

The Reign of Death; The Reign of Life

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[0:00] Romans chapter 5.

Romans chapter 5 and 5 verse 12. Last Sunday I kind of summarized the point, Paul's primary point here in verses 12 through to the end of the chapter.

! He summed up this way the greatest reality of salvation. One man, Jesus Christ, by one work, his death and resurrection.

Accomplished eternal salvation for all who believe. That is what he's saying. Now, Paul presents this truth, as I said last week, by contrasting it with another truth.

In a sense, he's kind of presenting an argument to a kind of mysterious or representative objector.

[1:12] You might say, I just have a hard time believing that. That one man, Jesus Christ, could by one act bring or accomplish salvation for all who believe. I have a hard time believing that one man could do that.

And he says, if you have a hard time believing that, then would you consider another man? Who also committed a certain act, one act. And by that one act brought death on all humanity.

And so he contrasts the two. And he begins with Adam. And so we began with Adam and the reign of death. And we've already seen several things here in this part of the chapter.

In the first few verses of chapter, excuse me, verses 12, 13, 14. And, well, let's just go ahead and read it. Well, let me find it first.

Let's see, where's Romans? Romans. Is that in the New Testament? I think it is. 12.05? I'm sorry, it's page 1524.

[2:21] Verse 12. Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world. That's why I say he begins with Adam here. 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 was a type of him who was to come.

Then he's going to go from there, and we'll get there here in a little bit, but he's going to go from there to the reign of life, and through the act of the one man. And from there through to the end of the chapter, he's going to contrast the two.

Adam, Jesus. Adam, Jesus. What one man did, Adam, that accomplished thus and such. The one man did, and committed an act that did thus and such.

[3:26] He's going to contrast the two, and we're going to see that he's going to show how the act of the one man, Jesus, accomplished something far more glorious and magnificent than the one act of the one man, Adam.

And we'll see that contrast as we go along. But just to finish up the reign of death, we looked at this last week, and we kind of walked through primarily verse 12. In fact, exclusively verse 12.

And said, number one, sin entered the world through Adam. We talked about that. Number two, death entered the world through sin.

And we talked about that. And then number three, sin and death polluted all of mankind, spread to all of mankind. And that is very clearly what Paul says here in verse 12.

It's just, I mean, just as plain and straightforward as you could expect it to be. And not much room there for, you know, interpretation or misunderstanding.

[4:33] It's just very clear. Sin into the world through Adam and death through sin and sin and death spread to all mankind. That's all of us. And that's what we looked at last week. So the reign of death.

But we have one other thing to say about this reign of death. And so here's number four. Sin and death has reigned throughout all the history of mankind.

All right. It's spread to all man and it's reigned. I just simply was a part of the fabric of the life of man from that point on.

Some thing that we have or some problem we have that we can choose between. You know, well, you know, now I've got this thing called sin in me and I can commit sin or not commit sin.

And it's not just simply that it passed to all of us in the sense that it's a part of us now. But it reigns in the world.

[5 : 29] Reigns in all of humankind. And it can be proved very clearly if you just look back through history. And it's very easy to prove.

And so, again, verse 13 and 14. Let me just read it again so that we keep these verses, these two verses, squarely in our minds as we kind of walk through them.

For until the law, that is, until the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not imputed when there is no law.

No written law. No established law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses. I mean, it's pretty straightforward. Even though, before the law, sin was not imputed.

And we'll kind of flesh this out a little bit here in just a minute. Nevertheless, even though that's the case, and the law wasn't given until Moses, even though sin was still present in the world in that time period.

[6 : 41] Even over those who sinned or did not sin according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam. Didn't sin in the same way.

Who is a type? And this last phrase is what will launch us into verse 15 and what Paul has to say about the reign of life. And then he starts to contrast the two.

And that phrase is, who is a type? This Adam is a type of him who was to come. A type in what way? Well, we'll get to that. All right, now, the key words in these two verses, verses 13 and 14, the very key to it, to understanding what he's talking about is, or the key words are, death reigned.

Death reigned. That's key to understanding what he's saying here. Death reigned. See, listen, it's really very clear. What is the curse of sin?

We talked about that last week. It's in verse 12. What is it? It's death. It's death. Very clearly, the curse of sin is death.

[7 : 57] Now, to whom was this curse applied? To all, all men. All women. And men.

All humankind. I get so tired of my computer, as I've been writing lately, and I put in the word mankind, and it puts a little squiggly mark. That's not the word you should use.

It should be humankind. All right. In our politically correct world, but in biblical language, mankind, or the old language, mankind, meant all of humankind.

We're not singling out men. And if there's ever a place that men would like to be excluded from this, it would be here. Okay? But it includes womankind as well.

And so it's humankind. So, to whom has the curse been applied? To all. All. Without exception.

