the point that death is ALWAYS the penalty for sin. But this truth must be seen correctly. Infants, and the mentally incompetent, for example, do not die because **they** have sinned. They, like everyone, die because **Adam** sinned! “***By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men***” (v 12).

Simply stated, when we see death ruling over all men, we must not be drawn aside to the different manners in which men die. Some leave the world in a good old age.

Others have their lives terminated abruptly by some tragedy. Still others are removed from this world in the fiery trial of persecution.

If we are asked, “Why must men die?” We simply answer, **Because Adam sinned!** That is the powerful point of our text, and it will set the stage for the affirmation of the effectiveness of Christ’s atoning death.

in the world before the Law confirms that some kind of law was really present.” Now, that may make sense to the flesh, but it does not make our text any clearer, for no specific law is cited.

The transgression that brought death into the world was Adam’s transgression. He violated a law; “*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and*

2. NEVERTHELESS DEATH REIGNED

“*Nevertheless 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.*” The word “*nevertheless*” refers to the condition stated in the previous verse: “*but sin is not imputed when there is no law.*” Even though the period between Adam and Moses was not characterized by infractions of articulated law, still death dominated that time. This confirms that “*thou shalt surely die*” was passed to all of Adam’s offspring.

DEATH REIGNED

No person was able to reverse the Divine decree. “*Death reigned!*” with all

of his seeming wisdom, man could not remove the curse, reduce its effectiveness, or neutralize its power. “*Death reigned!*” Wherever man is found, death is found with him. Whether he is in isolation or in a society, death is reigning.

Here is the longest single period in human history. It is no less than 2,500 years long, comprising 42% of all time. It is 66% longer than the 1,500 years of the Law’s administration. It is 25% longer than the “*day of salvation*” to date(2000 A.D.).

Great civilizations were formed during this time. The Egyptian empire, Hammurabi, Babylonian empire in

Mesopotamia, Sumerian civilization, Phoenicians, Aegean civilization, Indus Valley civilizations, the Yang-shao and Lung-shan cultures (China), Danubian culture (central Europe), etc.

Legendary cities were built during this time. Troy, Athens, Stonehenge, Lagash, Ur, Tangier, and Sidon.

Remarkable skills were developed from Adam to Moses. Clay pottery, weight balances, writing, bronze implements, ships propelled by oars and sails, musical instruments, a 365 day calendar, mathematical systems, iron smelting, medical treatment, and glassmaking.

Yet, with all of these apparent advancements, “*death reigned from Adam to Moses,*” universally and without interruption. Death was like a monarch. As one has well said, “Under his dark and withering reign, people sank down to the grave.”^{Barnes} In his reference to death, Bildad the Shuhite referred to “*the king of terrors*” (Job 18:14). David referred to “*the terrors of death*” (Psa 55:4)—things

sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam,^{NASB} “*even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam,*^{NIV} “*even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam.*^{NRSV}

The point of the verse is NOT that death reigned over a SEGMENT of humanity whose sin was not like that of

THE FIGURE OF HIM

In saying Adam was “*the figure of Him that was to come,*” the Spirit introduces the Savior into the dialog. He is going to show to us the effectiveness of Christ’s vicarious atonement. Adam was not a figure of Christ in WHAT he did, **but in the IMPACT of his deed upon those who came from him.** He was not a “*figure*” in the sense of passing on blessing, or foreshadowing the good that the Savior would accomplish. Rather, as a federal head, Adam stood for all who sprang from him. By “*federal head,*” I mean the representative of all natural men, who bore his likeness, and participated in God’s dealings with him. He is the principal figure of natural men. As such, what happened to him was also brought upon all who are in him.

The phrase “*even over them*” refers to those living “*from Adam to Moses.*” All men were under the dominion of sin, even though sin was not the result of breaking laws given during that time. Death reigned because Adam sinned, and passed along that sinful nature to his progeny.

associated with the reign of death.

On the individual level, “*it is appointed unto man once to die*” (Heb 9:27). On the global level, “*death reigned from Adam to Moses.*” The fact is beyond all controversy! There was no culture from Adam to Moses that did not acknowledge the inevitability of death.

EVEN OVER THEM

The extensive of the curse is seen in the reign of death “*even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.*” Other versions read, “*those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam,*^{NKJV} “*even over those who had not*

Adam. Those who hold to the view that this is what the text means consider this to refer to infants. If that were the case, however, he would have said “*those who had not sinned,*” NOT “*those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam.*” The point of the text is that death reigned over EVERYONE from Adam to Moses, even though they had not broken a specific commandment.

The phrase “*even over them*” refers to those living “*from Adam to Moses.*” All men were under the dominion of sin, even though sin was not the result of breaking laws given during that time. Death reigned because Adam sinned, and passed along that sinful nature to his progeny.

At once, the flesh will remonstrate, saying this is not fair. But the flesh is wrong! This is a righteous way, for it was carried out by God Himself. That no unrighteousness is in the arrangement is confirmed by the domination of sin over the race of Adam, and the uncontested reign of death. Had it been possible to salvage a single person from Adam’s race, it would not have been written off in favor of a “*new creation.*” This will become more evident as we proceed through this passage.

