

Intro:

Have you ever seen those Russian dolls that you open up and find another doll inside? And then you open up the next doll and find another ... and another, and another, and another?

That is something like what our text in Romans 5 is doing for us.

Perhaps a better metaphor would be a picture that is printed on folded paper. As you unfold it, you have the same picture, but it is so cleverly designed that more and more detail and beauty is seen with each unfolding. The whole picture, when completely unfolded is more beautiful than the original little folded picture could possibly be ... but is still the one and same picture.

That is what we are seeing unfold before us in the statements of contrast we are seeing in Rm 5.15-17.

I have given our message this title:

Abundant Grace, Abundant Righteousness, Abundant LIFE

These are the ‘three folds’ of this picture of how much better the work of Christ is when it is *contrasted* with the work of Adam.

Our passage today, v. 17, sums up the content of the previous two verses — in an interesting way — and adds one crowning detail to the whole picture.

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When we consider the theological details we are talking about, repeating, making much of ... I think one could well ask the question, *What does all this theology matter?*

What does it matter for us to know these things? What difference does it make in our lives?

Let’s consider a wider view of Romans:

1. We are convinced in Rm 1-3 of the utter depth and depravity of our sinful humanity: as in Adam all die
2. We have revealed in Rm 3.21-5.11 the amazing reversal of our condition available by faith alone – justification by faith: so in Christ are all made alive.
3. And now we are in this incredibly detailed contrast and comparison of the work of Adam and the work of Christ, Rm 5.12-21.
4. And next we will turn to the ‘so what’ section — the ‘how should we then live’ section, Rm 6-8.

The theology of salvation matters because the more we understand the profound work of God on our behalf, the more we will be energized to live as we have been enabled by salvation, to live yielded to God and to live refusing to yield ourselves to sin.

Read Rm 5.12-17

**Proposition:** The free gift of salvation grants power for living the resurrection life to whoever will receive it.

## I. The reign of death (review)

A. We have been contrasting ‘the one’ throughout this section

1. The one man (12 — 13-14 a parenthesis)
2. The free gift is not like the transgression [contrasting two ‘things’, not men (header over vv. 15-17)
  - a. The transgression of the one man contrasted with the gift by the grace of the One Man (15)
  - b. The gift not like that which came from the one man who sinned (the gift vs. the one transgression) (16)
  - c. The transgression of the one *man* vs. the things that come from the One, Jesus Christ (17)

In v. 17, ‘the one’ refers to Adam, which brings us back into connection with v. 12

B. A description of the reign of death:

“I traveled around this world from west to east, beginning from Chicago. As we went eastward to the older parts of the States, we saw the stones thicker and thicker in the cemeteries. Then in England and Scotland, still more cemeteries, with still more monuments to the reign of death. But when we got out to old China, I was literally appalled at the number of the tombs and the coffins! Surely *death has reigned*, through Adam!”<sup>1</sup>

C. The ‘mediacy’ of Adam

1. ‘Mediacy’ a word brought to us by one of my commentators, John Murray

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<sup>1</sup> William R. Newell, *Romans Verse by Verse*, p. 186.

To mediate by “exhibiting indirect causation, connection, or relation”<sup>2</sup>

2. Our text says death reigned:

- a. ‘by one man’s offence’ [KJV]; ‘by the transgression of one’ [NAU], and...
- b. ‘by one’ [KJV]; ‘through the one’ [NAU]

In other words, it isn’t just the act of Adam that brought about the reign of death, it is as if Adam stands between men and God, mediating (dispensing) death for every one of his descendants.

D. A concise summary or review of v. 12

## II. The abundance of grace received

A. Another ‘much more’ point

- 1. My commentaries call this an *a fortiori* argument
- 2. I looked that up recently to figure out what it meant
- 3. It means: ‘from strength’
- 4. In logic, it means that we start with a strong argument, preferably one that is immediately recognized by everyone
  - a. In this case, it goes without question that death came from Adam
  - b. Paul proved it in vv. 12-14, and has proved it in ch. 1-3

The argument goes this way: Since death reigns, much more shall something else reign — in this case it is the reign of life.

But there is first an important distinction

B. The ‘much more’ is applied to a particular set of people

- 1. The verb connected to ‘much more’ is ‘shall reign’

<sup>2</sup> Merriam-Webster, Inc. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. Eleventh ed. Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003.

