

# **Justification and the Cross**

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## **A. Introduction**

Justification is an image, used to interpret the significance of Christ's death, taken from the court of law. Two passages (2 Cor 5:18-21; Rom 5:8-9) bring together reconciliation and justification by faith. The two terms are almost synonymous; but they express different ideas. They are brought together because both are actions of God made possible through the sacrificial death of Christ. Let us concentrate on the connection between justification by faith and the cross of Christ, or more precisely the effect of the death of Christ on the human race. Such study must begin with Rom 5:12-19, where Paul explores the universal significance of the death of the Lord. This is one of the most controversial passages in the NT and deserves careful attention.

## **B. Analysis of Rom 5:12-21**

Romans 5:12-21 seems to serve a double function. It seems to bring to an end the previous section and introduces topics to be discussed in the following chapters (6-8). It is usually recognized that 5:12 introduces a statement that is interrupted and to which Paul returns possibly, in verse 18. There does seem to be an incomplete thought in verse 12. Nevertheless, this has been considered to be a very important passage in the interpretation of the whole section.

## 1. Sin and Death Came into the World

**Rom 5:12a** Therefore, just as through one man sin came (*eiselthen*) into the world, and death through sin,

Several things deserve notice as we analyze this passage.

### a) Originally Sin and Death Were not Part of the World

Nothing is stated here about the origin of sin and death because their presence in the world is almost taken for granted. Nevertheless, one thing is clear, sin and death did not originate in this world; they came from outside as intruders. Paul is simply describing how they came into the world and took control of it.

### b) Uniqueness of Adam's Sin

The sin of Adam was unique in the history of the human race in terms of its consequences or results. His sin opened the door for *sin* to enter or come into the world. Sin is almost personified here, waiting at the door of the world for someone to open it for him. What Adam did led to a universal impact in that he allowed sin to take control of the world. The preposition *dia* ("through") is important because it identifies the one who mediated the entrance of sin into the world. This personification of sin is developed in Romans 6, where sin is described as a king who enslaved the human race.

### c) "World" Designates Creation and Humanity

The term "world" will include here not only the world of humanity but everything God created during creation week. The world is now the place where sin is fully active and in control. Once Adam let sin in, even the natural world was affected by it (Rom 8:22-23). The text suggests some kind of solidarity between Adam and the world. However, in this context

the term "world" emphasizes in a more specific way the world of humankind and establishes a solidarity between Adam and his descendants.

#### d) Death Came with Sin

Notice that sin came into the world accompanied by another power: Death. We find the preposition *dia* ("through") used twice in the passage. One with the "one man"—*through* him sin came into the world—, and the other with sin—*through* it death had access to the world. Here death is designating physical as well as spiritual death. The sin of Adam brought separation from God—spiritual death—and physical death as the consequences of sin.

#### 2. *Death came to All*

**Rom 5:12b in this way death came to all men,  
because all sinned—**

#### a) "In this way"

Death is described here and in 12a as a universal phenomenon that reached all humans as a result of the sin of one man. The act of one had a universal impact and determined the condition and fate of the world. Paul does not speculate about the connection between the act of one and what happened to "all." Rather he describes the connection in terms of consequences. This is what the phrase "and in this way" (*kai houtos*) indicates. It is used in v. 12b to introduce the consequences of the action of one man. When used in the absolute, without a coordinating particle, it means "thus/in this way" or "accordingly/therefore" (cf. Horst Balz, ("*Houtos*," *Exegetical Dictionary of the NT*, vol. 2, edited by Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991], p. 549; C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans*, vol. 1 [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975], p. 274). What was experienced by "all" was the result or the consequence of what the one did. *There is no reference here to the imputation of*

*the sin of Adam to "all". There is clearly an element of solidarity with him, but it is a solidarity in result not in the act and that was possible only because Adam represented the human race. What he did had an impact on his descendants. The fact that there is no reference to the imputation of sin may explain why Paul avoids using in this passage the phrase "in Adam." Nowhere do we find Paul saying "in Adam all sinned;" although he says "in Adam all die" (1 Cor 15:22).*

#### b) Death for All

The verb *dierchomai* means "to go through, to reach" (U. Busse, "*Dierchomai*," *Exegetical Dictionary of the NT*, vol. 1, p. 322) and with the preposition *eis* ('for, to") it means "reach, arrive at" (ibid.). The prefixed *dia* ("through"), attached to the verb, increases the force of the verb suggesting the idea that "death passed through the whole range of human kind" (James D. G. Dunn. *Romans 1-8* [Dallas, TX: Word, 1988], p. 273). It seems to have a distributive meaning: Death went through each person, it took hold "of each individual man in turn, as the generations succeeded one another" (Cranfield, *Romans*, vol. 1, p. 274). *Notice that what reached every human being was not the specific sin of Adam but death. The issue is not whether the sin of Adam is the sin of the human race but that because of his sin death took hold of every person.*

