

Romans 5:1-21 Adam the disobedient one – Jesus the Obedient One

To summarise chapters 1-4 so far:

- Jews and gentiles alike are under sin;
- Jews and gentiles both need justification (forgiveness);
- Justification is by faith in Jesus Christ who died for our sins;
- Justification is not by *works of the law* but by faith in Jesus Christ (we will discuss this further later);
- So gentiles have equal standing with God without being circumcised (becoming Jewish).

Chapter 5 begins, *Therefore since we have been justified by faith* (Romans 5:1). From this point on Paul is talking specifically to those who have been justified by faith in (i.e. converted to) Jesus. Although the chapter is a mine of theological gems I have chosen three points from this chapter.

1. The generosity of God

We see the generosity of God in creation. When God made the animals on the 5th day it says the oceans were *teeming* with life (Genesis 1:20). Then God provided abundant provision for human beings in the garden, *You may surely eat of every tree of the garden ...* (Genesis 2:16). There was one exception, but basically the garden was overflowing with signs of God's generosity and goodness.

We see this same kind of generosity in Romans 5, *God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.* (Romans 5:5). And, *See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!* (1John 3:1) As the hymn says, "Here is love, vast as the ocean, loving kindness as the flood."

In Romans 5:6 we see the full extent of His generosity, *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly* (Romans 5:6). To be *weak* here is to be without Christ. He died just at the right time in history, but he also came into our lives at just the right time, when we were lost and without a shepherd. If you feel lost, turn to Him!

We see His generosity in Romans 5:17, *much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ* (Romans 5:17). Can we measure *abundance of grace*? No! It is like a huge reservoir; it is like the 12 baskets of bread left over after the feeding of the 5000, with more than enough to go around.

Yet we are living in a suffering world of hunger, war and swaths of migrant people moving across the world trying to find their own Eden. Romans 5 is also realistic. For Christians suffering has a purpose (Romans 5:3-5). For all of us the root of suffering lies in the fact that sin has come into the world (Romans 5:12). That we live in a suffering world is all the more reason to preach the generosity of God. He is in the business of restoration, and one day He will restore all things when the kingdom comes.

2. Adam the disobedient one – Jesus the Obedient One

The generosity of God was seen in God giving His life for the world in Jesus (John 6:51). His atoning sacrifice is the cure for our sin. Romans 5:12-21 shows that where Adam failed Jesus succeeded. There was abundance in the Garden but also the possibility of evil. (Genesis 2:16) The main issue was obedience or disobedience to God. To be created in God's image means the ability to love; love always involves choice; so there had to be the possibility not to love for human beings to be authentically in God's image. I don't see that Genesis answers the question as to why God did it this way in the first place, even though the story relates powerfully to our human experience of choice and temptation and so on.

Even with ample provision, Adam gave in to the temptation, and thus *sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned* – (Romans 5:12). It's not clear

how death and sin spread. It's like an infection or genetic, though it's neither of those: somehow Adam's sin and its effect were passed on to all his offspring, the whole human race, *even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam* (Romans 5:14) – e.g. children.

But, *Adam was a type of the one who was to come* (Romans 5:14). Messiah was known as *he who was to come*. Messiah would be like Adam in that he would be a flesh and blood man – though note that Jesus obeyed in the “wilderness”, which shows that materialism isn't the answer. But Paul's main point is that like Adam, Messiah would be the representative Head of all His offspring (Romans 5:15-21). Adam, through his disobedience passed sin and death on to all his offspring. Jesus, through his obedience passed on righteousness and life to all his offspring, all who belong to Him (Romans 5:19).

We can appreciate the principle that our sin doesn't affect us alone. The sin of the Catholic priest who was imprisoned this week affected him, the children he abused, his family, his community, his church, and the whole of the catholic church. His sin is not passed on in the same way that Adam's sin was passed on. But we can see that our sin affects far more than only us (as do our good deeds.)

By virtue of natural birth we are *in Adam*, and Adam is our representative Head. By virtue of our second spiritual birth, we are *in Christ*, and Jesus Christ is our new representative Head. Jesus expressed considerable surprise that Nicodemus, a teacher in Israel, didn't recognise the need for new birth. Jesus told him, *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'* (John 3:5) To be born again isn't difficult. We just need to repent of our sins and put our trust in Him. It is by His obedience and faithfulness that we are justified.

3. The obedience of faith

Paul holds up Jesus as the Obedient One to show that as followers of Jesus the natural response is the obedience of faith. A good plan for any public speaking is to a) say what you are going to say, b) say it, and c) saying what you've said! It seems this is what Paul does in Romans. To summarise:

Paul, as Apostle to the gentiles, is writing to gentiles to teach them the obedience of faith (Romans 1:5)

Chapter 1-4 justification from sin – without which obedience of faith isn't possible

Chapter 5-8 the obedience of faith – the new way of the Spirit

Chapter 9-11 the obedience of faith – for gentiles in relation to stumbling Israel

Chapter 12-16 the obedience of faith – the practical outworking of all that's been taught

In the doxology, Paul summarises his purpose that all gentiles might come to the obedience of faith (Romans 16:26).

This indicates to me that “the obedience of faith” is the main theme of the book of Romans.

To conclude, God has deposited something uniquely special into humanity which we all share, called Life, the most precious gift. God breathed into Adam life with a capital L, Divine life, abundant life. But as soon as that Life was placed within human beings it was attacked by Satan who was *a murderer from the beginning* (John 8:44). Through disobedience that Life was squashed and mutilated, and became just physical existence with a small l. Life became simply about ‘my life’. But Jesus came to re-inflate us through new birth and being filled with His Spirit, as Adam was filled. But the change required takes nothing less than a Copernicus revolution on our hearts. We are created to rotate around Him and to partake in His Life. This means our disobedience needs to become obedience; our way needs to become His way. Put it like this. God has poured His love by His Spirit into our hearts. If this is true, the natural response will be to love Him in return (John 14:15, Deuteronomy 6:4). Obedience is really faith expressing itself through love (Galatians 5:6).