The Spirit will confirm to us that our blessing is owing to a single Person, just as our cursing is traceable to one man. Life comes because of One just as surely as death reigned because of one. This is the principle lesson of this passage.

3. THE GIFT IS NOT LIKE THE OFFENSE

“¹⁵ ***But 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.***” Here the Spirit begins a comparison between the two federal heads, Adam and Christ Jesus. Adam is the head of the natural order, and Jesus of the spiritual one. Each one of them determines the destiny of all who spring from them. In both cases, the effects will be traced to a single deed. Cursing will result from one, and blessing

from the other. Further, the effects will spread to all of the posterity, excluding none of them.

Both Adam and Jesus, the “*first man*” and the “*Second Man,*” are uniquely responsible for the condition of their offspring. Their children are like them, bearing their likeness and the Divine assessment of them.

THE FREE GIFT

This is an explanation of the “*righteousness*” announced in the Gospel

of Christ “*a righteousness that is by faith from first to last*”^{NASB} (1:17). Notice with what care and God-honoring speech this righteousness is mentioned: “**free gift . . . the grace of God . . . the gift by grace . . . abounded unto many.**” Having proved the whole of humanity to be under the power of sin, their reclamation can only be accounted for by the grace of God and the work of Christ. Men could not correct their condition, but were actually locked into sin because of Adam. No person should stumble at this, for Scripture clearly teaches we were

“servants of sin” (Rom 6:16,17,20) and “free from righteousness” (3:20b). Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (John 8:34). That this excludes no natural person is confirmed by our text: “so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

IT IS NOT LIKE THE OFFENSE

The gift is singular, as was the offense. “**THE** offense” was Adam’s transgression, through which sin entered into the world. “**THE** free gift” is righteousness, which came because of the vicarious, or substitutionary death of Christ.

Within the framework of these gracious words, the Spirit will confirm that the effects of Christ’s death are more extensive and wide-sweeping than the effects of Adam’s transgression. What has resulted from the death of Jesus far transcends what resulted from the sin of Adam. By this He means Christ elevates us above the first state of Adam, bringing a greater and more precise likeness to God than was borne by Adam at the first.

BY ONE MAN’S OFFENSE

Here again, the ails of the human race are traced to a single deed by a single man: “one man’s offense.” Without appearing redundant, that offense was eating the fruit of the forbidden tree.

And what was the effect of that single deed? It is stated so as to accentuate the extensiveness of that effect: “**MANY** died.” By saying “many,” the text does not suggest there were some who did NOT die. Rather, this is a way of pointing out that Adam did not simply bear the curse himself. In a very real sense, he ate the sour grapes, and his children’s teeth were set on edge (Jer 31:29; Ezek 18:2).

This is the ultimate generational curse! It dwarfs the Lord “visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation” (Num 14:18). This visitation was to all of Adam’s generation, without exception. “Many,” therefore, stands for all, and not for a portion.

“Many” frequently is used in the sense of all. Romans 6:3 refers to “as many of us as were baptized into Christ,” meaning ALL who were baptized into Him. Romans 8:14 says “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,” meaning ALL who are so led. The word “many” pictures the multiplicity of fruit that comes from a single seed.

MUCH MORE! MUCH MORE!

If we cannot see the extensive effects of Adam’s sin, we will not be able to see the glorious impact of Christ’s death. The manner of the Kingdom—which

is ONE being the fountainhead for the many—is seen first in Adam, and then more precisely and extensively in Jesus.

Both the “*grace of God*” and “*the gift by grace*” have come to us from “*ONE man*.” The “*grace of God*” is His willingness and eagerness to bless us with salvation. “*The gift by grace*” is His own righteousness which He confers upon us. Neither of these can be experienced independently of the “*Second Man*” (1 Cor 15:47). If God does not deal with us through Christ, we are confined to the Adamic curse.

In Christ, both “*the grace of God*, and *the gift by grace*” ABOUND, or are ministered in copious supplies. The NIV reads, they “*overflow to the many!*” —and Christ is “*the Firstborn among MANY brethren*” (Rom 8:29). What they receive because of Him and through Him far exceeds the order of Adam. It reaches deeper and elevates higher. In Christ there is greater measure and greater certainty than ever there was in Adam.

The people of God must seek deliverance from small and minuscule thoughts of God and His great salvation. What we have in Christ is “*abounding*.” It is given in abundant measures, and increases exponentially like the waters that gushed from the wilderness rock. Ours is a “*much more*” salvation!

4. THE GIFT IS NOT LIKE THE RESULT OF THE OFFENSE

“*16 And 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.*”

Again, “*the gift*” is “*the gift of righteousness*” (5:17), which is the theme of this passage. While there are similarities between Adam and Christ, there are also enormous differences. The likeness is seen in one standing for the many. The difference is in the nature of what is passed to their offspring.

Notice how the Spirit continues to take us back to the source of the curse:

“*ONE who sinned.*” Try as you may, you can only come up with two men in this text: Adam and Jesus. The clear teaching is that God deals with all men upon the basis of one man—whether Adam or Jesus.

THE JUDGMENT

Here, the entrance of sin and death into the world is called “*the judgment.*” Simply stated, “*the judgment*” was that rebellious man would not be received by God, and could not live in His presence. Further, because of these conditions, death was passed upon him, and he was condemned!