#### c) Because All Sinned

Possibly the most difficult phrase in this verse is the last one: "Because all sinned" (NIV). The basic problem is that in the previous statements Paul described the presence of sin and death in the world as a result or consequence of the sin of the one, but here he seems to attribute the death of all to their individual sinning. The translation "in whom [Adam] all sinned" is today rejected based on linguistic grounds. The preposition used here is not *en* ("in") but *epi* ("on, for") and the possible antecedent of the pronoun, "one man," is too far

away (*eph' ho = epi ho*). It is now recognized that *eph' ho* is functioning as a conjunction and that it could mean "for this reason that, because," in a causal sense (cf. 2 Cor 5:4; Phil 3:12; 4:10). In that case Paul would be saying that humans die not only because of Adam's sin but also because they themselves sinned. "Paul only intends to refer to the fact that death has overtaken all people because they all have sinned (in their own way). For him, sin is at the same time one's fate and one's act, for which one is responsible. . . . With and since Adam, death and sin are inescapable. No person can avoid them" (Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* [Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1994], p. 86). But *eph' ho* ("because") could be also functioning as the equivalent of a consecutive conjunction (like *hoste*), meaning "so that, with the result that" (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* [New York: Doubleday, 1993], p. 416). In that case the text would be saying that through Adam death has reached every human being with the result that they all commit sinful acts (Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998], pp. 274-277). As we will see the second view seems to fit the context very well.

#### d) All Sinned

The next problem is the verb "sinned" (*hamarton*). Whose sinning is this? A very common explanation is that "all sinned" when Adam sinned. That is to say, the reason why all die is that when Adam sinned "all" were already in Adam. His sin was the sin of humanity and that explains why death is universal (cf. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959], pp. 182-86). This is different from the idea that Adam's sin is imputed to each one of his descendants, to all. The argument suggests that every person was in some realistic way in Adam when he sinned. This interpretation faces several problems.

*First, it introduces into the passage an idea that is not present in it, namely, the idea that humanity was in some real sense present "in Adam" when he sinned, sinning in him. This creates serious theological problems because it presupposes that every individual already*

existed or was present in the person of Adam before he or she was born. Such a view introduces in the Bible a dualistic view of the human nature.

*Second, the verb hamartano is used by Paul exclusively to refer to the actual sin of a person or persons, not to their participation in the sin of Adam. "There is nothing in the context or in the verse to suggest that hamarton is being used in an unusual sense and that in every other occurrence of this verb in the Pauline epistles the reference is quite clearly to actual sin" (Cranfield, Romans, vol. p. 279). This concrete meaning is present in Rom 2:12 where Paul states that some people sin apart from the law and others sin under the law, again suggesting that all are sinners.*

*Third, the phrase "all sinned" was used by Paul in 3:23 to refer to the actual sins of the human race in order to demonstrate that all are under the power of sin (3:9). The past tense is to be interpreted as a gnomic aorist, indicating that sin has characterized human experience throughout history. Stanley E. Porter writes concerning this type of aorist: "One of the ways in which language users refer to events is to see them not simply as confined to one temporal sphere (past, present or future) but as occurring over time and perhaps as representative of the kind of thing which regularly occurs. . ." (Idioms of the Greek NT (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994], p. 38). He gives as an example Rom 3:23. There is not the slightest evidence in that passage to support the idea that all sinned in Adam. In previous chapters Paul demonstrated that Gentiles and Jews were sinners and that the only way out of this predicament was through faith in Jesus (1:18-3:26).*

*Fourth, in the next verse (5:13) Paul deals with the question of the period between Adam and the giving of the Law and how could there have been sin before the Law was given. If all sinned in Adam "the question of how they could sin without further commandments just does not arise. It is because Paul accuses all of having actively sinned against God that he must deal with the possible objection that God's will was not revealed to men between Adam and*

Moses" (A. J. M. Wedderburn, "The Theological Structure of Romans 5:12," *New Testament Studies* 19 [1972-73]:352).

e) Death and the Inevitability of Sin

We should therefore take Paul's statement at face value and conclude that according to him "death came to all with the result that all sinned." Death, spiritual and physical death, is a universal phenomenon and sin is also a universal phenomenon. In context this means that through Adam, sin as an enslaving power came into the world, and since then no one has been able to escape from its control. The reason for that is that as a result of the sin of Adam death—spiritual death as separation from God and physical death—came into the world and consequently sinning became inevitable or unavoidable for the human race ("all sinned"). There is "no one righteous, not even one;" "Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin" (3:9,10). Adam's sin separated the human race from God.

