

ROMANS Part 47

Chapter 5:15-19



Greater Than Adam, Part 6

THOSE OBTAINING
THE SUPERABUNDANCE

But not as the offense, thus also the grace. For if, by the offense of the one, the many died, much rather the grace of God and the gratuity in grace, which is of the One Man, Jesus Christ, to the many superabounds. And not as through one act of sinning is the gratuity. For, indeed, the judgment is out of one into condemnation, yet the grace is out of many offenses into a just award.

For if, by the offense of the one, death reigns through the one, much rather, those obtaining the superabundance of grace and the gratuity of righteousness shall be reigning in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Consequently, then, as it was through one offense for all mankind for condemnation, thus also it is through one just award for all mankind for life's justifying. For even

as, through the disobedience of the one man, the many were constituted sinners, thus also, through the obedience of the One, the many shall be constituted just.

The “much rather” of verse 15, above, speaks of how the grace of Christ results in so much more than a mere restoration to Adam’s pre-sin state. Being that, it certainly outweighs the death introduced via the first man’s sin. The “many” who died through Adam are the same “many” to whom the grace superabounds. This is obviously everyone. It’s a simple statement. Only orthodox theology complicates it by trying to explain how Paul’s plain point doesn’t mean what it says. If the superabounding grace does not eventually cover every member of Adam’s progeny, then the “much rather” Paul uses to describe such a grace is not only mistaken, but meaningless.

Verse 16 pits the acts of Adam against the one act of Christ. The act of Christ wins—just so you know.

I’ll be getting to the other verses momentarily, but first I have a little something to say.

“JUST AWARD”

The translation “just award” in the *Concordant Literal New Testament*, is awkward and regrettable. It is a botch job of the Greek word *dikaïoma*, whose Greek elements are JUST-EFFECT. The definition is, “the result of a right standard.” This is the CLNT’s own definition. Notice the word “right” in the definition. It is right. Why not find a way to put your own definition into the context? Unaccountably, a version which prides itself on consistency translates the Greek root *dikai* two different ways: “just” and “righteous.” How about one way? If I want multiple translations of a single Greek work, I’ll read the King James Version. I vote for the one way, “righteous.”

I would like to know one more thing: what the hell is a “just award”? Okay, two things: where the hell did the word “award” come from? I know it’s in lightface type in the version, but it’s distracting. I would even go so far as to call it misleading. I would even go so far as to call it a mistake. “Award” and “effect” have nothing in common: an “award show” is not an “effect show,” is it? Heat is the effect of fire, not the award of it. “Award” is an unwelcome intruder in these passages. It is a turtle at a horse-jumping contest. I once witnessed an able teacher spend 45 minutes trying to explain the translation, “just award.” The man had to be sponged down halfway through his talk. Instead of teachers sweating to explain this translation (as I am doing here), how much better to have translated *dikaioma* correctly (and sensibly) in the first place? Had this word been correctly translated, I could be eating lunch by now.

Dikaioma is the effect of a righteous act or standard. Call me crazy, but why not translate this word, “righteous effect”? This translation fits all ten contexts where the word *dikaioma* appears. In verse 16, then, the grace of Christ has a “righteous effect” rather than a “just award.” In verse 18, one “righteous effect” justifies all mankind. (God only knows what one “just award” would do, or even what it is.)

THE REST OF THE VERSES

Verse 18 speaks of the evil effect of Adam’s one sin, and the righteous effect of Christ’s death for the sake of humanity. The subject of both effects is “all mankind.” The “all mankind” that is affected by the sin of Adam is the same “all mankind” affected by the righteous act of Christ. If it’s not the same “all mankind,” then Paul’s connecting phrase, “thus also” is once again not only mistaken, but meaningless. The effect of Adam’s one offense is: condemnation. The effect of Christ’s death on the cross is: righteousness.

Verse 19 discusses the designation of one who has been condemned by Adam, and then subsequently justified by Christ. (If you have to call such a person a name, what would it be?) A condemned person is considered to be “a sinner.” A justified person is considered to be “just.” (Once again, the Greek root *dikai* appears here, so why not just make it “righteous”? Even though “just” and “righteous” are basically the same, “righteous” contains the root word “right,” which is elegant in its simplicity: “You’re right!”) If Adam condemns me, I’m a sinner. But if Christ “righteousness-es” me (justifies me), then I’m

right. To sin means, “to miss the mark.” The opposite of missing the mark is hitting it. To miss is wrong, but to hit is right. Adam looks at me and says, “You’re wrong.” Christ looks at me and says, “You’re right.” I’m the same person, doing the same things. Who am I going to believe? I will believe both of them. Whose word is the latest word concerning me? Christ’s. Christ is greater than Adam. Therefore, I will go with Christ’s word con-



**“Adam looks at me and says,
‘You’re wrong.’ Christ looks
at me and says, ‘You’re right.’
I’ll go with Christ.”**

cerning me and leave Adam and his ancient aspersions to the history books.

