

Reading: Romans 5:12-21

Theme: Being in Christ surpasses being in Adam!

Paul has been showing us something of the unsurpassable riches and privileges that believers have in the Lord Jesus. He started a comparison in v12 and brings it to completion in v18-19. In between he shows us what we have in Adam and what we have in Christ. Adam was a pattern of the One to come and so we find similarities - both are representative heads and whichever one we are in we find that what is true of them, is true of us in God's eyes. Yet there are also differences, glorious differences and Paul has opened up in v15 on these differences - the differences the gospel makes - "*how much more*" and the supremacy of grace.

Now in v16-17 Paul opens up further on these differences. It is as if he says "*Yes, these are surface differences, but go below the surface and you will see even more incredible differences!*" It is like opening bonnet of model T Ford and the bonnet of a modern high-performance car - many similarities, but amazing differences! In approaching v16-17 I must admit I had difficulty in preparing. Not that the truths were uncertain, for they are gloriously certain, but how to handle and shape the material to present it in a useful way. As sometimes happens, in the middle of the night it clicked, woke me up and thankfully I remembered it – or I think I did! I can assure you the sermons I preach in my dreams are always far better than the ones I preach in real life!

In v16-17 Paul interweaves a number of thoughts. I'm going to try and isolate each main strand in our connection with Adam and then with Christ, so we will compare and contrast these as we go through these verses. See 2 things:

1. In Adam we have the judgement, condemnation and tyranny.

It sounds a dark heading, and yes it contains dark material and truths in it. If this were a film it would be X-rated, have warnings on it because of the description of the horrors it contains, for it is a true description of all men and women, all boys and girls from all ages and all nationalities.

Here once again we are taken back to the garden of Eden, to Adam's sin as our federal head and representative. We are all included in Adam and the guilt of his original sin is our guilt too. All are included in that original sin and we are held as guilty before God as if we had actually committed it. Just as Adam was judged by God, so we are under the same judgement. God had warned Adam beforehand that if he disobeyed God's command about eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, there would be consequences, there would be judgement to follow.

Paul stresses here that the judgement followed **one sin** - one teeny weeny, small, insignificant little-old-taking of the forbidden fruit and for that Adam and Eve were judged and we in them. It seems a harsh, bitter, unfair and disproportional judgement to many people. Yet Adam lived in Paradise, no bias to sin, was in innocency, with nothing to distract his enjoyment and relationship with God; he had God speak directly to him about this matter and God lovingly warned him most solemnly. We often rate or measure crimes according to whom they were committed against. So, offences against us would not be as newsworthy or regarded as so serious as against HRH. Yet here Adam rebelled, disobeyed and committed this 'crime', this sin, against the very God made him, the God of all Creation and Adam did so with no mitigating circumstances - for it was a deliberate, active disobedience and rebellion.

The judgement had been warned of and it was carried out. There is no point threatening or saying something and failing to carry it out. People need to know there are consequences to breaking the law; or consequences for children for disobedience. People speak of their ‘rights’ so much these days, but few of them stress their ‘accountability’ or ‘responsibility’. The Bible stresses both.

The judgement God warned Adam of came - as we read in Genesis 3:17ff - ultimately death in its 3 manifestations - spiritual, physical and eternal. It was the judgement that led to condemnation – the sentence of death was passed on all people. This came on all, irrespective of their lifestyle, their age. There is clearly the condemnation on all of actual physical death, but all are also born spiritually dead, separated from God, cut-off by the one sin of Adam and as a result all have a nature biased towards sin and away from God.

Through the one sin of the one man, we learn that “*death reigned*” and death’s reign has been a tyrannical reign, a dark, oppressive, cruel, destructive, horrible and total reign. It is not that death will strike some of us sometime, but that death will strike everybody! Every generation has died. Wars, disease, famines, natural disasters have not increased the death toll of that generation, for every one of every generation has died and will die - with notable exceptions - Enoch and all alive at Christ’s 2nd coming.

Many poets write of death and its tragedy, its finality its horror and darkness. People throughout history see death as an enemy, a terror, a horror, the end - the grave and then we rot! Yes, brave men and women have given their lives for country, for causes, for loved ones, but the grief, the loss, the horror and terror affect so many. Far worse than physical death is that we are spiritually dead to God and if we physically die still spiritually dead to Him, we

will be judged and suffer eternal death in Hell. Paul writes of the judgement, condemnation and reign of death on all these 3 levels.

What a tragic legacy we have in our union with Adam and we cannot do anything about it if left to ourselves. All may seem hopeless and helpless, but not so, for there is the last Adam, the One that Adam was a pattern of - the Lord Jesus Christ and here we have a glorious contrast as we see:

2. In Christ we have the gift, justification and reigning.

This is where I've been wanting to hurry to, but I needed the first point to contrast this glorious point with the dark and horrible state we are in through our union with Adam. This should cause us to marvel at the how much more we have and are in Christ. What we have in Adam was the result of, the deserving of his sin and it was earned. The wages of sin is death, but in contrast at that we have '*the gift of God*' (v16a) - which is a different word to that used later on in the same verse (*free gift in all but NIV*). The first word Paul uses for '*gift*' means a bountiful gift and then the 2nd word means '*free gift*' (the word *χαρισμα*) - an undeserved, unmerited grace gift of God.