[8 : 55] And what is the proof? I mean, this is just basic stuff here. What is the proof that sin and the curse of sin, which is death, has passed to every individual man and woman?

What's the proof of that? We all die. All die. Well, I would say that, in a sense, that last phrase in verse 12 also serves as a proof because all sinned.

And we can look at history, past and present, and see very clearly that death, that sin reigns. And death reigns. That death is passed on to all men because we see sin all over the place.

But the primary proof is, there in verse 14, that death reigns. The reign of death. That's the proof of it. You can't deny it. That is, if you're going to accept what he said in verse 12, that sin came through Adam and death through sin and sin passed on to all humankind, then the clear proof is, the proof that sin is passed to all of us, is that we all die.

And it's just very clear, isn't it? Now, you and I are certainly responsible for our actions, aren't we?

[10 : 19] We are responsible for our acts of sin, certainly. But as true as that is, that's not the point here. Or I might even say it's more than that.

But you and I are also responsible for Adam's sin. We're held responsible for it.

Not just when you sin. And so then, when you commit the first sin, then you're linked with Adam and his sin. It's not just when you sin, or not just when you, like Adam did, willfully disobey God's law, God's command.

It's not just when you, at that moment, break one of his holy commandments. No. The fact is, you and I are all held, we're culpable in Adam's sin that he committed back in the garden. And what's the proof of that? Death reigns. Death reigns. Verse 14. Now, notice what Paul says about this.

[11:29] Death reigned, he said, and then he gives a time period. From Adam to Moses. Now, what does that mean?

Now, that does not mean that it only reigned then. The idea is not that it just reigned then. It still reigns today. You're not trying to make a point, or trying to limit, make any kind of limitation to a certain time period when sin reigned.

That's not the point of that. The point of it, or the meaning is this. When was the law given? It was given when Moses was walking the earth at some time in his life when he led Israel out of Egypt and eventually God led them to Mount Sinai and the Ten Commandments were given.

The law was given. And so, the law was given then, wasn't it? In Moses' day, right? And so the point is, there was a substantial period of time when people did not have a, well, even in this time, they didn't have a written copy of God's law, but his law was revealed and it was written and it was given and established, albeit verbally to them.

But there was a substantial period of time when that wasn't the case. They didn't have it. They didn't have God's law. And so, they did not have the Ten Commandments.

[13:00] And so from Adam to Moses, a couple of thousand years, there was no law in the official sense of the Word because God had not given it yet.

Gave it to Moses on Sinai. And so in a sense, and this is what Paul is saying, though it may seem confusing to us, in a sense, there was no willful disobedience of God's law for a couple of thousand years.

No willful disobedience of it. Why? Because there was no law. sin. And so, no one could be then charged for sin in that sense, in disobeying God's law, in rejecting or breaking one of God's commandments.

There could be no sin charged during that period of time. Verse 13, for until the law, sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

And so, from Adam to Moses, no one could legally have sin charged to their account. The principle still holds true today. I mean, just ask Tom Holland back there.

[14:25] Just ask him if he can go out and arrest someone for a crime unless he has a written law that says what they did is a crime. I mean, you know, you couldn't come up to someone there on the streets of Bartlesville and let's say they're just walking down the street and they belch in public.

Appalling. What a criminal thing to do. And so, can you just imagine you know, Tom Holland walking up to that person grabbing that heinous criminal by the arm and saying you're coming with me.

And they say what? What are you doing? And he says bud, you're under arrest. I'm going to throw you in jail. You're a criminal. You're a lawbreaker. And then they say what law have I broken?

Well, he couldn't arrest him, could he? Now, I do understand and I did a little research on the internet several years ago when I was preaching on the law and crazy laws that are out there and there are laws on the books in some places that are pretty wild.

I mean, spitting on the sidewalk is against the law in a lot of communities. Now, it's not enforced anymore but it's there. And so, I guess, Tom, you could arrest somebody for spitting. That is if there's a law here for that.

[15:50] But you get the point. There must be a law before there can be a crime in the official sense. And there could be no charge imputed when there is no law.

And you're wondering where are we going with this? Yet, Paul said in verse 13 for until the law, until it was given, sin was in the world.

It was here. And operating. The sin principle was alive and well in the heart and lives of every individual who lived in that couple of thousand year period of time though no law or sin or infraction of the law could be charged to them.

Sin was still in the world. And how do we know that? Everybody died. Everybody died. And why did they die?

Romans 3.23 The wages of sin is death. The wages of sin is death. They're all sinners and they all died. And history proves this to be the case. And it proves that sin, death, sin and death passed to

everybody because everybody died even before there was no law charged that they could be charged with.

[17 : 14] And do you know what this means? Sin exists without the law. And where there is sin there is death. Paul is basically saying the same thing in verse 14.