2. The subject of the verb is a long complicated clause
  - a. KJV: “they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness”
  - b. Lit.: ‘The ones the abundance of the grace and of the gift of the righteousness receiving’
3. Let’s simplify it:
  - a. Basic subject: ‘the ones receiving will reign’
    - 1) ‘ones receiving’ = a participle acting as the subject of the verb
    - 2) Question: *the ones receiving what?*
    - 3) Answer: *the ones receiving the abundance*: ‘the abundance’ is the direct object of the participle [for those keeping score in the grammar competition]
  - b. Compound subject: *the ones receiving the abundance* of what?
    - 1) The abundance of the grace = v. 15 [which includes justification by faith and all the blessings of 5.1-11]  
AND
    - 2) The abundance of the gift of the righteousness = v. 16 [which is a sentence of righteousness declared over against a backdrop of many, many sins – past, present and future]
  - c. Who are the people included in this subject? The ones *receiving* these things
    - 1) This verse militates against a universalist interpretation in the passage
    - 2) The statement limits the reign to those who have received the abundant blessings
    - 3) How are those blessings received? Through faith like Abraham’s, see Rm 4

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| Sum up: |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Death reigned through the one, Adam</li><li>• The ones receiving the abundance will reign in life through the one, Christ</li></ul> |
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One of my commentaries says there is a difference here, one I think that should be noted before we move on:

- “This [compound subject] underscores an important difference between the reigns of death and life. The former has the character of fate ... The reign of life, on the other hand, is experienced through choice and personal decision; it is for those who ‘receive’ the gift.”<sup>3</sup>

But now, what is the reign of life and when does it happen

### III. The reign of life realized

#### A. The meaning of the future tense

##### 1. Many link this ‘reigning’ with the future and the end times

a. There is such a thing as people who will reign with Christ during the millennium (Rev 20.6)

1) They are those who have part in the first resurrection

2) On these the second death has no power (second death = being cast into the lake of fire: the end of the reign of death, Rev 20.11-15)

3) Some of those who reign with Christ are described in Rev 20.4

a) Beheaded for Christ and the Word of God

b) Did not worship the beast

c) Did not receive the mark of the beast

Clearly these are people who received the abundance.

b. The term life is not qualified in our text

1) No article: not ‘the life’

2) No adjective or other qualifier

a) Not ‘the life to come’

b) Not ‘eternal life’

<sup>3</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 340.

- c. Some commentators suggest a 'logical future' here
- 1) Before a person becomes a believer, death reigns over him
    - a) It is his destiny mediated to him through Adam
    - b) It is the terror he seeks to avoid by almost every possible means
    - c) It is the enemy to which he must inevitably succumb, no matter what he does to avoid it
  - 2) But if a person will receive the abundance, *he will reign in life*

John Newton in *Amazing Grace* gave us some lines that illustrate this:

I once was lost [reign of death], but now am found  
[I'm reigning in life]

Was blind [reign of death], but now I see [I'm  
reigning in life]

Well, let's think about what this means...

## B. The meaning of the content

1. The fourth stanza of *Amazing Grace* describes the whole idea:

The Lord has promised good to me,  
His Word my hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be  
As long as life endures.

- a. There is a secured hope that is future
  - b. There is a shielded life that is real now
2. The reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ, is the victory the believer (the possessor of the abundance) has right now as he turns from sin and turns to God
- a. This phrase anticipates the glories to come in Rm 6, the saint yielding to God and refusing to yield to sin
  - b. This phrase anticipates the victory that comes in Rm 7, where the depressed and struggling saint looks for the victory over his sin and finds it in Christ

- c. This phrase anticipates the promise of Rm 8, where there is no more condemnation, but the working of the Spirit to bring us all to heaven, conquerors in and by the love of God

## Conclusion:

I remember talking to some young fellows a long time ago about Christianity. One fellow said to me, “I can’t become a Christian because I’m afraid I can’t live the life.”

It isn’t about you living the life!

It’s about you receiving the abundance!

- The abundance of grace
- The abundance of the gift of righteousness

And then, through Christ, you simply reign – you rule! – in this life over sin as you follow him.

**Proposition:** The free gift of salvation grants power for living the resurrection life to whoever will receive it.

And... you *will* reign with Him when he returns.