Paul is keen to drive home this wonderful truth, that our salvation and all it includes is a gift of God freely given to us. Grace is free, salvation is freely given to whosoever will receive and believe. Sadly, people do not like this as they feel they have to or want to do, to try to be the best they can be and so earn, merit and deserve salvation. **Realise that the gospel is bad news to good people!** The gospel says that unless we come as beggars, as paupers to God for salvation, we will not be received by Him, nor be given His gift. If we come with what we have and do in our hands, we cannot take the free gift He freely offers and gives generously. We should receive the Saviour offered to us freely in the gospel. It's not a

cheap salvation or cheap grace, for it cost God the most He could ever give, as heaven's Best was offered freely on our behalf and He is freely offered to us. What a wonderful gift the God of heaven freely offers people like us who do not deserve it, it is the supremacy of grace and declares '*how much more*'.

The one sin of Adam led to judgement and condemnation, but God's gift is contrasted not only to the one sin - the gift is given in spite of this one sin, "*but the gift followed **many trespasses** and brought justification.*" God's gift of salvation came, was given after an unimaginable number of sins, repeated sins, horrific sins were committed by all peoples as an outworking of original sin. The vastness of God's gift of grace is dramatically shown against the dark backdrop of such wickedness. God's gift of salvation comes to us, is offered personally to us, in spite of **our** many trespasses, offences that **we have personally committed against God** as well as the original sin we are guilty of. When this gift is declared to bring justification – realise it removes all the guilt and condemnation of Adam's sin on us (*original sin*) and of **all** our actual sins. As the hymn says "*My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought; my sin not in part **but the whole**, is nailed to his cross and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord Oh my soul.*" Therefore, it is well with our souls!!

Having received "*God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness*" (v17) we are no longer under condemnation, but brought into justification. Condemnation and justification are opposites, are vast contrasts. Justification means we are legally and eternally made and declared to be righteous - hence it is called "*the gift of righteousness*" in v17. With that righteousness on, can say with Wesley "*No condemnation now I dread...*" I know we've covered these things before, but if Paul feels they are worth repeating, then who am I to argue!!! If we are a believer this

evening, then I want us to recognise that we have Christ's eternal righteousness credited, imputed, put to our account for ever from the moment we are saved. We have a full and free salvation. I am a "full gospel" preacher as anything less is false, an imitation and not worth having. I pray we all will possess this free and full salvation and all it offers in Christ Jesus. Can we say as an individual "*Jesus your blood and righteousness my beauty are, my glorious dress...*"

We are to realise the assurance, the comfort, the certainty that are here in these verses concerning our salvation. In Christ we have gained in superabundance so much more to what our father Adam lost - security, a home in heaven, constant access to God in prayer, constant communion with Him and not having to wait for Him to come down to walk and talk with us, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus given and credited to us forever.

Sadly, we are still subject to death, death still reigns over our mortal Adamic bodies, but it cannot ever inflict any harm to our eternal souls as they are forever united with Christ. When these mortal bodies fail and our souls are freed, we will be instantly in God's presence and delight in Him there until the appointed time when God defeats and destroys death and we are given resurrection bodies. Christianity honours the body and does not despise it and even now we are stewards of our bodies, time, talents and must not harm our bodies or misuse them - for even our bodies are to be holy to God.

We could easily expect Paul to contrast '*death reigned*' with '*life reigned*'. Yes, we know that all who have the Lord Jesus as their Saviour has abundant life, for Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. His gift of eternal life reigns in all His people and all who received Him as their Saviour have eternal life. Yet Paul does not

say that in v17, for he says *'how much more... reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.'* Yet again Paul focuses our attention on Christ - he is so absorbed and taken up with Jesus, which is something we would do well to copy! Paul takes us beyond the blessing, the benefit, the gift of eternal life. He includes it, but it is *'how much more'* for death is not going to reign over us. Yes, as believers we will die unless Jesus comes before that happens to us, but even if we die, we will die in hope, certainty and assurance. We are justified and therefore we will not be condemned; at this moment now, we have eternal life and we will one day enjoy it fully in heaven.

What then is Paul hinting at in these words *'reign in life'*? Death is our last enemy and we may easily fear our enemies, especially cruel, vicious death. But here it includes the truth that we are no longer in bondage to the fear of death as we read in Hebrews 2:14-15 *"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."* As believers we are reigned over by God's grace and not sin's domination (Romans 6:14). Now by God's strengthening we can draw near to God; we can resist the devil and he will flee from us (James 4:7-8).

For now, we are not at the mercy of every wind of changing circumstances and we are to recognise our God is in control in His all-knowing and all loving wisdom. This means we can do our duty, look for grace, but leave the future, the circumstances safely in our God's hands. In Romans 8 Paul goes on to write to those could well be slaughtered for Christ's sake and says remarkably *"in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us"* (8:36-37). By our Saviour's enabling gift of grace,

we are able to rise above our circumstances, to see them from heaven's perspective and endure, even rejoice in them!

Yes, we live with and in the hope of the glory to come - when we shall reign with Him in glory. Yet v17 indicates this 'reign in life' is not exclusively reserved for "*one day in the future*". Yes, it does speak of that glorious day in the future, when the Lord Jesus will be seen and owned as King of Kings, but we, as believers, are made us kings and priests unto God. We are seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus now; we are joint heirs with Christ even now. Sadly, we are blindly and forgetfully ignorant of our standing in Christ and we often live as paupers to His grace and not abundant recipients of it! We live our lives as if our Lord and Saviour has done little for us, as if being a Christian is nothing wonderful or special in this life.

I am not on the triumphalist bandwagon. What I fear is that the devil will dupe us, fool us, deceive us, cheat us and we live our Christian lives at a poor dying and miserable rate and we fail to honour our Saviour, fail to worship Him correctly and in doing so we do not love, honour Him or delight in Him as we fail to live out His abundant life. This is another one of the '*how much mores*' and we have only begun to taste and delight in their multifaceted sweetness. My prayer for us all is that we would delight most fully in these '*how much mores*' and glorify our Saviour and all He has done for us.