Do not miss the power of this statement. It reveals the nature of God, and the nature of sin as well. “*The*

judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation.”^{NASB} Do you wonder about the magnitude of sin? In this verse do you not see how reprehensible it is? “*One single offence brought condemnation!*”^{NJB}

Adam’s single sin did not bring a rebuke, but condemnation! It did not bring a mere reprimand, but condemnation! The previous verse showed us that all of the effects of sin flowed from a single man. **This verse confirms the consequence of condemnation came from a single deed!** At its root, the lostness of the human race is traceable to the single transgression of a single man.

THE FREE GIFT

There is a slight change in the reasoning of the Spirit here. The Spirit does not say the free gift came from Christ's death, as compared with Adam's transgression. Instead, He says *"the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification."*^{NASB} The idea is that the free gift removed the *"many transgressions"*.

The *"gift of righteousness"* undoes the effects of sin, causing men to stand pure and acceptable before the Lord whom they had offended. Thus, they are no longer condemned.

When God took the sins of the world—the *"many transgressions"*—and placed them upon the Son, the result was *"justification,"* or the imputation of righteousness, upon all who believe (3:22). That single deed had more far-reaching effects than the sin of Adam. This will be confirmed with unusual power.

You see, then, the superior work wrought through Jesus Christ, the *"Second Man."* **In Adam, God started with a single sin, and condemned the whole of humanity. In Christ, He started with many transgressions**

and justified all who are in Him!

CONCLUSION

The sin of Adam was like a spiritual virus injected into the spiritual bloodstream of humanity. It produced a flood-tide of sin which quantitatively far exceeded the transgression of Adam. The wisdom of God is seen in Him taking those many offenses—all flowing from a single transgression—and through them bringing about the reconciliation of fallen man. Just as surely as all who are in Adam die, all who are in the Son will be freed from both sin and death!

5. THE REIGN OF DEATH AND THE REIGN OF LIFE

"¹⁷ For 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."

The reign of death is traced to one man—Adam. The reign of *"the gift of righteousness"* is traced to one Man—Jesus Christ. Men die because of Adam. They live in a state of righteousness because of Christ. Two men, and only two, determine the ultimate state and destiny of all men!

By nature, all men are the offspring of Adam. Regardless of their attainments, death *"reigns"* over them because of that association. They are *"made sinners"* because of that relationship. They are in a state of *"condemnation"* because of that connection. These are the unwavering declarations of our text.

SOME IMPLICATIONS

We MUST see that whatever does not come from Christ ultimately is traced back to Adam, brings condemnation, and promotes sin. I understand these are strong words, yet they must be said. Much of today's religion is more related to Adam than to Jesus. It is more natural than spiritual. At some point, the individual must rely completely upon Jesus Christ

and His atoning death, else its benefits will not pass to him.

Although I have said this before, it bears repeating. **God has written off**

development of a vicarious atonement as the basis for conferring righteousness upon those who have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

The Spirit keeps taking us back to Adam and his single recorded sin. He reaffirms that the human condition is owing to a single individual and a single transgression. *"By the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man."*^{NIV} It was the single sin of Adam that enabled sin to reign over all men! You will rarely hear this truth affirmed in our day—or any other, for that matter. It so contradicts the wisdom of men that they will not take these words into their mouths. Notwithstanding, this is the truth. To refuse to declare it is to cause the mist of ignorance to descend upon men, robbing their hearts of the joy of salvation and the confidence and assurance that can be possessed.

This is true because the powerful effects of Christ's death are only as clear to us as the pervasive impact of Adam's sin are seen.

MUCH MORE THOSE . . .

Here we make the transition from Adam to his offspring who *"receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness."* Here another difference is seen between the offspring of Adam and those of Christ. Adam's children had the

By nature, all men are the offspring of Adam. Regardless of their attainments, death "reigns" over them because of that association. They are "made sinners" because of that relationship. They are in a state of "condemnation" because of that connection.

Adam and the natural man. He has declared no good to be in them. Whatever has its genesis in Adam or nature has been rejected by God, regardless of its seeming worth. Only those created anew in Christ are acceptable, and a *"a new heavens and a new earth"* are a suitable habitat for all who are a *"new creation"* (2 Cor 5:17). The comprehension of this by faith will quickly resolve many difficulties and assist all, from the least to the greatest, in developing a proper focus.

ONE MAN'S OFFENSE

Remember, we are beholding the

sentence of death passed upon them independently of their sin. They did not “receive” the sentence, but had it imposed upon them. They do not have sinful natures because they chose to have them, but because, by virtue of their relation to Adam, they were born with them.

Those who come from Christ, however, are quite different. They possess what they have “received.” It has not been imposed upon them, but they have received it by faith. Notice how refreshingly this is stated. “*Those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness.*”^{NIV} In general, they receive God’s loving favor, coming into the area of blessing. In specific, they receive His “*gift of righteousness,*” whereby their sins are covered and His own righteousness is imputed unto them.

And what can be said of these people? What effect does grace and the

gift of righteousness have upon them? How does it compare with what they received from Adam?

On a scale more grand and expansive than what they were in Adam, they “*exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.*”^{NRSV} Rather than being a slave, they become “*kings and priests unto God*” (Rev 1:5-6). **They reign over the very lusts that once reigned over them!** Once death reigned, now they reign! Death belongs to them (1 Cor 3:22), and cannot separate them from “*the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Rom 8:39). There is a note of triumph in their life.