The reason Paul writes “all mankind” in verse 18, and “the many” in verse 19, is because Adam himself is included in verse 18 as one of the people condemned by his own offense (“through one offense for all mankind for condemnation”), whereas in verse 19, Adam is identified personally as the channel of the curse (“through the disobedience of the one man, the many were constituted sinners”), and as such is excluded from the result of his actions. It’s not that he did not also become a sinner with us, but that he alone channeled the curse;

only in this sense is he excluded from the result. (The same sense occurs with “the many” of verse 15).

Behold the accuracy of Scripture. Adam was not “constituted” a sinner. The man just flat-out sinned, and that made him a sinner. The sentence needn’t have been pronounced from without. God didn’t have to say, “thou art a sinner, Adam,” or, “I constitute thee a sinner.” The rest of us are “constituted sinners,” not because of what we do (though we obviously do stuff), but because of the mortality streaming through our veins through Adam. Adam placed us in sin’s way, via mortality. Without him, it wouldn’t have befallen us. So “the many” here refers to everyone except Adam. Just as Christ, as the channel of blessing to the rest (verse 19), is excepted from those who are constituted just, so Adam, as the channel of curse to the rest (also verse 19), is excepted from those who are constituted sinners. Those who try to make “the many” of verse 19 mean that not all humanity will be saved (“It’s only ‘many,’ not ‘all!’” they postulate) have not only to reckon with the “all mankind” of verse 18, but, to be consistent, must include Christ as One Who was “constituted just”—as though He were not that way before.

The “all mankind” of verse 18 includes everyone except Christ. The “many” of verse 19 includes everyone except Adam and Christ, as they are the channels that respectively affect “the many.”

To review:

VERSE 15: The grace of Christ more than restores what was lost to the race through Adam.

VERSE 16: The act of Adam is pitted against the act of Christ: Christ wins.

VERSE 18: The same “all mankind” affected by Adam’s act, is affected by Christ’s act.

VERSE 19: All mankind are made sinners in Adam; the same all will be made righteous through Christ.

I have thus far purposely omitted verse 17. This is because verse 17 is different from verses 15, 16, 18, and 19—as different as these verses are from one another. Some critics of the truth of the salvation of all humanity will point to verse 17 to claim that, since this verse specifically concerns those who believe now, then the rest of the verses of this passage cannot be used to prove the eventual justification of all humanity.

I trust that by this time you can easily spot the fallacy of this argument. To claim that what Paul says in verse 17 disproves the other verses of the passage is like trying

to prove that, because I have a nose, therefore I don’t have a mouth. Romans 3:22 says that the righteousness of God through Jesus Christ’s faith is “for all, and on all who are believing.” Does this verse prove that God’s righteousness is for all, or does it prove that it is only on all who are believing? The verse proves both things. A single verse can very well say two different things; not contradictory things, but different things. God’s Word complements itself, without contradicting. God’s righteousness *is* for all—eventually. But right now, it is only *on* those who are believing.

Our verses from Romans chapter 5 could be considered an elaboration of Romans 3:22—the “for all” part of Romans 3:22 is elaborated upon in Romans 5:15, 16, and 18, 19; the “on all who are believing” part of Romans 3:22 is elaborated upon in Romans 5:17. Let’s look at that verse now.

“REIGNING IN LIFE”

“For if, by the offense of the one, death reigns through the one, much rather, those obtaining the superabundance of grace and the gratuity of righteousness shall be reigning in life through the One, Jesus Christ.”

Paul is talking now (in verse 17 only) about believers. The subjects of this verse are not all humanity, but “those obtaining the superabundance of grace and the gratuity of righteousness.” How do I know? Because these “shall be reigning in life through the One, Jesus Christ.”

