

*A new position –  
'in Christ'*

- *A comparison begun but not completed until verse 18*

**'The position then is this'**

- *The comparison Just as... so*

- *Digression to make two points*

**The thread of the argument**

*v12 An unfinished comparison*

*v13-14 First digression*

*v15-17 Second digression*

*v18-19 Comparison*

'Therefore having been justified by faith we have . . . ' Paul is telling us what we have now that we are right with God. First there are some immediate results<sup>11</sup>. But Paul wants us to see it in an altogether deeper way. We have an altogether new position in the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:12–21 goes on to tell us how being justified and having access into God's grace and being immediately reconciled to God is part of something even greater. We used to be 'in Adam', but we now are 'in Christ', and the grace of God rules over us.

It seems difficult at first to follow the complicated argument of verses 12–21, but the key is to realize that Paul starts a comparison but does not finish it at first. He starts off like this: <sup>12</sup>*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world and through sin death came, and in this way death spread to all people, because all people sinned . . .* The opening word, 'Therefore', introduces a new sub-section. It is as though Paul were saying, 'The position then is this'. When Paul started, he was thinking of saying something like:

Just as sin entered into the world, and through sin death came, and in this way death spread to all people, because all people sinned . . . .

So in the same way, righteousness came into the world.

He was intending to make some comparison like this, and he does get to that comparison in verse 18. But as Paul was making this 'Just as . . . so' comparison, he felt he ought to digress to make two things clear before he finishes his comparison. So he turns aside to deal with two points, and then he comes back to finish what he was going to say. The thread of the argument goes like this.

Verse 12. An unfinished comparison. *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death came, and in this way death spread to all people, because all people sinned...*

A digression to explain something. <sup>13</sup>*For until the law sin was in the world but sin is not imputed where there is no law.* <sup>14</sup>*But death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a pattern of the One who is to come.*

Verses 15–17. Another digression to explain a further point. <sup>15</sup>*But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did the grace of God and the free gift that came through the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abound for the many?* <sup>16</sup>*And the gift is not like what happened through the one man who sinned. For, on the one hand, the judgement came from one sin, and brought condemnation, but, on the other hand, the free gift arose because of many trespasses and leads to justification.* <sup>17</sup>*For if by the trespass of the one man death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one person Jesus Christ?*

Verses 18–19. The comparison is then completed. <sup>18</sup>*So then as through one man's trespass something happened for all people for*

11 5:1-11

completed

their condemnation, so also through one man's righteous act something happened for all people for justification of life. <sup>19</sup>For as through the disobedience of one man the many were constituted sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be constituted righteous.

### The teaching

Let us work through the teaching step-by-step.

(i) 'Sin entered the world – a specific time

(i) There was a specific time in history when 'sin entered into the world'. We do not know the precise date. It was thousands of years before Jesus came. But there was a time in the calendar of the human story when humankind fell into sin. 'Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death came, and in this way death spread to all people, because all people sinned ...'

(ii) Sin and death entered through Adam

(ii) Sin and death entered the world through the one man Adam.

(iii) Death came through sin

(iii) Death came into the world through sin.

(iv) All people sinned 'in Adam'

(iv) All people sinned in Adam. The last few words of verse 12 are much debated ('because all people sinned . . .'). Some say it means that all die because they follow Adam's bad example and sin themselves (but in verses 13–14 Paul says that death reigned over those who did **not** follow Adam's example by transgressing a law). Others think it means that everyone dies because we inherit sinfulness from our ancestors and from Adam (but it does not say 'all were sinful'; it says 'all sinned' a definite single sin). Some think it means that we all sin **personally** in ourselves and so bring death upon ourselves (but this is not confirmed by the following verses).

• Understood in various ways

• The true interpretation is that Adam was the representative of the whole human race

The true interpretation is that all sinned 'in Adam'. As Paul continues in verses 15–19 it becomes clear that everyone sinned in the one sin of Adam. When he says that 'all sinned' and when he says there was one trespass of one man, he is speaking of the same event. Adam represents us. He was one of us. We have the same human nature as he had. We are from one human race. God made 'from one, every nation of people' (Acts 17:26). So when Adam was on trial to test his obedience, I was also on trial to test my obedience. When Adam failed it was the proof that my human nature fails. He was representing the whole human race. When he sinned I sinned.

• We were born in Adam – but now we are 'in Christ'

But Paul has not finished. Adam's sin is mine, but by faith Christ's righteousness becomes mine. I was born in Adam, but I am now in Christ.



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