

Intro:

Last Sunday I said I thought I would do a bit of a review message for us this week since I will be gone for two Sunday's I want to keep verses 18-21 all together as one unit as we conclude the chapter and the section on the doctrine of salvation.

In reviewing today, I am not going to strictly be repeating the argument of these verses, I have been highlighting that step by step as we go through the passage and will likely do that again as we pick it up again on my return.

But by way of a review message today, I thought I would do something to highlight the magnificence of God's grace to us in salvation. The idea came to me after reading an essay in one of my commentaries that was placed at the end of the comments on chapter 5.

What I want to do is pull out two ideas from our passage of contrast and comparison and lay them side by side for you.

The first idea is the idea of sin.

As we go through the passage, we find that the cause and effects of sin from Adam to all men is a major idea in the passage.

I am not sure if you really picked up on what I want to emphasize today, but as we went through, Paul uses several different Greek words for sin. (5 to be exact)

I want to highlight those words and point out an emphasis the Bible makes that we often overlook or minimize.

The second idea is the idea of the gift of God:

We find that in contrast to the just sentence due to sin, God instead has made available to man a gift in place of judgement.

The emphasis on the gift is almost as complete as the emphasis on sin in this passage and Paul also uses several different words to describe the gift. (4 of them)

The variety of terms used in this compact passage seem to suggest that Paul is trying to fill out completely the meaning of these two ideas in making the contrast and comparison throughout the passage.

In the end, if we pull these two concepts out and lay them side by side, we are going to see the magnificence of God's grace to us in saving us from sin.

Read Rm 5.12-21

Proposition: If we tell ourselves (and God) the truth about our sin, the magnitude of his grace and gift will shine all the greater.

I. Identifying the components of a dual portrait

A. Words for sin in Rm 5:

1. ἀμαρτία: n. missing the mark - vv. 12, 13, 20, 21
2. ἀμαρτάνω: v. missing the mark - vv. 12, 14, 16
3. παράβασις: a stepping out of bounds - v. 14
4. παράπτωμα: a slip or fall alongside the right way - v. 15, 16, 17, 18, 20
5. παρακοή: hearing something beside what is being said, ‘mis-hearing’ - v. 19

B. Words for gift in Rm 5:

1. χάρισμα: a gift from grace, a grace-gift - v. 15, 16
2. χάρις: beautiful kindness - v. 2, 15, 17, 20, 21
3. δωρεά: formal endowment, an award - v. 15, 17
4. δώρημα: a gift, bestowment - v. 16

II. Accentuating the Biblical understanding of sin

A. The human understanding of sin woefully inadequate

1. The Greek terms minimize sin
 - a. ‘missing the mark’
 - b. ‘stepping out of bounds’
 - c. ‘slipping or falling along the way’
 - d. ‘mis-hearing’
2. Our terms minimize sin
 - a. It was a ‘mistake’
 - b. It was a ‘little white lie’
 - c. I’m just ‘borrowing it’

Pastor Herring: ‘Would you rather I owed you for life or I beat you out of it?’

B. The contrast between human understanding and Biblical understanding

1. The Greek usage of ἀμαρτία contrasted with the Biblical usage

- a. Hebrew word often translated by this term has same root meaning, ‘miss the mark’
- 1) Both words have a “higher and a lower meaning”¹
 - 2) “The higher meaning belongs to the sphere of religion.”²

b. Classical Greek

- 1) “Common enough in the lighter senses of ‘missing an aim,’ or ‘error in judgement or opinion’;
- 2) “in the graver sense of serious wrong-doing they are rare”³

2. Biblical usage

- a. Nearly always used in the context of a wrong done before God

Story of Joseph: “how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” Gen 39.9

- b. The sense of serious wrong-doing is at the forefront

^{KJV} **Ps 51.4** Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.

^{KJV} **Ezek 18.4** Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

“It is impossible to have an adequate conception of sin without an adequate conception of God.”

- The Greeks had no adequate conception of God.
- Our culture has no adequate conception of God.

We saw someone talking on television recently about a young man who killed someone and got a life sentence. This guy said, “Well, whenever you see something like this, it means that someone failed this kid somewhere along the line. The community failed, his family failed...” and so on.

