

• *Salvation also comes by representation and substitution*

Paul's first digression explains how we die in Adam

• *Adam's disobedience to God's one-point law*

• *From Adam to Moses people died including children*

• *Because they shared Adam's sin*

Paul's second digression explains how grace is greater than sin

• *Adam and Christ parallel but Christ is far greater – reversing millions of sins*

The comparison completed

When Jesus came to be our Saviour the method God chose was also the way of representation and substitution. 'Jesus died on the cross for us', in the same way that Adam was under test of obedience 'for us'. We get to be righteous in Jesus, just as we were sinners in Adam. Jesus was a second and last Adam. He is our perfect representative.

Paul's first digression explains how we die in Adam. ¹³*For until the law sin was in the world but sin is not imputed where there is no law, ¹⁴but 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.* Adam's sin was a transgression of an openly stated and explicit command. God issued a one-point law: 'You shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In the day you eat of it you shall surely die.' Adam broke an explicit 'law' when he sinned. But what about those after Adam and before Moses? After Adam, God gave no more explicit commands like the one he had given to Adam, and like the ones he would give through Moses. Yet people died! Why did they die? They had not broken a command to which a death penalty was attached. The people after Adam did not break any openly stated law. So why did they die? Some of them were children! Why should children die? (I am not saying Paul has only children in mind, but they are certainly included, for there were children who died between the days of Adam and Moses.) The answer is that people died because they had sinned 'in Adam'. They shared Adam's punishment because they had shared Adam's sin. We were all there when Adam sinned. He was sinning for us as well as for himself. This is Paul's way of proving what he said in Romans 5:12, 'death spread to all people, because all people sinned . . .'

Paul's second digression explains how grace is greater than sin. ¹⁵*But the free 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. ¹⁶And 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. ¹⁷For 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.* Grace is greater than sin! Adam and Christ are not **exactly** parallel. The grace of God is greater than the sin of Adam¹. Adam sinned only one sin. Christ's grace reverses millions of sins. Adam brought condemnation but it does not have to last for ever. Jesus brings eternal justification². Adam brought the reign of death; Christ brings a much greater reign of life³.

Romans 5:18–19 goes back to verse 12 and completes the comparison. ¹⁸*So then as through one man's trespass something happened for all people for their condemnation, so also through one man's righteous act something happened for all people for justification of life. ¹⁹For 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.*

¹ 5:15

² 5:16

³ 5:17

The Law of Moses – its purpose

- Human laws intended to bring security and blessing
- God's law – to make things worse
- To intensify the power of sin and expose the problem
- Sin allowed to get worse and worse
- Then Christ came and grace abounded
- Released from the law to live under the reign of grace

Romans 5:20–21 explains how the Mosaic law fits into the picture. ²⁰And the law entered in with the purpose that the trespass might abound but where sin abounded grace abounded all the more, ²¹in order that as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We all tend to think that somehow if we make laws and impose them, blessing is secure. We seem to think that if only we can get people to do certain things, which we are going to define in writing, all will be well. But why did God give his law? Things were bad when there were only sinners who were sinners because of what they were in Adam. Paul says that when the law came, it made matters worse! Sometimes when you are dealing with a problem, the problem has to get worse before it can get better. Sometimes a situation has to 'come to a head' before it can be dealt with. The law entered in with the purpose that the trespass might abound. The law defined some major sins. And it turned some sins into punishable offences. The law brought civil punishment. Also the law inflamed sin. When one is living under law, the struggle to measure up to what the law demands actually intensifies the power of sin. The law depresses, and when there is depression there is always vulnerability to sin. The law brings despair and misery.

So the law entered in order that the trespass might abound but that is not the end of the story. Paul goes on to say that where sin abounded, grace abounded all the more. Sin was allowed to get worse and worse. Then Christ came and grace abounded all the more. It reigns in righteousness, through what Jesus did on the cross, and through our being justified. And it reigns 'unto eternal life'. Grace gives us life, and goes on keeping us lively towards God. It brings us all of the way to never-ending life with God in the new heavens and new earth. We are encouraged to live in an entirely different way. We are not under law, we are under grace. We are released from the law. We have died to that which held us captive, says Paul¹. Now grace insists on reigning over our lives.

Grace reigns! The grace of God is a mighty king. It initiates salvation. Then it goes on keeping us. God's protecting grace prevents us from coming into situations that we could not handle. There is God's training grace. God's restoring grace works at bringing us back when we drift from him. 'My grace is sufficient for you', God says. Our salvation will be 'to the praise of the glory of his grace'¹. The praise of the glory of God's grace will last for ever.

¹ see 6:14; 7:6

¹ Ephesians 1:6



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