Let me read it again. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses even over those who over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam.

Adam sinned by breaking God's law. He said, I thought there wasn't a law until Moses. Well, there was a law given to Adam and Eve.

We have our Ten Commandments. He only had one commandment. We think it's hard to keep Ten Commandments. It would be great if we just had one. Right?

Adam and Eve had one commandment. Just one. And they didn't keep it. And God said to them, you know, do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Saying, don't do it, Adam.

[18 : 26] Don't do it, Eve. If you do, you will surely die. And Adam disobeyed. Eve disobeyed that one commandment. Adam and Eve died. And death then reigned from Adam to Moses.

That's what Paul is saying. Now wait. Adam and Eve had a couple of sons. Well, they had more than a couple. They had probably hundreds of children in their lifetime.

But the Bible mentions a couple of them by name. And so we know they had Cain and had a son named Abel. And putting aside the story about those two men, the fact is that ultimately they both died.

Didn't they? Now Abel was helped along a little bit with his brother, by his brother, but they both died. And Abel, if he hadn't been murdered by his brother, he would have died eventually. But now, they didn't eat of the tree.

Did they? No, they didn't break that one commandment. In fact, that commandment could not be broken after Adam and Eve once broke that law because then they were expelled from the garden and the way back in was barred to them.

[19 : 48] And there was no possibility of eating of that tree. I'm not sure what happened to the Garden of Eden. Some of you are thinking, what did happen to that tree? I don't have any idea.

But the point is that Cain and Abel, they didn't break that one commandment. They died. And all of Adam's children, all of Adam and Eve's children, hundreds of them, and the grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

Can you imagine how many great-grandchildren they had and great-great-great-great-great-grandchildren still living while they were living. And they all died, every single one of them. Well, Enoch didn't.

That's another story. They all died. And, you see, death reigned without the law. And why?

Because, and here's what the point is, it's because there is a principle of sin and death that passed to all of Adam's, those who came out of Adam.

[20 : 52] That's all of us. It's a principle of sin and death. It is a corrupt nature in everyone, every one of us.

A corruption. And we got it from Adam. Now, quote one commentator. Here's Paul's point. All of human history, from Adam on, before the law and after the law, all of human history, whether you sin in direct violation of a command of God or whether you're an ignorant pagan who doesn't have any idea what God said, all of human history will reveal the fact that man is a sinner at the very deepest level of his nature because everybody dies.

Everybody. And so there's the reign of death through the act of one man, Adam. And through that act of that one man, that one time, just once, that's all it took, the entire human race was plunged headlong into sin and death.

Then notice what he says at the close of verse 14. He's speaking of Adam here but he's about to shift to Jesus. He says, Adam, who is a type, a type of him who was to come?

And that one, of course, is Jesus. Let's put this squarely in our mind as we move to the next step here.

[22 : 46] you and I are first and foremost, we're sinners first and foremost by birth. By birth, we're sinners according to our nature.

You and I are not sinners first and foremost because of anything we've done. Because we didn't start out that way.

We were little babies. Not because of anything we've done. I'm talking about first and foremost. You and I are sinners in the first place because of something someone else did.

Adam. And that's just the way it is. And I have passed that on to my children. I'm sorry, John.

I couldn't help it. Pass it on to all my kids. How blessed they are. And soon Sherry and I are going to have a sweet little granddaughter and the sin nature that I passed on to our son Timothy.

[23:58] He will have passed on to his sweet little daughter. He got it from me. She'll get it from him. In a sense though I hesitate to use the term but in a sense you and I are victims of the principle of sin.

We're victims before we are participants. And we couldn't help it. It wasn't our fault in that sense. And all those who come out of us, all those who come out of me, my sons and their children and their children's children until Jesus comes.

They're all victims. Now with this last phrase though, verse 14, and then going on in to verse 15, Paul makes his point very clear.

just as you and I are not directly and even indirectly responsible for that one act or that one time that brought death to the whole human race, just as you and I are not responsible for that, you and I also are not responsible for the act of one man and one time that brought life.

we didn't make that happen. We're not responsible for that. The reign of life, that is a gift.

[25:32] It's a gift. Verse 15, but the free gift is not like the offense, he said. And here's where we move into the contrast. The gift is different from the offense and it's different in many ways.

And that's what we see in the verses that follow. And I'll just point them out to you. We'll just kind of walk through these. Verse 15, but the free gift is not like the offense.

For if by the one man's offense many died, that's Adam, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many, to many.

There's just all kinds of things to look at there. But what I want to point out is the contrast. And the contrast is that the one act of the one man named Jesus accomplished more than the one act life. Of the one man named Adam. Because through the one act of Jesus there's now more than just simply life. See, the one act that Adam committed brought death, but the one act that Jesus committed on the cross for us accomplished more than just reversing what Adam did.