Last week I told you that the “especially” salvation enjoyed by believers in 1 Timothy 4:10 gives believers more in Christ, and sooner, than the rest of humanity. The example I gave was the tickets to the Billy Joel/Elton John concert. Everyone I buy tickets for gets into the concert, but only my special friends meet the musicians two days ahead of time and help them prepare the show. Not all humanity reigns with Christ during the two future eons. Some of humanity will not even live with Christ until the eons are consummated (1 Corinthians 15:26-28). Not even all believers will reign with Christ, let alone all humanity. 2 Timothy 2:11-13 says,

Faithful is the saying: “For if we died together, we shall be living together also; if we are enduring, we shall be reigning together also; if we are disowning, He also will be disowning us; if we are disbelieving, He is remaining faithful—He cannot disown Himself.”

At Christ's appearing, all members of His body will automatically live together with Him, for they died together with Him (Romans 6:5). Only those enduring suffering for His sake, will reign. "Reigning in life," therefore, cannot refer to the mass of humanity saved at the consummation of the eons.

Am I sure we are not "reigning in life" now? Couldn't the life referred to here be the present one? Please. If, for some reason, you think that "reigning in life" means *this* life, please invite me over to your house so I can



see how you reign. There is a line in the Beatles song "Lady Madonna" that says, "... see how they run." I want to come over to your place and see how you reign. No. This is not the day of our reigning, but rather of our humiliation. We are subject to everything now: local government; national government; our bosses; our families; our own mortality; what we ate for dinner—we are subject even to Satan himself, for he is "the god of this eon" (2 Corinthians 4:4). When you are reigning in life, you won't have to look in the mirror and wonder if you are reigning in life. The universe will be at your feet.

A NEW APPLICATION OF "MUCH RATHER"

It is a superabundance of grace and righteousness, indeed, that would cause a gaggle of losers like us to reign with Christ in the upcoming eons. See how Paul borrows the "much rather" and "superabounds" from verse 15—employed there to describe the superiority of grace over offense for all humanity—and uses these words to describe our specific call. It's as though, while describing the gratuity come upon all humanity, Paul wants us to remember what is especially for us. It's his same concern in Romans 3:22.

While elaborating upon the "for all" there, he calls out those upon whom God's righteousness now resides.

To the degree that the grace of Christ overwhelms Adam's offense, thus does our special calling overwhelm even the salvation of all humanity.

As a side-note, I like Paul's use of the word "obtain" here, as in, "those obtaining the superabundance of grace." We who have this blessing did not invent it. Absolutely speaking, we did not earn it. One day we woke up and it was revealed to us. One day, God hit the light switch, making us aware that we had been designated beforehand for the place of a son (Ephesians 1:4). Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 4:7—

Now what have you which you did not obtain?
Now if you obtained it also, why are you boasting as though not obtaining?

Is there anything you have that you did not obtain, that is, get from God? No, not one thing, for "God gives to all, life and breath and all" (Acts 17:25). Our superabundant life in Him is, absolutely speaking, just as much an act of grace as is the superiority of grace itself over Adam's offense.

THE STRUCTURE

While studying these passages in detail, I noticed an inspired structure. Consider this:

VERSE 15: The grace of Christ more than restores what was lost to the race through Adam.

VERSE 16: The act of Adam is pitted against the act of Christ: Christ wins.