Now death is a blessing to them, for “*Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord. ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘they will rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them.’*” (Rev 14:13). Although it is an enemy, it is their “*last enemy,*” and they will soon mock it shouting, “*O*

death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Cor 15:55).

In the meantime, life belongs to them, and they reign in it. Whether “*Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—*” everything belongs to them, and they belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God (1 Cor 3:22). In a kingly act, they refuse to let “*sin reign*” in their “*mortal body*” (Rom 6:12). As princes, they buffet their bodies and bring them into subjection (1 Cor 9:27).

And how is it that such a “reign in life” is realized? It is NOT because of disciplined habits, or learned conduct. It is not because they follow a manual of conduct, or adhere to certain fleshly regimens. No! They “*reign in life by one, Jesus Christ!*” Their triumph in life is traceable to “*one Man.*” Their victory in its totality is owing to Him! Remove Him, and they have nothing.

END OF PARENTHETICAL PARAGRAPH

ONE MAN EFFECTS ALL MEN

“¹⁸ **Therefore, 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.**” The Spirit now returns to the argument at hand, showing the effects of Christ’s vicarious atonement. In verses 14-17, the Spirit has emphasized **the PERSON of Christ**, as compared with the person of Adam. He has referred to the Savior as “*Him that was to come*” (v 14), “*one man Jesus Christ*” (v 15), the One to whom “*many offences*” were imputed (v 16), and “*one, Jesus Christ*” (v 17). Now, the Spirit will shine the light upon Christ’s death, showing what marvelous effects have come from it.

men, they also are brought to two acts, or deeds. One was wrought in a garden, and the other on a hill, the place of the skull. One was done out of self interest, the other in the interest of others. One was the result of yielding to temptation, the

- ▶ **Canaan, Noah’s son.** When Noah’s younger son looked upon his nakedness, he incurred a curse for himself and his descendants (Gen 9:25).
- ▶ **The people of Meroz.** Because they did not come to the help of God’s people, the inhabitants of Meroz were cursed (Judges 5:23).

Not only does the condition and destiny of all men narrow down to two men, they also are brought to two acts, or deeds. One was wrought in a garden, and the other on a hill, the place of the skull.

- ▶ **Gehazi, servant of Elisha.** When Gehazi was covetous, taking a reward from Naaman which was rejected by the prophet, God placed the leprosy of Naaman upon Gehazi and his seed forever (2 Kgs 5:27).
- ▶ **Achan, who coveted the cursed thing.** When Achan coveted and took what God had cursed, Israel lost a key battle, and his entire family suffered death with him (Josh 7:1-24).

ONE MAN’S OFFENSE VERSUS ONE MAN’S RIGHTEOUS ACT

Not only does the condition and destiny of all men narrow down to two

other to a commandment from God.

One Can Effect Many

A single deed can have sweeping effects upon other people. Some lesser deeds that come to mind are as follows.

- ▶ **Abraham.** Because Abraham obeyed God, hearkening to His voice, all nations of the earth were blessed in his Seed (Gen 22:18).
- ▶ **The Passover.** During the Passover and consequent exodus from Egypt, the

people were spared from Divine judgment because of the blood of that sacrifice (Ex 12:27).

What we are considering, therefore, is not a strange teaching. The principle of one being the fountain of either cursing or blessing is found throughout scripture.

A SINGLE OFFENSE

Because this is so contradicting of the wisdom of the world, the Spirit places great stress upon it. Whenever such an emphasis is found in Scripture, the truth expounded is always a key to the opening of large vistas of Kingdom reality.

Think of it! What is described in Genesis in these words, *“she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat”* (Gen 3:6), is here called *“the offense of one,”*^{2KJV} or *“one man’s trespass,”*^{2NKJV} or *“one transgression,”*^{2NASB} or *“one trespass.”*^{2NIV} One time, one man, one sin! And what was the result of that dreadful moment, for it was not an extended period like the building of Babel, or the corruption of Sodom.

“Judgment Came!”

Here is what happened, and our hearts must take these words in. *“Judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation.”*^{2NKJV} Other versions read, *“there resulted condemnation to all men,”*^{2NASB} *“the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men,”*^{2NIV} *“one sin brought condemnation upon everyone.”*^{2NLT}

Everyone was condemned because of *“one transgression!”* From this fact we learn of the malignancy of sin, God’s utter

hatred of it, and the impotency of men to stop the spread of sin once it has entered. If men are unable to behold sin in themselves, they ought to consider that condemnation has come to them because of Adam’s sin—*“one sin.”* To be sure, Adam’s nature is in them, and they have sinned also. But if they cannot see that yet, they are in a state of condemnation by

act of obedience, just as Adam’s act was the premier act of disobedience.