Summarizing, Paul is stating that as a result of Adam's sin, all are born spiritually dead, unable to resist the power of sin by themselves, making sin inescapable for all. "According to Paul, *death* has entered the world as a personified power, has penetrated to all humanity like an epidemic (Rom 5:12), and as a result of the fall death has established a domain of sovereignty (15:21; Rom 5:14, 17), in which in its turn sin came to power (5:21) among humankind, who deserved the judgment of death through their conduct (1:32) and had to *die* (1 Cor 15:22)" (W. Bieder, "*Thanatos* death," in *Exegetical Dictionary of the NT*, vol. 2, p. 130).

It is important to notice that Paul does not explain the connection between the sin of the one and the sin of the all. He simply states the facts: The act of one brought sin as a power into the world, sin brought death with it and because human beings are born in a state of death, separated from God and in need of salvation, they are totally unable by themselves to overcome sin (cf. Rom 8:6-8). As Adventists we do believe that the sin of Adam weakened

human nature making our sinning unavoidable. We have also taught that because of Adam's sin we exist in a state of separation from God, in condemnation and needing redemption. Because he was the representative of the human race, what he did had an impact on all of his descendants. We exist in solidarity with him as our common ancestor and as such he determined the fate of the human race. Sin and death invaded the natural world and especially human nature.

### *3. Sin Death and the Law*

**Rom 5:13-14**      **For before the law sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin in the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one to come.**

#### a) Universality of Death and the Law: An Objection

Paul is now defending his conclusion that all sinned. This is the function of the explanatory *gar*, "for." The fundamental issue is the one of the universality of death. The objection that could be raised against his interpretation is that sin cannot be reckoned to the individual if the law was not in place; therefore death as a penalty for sin could not have been a universal phenomenon before the law came in. In order for death to be present there had to be a nexus between sin and the law. If the two are not present then death could not be present because sin, defined as a violation of the law, was not present (cf. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 275). In the objection sin is being defined as transgression of the law and not as a power that invaded the world and death is considered to be only the result of the sin of each individual.

Paul answers back by pointing to the obvious fact that *death reigned* from Adam to Moses even over those whose sin was not, like Adam's, a violation of a specific command. For Paul

death is not only the penalty for specific sins but the consequence or result of the sin of Adam and in that sense death was present in the world even before the Torah was given to Israel. This is an irrefutable fact. Humans were under the power of death and consequently they sinned, but not exactly in the way Adam sinned. He violated a specific command or prohibition given to him by God. *Here it is obvious that the sin of Adam is not considered to be the sin of all, even though the consequence of Adam's sin affected all.*

For Paul death is not simply the result of sin defined as a transgression of the law; death, as a result of Adam's sin, is a universal phenomenon, a state of alienation from God, a power from whose grasp no one can escape. The law, Paul will argue in 5:20, gives us knowledge of what is already there, sin (cf. 3:20; 7:7; Ivan Blazen, "In Christ," [Unpublished paper], p. 86). "In vv. 13-14, then, Paul is reasserting the universality of death in the face of an objection to the effect that his own emphasis on the law as bringing wrath (4:15) would imply the absence of death in the absence of torah" (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996], p. 332).

#### b) Adam: A Type of Christ

Adam is described as a type of Christ in the sense that he was at the head of the human race, its representative and what he did had an impact and determined the fate of the race. In Adam's case, "the universal impact of his action prefigures the universal impact of the action of Christ" (Moo, *Romans*, p. 334). One could say that "Adam in his universal effectiveness for ruin is the type which-in God's design-prefigures Christ in His universal effectiveness for salvation. It is to be noted that it is precisely his *parabasis*/"disobedience" (which has just been mentioned) and its results which constitute him the *tupos tou mellontos* [a type of the one to come]" (Cranfield, *Romans*, vol. 1, p. 283).

Romans 5:13-14 essentially serves to establish the fact that death is a universal phenomena directly related to the sinful act of Adam in terms of its direct consequence. The

verses that follow contrast the results of Adam's action with Christ's action and their respective results.

#### 4. *The Gift and the Trespass*

**Rom 5:15** But the gift is not like the trespass (*paraptoma*). For if the many (*hoi polloi*) died for the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace (*charisma*) and the gift that came by the grace (*dorea en chariti*) of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow (*eperisseusen*) to the many (*eis tou polous*)!

##### a) The Gift is not Like the Trespass

This verse is introduced by the contrasting particle "but" because Paul has just stated that Adam was a type of Christ and he now wants to clarify that there are significant differences between the two of them. He immediately states that, "The free gift is not like the trespass," that is to say, it is greater than the trespass. Paul is not saying that the work of Christ paralleled in some way what Adam did. He is in fact contrasting the two in order to show that what Christ performed was greater and more meaningful than what Adam brought as a result of his sin. The parallelism is not exactly antithetical. We do find a contrast in the first two lines, but the opposite of "the many died" should have been "the many will be made alive." Instead, we read, "to the many overflowed." Observe also that "the many," under Adam, functions grammatically as the subject of the verb ("the many died"), while under Christ they are the indirect object introduced by the preposition *eis* ("for, to"), which identifies them as the *intended* target of the action of the verb. The verb is *perisseuo*, "to be more than enough, abound, overflow."

