

Romans 5:12-21

Rom 5:12-21 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.

Questions On The Text

How did sin enter the world?

Verse 12: Sin entered the world through the choice of one man, Adam. Instead of choosing to obey God, Adam chose to disobey. See Genesis 3:1-6.

How did death enter the world?

Verse 12: Death was the natural result of sin. In Genesis 2:16-17, God clearly warned Adam that he was not allowed to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God also warned Adam that disobedience to that command would mean that he would die that very day. Of course, when Adam sinned, he did not immediately die physically. But he did die spiritually. That state of spiritual death has been the condition in which the entire human race has been born since then. (See Ephesians 2:1) Death came through Adam's sin and spread to all as all took on the sinful nature of Adam and sinned also.

When is sin imputed?

Verse 13: Sin is only imputed (counted as being so) when there is law. In other words, God does not hold it against us if we are unaware that something is wrong.

Were people counted as sinners before the Law of Moses?

Verse 14: Death ruled over all humanity even before God revealed His law to Moses. Although they had not sinned in the likeness of Adam, who disobeyed a direct command from God Himself while in a sinless state, they are nevertheless held accountable as sinners. This is because, as Paul has already explained in Romans 2:14-16, everyone has God's law written in their hearts, and their consciences accuse or excuse them depending on whether they are obedient or disobedient.

In what way is the free gift unlike the offence?

Verse 15: The offence refers to Adam's sin. Since Adam, like all of God's creatures, reproduced in his own likeness (see Genesis 5:3), he passed on his sin nature to all his descendents. In this way, death was passed on to his descendents too, because death is the just reward of the sinner based on his actions. In contrast, the gift

(of eternal life) is not earned, but comes through grace. Paul will state this contrast more succinctly in Romans 6:23.

How do Christ's legacy and Adam's legacy differ?

Verse 16: Christ's legacy is the free gift of justification which was only necessary because of our numerous sins. Adam's sin resulted in a judgment of condemnation. Again, Paul is emphasizing that our own sinful condition has earned the judgment of God, whereas our justification came as a free gift.

How can we reign in life?

Verses 17-19: Reigning implies that we should be living at a level that is not experienced by the "common" people. We are sons and daughters of the King of Kings and therefore royalty. (See 1 Peter 2:9) If we are royalty, we should be accessing all the rights and privileges available to us. Paul will explain these rights and privileges in chapters 6 to 8. But here he says that if we want to receive this abundant life (see John 10:10), we must first avail ourselves of the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness available only through Christ. What God has done is to justify us and thus remove the condemnation of His judgment. This is the condemnation that resulted from Adam's disobedience which consequently made us all sinners. But now we are made righteous through Christ's obedience in dying on the cross. See Philippians 2:8.

Why did the law come?

Verses 20-21: The law was given so that the awareness of sin would increase. In this way, sin abounded. However, God's grace abounded even more in providing a solution to the sin problem. Sin brought about a reign of death. But God's solution is the reign of grace which reigns through righteousness and results in eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Further Questions For Discussion:

Do you think that if you had been in Adam's position you would have made a different choice? Why?

Why have all humans inherited a nature that has a tendency to sin?

What is the difference between wages and a gift? How does this difference relate to the two final destinations of heaven and hell?

What is the difference between life and abundant life?

Are you experiencing the abundant life that God has provided for you? How can you increase your experience of this kind of life?

In what way does grace reign in your life on a day-to-day basis?