

Reading: Romans 5:12-21

Theme: Even More Glorious Contrasts!

Isn't it great to share good things e.g. celebration events, good news, exam success, family news! Paul has shown us the fullness, completeness and security of justification by faith. As he has been doing this, we have had our attention directed to Christ, all He is, all He has done and what we have and who we are in Him. Paul began by starting a comparison in v12, but not then completing it. He wrote a wonderful digression, parenthesis in v13-17. Basically, in those verses he shows that although there were many similarities, there are also glorious differences to what we have in Adam and in Christ. We were able to learn "*how much more*" we have and are in Christ.

Now in v18-19, Paul takes up and finishes the comparison he started in v12 and in v18 we have a summary of what he said, but then in v19 he puts things another way to open it up again and to see even more glorious truths and drive these home to our hearts and minds. Again, in these verses Paul shows us again **the similarities** between Adam and Christ; that one man's action affects all who are in union with that person and also, almost in passing, Paul emphasises **the glorious differences**. I realise we will once again touch on matters we have touched upon before, but if Paul, directed by the Holy Spirit, felt it was worth repeating, then we need to pay attention and learn, for these truths must be important for us to know! I have 3 headings to help us look at these two verses to draw out great truths and sweet comforts in them for us:

1. Effective Actions.

We are presented with Adam and Christ in these verses and our attention is drawn to them both, especially that they are our representative heads before God and God deals with us in our union to the one or the other in accordance to what they did on our behalf. In Adam, we are dealt with in the light of his one trespass, the disobedience of the one man. In our salvation or on the day of

judgement, God will deal with us as an individual, but He also deals with us in either our union with Adam or Christ. If we are in union with Adam, we are regarded as guilty of his one trespass, of his disobedience and condemned.

In v12 Paul stated sin entered the world through one man and opened up on the consequences of such sin. Yes, Adam sinned in this way, but we are counted guilty by God in union with him. Even if we could live a perfect life, we would still have the problem, the impossibility of dealing with the guilt of Adam's sin that is upon us. I think we all know that no one is perfect; we all sin; all fail; all do that which displeases God and fail to do that which pleases Him. This means we have added to our original Adamic guilt with our own individual sins and their guilt. Adam's one trespass, the disobedience of the one man affected all mankind throughout history.

Yet in glorious contrast, Christ's one act of righteousness, the obedience of the one man, also affected all those who come, by God's grace, to be in union with Him. Paul shows us that as Adam's sin affected all in union with him, so Christ's righteousness certainly affects all those in union with Him i.e. have come to saving faith in Jesus as their Saviour.

Here Paul uses difficult concepts "*the one act of righteousness... the obedience of the one man*". It is not saying that Jesus got "*one important thing right*". This phrase points us to the perfection of the Lord Jesus in **ALL** of His life. It is more than that He as the Son of God is perfect and righteous, but it points us to His righteousness after becoming a man, as God the Son taking to Himself a real body. Theologians speak of **Jesus' active righteousness** as He lived on earth, He actively lived a righteous life in word, thought and deed. Some speak of the robe of righteousness He gives us as believers, as having been woven actively in His life here on earth as He actively obeyed the Law, fulfilled all righteousness. Jesus was made of a

woman, born under the Law, He satisfied fully the holy Law demands of God and so was able to deliver and rescue us who are under the curse of the Law. Every part of the Law was completely and actively fulfilled in the Lord Jesus.

Yet theologians also speak of **Jesus' passive righteousness**. Yes, He came to fulfil the Law, but He was also going to be made sin, to be the sin bearer, the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. Even there in the Garden of Gethsemane He actively submitted to the will of the Father - the will He knew and delighted to do. So, He submitted passively to all that was to come upon Him on the cross of Calvary.