## b) The Abundance of the Gift

The verb "overflow" seems to introduce in the passage the concept of *provision* (cf. 2 Cor 1:5a; 4:15; 8:2; 9:8ab; Eph 1:8). It is not emphasizing the act of justification but the extent of the provision. This means that, "the action of grace 'overflowing to' the many through Christ thus has the connotation of an abundant eschatological *provision* of righteousness for the many and a *presentation* of its riches to them" (David A. Sapp, *An Introduction to Adam Christology in Paul* [Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1990], pp. 324-25). Adam's sin resulted in the fact that the many actually die; but Christ's act of grace *provided* more grace than was needed to deal with the problem created by Adam's trespass. The provision was greater or larger than the need, and reveals God's generosity. The gift was greater than the trespass; therefore "the free gift is not like the trespass."

The contrast between Adam and Christ in this passage and in the others that follow make one essential point, namely, that "the single acts of the two respective persons have comprehensive, all-embracing effects" (Don Garlington, *Faith, Obedience, and Perseverance: Aspects of Paul's Letter to the Romans* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994], p. 99). The sinful act, the fall (*paraptoma*="sin, false step") of one had a universal impact; the act of grace of the other brought a provision of grace of such magnitude that it was even more than the many needed. The abundance of the provision and the fact that it is offered to all implies that from now on the destiny of all is determined by their response to the gift that is being offered to them. The human destiny is no longer determined by the sinful act of Adam!

### 5. The Gift and Condemnation

**Rom 5:16** Again, the gift (*dorema*) not like [the result] of (*dia*) the one man's sin: for the judgment (*krima*) from (*eks*) one [sin] to (*eis*) condemnation

**(katakrima), but the gift (charisma) from (ek) many trespasses (paraptoma) to (eis) justification.**

The contrast now is "between the gift and what came through Adam, rather than with Adam's trespass as such" (Dunn, *Rom 1-8*, p. 280). In the previous verse the contrast was mainly between the gift and Adam's sin. Once more we are told that, "The free gift is not like the effect of that one man's sin." What Christ brought is radically different from the result of the sin of Adam. His sin brought, as a result of judgment, condemnation; a negative result. But the gift of grace does not deal only with the *one* sin of Adam but with the *many transgressions (paraptoma)* and results (*eis*) in justification or acquittal for the sinners. The gift is superior! "That one single misdeed should be answered by judgment, this is perfectly understandable: that the accumulated sins and guilt of all the ages should be answered by God's free gift, this is the miracle of miracles, utterly beyond human comprehension" (Cranfield, *Romans*, vol. 1, p. 286).

But the contrast is not only between *one* transgression versus Christ dealing with *many* transgressions. The real contrast is located in the nature of the result of the actions of Adam and Christ. Adam's action resulted in condemnation (*eis katakrima*), the gift of God results in justification (*eis dikaioma*). How is the sinner justified? This is explained in vs 17.

#### *6. Accepting the Gift*

**Rom 5:17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned (*ebasileusen*) through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision (*perisseia*) of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign (*basileusousin*) in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.**

Once more the contrasts are not exact parallels, but the parallelism present in the text is basically antithetical. The verse is introduced by the particle "For" (*gar*), which introduces a

further elaboration or development of vs 16; this is an explanatory *gar*. It is important to observe that the effect of the trespass of Adam is universal: Death reigned over all. This was already established by Paul (vs 15), but now he personifies death and makes it an enslaving power. One would expect Paul to say that the effect of Christ's act of grace was that life reigned over all, but he does not make that statement.

#### a) Grace as Justification

The gift of grace mentioned in vs 16 is now identified as justification. In vs 16 Paul did not identify those for whom the act of grace resulted in justification. This he now explains in vs 17. In vs 15 Paul stated that the act of grace "overflowed" (*perisseuo*) for the "many." One could argue that the "many" are "those who receive the abundance (*perisseia*) of grace and justification," that is to say, believers. But it is also possible to say that provision was made for the "many," that is to say for all, but only those who receive the provision are indeed justified. In order to make a clear conceptual connection between what he is saying here and in vs 15 he uses a noun (*perisseia*, "abundance") derived from the verb *perisseuo* ("to abound, overflow") used in vs 15. This confirms our conclusion that the overflow of grace is to be interpreted in terms of provision that is to be received or appropriated.

