

**Reading:** Romans 5:12-21

**Theme:** An overview of the passage.

In my family, as children and teenagers, we would always try to sit down with our parents to watch *The Two Ronnies* on a Saturday evening. We knew that at a certain point - when Ronnie Corbett sat in his chair for his monologue - my mother would say “*I can’t stand this*”, then she would get up and do us all a bite of supper! Ronnie Corbett would start a story and go off on all sorts of tangents before getting back to his main subject. These are grammatically termed by many as ‘*anacoluthons*’, but by others as *wanderings*, *ramblings* or *parenthesis*. Whatever they were called my mother did not like them, not to her taste at all!

Paul in this passage before us, has a glorious parenthesis in v13-17 and it is shown in AV by brackets; but by a hyphen in NIV at end of v12 - though it doesn’t mark where it ends! Paul starts a comparison, a sentence even, but doesn’t finish it until v18. I have now covered one of the easiest bits about this rich passage! There is much debate between scholars and commentators virtually over every clause in this section and I do not expect to satisfy everyone’s opinion, but I want to encourage us all from truths it contains.

There are glorious truths contained in this section as I pray we will see as we go through it - original sin, the historicity of Genesis 1-3 is underlined, the dealing of God with mankind through covenants, the panorama of salvation and the certainty, security and assurance of our salvation will again be stressed and shown in it - hopefully to our further encouragement. I feel Paul’s great aim in this section is to

show the greatness and gloriousness of justification by faith on the ground of the righteousness of Jesus Christ by comparing and contrasting such with the condemnation of all for the sin of Adam. I feel Paul's aim and concern is to drive this home and so to underline the truth of our security in Christ. One commentator suggests these verses are the very heart and centre of this letter to the Romans! I want us to note 2 things about these verses as an introduction and an overview to v12-21.

### **1. The Connection to the Preceding.**

We can see that v12 begins with "*Therefore*" (many versions) or "*Wherefore*" (AV) and this directs our attention back to what Paul has already written. Some people write letters that are random thoughts thrown together, put on paper in no ordered manner, but this was not the case with Paul. He had a brilliant and logical mind which God used and he was inspired and directed by the Holy Spirit. When we see the word '*therefore*' we need to see what it is there for! All the commenters agree Paul is referring back to things he had previously written - both generally and then specifically.

We cannot really understand these verses v12-21 unless we recognise and see them in the light of 1:16 onwards and this includes all the great truths in chapters 1-4 and also in the opening section of Chapter 5. We are not to come suddenly at these verses in isolation, as if Paul had not written anything else to the Romans.

Not only is that true generally, but there is a connection specifically and commentators argue this is v9-11. When we

were looking at these verses, we noted that at the end of v10 Paul says *'how much more having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life'*. We saw the word *'through'* (NIV) or *'by'* (AV) is the word *'in'* or *'union with'*. We are saved in union, in His life – a life union, the amazing life of Christ in us, we in Him and all He has accomplished for us.

Once we were not recipients, partakers, sharers of this life. At one time we were dead in our trespasses and sins, were condemned along with all people in Adam, but now we are in Christ. We are in Him as a result of justification by faith, of salvation by grace. In v12-21 we are shown the out workings of the *"much mores"* of v9-11. Indeed, we are shown why we needed to be redeemed, how justification by faith alone is the only means of our salvation through, in and by Jesus Christ and how it makes possible our new life in Christ. If, as said earlier, these verses can be viewed as the heart and centre of the letter, it means these verses are a crucial passage.

These verses summarise all Paul has said before - he was not ashamed of the gospel (1:16); he's written of the state of all people before God. The question must be asked as to why they are like that 3:23 *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"*. It is because we are in Adam. Being in Adam places us in a desperate and condemned state. Why is that? Well here Paul opens up on what Adam did and its consequences for all. In Adam we were hopeless and helpless. Have we realised that? It is not asking are we trying to be good or to be a Christian or to improve, but do we realise that outside of Christ we are lost and hopeless with no chance of heaven as our home?

We may not like that idea, but Paul opens up on it to drive home, screw the truth into our minds and hearts. We are all in Adam by birth and therefore we are lost, in sin and under the curse of death. Our lives, our world history is littered with greater or lesser examples of sin and its effects. Even our own lives give evidence of such. Yet there is hope - it is "*in Christ*"! Biblically there are only 2 types of people in the history of the world and even now - those "*in Adam*" and those "*in Christ*".

These verses summarise what Paul has said before, but they also summarise, or rather hint at, what he is going to write of towards the end of chapter 8 - the glories of being a Christian and so he will contrast and compare what we were and had in Adam to what we are and have in Christ. We will also see some further "*how much mores*".