“Justification of Life”

What a difference there is between the effects of Adam’s *“offense”* and Christ’s *“righteous act!”* The phrase *“justification of life”* means acquittal that results in life—spiritual life. Adam’s

One vicarious sacrifice became the basis for the conferment of righteousness and life upon all who believe. If the Father has such a high regard for the death of His Son, He will surely bless those who hear the record He has given of His Son, and embrace it heartily by faith!

virtue of their identity with Adam! His sin resulted in *“condemnation for all men!”*

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF ONE

Now the Spirit powerfully affirms the reality and effectiveness of Christ’s vicarious atonement. *“Even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”* The *“righteousness”* which He mentions is not the sinless life of Christ, but the righteous deed He accomplished when He died. Thus other versions read, *“through one Man’s righteous act,”*^{2NKJV} *“even so through one act of righteousness,”*^{2NASB} and *“the result of one act of righteousness.”*^{2NIV}

This is the *“act”* formerly declared in this chapter. *“Christ died for the ungodly”* (5:6), *“Christ died for us”* (5:8), *“the death of His Son”* (5:10). That single deed is the basis for the undoing of all Adam brought upon us. It is the premier

transgression introduced sin into the world. Christ’s righteous deed brought exoneration from sin. Adam’s sin brought death, Christ’s righteous act brings life.

Other versions read, *“leads to justification and life for all,”*^{2NSRV} *“justification that brings life for all men,”*^{2NIV} *“leads to acquittal and life for all men.”*^{2RSV} The idea is that once our sin was put away, we became alive and sensitive to the God from whom we were estranged by sin. Where once there was death and a lack of response, now there is life and an acute sensitivity to, and love for, God. And it is all because of *“one righteous act”* accomplished by the Redeemer! One vicarious sacrifice became the basis for the conferment of righteousness and life upon all who believe. If the Father has such a high regard for the death of His Son, He will surely bless those who hear the record He has given of His Son, and embrace it heartily by faith!

DISOBEDIENCE AND OBEDIENCE

“¹⁹ For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.” The Spirit has not yet finished with establishing this truth to our hearts. He has traced our sinfulness and dead condition to one man. He has traced our release from sin and our triumph in life to one Man. Our condemnation is traced to a single deed committed by a single man. Our release

from condemnation to the condition of being alive unto God is traced to a single act of righteousness. Now the Spirit drives the point even deeper into our heart.

ONE MAN’S DISOBEDIENCE

Fix In your mind how the Spirit speaks of the entrance of sin. What appears rather simplistic in Genesis is seen as much more complicated in Romans. The Gospel has not only brought *“life and immortality to light”* (2 Tim

1:10), it has opened to us the magnitude of sin as well. As it is written, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness”*

(Rom 1:16-18).

Here, Adam's sin in the garden is called "*one man's disobedience*." One man disobeyed God! The reference is not to a life of disobedience, as lived by Hophni and Phinehas (1 Sam 2:22). It is again to a single act committed at a point in time. Adam's "*disobedience*" occurred when he ate the fruit of the forbidden tree!

We know very little about the life of Adam, even though he lived for nine hundred and thirty years.

- ▶ He gave names to all cattle, birds, and every beast of the field (Gen 2:20).
- ▶ He received a wife from God and called her "Woman" and "Eve" (Gen 2:23; 3:20).
- ▶ He begat Cain, Abel, Seth, and many sons and daughters (Gen 4:1-2,25; 5:4).
- ▶ He lived 930 years and died (Gen 5:5).

The thing for which Adam is noted in this text is his "*disobedience*." That is the thing that most impacted our race!

MANY WERE MADE SINNERS

The result of "*one man's disobedience*" was devastating. It is of such a remarkable nature that theologians still have a difficult time with the affirmation. This was not the result of the "*disobedience*" of a family, or a city, or a nation, or even a world. It was the result of "*one man's disobedience*."

Here is the revealed result of Adam's "*disobedience*." "*Many were MADE SINNERS*." Nearly every version of the Scripture reads the same. Some alternate readings are, "*the many have been constituted sinners*,"^{BBE} and "*many people became sinners*."^{NLT}

Why are people sinners? Some will respond, "Because they sin, for sinning is what makes people sinners." But that is not what the Spirit says in this text. **He affirms they are sinners because of the "*disobedience*" of Adam.**

By affirming we have been "*made sinners*," the Lord removes any temptation for men to claim innocence.

God did not make men sinners judicially. That is, He did not simply pronounce them sinners. By virtue of Adam's federal headship, and because all of his offspring partake of his nature, "*many were MADE sinners*." While it may appear but a technical point, it is necessary to strongly affirm it. **Men are not sinners because they sin, but sin because they are sinners.** They were "*made sinners*" because of "*one man's disobedience*," not

Here, Adam's sin in the garden is called "*one man's disobedience*." One man disobeyed God! The reference is not to a life of disobedience, as lived by Hophni and Phinehas (1 Sam 2:22). It is again to a single act committed at a point in time. Adam's "*disobedience*" occurred when he ate the fruit of the forbidden tree!

because of their many acts of disobedience.

The Adam-nature, shared by everyone that comes into the world, is a corrupted nature. Knowing this, David confessed, "*Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me*"^{NIV} (Psa 51:5). Speaking of all men, the Psalmist also says, "*Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies*"^{NIV} (Psa 58:3). Job was correct when he lamented, "*Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!*"^{NIV} (Job 14:4). Later, Paul would say we were "*by nature children of wrath*" (Eph 2:3).