#### b) Grace is to be Accepted

According to vs 16 the act of grace "has arisen in response to the many trespasses. But not all who have trespassed will be justified. Only those who actually receive that gracious act and the abundance of the gift of righteousness that it brings will indeed be justified" (Sapp, *Adam*, p. 326). That is probably why the apostle said that the act of grace is not like the one trespass. One could even say that "death shows no partiality and extends its dominion 'over' all (cf. 5:14). But grace freely grants righteousness to those who will receive it and then receives them as ruling subjects in the kingdom of grace" (Ibid.). Grace is not an enslaving

power that enters into the world and makes all people subject to its power. This is rather a characteristic of sin and death. Grace offers itself to humans as a gift from God and calls sinners to become members of its kingdom, to allow themselves to be ruled by it. Verse 21 indicates that grace reigns through righteousness, suggesting once more that "the eschatological lordship of grace is limited rather than universal in scope. It is a reign of those who receive grace, that is, who receive the gift of righteousness" (Ibid., p. 323).

The fact that the grace of righteousness is a gift supports also the idea that it is universal in its provision but not in its salvific effectiveness unless all receive it. A gift can only be offered to those for whom it was obtained. God has this wonderful gift of justification for the human race and he has revealed it to us in and through Christ (Rom 3:21). But this is the justification that comes only by faith (3:21-22). We have to receive it, to say "Yes" to the Lord.

Romans 5:17 is extremely important in the understanding of Paul's argument because it is a summary of what he has been saying in the previous verses and forms the basis for what he is going to add in the following verses.

### *7. Condemnation and Justification for All*

**Rom 5:18**     **Consequently (*ara oun*), just as through(*dia*) one trespass to (*eis*) condemnation for (*eis*) all men, so also through (*dia*) one act of righteousness to (*eis*) justification of life for (*eis*) all men.**

#### a) Comparison and Contrast: Behavior and Result

Now the main contrast is between the conduct or behavior of the two representatives of the human race. There are no verbs in this passage; it is indeed a "masterly compression of the different aspects picked out in the preceding verses" (Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 283). This fact makes the interpretation of the verse difficult and will require from us to look carefully at the context. But first, let us examine the verse itself. It is formed by prepositional phrases, two

main prepositional phrases introduced by *dia*, "through." We also have a comparison in which the protasis is introduced by "as" and the apodosis by "so." Paul is not simply comparing the behaviors of Adam and Christ and the respective consequences, but contrasting them: "Just as through one trespass to/for (*eis*) all men for (*eis*) condemnation, so also through one act of righteousness for/to (*eis*) all men for/to (*eis*) justification of life."

We also find the preposition *eis* used twice in each of the prepositional phrases. The first usage introduces the *extension* of the action ("to all men"). Since there is no verb in the phrase it is difficult to determine what is the connection between "the trespass of one" and the statement "to all men." The same applies to the second prepositional phrase. The second use of the preposition *eis* introduces the ultimate goal or *result* of both actions--"to condemnation;" "to justification of life." Paul is stressing "the correspondence between the two contrasting causes (*dia*) [disobedience\obedience] and ultimate ends (*eis*) [condemnation\justification] and in between their equivalent extension (*eis*) [to all men]" (F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the NT*, [Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1961], p. 255).

#### b) Use of the Preposition *eis* ("to, for")

The first usage of the preposition *eis* is quite clear; it serves to identify those "to whom the act of Adam and Christ extends ('to all'), that is to say, the penalty or benefits are intended for all" (Sapp, *Adam*, p. 326). The second usage is a little more complicated because it indicates purpose or intended result and it takes not an object but a relationship or a condition--"condemnation," "justification." *The usage of the preposition does not indicate by itself whether the purpose it points to is actually realized or simply aimed at.* This is to be decided by the context (M. J. Harris, "Prepositions and Theology in the Greek NT," *New International Dictionary of NT Theology*, vol. 3, edited by Colin Brown [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978], p. 118; Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms*, pp. 152-153; cf. Rom 10:1; 12:3; Col 3:10).

### c) Justification and Universalism: Justification for All

One could argue that the parallel between Adam and Christ would require the preposition *eis* ("for, to") to have the same meaning in both cases. That is to say, if in the case of Adam its purpose was actually realized-his action resulted in the condemnation of all-it must have the same meaning with respect to Christ-his obedience resulted in justification for all. This is a logical argument but it is valid only if we are willing to embrace universalism. The condition in which we found ourselves as a result of Adam's sin was *unavoidable* and *permanent*. Therefore, the condition in which "all" find themselves as a result of the obedience of Jesus has to be *unavoidable* and *permanent*, not related at all to a personal decision. But this conclusion cannot be supported by the rest of the Bible and particularly by any of the Pauline Epistles. Universalism is not a biblical doctrine and there is no reason to introduce it in our interpretation of Rom 5:18.

