

Doctrinal 3:Sin The Two Races/Two Heads, Romans 5:12-21

Good morning, our Scripture before us today is Romans Chapter 5 verses 12 to 21. In these verses we see a very simple principle that people can be influenced by the person who is at the head of them. A King, President or Prime Minister can have an effect over the people of their country, perhaps less so now but in times past this was more evident. A company will and should certainly be influenced by the CEO or MD, poor leaders indeed if they have no impact on the people they lead. In the armed forces, there should always be an element of the leader's character that has an impact on the troops they lead; history is full of examples of this. So, in these verses we see the impact of two heads, and everyone is either impacted by one or the other in a dramatic and important way.

So, with these few thoughts in our mind let us read these verses: (Revised Authorised Version)

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—

(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

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. But the free gift *is* not like the offence. For if by the one man's offence many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. And the gift *is* not like *that which came* through the one who sinned. For the judgment *which came* from one *offence resulted* in condemnation, but the free gift *which came* from many offences *resulted* in justification.

For if by the one man's offence 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.)

Therefore, as through one man's offence *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.

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,

so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Up to this point of the chapter, we have been occupied with the wonderful position of blessing that the believer has been brought into as being justified by faith, having peace with God and reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now we read of the opposite position that the whole world was brought into by the work of another man, Adam. Not now a position of blessing through the death of Christ, but rather a position of death through Adam's disobedience.

Verse 12 takes us right back to the beginning of creation and reminds us of the events recorded for us in Genesis chapter 3 when Adam disobeyed God's instruction. Adam and his wife, Eve, were in perfect circumstances; they themselves were perfect and God had ordered everything for them. It was truly paradise but they still disobeyed God and that one act changed everything for them and for all of humanity who have come since. It is in Genesis 3 that the Gospel story begins. The Gospel means the good news of a happy God and is the means by which mankind can be brought back into the blessing and favour of God, lost in the garden of Eden. Re-establishing the idyllic circumstances of the garden can never do this, so the true presentation of the Gospel must always start with this principle. This simple act of disobedience brought sin into the world, separated man from God and brought in death. It is the root cause of every single thing that is wrong in our lives and world today. Illness, wars, unrighteousness, lying, stealing, death etc are all fruits of that one root.

As Bible believing Christians, we know through faith that the creation of man by God means that we are all descendants of Adam and Eve. So, in the same way as we inherit certain characteristics from our parents, we have each inherited this awful thing from our first parents, sin. Death and condemnation therefore fall to us all as having Adam as our head, but we then need to go down to verse 18 to see another head and another inheritance being introduced. Please notice at this point that verses 13 to 17 are a parenthesis and it does make things so much clearer when we read from verse 12 straight to verse 18 but we will come back to these verses. Verses 18 and 19 therefore bring in another "one Man"; this time it is referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. Adam's disobedience to God brought condemnation and death; however Christ's obedience brought about righteousness and life!

The Lord said in John chapter 10 verse 10, "I have come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly." Life and death are a clearly identifiable contrast in the 5th chapter of Romans and I would like to mention three aspects of the life that Christ brings to those who follow Him. They come under this thought of "abundant life" that we have just quoted. In verse 17 we have those who "reign in life", in verse 18 we have "justification of life" and later, in verse 21 we read of "eternal life." Could there be any better way of life?

I remember fondly many years ago the Gospel campaign that went around the country and was entitled 'The Way to Life.' The contrast is clear and there is no grey area. By Adam, death came in but by Christ there is the 'Way to Life.' By Adam we will all die but in Christ all shall be made alive, that is to enjoy eternal life.

We must make clear, however, that we all are all descendants of Adam but to be "in Christ" there is a choice that needs to be made. The apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthian church re-emphasises this when he tells them in chapter 15 verses 21 and 22: "For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive." He then explains how eternal outcomes follow the headship that we are under. Eventually the last enemy that will be destroyed is death and this will be on the basis that Christ rose from the dead and in so doing destroyed the power of death.

We must confess that we are sinners and put our faith and trust in the work of Christ on the cross of Calvary where He took the punishment for our sins. In chapter 10 and verse 9 of this same epistle we are reading today we read "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved." So, for everyone who is listening today, are you in Christ or still in Adam?

We have already mentioned Adam's disobedience and Christ's obedience. Adam's disobedience was clear. God had told him that he could eat of every tree in the garden. He had provided everything for him but only gave him one prohibition: do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and, if you do, that very day you will die. Not die physically that very day, but rather

be dead spiritually as separated from God and begin to die physically. It seems a hard thing to understand but that was God's law and Adam should have obeyed.

God still requires many things of us, and we do well to obey even if we don't understand as He always has our ultimate blessing in mind. Adam failed and realised right away. Hence he immediately realised he was naked and tried to hide from God. The close relationship he and Eve had with God had immediately been lost and, in a sense, nothing has changed. It is only in obedience that relationship with God can be maintained. We should stress, however, that our salvation cannot be lost, but disobedience can certainly affect our enjoyment of it.