All of this is affirmed in our text, and that with great power. "*By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.*"

THE OBEDIENCE OF ONE

All of the preceding statements are leading up to this grand announcement—the effects of a vicarious atonement. "*So also by one Man's*

obedience many will be made righteous."^{NKJV} The New Living Translation reads, "*But because One other Person obeyed God, many people will be made right in God's sight.*"

What is the "*obedience*" to which our text refers? Although Jesus did "*always those things*" that pleased the Father (John 8:29), that is not the "*obedience*" of reference. Even though our blessed Lord did "*nothing*" of Himself, but spoke only as His Father had "*taught*" Him (John 8:28), that is not the "*obedience*" mentioned here. Jesus did nothing of His own accord, but only what He saw the Father doing (John 5:19). Still, that is not the "*obedience*" to which the Spirit refers. In all of the above reference many words and deeds were covered. But our text speaks of a single act of obedience—one righteous act!

It is the death of Christ that is called "*the obedience*." Like Adam received one commandment, there was a sense in which Jesus also received a single commandment. He put it this way, "*Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father*"^{NKJV} (John 10:17-18).

Paul also mentioned this singular act of obedience in his remarkable exposition of what was involved in Jesus coming into the world. "*And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross*" (Phil 2:8). Jesus laying down His life in the death of the cross, therefore, is the "*obedience of One Man*."

MANY WERE MADE RIGHTEOUS

Just as the one act of disobedience in Adam constituted all men sinners, one act of obedience by Jesus constituted many men righteous. That is the express statement of our text: "*so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.*"^{NRSV} You must exercise your faith to take hold of this truth.

This very truth is strongly affirmed in the fifth chapter of Second Corinthians. Here again is a remarkable statement of justification. *“For He [God] hath made Him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him”* (2 Cor 5:21). The NIV reads, *“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

The point is strong here, and must be reaffirmed. **As needful as our obedience is., we are not made righteous by our obedience, but by the obedience of Christ!** Further, it was not Christ’s obedience to the law that made us righteous, but His obedience

“unto death, even the death of the cross.” If Jesus had not died, bearing our sins in His body on the tree (1 Pet 2:24), His sinless life would have carried no significance for us. We would have remained sinners by virtue of our descent from Adam, and personal involvement in sin as well.

Our *“faith in His blood”* (Rom 3:25) brings the imputation of righteousness to us from God! When we believe what God has declared of His Son, He is kindly disposed to make us righteous by giving us His own righteousness.

For those who feel this minimizes the necessity of obedience on our part, the following should be considered. Our text

says that through the *“obedience of One”* we are made righteous. With a thorough familiarity with *“the deep things of God,”* and total expertise in expressing the truth precisely and with power, this is how the Spirit declared the matter. We do well to forthwith abandon any view of Scripture that does not permit us to speak in words *“taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words”*^{NASB} (1 Cor 2:13).

I have a growing discontent with powerless teaching that insists on neutering the text of Scripture by pressing it through the colander of the wisdom of men. It is always best to say it like the Spirit did. Our text is surely one that must be so approached.

ABOUNDING OFFENSE AND ABOUNDING GRACE

“²⁰ Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more . . .” Here the Spirit takes up the matter of sin being in then world before the Law. He is going to show us that the Law *“entered”* to accentuate the reality and wickedness of sin, causing it to *“abound.”* Remember, from Adam to Moses, *“sin was in the world.”* It was not, however viewed within the structure of a moral code. Men were constituted sinners because Adam disobeyed God. Nevertheless, they were really sinners, and the Law would show that to be the case.

THE LAW ENTERED

There came a point in time when *“the Law”* came into the world. This entrance is described in a number of ways. From one perspective, *“the law was given through Moses”* (John 1:17). From another view, *“it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator”* (Gal 3:19b). From yet another, the law *“was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come”* (Gal 3:19a). The entrance of the Law was a hallmark in human history.

THAT THE OFFENSE MIGHT ABOUND

Contrary to the ideas of some, the Law was not given to enable men to

become righteous. It was not intended to correct the human condition. Our text plainly states it *“entered that the offence might abound,”*^{KJV} or *“that the transgression might increase,”*^{NASB} or *“to multiply the offences.”*^{NJB}

provoked to even more sin through God’s holy law. Sin had brought hostility toward God as well as alienation from Him. Thus, in his most excellent treatise of the ministry of the Law, Paul confessed his own experience. *“But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died”*^{NIV} (Rom 7:8-9).

Thus sin burst from its banks, flooding into the whole of life in unprecedented levels because of the Law. The Israelites, for example, which were not noted for indulgence and fornication in Egypt (at least not according to the record), broke over the boundary of morality at the very foot of Mount Sinai. They were naked, worshiped an idol, danced, drank, and indulged in revelry (Ex 32:19-25; 1 Cor 10:7). All of this occurred with the arresting sound of the Law still in their ears. Sin had become *“exceeding sinful!”* Or, in the words of our text, *“the transgression increased.”*

To sensitive souls, who did not practice such corruption, their hearts became more sensitive to the sin they had.

Here the Spirit takes up the matter of sin being in then world before the Law. He is going to show us that the Law *“entered”* to accentuate the reality and wickedness of sin, causing it to *“abound.”*

How is it that *“the offense”* was caused to *“abound”* by the entrance of the Law? There are, in my judgment, at least two ways in which this took place.

