

TUTORIAL
3.9

From Justification to Life

Bible presenter Scot Keen analyses the transition from justification to life for the believer in Romans chapter five. He contrasts Adam with Christ and helps us to identify with them.

Introduction

So far we have discussed Paul's thesis for the book of Romans. He is not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes, to the Jews first and also to the Gentiles. Paul then launched into a discussion on the righteousness of God that we find in the Gospel. He elaborated on justification by faith. He also explained the theological basis for our justification, for our redemption and for the satisfaction of God's wrath. In Romans chapter four, Paul went on to deal with Old Testament examples of justification by faith. Then in chapter five we looked at the results of justification. We now stand in God's favor, we have hope that is guaranteed and our future rejoicing is in the glory of God.

Justification to Sanctification

Now we will explore Romans 5:12-21 and look at the transition from justification to life. This section focuses on the journey from justification to sanctification, a journey of Christian growth and maturity. It is foundational as Paul will talk about our identification with Adam and his sin and also identification with Christ. This will be the basis for all the Christian life principles that come in chapter six through to chapter eight. So it is foundational in that sense. Also, we are going to find that Paul will elaborate on the abundance (or riches) of God's grace and the impact that they have on the believer's life. The keyword of Romans 5:12-21 is 'one'. As we transition from justification to life, Paul will emphasize the oneness of those identified either with Adam or with Christ. We find death through Adam and life through Christ.

Listen to all the words that describe oneness, or the identification principle. We find that through *one* man sin entered into the world. It was the transgression of *one* that caused many to die. God's gift of grace came through *one* man. There is *one* who sinned. Judgement arose from *one* transgression. Death reigned through the *one* and we reign in life through the *one*, Jesus Christ. *One* transgression brought condemnation to all people. *One* act of

righteousness results in justification. *One* Man obeyed and *one* man disobeyed. We find a contrast between Adam and Christ in the picture. We have moved on from contrasting the Jews and Gentiles. We are now contrasting Adam and Christ. Adam's one sin is what set us all up as sinners. Christ's one act of righteousness is what sets us up as belonging to God. We have been declared righteous through faith in Him. Through Adam came sin and death, and through Christ comes righteousness and life. Those are the contrasts in this section.

Let's think about how we can identify with Adam in his sin. In Romans 5:12 Paul says, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned." And so the question is, "How did we sin along with Adam? Why are we brought into his judgement?" There are several different views on this. One is the Seminal View. In this approach, we sinned in and with Adam because we were in him biologically, meaning we can be traced back to him by our DNA. So when Adam sinned, we were inherently in Adam and therefore we sinned along with him. The other major view is called Federal Headship and it argues that just as a team captain makes decisions for the entire team, so Adam, when he sinned, was representative of the human race and therefore brought us all into death and condemnation. At the end of the day, it does not really matter how we get there. The result is still the same: through one man's sin, death entered into the world and it spread to all people because all sinned.

Before I delve into the details, I want you to understand what I believe is Paul's goal here. His aim is not to explain why people go to Hell when they die. Paul already accomplished that thoroughly in Romans 1:18-3:20. He has already established the fact that all the world is guilty before God. So Paul is not trying to make the same point all over again. Rather he wants to show that just as there were ramifications from being united with Adam, so there are ramifications of being united with Christ, just further reaching ramification this time.

The Damage of Sin

Let's look at the damage caused by the first man, Adam. Paul says, "As through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin and so death spread to all men because all sinned." Death (the divinely appointed penalty for sin) came into the world through Adam's sin. Now death is the penalty that God appointed for sin. Remember God said of the fruit in the garden, "The day that you eat of it you will surely die." Cranfield, author of a commentary on Romans, says, "Death is not sin's soldier or servant or instrument. It is the sign of God's authority. Death is appointed by God as the inseparable and inescapable accompaniment of sin." Wherever there is sin there is death, and God was the One who set it up that way. So whenever we see death we are reminded that all of humanity is under the God's authority, as death is the divinely appointed penalty for sin.

In some cultures we almost numb ourselves to the realities and pain of death. Maybe we do this to take some of the sting out of it. Death is supposed to be a reminder to all of humanity that something is wrong in God's perfect world, a reminder that there is a problem now and that we are not in the garden any longer. So death reminds us that there is something wrong and also that we are under God's authority. It is experienced by all because all sinned in and with Adam and so death spread to all people because all sinned. This reminds us of our mortality.

Look at Romans 5:12 again, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned." Then Paul says in Romans 5:13, "For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam." I'll slow down and explain this technical section as best as I can.

Some look at the verse, "Sin is not credited or imputed where there is no law", and think that God did not judge sin until the law came along. But remember, God judged sin in the days of Noah. There was no Mosaic Law then. God also judged sin in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, so he is not saying that God did not judge sin. Paul is saying Adam had a clearly stated consequence. He was told that when he ate the forbidden fruit, his punishment would be death. Moses' Law prescribed what people must and must not do. If the Israelites disobeyed God, in some cases, death was the clearly prescribed penalty. Both Adam and Moses had a clear prohibition and a clear warning that death would be the consequence if people disobeyed God. Paul is saying that death reigned from Adam until Moses, even for those who did not sin in the same way as Adam. These people did not transgress a clearly stated prohibition. The reason that death reigned for them is not because they were disobeying a clear-cut command, but because they were sinners because of Adam's sin and we know death is always the accompaniment of sin. So Paul is making the point that through Adam's sin death established its reign over mankind. The reign of sin and death is universal and inescapable. No one gets out of here alive. God has appointed death as the penalty for sin.