Both active and passive obedience were there in place in the Lord's life. This is what I feel Paul is referring to here - the one act of righteousness, the obedience of the one man, encompasses these great truths of the **whole** of our Lord's life, Being, ministry and death. Both Adam's and Christ's actions were effective for those who are in union with them and so we see:

2. Divine Results.

Contrast the results of the actions of these 2 representative individuals for all in union with either of them is vastly different. The same results occur for **all** who are in union with them. We need to note that the results of Adam's one act of disobedience, trespass, affects all mankind and are not avoidable by anything we do, but recognise also that the results of Christ's one act of righteousness **are not automatically applied to everyone**, but are only effective in and for those who trust Him personally as their own Saviour. This is so important and as it highlights the need to trust Jesus as our own Saviour.

Adam's one trespass resulted in condemnation. Here is a dark, solemn, serious result. There can be no avoiding the implications of

what Paul wrote here as it speaks not only of others, but it includes all of us here as we were born into this world, as we live, grow, face joys and sorrows, even as we face our own death. We do not become sinful after birth, but we are born sinners, with a bias, a gravitational pull towards sin already in us and we were born under the sentence of condemnation. This condemnation is not only physical death, but also includes being under condemnation to hell forever.

Condemnation refers to the damning sentence of God upon us. Adam's one trespass resulted in all men and women, boys and girls, being under the sentence of condemnation. It does not matter how nice, moral, well spoken, educated, rich, famous, charitable people are. It doesn't matter what people do, feel or try to achieve - as the sentence of condemnation stands upon them, upon us, because of Adam's sin - his one trespass and its guilt credited, imputed to all his descendants. This places us all under God's condemnation.

You may feel you are a good, nice, moral person. You may not have a care or a problem in the world and may even feel death will be a PR opportunity and people will know how good you really are then; but you will be wrong! For you will realise at the moment of your death, with a horror you could never imagine at this time, that your **righteousnesses** are as filthy rags before God and they will be blown away like dry leaves in a storm and what you will then realise your about **sins** will horrify you even more! Do not be a contented, deluded, self-satisfied moral or religious person and end up being lost for eternity. We need to recognise our need of the Saviour and as we do so, to recognise what is freely available as a result of Christ's one act of righteousness, through the obedience of the one man.

The result of Christ's one act of righteousness was justification that brings life to all people i.e. to all those who believe in Him. If we want to have the assurance of salvation, we are not to look to our

own feelings, efforts, works, religious acts, doing our best. Those places are dismal places to look to! We are to look to the Lord Jesus Christ, His perfect righteousness and obedience and that He will give the gift of His righteousness to all trust Him. It is only the just who **shall live** by faith and that being made “just”, occurs when we trust the Lord Jesus and are justified - eternally and legally made, declared righteous in the court of heaven by the holy God of heaven. Then our original sin and guilt in Adam is removed; also the guilt and condemnation our actual sins deserve are removed, blotted out and we are given, credited with the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ forever. We are also given eternal life, a guaranteed home in heaven to see Jesus’ glory, to be made like Him.

We are given life abundant life which can be known, enjoyed and worked out as we go on involved in our lives. Now our home and heart are in heaven and so we “*reign in life through one man, Jesus Christ*” (v17). Then we are not cringing in fear of death, but know it will take us to glory and we live our lives conscious of our God’s love, care and working in and through our lives.

Both Adam and Christ’s actions affect those in union with them, but the results are vastly different. It is vital to recognise we need to be taken out of Adam and placed in Christ. In Adam there is no hope and no way we can do anything to escape God and His judgement. This means we need to cry to God to be merciful to us, to receive us, save us, bring us to faith and so put us in Christ and then our situation will be dramatically different. Finally see:

3. Appointed Categories.

In v19, note that Paul writes of what people are **made** in union with their representative heads. The word “*made*” is a very forceful and strong word. The Amplified Bible translates it as “*constituted*” - it is a word made up of 2 words that speaks of appointing a person to a position or category e.g. Paul, using the same word, tells Titus (1:5)

to **appoint** elders in every town; it means to set in the rank of a soldier, or place in the category of.