### d) Legal Universal Justification: Justification for All

Some have tried to avoid the trap of universalism, while still emphasizing the parallel between Adam and Christ, arguing that all were *legally* justified in Christ independent of any faith-commitment but that one could reject that legal status through a personal decision against Christ. This suggestion actually breaks the parallel between Adam and Christ and destroys the internal logical consistency of the argument. Let me explain. The actual result of the sin of Adam, namely condemnation, was not something that we could reject, avoid or even accept. It was simply ours. Pressing the parallel between Adam and Christ would mean that the "righteousness of life" that Christ brought "to all men" was also unavoidable and permanent. By introducing the idea of a legal universal justification that could be rejected the parallel between Adam and Christ, on which the argument rests, is broken. Consequently, Rom 5:18 should not be used to support the theory of legal universal salvation. The best

solution is to acknowledge that in the case of Adam the preposition *eis* ("for, to") refers to the actual result of his action-it brought death for all-, but that in the case of Christ justification is intended for all but that not all will be justified because it has to be received, accepted. This is supported by linguistic and contextual arguments.

#### e) Contextual Analysis

It is generally accepted that vs 18 is related to vs 12 where we find an inconclusive statement made by Paul. In vs 18 Paul summarizes what he was saying in vs 12 and then adds the apodosis to it. But one cannot deny that the intervening verses contribute to the summary of vs 18 (Garlington, *Faith*, p. 101: "The verse draws on two sources, one is vs 12, but the intervening verses contribute also"). For instance we find some clear linguistic parallels with vs 16: "condemnation" (*katakrima*), "trespass" (*paraptoma*), and "justification" (*dikaioma-dikaiosis*). We should keep in mind that vs 16 is explained in vs 17.

Therefore, if we were to look for verbs to interpret vs 18 we have to go back to the previous verses. We will be looking for the following grammatical structure found in that verse: *Verb + the preposition eis ("to, for") + an indirect personal object*. This same structure is used concerning Adam and the result of his sin and Christ and the result of his salvific act. Of those elements the only one missing in vs 18 is the verb. If we find the same grammatical structure somewhere else in the context we could suggest that Paul has the same verb in mind in vs 18. With respect to Adam the only place where we find this grammatical structure is in 5:12:

<b>Preposition</b>	<b>Indirect Personal Obj.</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb</b>
<i>eis</i>	<i>pantas anthropous</i>	<i>ho thanatos</i>	<i>dielthen</i>
to	all	men	spread

The connection with vs 12 that we just mentioned allows us to take the verb it uses to express the same thought that we find in vs 18. Notice the parallel:

**5:12 eis pantas anthropous ho thanatos dielthen**

*to all men            death spread*

**5:18 di' henos paraptomatos eis pantas anthropous [ho thanatos dielthen]**

*through one trespass            to all            men                            [death spread]*

In an attempt to be loyal to what Paul is saying it is necessary to use the phrase "death spread" from vs 12 in vs 18. The passage would then read, "Therefore, as through one man's trespass [death spread (*dierchomai*)] to all men to condemnation . . ." (Suggested by Sapp, *Adam*, p. 328). The "one trespass" is the one of Adam as vs 12 indicates: "Through one man's sin." The second preposition *eis* expresses the actual result-condemnation. This fits the context very well, does not violate the thought expressed by the apostle, and establishes a clear connection with vs 12.

We should now deal with vs18b and the verb that needs to be supplied there. It was the context, as we have seen, that informed us about how the disobedience of Adam affected all men. We should do the same with respect to the work of God in Christ. Here we have to look for the same grammatical structure: *verb + eis* ("for, to") + *indirect personal object*. The answer is found in vs 15 which is developed and clarified in vss 16-17.

**5:15 he charis. . . eis tous pollous eperisseusen**

*grace to the many abounded*

**5:18 eis panta athropous [he charis eperisseusen]**

*to all            men                            [grace abounded]*

It seems to us that this is what the context suggests. The benefit of this approach is that there is some control in the selection of the verbs to be used in vs 18 making it unnecessary for the interpreter to introduce his or her own preference.

It is also interesting to notice that the two usages of the preposition *eis* ("for, to") + *an impersonal object* in vs 18 finds their parallels in the immediate context, applied once to Jesus and once to Adam.

<b>5:16</b>	<i>eis katakrima</i> (Adam) to condemnation	<i>eis dikaioma</i> (Christ) for justification
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<b>5:18</b>	<i>eis katakrima</i> (Adam) to condemnation	<i>eis dikaiosin tsoes</i> (Christ) to justification of life
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This shows that Paul is expressing in vs 18 ideas found already in the previous verse; he is probably summarizing what he stated before. Nevertheless, finding a verb for vs 18 is not indispensable for its proper understanding. The preposition *eis* ("for, to") can be used, as we already did, to elucidate the meaning of the verse.