On the other hand, how different the obedience of Christ. This shows the complete contrast between Adam and Christ. Even Pilate as he sought to judge Christ could admit that he found no fault in "this man." Christ was God's "one Man." In the epistle to the Philippians chapter 2, Paul tells us that Christ became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. In the garden, as the Lord felt the full weight of all He was about to endure, He could pray to His Father that "if it be possible let this cup pass from Me." However, He went on to add, "Nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." It is imperative to notice at this point that death had no hold on the Lord. He was not 'in Adam' and so did not 'inherit' the sinful nature that every other person has. Therefore, death would not have followed for Him in a natural sense. He chose to become obedient to death in order to fulfil the ways of God. The eternal Son of God who ever was and could never die chose to become the Son of Man in order to go into death. A great hymn starts with the line, 'How wonderful that Thou the Son has come, and here for us as Son of Man has died.' So, Christ's obedience was to go into death in order that death could be destroyed. This should raise a song of worship and thanksgiving in our redeemed hearts each and every time we are reminded of it.

So, in summary of these 3 verses, on the one hand, one man Adam, one offence, all men constituted sinners, all sinning and consequently death and condemnation upon all. On the other hand, one man Christ, one righteousness in obedience unto death, those under His headship constituted righteous in justification of life. Another example from the Old Testament of one man's disobedience to God bringing about two very different descendants would be Abraham. He was promised by God that he would be the father of many nations. However, his wife Sarah was old and in terms of natural things was beyond child bearing. We read in Genesis chapter 16 that Sarah, or Sarai as she was then called, persuaded Abraham that his only hope of being a father was to take her handmaid Hagar and have a child with her. Instead of holding to what God had promised, he gave into his wife and did what she had suggested.

The son who was born was named Ishmael. God, however, was still faithful in spite of Abraham's lack of faith and did eventually bless him and Sarah with a son whom they named Isaac. All was fine initially but the point came when Hagar and Ishmael had to be put away as the strife between them all became too much. God again was faithful however and made it clear that great nations would descend from both Isaac and Ishmael. This has certainly come true as today two of the world's main religions, Judaism and Islam, claim Abraham to be their father - one through Isaac and the other through Ishmael. Just think of the impact that one moment of disobedience has caused down through the centuries!

We should now go back and deal with the 5 verses that are in parenthesis. They are added, in a sense, to give more explanation and clarity to what we have been discussing. A question to consider which may help us with our understanding of this, if we sin without realising it does it not count? These verses are telling us that although every person from Adam to Moses did not commit the same sin as Adam they still came under the same condemnation, they died. In an earlier talk when we considered Romans chapter 1 we saw that ignorance is no excuse. So the law was just simply laid down to show how far short mankind had come from God's standard. Some may get very close to keeping the law while others may be a long way off but we all still have come short. I often give the analogy of the huge chasm that cannot possibly be jumped over. Some by reason of fitness may get quite a way over, some may get halfway and others no

distance at all, but all will fall into the great chasm! The law is the same; we all fail and fall into that great chasm that is sin and separation from God. The apostle Paul tells us that the law was a schoolmaster to bring us to God. It cannot of itself bring us to God. It just simply points the way by showing how far short we have come. In the epistle of James chapter 2 verse 10 we get this stated unequivocally: "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all."

Paul then goes on to explain that as the offence came by one man, then it should follow that the gift of grace that brings in righteousness should also come in by one man. If this were not the case then the offence would be greater than the gift. Is there to be an extended effect of the offence of the creature and not a similar extended effect of a great act of favour on the part of God? This is the effect of the 'Amazing Grace' that is so often thought about in Mr Newton's wonderful old hymn. I am also reminded of the words of another hymn which exclaims, 'Oh, to grace how great a debtor, daily I'm constrained to be!' This then should draw from our redeemed hearts worship to God the Father through the Lord Jesus.

In verse 15 the word 'many' is mentioned twice; perhaps more accurately it should be 'the many'. By one man's offence 'the many died', that is all those under the headship of Adam and as we have already seen, that is everyone. Then the gift of grace through Jesus Christ came to 'the many' who have now come under His headship through salvation; that is not everyone. This salvation is available to all but we must always remember that this is not a universal, or blanket salvation. It is available to all but only upon all who believe.

Verse 16 again makes this sharp comparison that the gift is very different from the offence. One man's one offence brought in judgement of death upon all but the free gift brought in by another Man brought about justification from many offences. Then this section is finished off in verse 17 with the practical outcome of these things as worked out in life. Are we really living or just existing? In Hebrews chapter 2 verse 15 we read, "and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Someone who is in bondage cannot be reigning. One suggests being limited and constrained, the other suggests freedom to come and go as you please. I mentioned earlier of reigning in life and this is what we have here. In a day to come, all those who have been redeemed by grace will reign with Christ but here we have the truth that even now, even in this world where sin and death reign, we can, through relationship with Christ, reign by Him. This gift of grace has given us the power to be morally dominant over all the forces of evil and lawlessness. What a position to be in!

This then takes us nicely again to verse 18 where it states that this gift of grace results in "justification of life." What a contrast to condemnation of death. By Adam's offence we are all condemned to death but by Christ's one act of obedience we who believe are constituted righteous and brought into justified life which verse 19 so clearly summarises.

How often do we hear people ask, 'Where will it all end?' When we see the condition of this world in which sin and death reign, we can quite easily see what people mean. Think of the challenges that are facing this world. Poverty, climate change, corruption, violence, immorality, greed and we can go on and on. The world has no answer to these things. However, as we come to the end of our chapter before us we get a very different answer. If we consider all that comes through the gift of grace and ask 'Where will it all end?' we get the answer and that is eternal life. For all eternity, grace will reign through righteousness through 'one man', our Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Lord bless you all this morning and thanks for listening to our Truth for Today talk on the Epistle to the Romans, section sin, The Two Races and Heads, talk number T1118.

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