- ▶ FIRST, the perverse nature of sin, which already existed, was seen more clearly. In this sense, that very sin *“by the commandment might become exceeding sinful”* (Rom 7:13). Thus, the dreadful plight of the sinner became more apparent, whetting a desire for deliverance from sin.
- ▶ SECOND, man’s corrupt nature, received from his father Adam, was

Under the bludgeon of the law, like David, they would cry out, *“O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great”* (Psa 25:11). *“My strength fails because of my iniquity, And my bones waste away”* (Psa 31:10). *“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest”* (Psa 51:2-4).

Thus, the *“offense”* abounded, and the transgression increased. The Law, then, was most effective in its work. It entered to cause the transgression to increase, and increase it did—both in perception and in quantity! **In this, God’s assessment of humanity was confirmed to be true, and thus He was justified.**

WHERE SIN ABOUNDED, GRACE ABOUNDED MUCH MORE

The increase of sin, however, was not the end of the matter. As great as sin is, grace is greater! The capacity for sin to increase is significant, but the capacity of grace to proliferate is more significant! *“But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.”*^{NASB} *“But where there was much sin, there was much more grace.”*^{BBE} *“But however much sin increased, grace was always greater.”*^{NJB}

There are at least three ways to view this text, and all of them are certainly true.

FIRST, as sin abounded in the first

man Adam, so grace abounded even more in the second man Jesus. More grace was in him than sin was in Adam. Thus, the *“second man”* far exceeds the *“first man”* in every way. Jesus was *“full of grace and truth,”* proving the superiority of both (John 1;14).

SECOND, grace was able to reach into the depths and retrieve man from sin and degradation, then set him in the heavenly places in Christ—higher than Adam was in all of his innocence. Grace can take the same powers blasted by sin, restore and fill them with the Divine nature. It can regenerate an unregenerate, lift the fallen, and raise the dead to everlasting life. The worse the condition, the more adequate grace becomes.

THIRD, the effects of Christ’s obedience far transcend the effects of Adam’s disobedience. Christ’s one act of righteousness has produced much more than Adam’s single offense. What Christ’s death has accomplished has wrought a multitude of benefits in a multitude of people that has superabounded over the trespass of Adam.

If you are able to receive it, the more readily sin is seen in truth, the greater and more effective the grace of God becomes. Thus, in this great salvation, sin itself works against the old

serpent. The Law identified it, causing it to spring forth in its real nature. But then the Gospel comes, proclaiming with power the grace of God who can not only eradicate the guilt of sin, but also impute His righteousness to the person once enslaved to sin. Then it also brings an eternal inheritance, reserving it in heaven for us. All the while, we are *“kept by the power of God through faith”* until the appointed time, when we will have an abundant entrance ministered to us into the everlasting Kingdom.

In every way, grace has abounded over and exceeded sin, enormous though it was. In every way, Jesus has outdone

If you are able to receive it, the more readily sin is seen in truth, the greater and more effective the grace of God becomes. Thus, in this great salvation, sin itself works against the old serpent.

Adam. In every way, grace has proved more effective than sin. What sin has done, grace has done much more. Whatever Adam has brought, Jesus has brought more. Thank God for His grace! Obedience has out-shined disobedience.

THE REIGN OF DEATH AND THE REIGN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

“²¹ so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Everyone is under the reign of someone or something. Either Satan rules men or Jesus Christ does. Either sin reigns in death, or grace reigns through righteousness. These contrary reigns cannot take place simultaneously. Men are governed by either Satan or Christ, but not by both. Sin or grace rules them,

but never at the same time!

SO THAT . . .

This is an explanation of **WHY** grace abounds *“much more”* where sin abounds or increases. Everything God does is for a *“cause”* (Ezek 14:23). **The reason for grace abounding is that it might exercise the dominion.** Ordinarily, men do not think of grace as a ruling or governing factor. They tend to think of it in terms of tenderness. **While**

God’s grace is tender and gentle with wounded sinners, it has a nature that rules.

SIN REIGNED IN DEATH

Sin reigns in an environment of death. Wherever there is separation from God, insensitivity to His Person and will—wherever men do not have eyes to see and ears to hear—sin is ruling. When men were severed from God, sin got up on the throne and began its ruthless rule.

Wherever dull and spiritually listless souls are found, sin is governing the individual. There are no exceptions to this rule, for sin reigns *“in death.”* That is the habitat in which it flourishes.

Sin and death are wed together, and work together. Those who are gripped with the *“fear of death,”* for example, are, by virtue of that condition, in bondage. As it is written, *“who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”* (Heb 2:15).

GRACE REIGNS THROUGH RIGHTEOUSNESS

When grace abounds, however, it changes the entire situation. Death is no longer the environment in which the believer is found. Because of that, sin can no longer reign, for sin and life cannot mingle.

Grace reigns *“through righteousness,”* or justification.^{NRSV} That is, when the individual is aware of his acceptance by God, and knows his name is written in heaven, grace takes the throne of life, exercising a beneficent rule. This righteousness is what is imputed to us. It is the righteousness that comes from God by faith in Christ Jesus. It is the

righteousness announced in the Gospel, and procured by the vicarious death of the Son of God.