It is useful to remember that in vs 17 is a development of vs 16. The noun "abundance," used in vs 17, is associated with justification by faith and those who receive it. According to vs 17, that abundance of God's grace is to be received or appropriated by the believer. Therefore, the second preposition *eis* in vs 18 points to that which the act of Christ was aiming. God's grace revealed in Christ does have universal relevance. God wants every individual to be saved, but the fact that justification and life are both mentioned in vs 18 and that both are "gifts (*dorea*, 5:15d, 17b) to be received (5:17b) by faith demonstrates that Christ's death does not result in the justification of all men" (Sapp, *Adam*, p. 327). Justification as "life" belongs only to those who believe. Once more we can see the provision is universal in its extent but limited in its effect because of human freedom.

8. *Made Sinners Through Adam; Made Righteous Through Christ*

**Rom 5:19** For just as through (*dia*) the disobedience of one man the many were made (*kathistemi*) sinners, so also through (*dia*) the obedience of the one man the many will be made (*kathistemi*) righteous.

a) Meaning of the Verb *Kathistemi* ("Made")

This passage is not as complicated as the previous one. The verse emphasizes the kind of people that individuals have become "as a result of the work of Adam and Christ respectively: by his disobedience, Adam has turned his posterity into sinners, while Christ, by his obedience, has made his people righteous" (Garlington, *Faith*, p. 103). Notice that the same verb is used in the comparison or contrast between Adam and Christ. But perhaps more important, when associated with Adam the verb is in the past tense while when associated with Christ it is in the future tense. The verb *kathistemi* in its passive form means "to be instituted as something, to become something" and is the equivalent of "to become" (*ginomai*; see Albrecht Oepke, "*Kathistemi*," *Theological Dictionary of the NT*, vol. 3, edited by Gerhard Kittel [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965], p. 445). How did the many become sinners? The answer is given in verses 12 and 13: Because of Adam's sin, death came into the world alienating us from God and making it impossible for any person to escape the enslaving power of sin. We are sinners not only because we commit sinful acts but because we are by nature separated from God. The context does not suggest that the sin of Adam was imputed to the many. The "many" become righteous when they accept by faith the gift of justification (v. 17), thus bringing to an end their alienation from God.

## b) Use of "Many" and "All"

Logically, vs 18 provides the basis for what is said in vs 19 and that is why it is introduced by the explanatory *gar*. The shift from "all men" in vs 18 to "the many" is also significant. In the Semitic languages the totality of a group is referred to by the term "many." Those languages did not have the adjective "all" in the sense of "every;" they usually used a noun (*kol*=the totality; *pas*=every, the whole, pl. all things) (see, G. Nebe, "*Polus*," *Exegetical Dictionary of the NT*, vol. 3, p.132). Instead, the OT used the pl. of *rab*="much," "many," "great," *rabbim*. In Greek *hoi polloi* could have an exclusive meaning, that is, it means "many but not all." However, in the NT the inclusive meaning prevails--"all." In Romans 5 the term designates the totality of two groups, those who belong to Adam and those who belong to Christ, who have received the gift of grace. We also find the expression in vs 18 "all men" which means the totality of humankind. The provision was made for the human race but the only ones who benefit from it are the "many," the totality of those who belong to Jesus.

We can conclude that Rom 5:12-19 describes the event of the cross as an act of grace of God through Christ. This act has as its goal the totality of the human race. There is enough grace to save the whole human race from beginning to end. The cross of Christ revealed that abundance of grace but the human race has to receive it, to take the gift brought into existence by God. The gift is in essence the gift of righteousness by faith. Those who accept it become part of the "many" who are in Christ. It is therefore important to observe that the comparison between Adam and Christ is rather a contrast and does not require equivalency of action or result. In fact what Christ did was greater, larger in its extent and power than what Adam did.

## 9. Law and Sin

### **Rom 5:20-21**

Paul returns now to topic of the law. He mentions a historical fact-the law was given after sin was in the world-, and a theological conclusion-the law joined the connection existing between sin and death with the intention of unmasking sin as sin (Rom 7:3). The law reveals sin for what it is-a state of rebellion that results in eternal condemnation. It increases sin in the sense that it identifies it. The law is totally unable to change the condition created by Adam but makes it unbearable. This results in something positive: Grace is revealed in all of its majesty and power as God's loving disposition to forgive sinners.

The last verse is the conclusion or summary of the discussion. It was the intention of God's grace to remove the human race from the dominion of sin and death. Sin reigned accompanied by or in the dominion of (*en*, "in") death, but now grace reigns by virtue of/by means of (*dia*) the gift of justification that results in (*eis*) eternal life.