We were helpless and hopeless in Adam, but in Christ we have so much more; we are part of a new humanity - forgiven, given everlasting life, no longer under the oppressive reign of sin - which has to be a happy thought! We are not gloriously saved and forgiven alone, but more importantly we are in Christ. Although this section will be one which will stretch us - certainly me as I try and rightly understand, open up and apply relevantly this portion of God's word - I pray it will be worth it for us all as we will see the great truths and views concerning our Saviour and ourselves. Again, it is an encouraging section and I will try to draw out the sweet, refreshing and strengthening comforts and encouragements

found in it. That is something of the connection of these verses to the preceding, but see:

## **2. The Birds-eye Overview.**

In many ways I've already started something of this, but I want to try to fix an overview of this section in our hearts and minds, so we can see the big picture before we start looking at the various parts. Charles Hodge (*a Presbyterian theologian*) divides v12-21 into 5 parts and as it is a convenient division I agree with, I will use his division, but use my own headings:

**A. Comparison started** (v12) - after having linked us back to what he'd written previously, Paul writes *'just as'* and so suggests a comparison, but Paul doesn't finish the comparison, or the sentence! He hangs it in mid-air. What he says is true, is important, but it dangles there waiting to be completed. It is not until v18 that it is completed! It seems as if he pressed the pause button and thought *'Yes, that is right, but would these Roman believers know this?'* So, he goes on to enlarge on or prove his point...

**B. Proof of the statement** (v13-14) - Paul begins to tease open what he has said, almost as if he's asking *"You do recognise that what I say is true don't you? If not here is why it is true..."* This leaves a problem - if sin caused death, how could God sort out the mess, for it would take something remarkable and marvellous! This is what Paul goes on to write about...

**C. God's gift and grace** (v15-17) - we learn that Adam was a pattern of Christ and what we had and were in Adam, is superseded, surpassed in amazing ways in Christ. There are similarities, but gloriously significant differences as Paul builds our confidence in what God has done for, to and in us. The one trespass bought death in as a matter of principle - it is deserved and merited. Christ's gift is undeserved and is a matter of grace (*mentioned twice in v15*) and overflows to the many. In Adam we receive justice; but in Christ we receive God's abundant, undeserved grace and generosity.

Paul in v16 tells us of how the verdict of condemnation affected mankind and how it came after only **one sin** (showing how serious sin is). Yet God's gift of salvation came after an **unimaginable and innumerable number of sins** committed by all people. The vastness and dazzling brightness of God's grace shows up clearly against the dark backdrop of so much wickedness. Then in v17 Paul draws together the threads of v15 and 16 and says those who received God's gift will reign in life through the one-man Jesus Christ - our certain and future hope and glory is secure. Paul stresses that by God's gift and grace we gain more than Adam ever lost and brought on us.

**D. Comparison completed** (v18-19) - now the comparison is completed from v12, but it is padded out, augmented by things he has already said in the parenthesis of v13-17. Paul then brings in yet another '*Therefore*' (a number of versions) or '*Consequently*' (NIV) - as if he is saying that therefore, consequently... Jesus' righteousness and obedience have had just as much effect on human history as did Adam's trespass

and disobedience. Those in Christ are certainly affected - as are all those who are in Adam. There is no doubt about it - all who trust the Lord Jesus as their Saviour are made righteous - justified by faith alone. That is why we need to be sure we have been justified by faith alone and we are only righteous because of that.

**E. Comparison and contrast of sin and grace (v20-21) -** Paul underlines to us that all mankind is in one of two camps - either in Adam or in Christ. Here in these 2 verses, almost as a postscript, Paul deals with the question of Law and grace. The Law could not be ignored, how then did it correspond, relate to God's grace? This is what Paul shows here by comparison and contrast.

I'm not even going to try and summarise Paul's arguments here, except to say that the era of grace is greater and brings eternal life to all who have the Lord Jesus as their Saviour.

I hope the overview has set in place an idea, a plan of what we will look at in more detail in the time ahead and that these things will make more sense as we do so. The whole section declares to us that we have a great Saviour. If we are in Him then we are secure, safe and have the assurance of eternal life and glory.

That is why it is so important not to be trying to be as a Christian, feel like a Christian, try to do our best to be good enough - as such attempts leave us in Adam - in whom we are hopeless and helpless! We need to be taken out of Adam and put into Christ. We cannot do it by our own works, desires or

best efforts. Only God, by the work of His Holy Spirit applying all Jesus has accomplished on our behalf, can do such and we are to ask God to have mercy on us, to trust the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, then we will be justified, reconciled, made alive, adopted, born-again, converted, are those who inhabit a new realm, we are new creatures and incredibly we are in Christ!

What a position to be in! We are by nature sons and daughters of Adam, who deserve hell and condemnation, yet we can receive grace and salvation and be made sons and daughters of God, be made heirs, joint heirs with Christ! Isn't the great news of the gospel of Jesus Christ amazing and declares to us glorious and thrilling truths. Only God through the great gospel of the Lord Jesus can take us from being in Adam and put us safely, securely and eternally in Christ.

That's all I want to say this evening; I hope I have given indication of the glorious truths that are ours when we are in Christ and we also stand secure in Jesus for time and eternity.