Stated another way, when we are in right standing with God, His favor rules over us, subduing our enemies and lifting us up to higher realms. His grace effectively teaches us to *“to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age”* (Tit 2:12). Empowered by the Holy spirit, we refuse to allow sin to reign in our mortal bodies (Rom 6:12). Rather than yielding to the *“deeds of the body,”* they are *“mortified”* under the capable leadership of the Spirit (Rom 8:13). Thus grace reigns within the environment of imputed righteousness, empowering us to maintain a heavenly stance in a condemned world.

TO ETERNAL LIFE

There is an objective to the reign of grace. It is not simply to cause us to live acceptably in this world. That is a requirement, to be sure. But it is a means to an end, and not the end of itself.

The real aim is to obtain *“eternal life.”* That is *“the promise that He hath promised”* (1 John 2:25), the sum of

Divine commitment. While we have eternal life now, it is only in the first fruit sense. The bulk of it is yet to come. Thus we are admonished, *“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life”* (1 Tim 6:12). Such a fight is a kingly one. The objective is to know we have eternal life now (1 John 5:13), and enter into the fulness of it at the appearing of the Lord Jesus. And how will such a condition be achieved? It is by grace reigning through righteousness. It is by our sins being removed from us, God’s righteousness imputed to us, and the knowledge of both being realized through faith.

THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

Sin has so infected and affected men that they can make absolutely no progress toward God without Christ. But men must not despair because of this situation. Rather, they must take hope, for Christ has already confirmed His willingness to *“bring us to God”* (1 Pet 3:18). God has received His sacrifice, and exalted Him to His own right hand in order to *“bring many sons to glory”* (Heb 2:10). Every child of God has good reason to be optimistic about being fully equal to the challenges of life in this present evil world, and fully prepared for a future with the Lord.

CONCLUSION

Try as you may, you cannot find more than two men in the passage we have covered. The condition of all men is traced to these two men: Adam, the first man, and Jesus, the Second Man. Both stand for all those who come from them, and are the cause for their condition. The establishment of this reality is more than a mere doctrinal treatise—although it is surely one of the premier examples of *“sound doctrine.”* The truth that has been effectively expounded is that of the vicarious death of Jesus. Not only has *“One died for all,”* He becomes the basis for the conferment of the blessing of God.

Ponder the marvels of what has been revealed in this section of Scripture. Behold the effects of the first and Second man, the *“first man Adam and the last Adam”* (1 Cor 15:45,47). See how extensive and effective they are!

ADAM	JESUS CHRIST
Sin entered the world	Grace entered the world
Death entered the world	Life entered the world
Committed an offense	Brought a free gift
Many are dead	Grace and gift abound
One that sinned	The free gift
Judgment to condemnation	Many offenses to justification
Death reigned by one	We reign in life by One
All men condemned	Justification and life
Disobedience made many sinners	Obedience made many righteous

Although men may boast of their independence, it is only an imagination. What we are by nature is traced to Adam, and what we are by grace is traced to Christ Jesus.

The reason for Christ’s atoning death is seen more clearly in view of these things. Because the fall of humanity came through one man, the rescue of humanity must also come from one Man. A Champion had to come that could assume all of the liabilities of mankind, absorb the full brunt of Divine wrath, and come back to rule from heaven.

Jesus is truly *“the Firstborn of the new creation.”* He has set the tone for the children of God. He is not a mere pattern to be emulated, any more than Adam was as example to be followed. By virtue of being the federal head of a new creation, all who are in Him partake of His nature. They are blessed by God because of Christ, and not because of their personal achievements.

Two men. Both are effective in what

they have passed on to their constituency. Both are the patterns of those who follow them. The first man brought in sin, death, and all of the dreadful things associated with them. The Second Man brought in righteousness and life, and all of the blessed things associated with them.

The environment brought about by the first man was death. Within that framework, no good could be produced, and no one could become righteous. It was a hopeless situation that could only be resolved by God making "all things new." To this day, death cannot produce anything acceptable to God. There must

be life, response, sensitivity, and alertness to walk with God. One must have eyes to see and ears to hear.

Where life is not found, Adam is the prominent one. In such a condition, the individual is not accepted, and all effort is futile. If what we have can be traced back to Adam, it is unacceptable, for the whole Adamic order has been rejected. A remake is required.

Where life IS found, Christ is the prominent one. He is the One behind the life, and the Reason the life has been conferred. God has blessed the individual

because of Christ. It is His obedience that has brought the blessing of righteousness, and His act of righteousness that has lifted us up on the eagle's wing.

All men are sinners by virtue of who they are, not what they have done. They were "made sinners" by the offense of Adam, and sin because of that. This by no means excuses what sinners do. It rather explains their conduct, and confirms their need of a Savior.

God is greatly to be praised for such a marvelous arrangement. His salvation provides for the rescue of all sinners.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 9/22/2000 Continuing in our studies on Romans, we will cover 6:1-14, **DEAD TO SIN, ALIVE TO GOD.** Justification, or the imputation of righteousness, has very real effects. When one comes into Christ, it is not a mere formality. The curse brought in by Adam is removed, and the blessing of God is brought upon the individual. This is portrayed vividly in our baptism into Christ. With absolutely no regard for the traditions of men, the Holy Spirit associates death to sin and life toward God with our baptism. Our meeting will convene at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God.

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