[27:09] because he says it abounds, abounds more. It's more than just simply life. It's something far greater. The larger part of it we have not yet even experienced through the one act of the one man named Jesus accomplished upon that cross.

We get more than just life. An eternal life, but an abundance of life, not only here, but great and wondrous things beyond here that we cannot even begin to comprehend through the act of that one man.

Then in verse 16, and the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. Here again is another contrast. It's different.

For the judgment which came from the one offense resulted in condemnation. We were condemned because of the one act of the one man at that one time, that man named Adam, and his sin.

We're condemned, but the free gift which came from many offenses. What is that?

[28:34] The Adam, he committed one sin and man, that's it. Death has passed to all man.

Sin and death has passed to all humankind. Jesus performed the one act dying upon that cross and he did that for many offenses. offenses. So you see, Jesus, his one act is not just simply taking care of the one act of Adam.

All right, we're going to reverse that, take care of that, that thing that Adam did back there. But his was for the many offenses.

Limitless number of offenses, and it's resulting in justification. justification. Dear people, there is something infinitely more wonderful and greater about justification than just the reversal of the condemnation.

So, just like in verse 15, it's more than just life that's accomplished through the one act of Jesus on the cross. In verse 16, it's more than just an acquittal for the sin.

[29:57] An acquittal so that we are now spared from the condemnation. It is justification. And we've already talked about what justification is many times in our study of Romans.

It is God placing us in Christ in a sense that He now sees us as as though we had never sinned, as though we had always perfectly obeyed Him.

God sees us in that way. To the one act that Jesus did on the cross. Verse 18, another contrast, therefore, as through, excuse me, verse 17, I skipped one, for if by the one man's offense, or really it ought to be because of, if by that offense, or because of that offense, death reigned through the one, through the one Adam all the way through, much more those who receive abundance of the grace, of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, will reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. That's different. See, it's more than just a restoration back with God. It is that.

But there is a new position, a reigning with Jesus. See, by the one act of the one man upon the cross, more, more than what the one man did at that one time, there back there in the garden, Adam, more, much more, he says, than that.

[32 : 00] Much more. We reign in life through him. Verse 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.

All men in the sense of all who believe. believe. Okay, you say, well, it's not there in the text. There are two objections or two misconceptions that are leveled here or spring from this particular passage.

He's using all in the sense of it's just parallel with the all of the first part of the verse. But we know from scripture very clearly, in fact, just in Romans, we don't have to go beyond Romans to find out that salvation comes through those who believe.

Well, let me just give you some examples. Romans 1, 16. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation.

[33 : 15] For who? Everyone who believes. Everyone who believes. You can look at Romans chapter, let's see here. I don't think we have to go very far.

Chapter 3, verse 22. Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who do what? Believe.

Believe. For there is no difference. And in verse 28 of that same chapter, therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by what? By faith. Faith apart from the deeds of the law.

And in chapter 4 verse 5, but to him who does not work, but believes on him, believes on him, who justifies the ungodly. His faith is accounted to him or accounted for righteousness.

And in chapter 4 verse 13, for the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed, that's not it, oh yeah, to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

[34 : 21] Faith. So don't get hung up on him saying to all men that this free gift is to all. It's not teaching universalism here. But it's all who believe.

All who believe resulting in what? Justification of life. For as by one man's obedience, many were made sinners, so also by one man's obedience, or disobedience, many were made sinners, but also, so also by one man's obedience, many will be made righteous.

Righteous. see, more than just simply forgiven, but made righteous. You see, he is comparing the two, or contrasting the two, but they're different.

He's using Adam as the type, as the example, that if you have a hard time believing that Jesus could commit that one act upon that cross and accomplish eternal salvation for all those who believe, then just go back to Adam and see that very clearly Adam committed one act, one time, and through that one act at that one time brought death to all of mankind.

And then Jesus, the second Adam, commits his one act. And it's not just simply a bare reversal of what Adam did. It's much, much more than that.

[35 : 48] Much greater, and that was God's plan from the very beginning. And then verse 20 and 21 wrap this up. Moreover, the law entered that the offense might abound.

But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more. We could spend a lot of time talking about the purpose of the law, and this is a statement about the purpose of the law, that sin would abound. But where sin abounds, grace abounds much more. It's much more. So that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The reign of death, the reign of life. Adam, one sin, one time. Sin and death passes to all humankind.

And we had nothing to do with that. It was not our fault, but it passed to us. But then Jesus, the one act, one time, accomplished eternal life for all who believe, and it is totally grace.

[37:10] God's grace. And not just merely a reversal of what Adam did, but much, much more. More and beyond. More than we could comprehend here. Amen and amen. Amen. Amen.