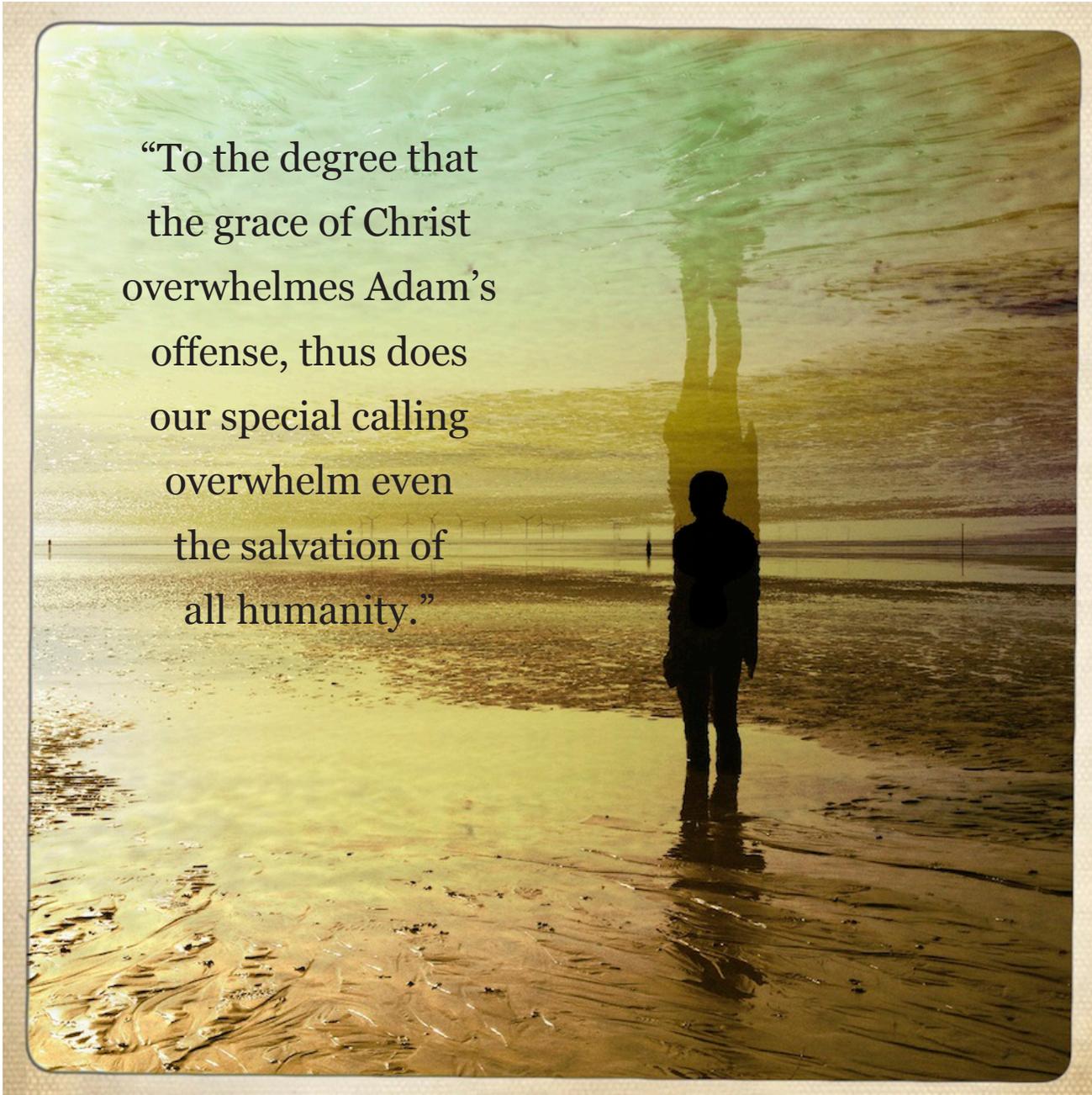
VERSE 17: Our reigning with Christ is as superabundant as the grace overwhelming Adam's offense.

VERSE 18: The same "all mankind" affected by Adam's act is affected by Christ's act.

VERSE 19: All mankind is made sinners in Adam; the same all will be made righteous through Christ.

In this structure, called an Introversion, the themes of grace and offense are considered first in their race-wide application, and then on an individual basis; first in theory (if you will), and then in action. The middle verse, verse 17, begins the individual application, for we are the firstborn in Christ.

Refer to the structure above. Verse 15 and 19 correspond in the following manner: Verse 15 describes the



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race-wide result of the superiority of grace over offense, while verse 19 details the way this blessing affects individuals. Verse 16 and 18 become more specific yet, and correspond in the following manner: In verse 16, the acts of Adam duel the acts of Christ: Christ wins. In verse 18, Paul briefly describes how these respective acts turn individuals from wrong to right. Nothing becomes personal and individual until Paul mentions our specific call in verse 17, and why not: the justification of all humanity begins with us, for we are the firstborn of Christ’s resurrection, having a prior expectation in Him (Ephesians 1:12).

Romans 5:15-19 precisely details the many ways in which the sacrifice of Christ exceeds Adam’s offense. Such grace not only saves all humanity, but lavishes upon believers an expectation far exceeding even that of those “merely” living forever with God. If the single bite of a piece of fruit could ever excel in consequence God’s Son suffering and dying upon a Roman stake, only then could any of our race even possibly escape the loving embrace of so powerful a Savior. —MZ

(To be continued.)

Produced by Martin Zender/www.martinzender.com
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email: mzender@martinzender.com

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