I remember years ago being at a Civil War graveyard when I was doing missionary training. We were on an excursion and were learning to use GPS and navigational tools. I had been studying Romans chapter five at the time, and so as I looked at the tombstones I was reminded that death is inescapable and universal. The reign of sin and death through Adam is something that all people face.

Paul says, "Death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam" (Romans 5:14). And then he

says that Adam was a type of Him who was to come. Adam is a representative, and although death came through him, he is also a type of Christ. There two Adams- the first Adam and the last Adam. Now there are similarities between them: both are representatives of a race of people and both performed significant acts that had consequences for those associated with them. So there are similarities but there are also major dissimilarities. Notice the first difference: in verse fifteen, Paul says, "But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many."

Adam did much for bad and Christ did much more for good. We know that what Adam did is true and it had ramifications that are known and recognized by all. But even more true than the reign of death through Adam's sin is the abundance of grace through Christ and what He did. Now how can one thing be truer than another? Well of course both are equally true. Paul is just being emphatic to make the point that if we believe that what Adam did had consequences on those associated with him, then we need to be even faster to believe that being associated with Christ has ramifications on our lives.

There is also a difference in number, "The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation" (Romans 5:16). God responded to Adam's one sin, not all of Adam's sins in his entire lifetime, not the accumulated sins of the human race. God responded to the one sin of Adam by bringing condemnation on all of humanity. If God judged one sin that severely, how would we expect God to respond to the accumulated sin of all of humanity? Look at Romans 5:16, "On the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation." God responded to Adam's one sin by bringing condemnation on all of humanity. God responded to the collective sin of all humanity by showing His amazing and unexpected grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is shocking us with this difference here. In grace, God responded to humanity's sin by dying in our place.

There is also a difference in consequence, "For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17). And so we know that through Adam's one transgression death reigned. Paul says, "much more," meaning even more sure than death's reign through Adam is the reign of life in Christ.

I remember listening to a song years ago that talked about Jesus' return, "We will leave this land where death reigns to ever be alive." I remember contemplating the words of that song, "Man, how great it will be when Christ comes back and we're ever alive with him." And then it hit me from the

Scripture that the moment we believe in Christ is when life begins, not when Jesus comes back but the moment we trust in Christ.

Paul says, “Those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness,” that is referring to justification by faith. “Those who receive that will reign in life through the one through Jesus Christ.” So the gift of righteousness, or justification, is the gift to stand before God. We begin to reign through life through the One, which is Jesus. Paul is talking about the ability through the indwelling spirit, Christ through us, to live the Christian life. The reign in life begins when we receive by faith the righteousness that comes through Christ. Paul is encouraging believers to accept that Truth. He says, “much more”. We picture this reign of God's grace and righteousness resulting in life.

Life through Faith in Christ

Paul summarizes this section in verses eighteen and nineteen. He says, “So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.” I'll pause there for a while. If all we had was verse eighteen, it would sound like Paul was saying Adam's sin condemned everybody and Christ's death justified everybody. Christ's death did make the payment for all sin, but notice again in verse seventeen that it is for those who receive the abundance of God's grace. Adam's sin automatically impacted all of humanity, whereas Christ's payment of sin potentially impacts all of humanity. We receive his gift by faith and then we find its impact. So it is not automatic and therefore has to be received by faith.

Look at Romans 5:19, “For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners.” We were placed in the camp of sinners because of Adam's one sin, “Even so through the obedience of the one the many will be made righteous.” When he talks about the obedience of the one, he's talking about Jesus being obedient by dying as the book of Philippians would say, “even the death of the cross.” It's that one act of righteousness when He died for us, “through that the many will be made righteous.”

What about the Law? Paul says that the Law was created so that transgression would increase. The Law increases sin in certain ways. It increases it in clarity because we have clear standards that we violate when we sin. It increases in clarity. It also increases in character because it shows that what people are doing is not just an act of sin but actually an act of rebellion, a violation of a clearly stated standard. The Law also increased in terms of quantity, as we will discover in Romans chapter seven. But when people feel that their autonomy is threatened by the Law, they actually want to fight against it. So the Law actually increases sin, “The law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” See this as a big picture of the Old Testament. Watch God's interaction with humanity,

specifically with Israel. Israel went from bad to worse throughout her history. God, in His grace, sent Christ to die for our sins. So sin abounded but grace abounded all the more. He says, then, that just as sin reigned in death, grace would reign through righteousness through eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. The result of what Christ did is eternal life. We have eternal life (life knowing God) and can live in fellowship with Christ because we are alive in Him.



DISCUSSION POINTS

From Justification to Life

1. What is the gift of righteousness?
2. Who are the ones that “reign in life”?
3. What is the key word of this passage?
4. What came through Adam?
5. What came through Christ?
6. What is the difference between the “Seminal View” and “Federal Headship”?
7. What is Paul’s goal in this section?
8. In what ways are Adam and Christ similar?
9. Those who believe the gospel receive what?
10. What does Paul mean by “much more” in verse 17?
11. How does “transgression” increase under the Law?



ACTIVITIES

From Justification to Life

A friend comes to you and says: “I sometimes doubt my salvation. I am constantly wondering if I did enough, if I did it right, etc. I don’t have peace in my heart, and I don’t see how God could accept me. I find myself still struggling with sin, so if I sin after God has forgiven me, then what does that mean?” He was told by a friend that if he was really saved he would have peace (Rom.5:1), and that if he still struggled with sin maybe he wasn’t saved. The man told him maybe he didn’t do enough, that he didn’t really commit. How can you help them only using Romans 3:21 – 5:21?