### C. General Remarks and Conclusion

Paul is obviously contrasting the result of the sin of Adam with the result of the salvific work of Christ. He is not arguing that the way sin came into the world parallels the way the gift of God came into the world. The parallel is basically limited to the fact that what Adam did had a universal impact and what Christ did also has a universal impact. The implicit reason is that Adam stood at the head of the human race and what he did determined the fate of his descendants. Now Christ is the one who stands at the head of the human race and determines its destiny in terms of the response we give to his offer of salvation (Rom 5:17). Since Adam could not pass on to his descendants what he did not possess, the result of his sin was death and sin for all members of the human race. Grace is not an enslaving power but its benefits are intended for all human beings (it has a universal dimension) who by faith receive

it. Grace, like sin and death, reigns, but it does it through righteousness not through fate.

The idea that every human being was in Adam when he sinned is totally foreign to the passage under consideration. To argue that when Adam sinned we all sinned because we were in him is to introduce in the Bible a wrong understanding of human nature. Implicit in the statement that we were in Adam is the idea that we pre-existed our natural birth and that therefore we are also responsible for Adam's sin. Biblical anthropology rejects any type of anthropological dualism and teaches that a human being is an indivisible unit for whom it is impossible to exist in a non-physical form. By insisting that we were in Adam and sinned when he sinned is being taught, unintentionally, that we are responsible for actions committed by us outside our personal physical form but inside the body of Adam. Those who promote this view are not using that language in a metaphorical way because according to them we actually sinned, became sinners, in the sin of Adam. Only persons are responsible for their actions, therefore, we had to exist in some form when Adam sinned in order to be responsible for his sin. Such ideas are foreign to Rom 5:12-21.

However, we must acknowledge that the sin of Adam had a universal impact. That is exactly what Paul is arguing. We are all sinners, we are all separated from God because of the sin of Adam. Paul explains what he means by saying that when Adam sinned sin and death came into the world. Certainly, Adam's sin is not our sin, but he made it impossible for any human being not to sin because death as a universal power came into the world as a result of *Adam's sin*. This is physical and spiritual death. We were separated from God as a race with a human nature that could not resist the power of sin. Our sinful condition was followed by sinful acts because we were spiritually dead. Paul says, "The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God" (Rom 8:7). It is that natural condition that we obtained from Adam; "in Adam all die" (1 Cor 15:22). We are sinners not because when Adam sinned we, who allegedly were in him, sinned, but because we came under the power of death, separated from God, making sin

unavoidable or inescapable to us.

Ellen G. White states, "Adam was endowed with a nature pure and sinless, but he fell because he listened to the suggestions of the enemy. His posterity became depraved; by one man's disobedience many were made sinners" ("Self-denial," *Youth Instructor*, 04-01-97, pr. 01). She also comments, "Because man fallen could not overcome Satan with his human strength, Christ came from his royal courts of heaven to help him with His human and divine strength combined. Christ knew that Adam in Eden, with his superior advantages, might have withstood the temptations of Satan, and conquered him. He also knew that it was not possible for man, out of Eden, separated from the light and love of God since the fall, to resist the temptations of Satan in his own strength" (1 *Selected Messages*, p. 279). It is that condition that we received from Adam, not his personal sin.

The gift of grace that came through Christ is sufficient to save every human being, every sinner. We are constituted righteous by accepting the gift and then we are empowered by the Spirit to overcome sin in our lives. The law could not revive us but Christ can: "For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe" (Gal 3:21-22). The gift is offered to all but is received only by those who believe. Adam's act of disobedience separated the race from God but Christ's sacrifice brings forgiveness for our sins and re-unites us with God. Legal universal justification is not what Paul is teaching in Rom 5:12-21.

The use of the phrase "in Christ" to support that concept creates serious theological problems that go against the gospel itself. The phrase "in Christ" is not found in Rom 5:12-21. This is amazing because Paul uses it very often in his epistles but avoids it here. If we were to accept the idea that the whole human race was in Christ as it was in Adam we create a serious theological problem. The argument that when Adam sinned we all actually sinned because we

were in him would mean that when Christ died we actually saved ourselves or contribute to our salvation because we were in him. That is to say, he was not our substitute and our sin was not transferred to him because we were "in Him;" we actually died for our sins in the same way that we actually sinned when Adam sinned. This is an unintentional aberration of the gospel of salvation through faith in what Christ, and only Christ, did for us on the cross. Those ideas are clearly absent from Rom 5:12-21.

Paul describes in Rom 5:12-19 the event of the cross as an act of divine grace. The manifestation of this gift has as its only objective the human race. Through Christ God provided enough grace to save the whole human race, since the time of Adam to the end of mercy. But this gift must be accepted in order to be ours. The gift is justification by faith and those who accept it are the "many" who are in Christ through faith in him.