It involves a decision, a judgement and a deliberate decision to constitute, set as... In v19 we learn through Adam's disobedience the many were made, categorised, appointed, constituted sinners. Not just liable, prone to sin, not sinful, but sinners. That is our category, our appointed position by and before God. This is how God views us outside of Christ and in union with Adam. No matter our morals, efforts or religiousness; we are in God's eyes, and therefore categorised, by Divine appointment, as sinners. No matter how good or bad we feel, no matter what we do, no matter how much we object to it, it is the appointed category which God in His justice, wisdom, love and holiness has put all into in our union with Adam. It is God's judicial act and He has the perfect right to do so as a result of Adam's one trespass, the disobedience of the one man's fall, we are all in the category of, are constituted sinners.

Yet in glorious, amazing, stunning contrast to this, God makes, constitutes, categorises, appoints all who are in Christ as righteous! The moment we become a Christian, are converted, are justified by faith, we are removed and taken out from the appointed category of sinner in Adam and put into the appointed category of righteous in Christ. Our old category is finished with for ever. God places us for ever in this new appointed category and He ever after views us as righteous - for we are eternally in Christ and therefore eternally categorised and viewed as righteous, for we have Jesus' righteous always credited to us and covering us. This is true of all who are in Christ and it is individually applicable to us and corporately true of us as members of His Church and people. In 1 Corinthians 1:30 Paul expresses some of the things true of us who are in Christ and what Christ has become for us from God *"It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."*

God views us as righteous and we will **always be righteous** in His sight. To be honest, this causes people problems, difficulties and also causes pastoral problems as the question is asked “*What happens if we sin?*” Amazingly we are still righteous and our standing before God has not altered. We are not for that moment Star-Trek-like beamed back into Adam, but we are always still in Christ and still righteous. King David was a believer and was, through OT means, justified before God. Yet he sinned and remained unrepentant for some 18 to 24 months in the incident with Bathsheba. During that time, he was still righteous, but he did not enjoy the relationship he previously had with God. On his confession and repentance, he was restored to that relationship (cf. Psalm 51), but even while unrepentant, he was still viewed as righteous by God. We are not to confuse our justification with our sanctification. Justification is a once and for all act and declaration by God in the very courtroom of heaven that we are once and for all righteous in God’s sight in Christ. Sanctification is an ongoing process in our life, it is that same justification being worked out practically in our lives as we become more holy, more Christ-like in our daily lives and on earth the process will never be completed, but we keep on pressing onward to be more and more like our Saviour.

It is foolish and unwise to presume on God’s grace and wrongly apply this glorious truth by saying “*It means I can go on sinning then if I’m a Christian, as it does not affect my standing with God!*” Paul goes on to deal with this more in Romans 6-7. Such an attitude shows a false understanding of what God has done for us as believers. If that attitude is our habitual attitude and practise, then we have to question our so-called “*salvation*”, to make sure it is a true saving faith, not merely a decision, turning over a new leaf, a religious notion or an empty false experience. True Christian life will show out more and more as we go on with Christ and live to please their Saviour.

If we are truly God's child, then nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38-39) and we are for ever in the appointed category of righteous and not constantly drifting into and out of "*in Adam*" and "*in Christ*". As believers we are to enjoy the certainty of this truth in our own lives, have the assurance that we are in Christ and are made righteous for all time and eternity. Yes, there are times when we can struggle and question this. If we are constantly always seeming to hop from being in Adam or in Christ, then we are to examine our own hearts whether we are truly a Christian or we could be deluding ourselves. Yet if we are in Christ, why then do we live and react as if God is not going to keep His promises to us? Doubting God's promises can cause us to live miserable Christian lives, when we should be enjoying the wonders of salvation, the assurance, the joyful assurance that "*I am my Beloved's and He is mine and His banner over me is love.*"

Yes, we **were** sinners - lost, condemned, without God and hope in this world; but **now** we are not. As we press on in our Christian lives, we are not ignorant or forgetful of what we were, but remember it is **what we were**, yet we now realise that **we are righteous, loved and accepted in the Beloved and we live as those constituted righteous in Christ**. As we press onward in our lives towards heaven, we are to make it our aim to glorify and enjoy our Saviour here on earth.