¹ William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, p. 144.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

- Our society sees sin only in terms of ‘failure’ between individuals.
- We don’t see sin in terms of an offense to a holy God.

Unfortunately, as Christians, we often use weasel words about sin ourselves.

- I made a mistake
- I messed up
- Oops...

We usually say these things when we are caught...

Let’s call sin what it is, let’s not mince words.

C. The power behind these terms

1. The two-part internal power (barely implied by our passage, but essential to our understanding)

- The focus on our passage is on the sentence of death that comes from the one sin and the first sinner
- The power of sin is implied in two verses:
 - Verse 16: the many transgressions (not just one transgression)
 - Verse 19: ‘many were made sinners’

a. The corrupted human nature inherited from Adam

- 1) Displayed in illicit (unlawful) desires – lusts
- 2) These desires come from the heart (Rm 1.24; *cf.* Mt 15.11, 18-20)
- 3) Confronted by the law (Rm 7.7-8)

The inner man is full of lusts, full of desires, which make sin appear wholesome, inviting, satisfying.

But it is more than just the desires that brings about sin, it includes also...

- b. The complicit human will exercised by the individual (Rm 7.14-19)
- 1) Even in a man who has infused the desires to do good (a born again man) these desires are present *and*
 - 2) He *will* do what he *would not* [*i.e.*, in his spirit, he *would not*, in his flesh he *would*]
2. The external power of the sin principle, a personification of sin
- a. Sin entered the world through Adam (5.12)
 - b. Sin can reign even in the believer's body (6.12-13)
 - c. Sin misuses the law and deceives me (7.11)
 - d. Sin dwells in me (7.20)
 - e. And several other references...

When Adam sinned, this power was unleashed in the world – sin came into the world...

- Why does Paul describe it as if it were a thing in itself, something with power over men? Over me?
- Is he giving us a little bit of an out? It isn't really my fault, "The devil made me do it"?

No, he is describing the way our desires seem to have power over us and enslave us so that we can completely disregard the will of God in order to get what we want.

- John closes 1 John with these words: "Little children, guard yourselves from idols." (1 Jn 5.21)

What are idols? The personifications, the embodiments of our desires.

- The ancient pagans desired good crops: they had a grain god and a rain god and a sun god and even fertility gods.
- The ancient pagans desired the rush that comes from various kinds of self-indulgence: they had a wine god and a sex god ... many of them ... and they worshipped by fulfilling these desires.

So when you have a desire that dominates you, along comes the Law in some way, and someone says, No, you can't fulfil that desire that way.

- And you will change the orders a little bit, and 'miss the mark'
- Or you will just 'step over the line' because your desire is so strong
- And you may find yourself slipping and falling even further than you thought you would because you have transgressed.

Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

III. Realizing the magnitude of God's gift

A. Contrasted with the words of sin are the words for the gift

1. χάρισμα: a gift from grace, a grace-gift - v. 15, 16
2. χάρις: beautiful kindness - v. 2, 15, 17, 20, 21
3. δωρεά: formal endowment, an award - v. 15, 17
4. δώρημα: a gift, bestowment - v. 16

The beauty of a gift is that you don't need to do anything to get it. It's a gift. You just receive it, in the language of v. 17.

B. The nature of God's gift

1. The gift is righteousness (16, 18-19)
 - a. No native righteousness
 - b. All imported righteousness

There are plants and animals that people have transplanted from one area to another. Not native, they also have no native predators, and often can really upset the balance in a new area, and just spread like wildfire and can dominate the new place. (e.g., scotch broom on Vancouver Island)

Notice the language of v. 19: by the obedience of one, many are *made* righteous.

- We see this when we see a soul do an unnatural thing, display genuine righteousness and godliness.
- It can be something as simple as taking delight in the Word of God and what it says (delight to be in church, delight in reading the Bible, delight in submitting to God's will revealed in His word, even when it seems costly or even nonsensical).
- It can be something as profound as suffering persecution quietly and meekly all for the name of Christ.

2. The gift is life (17, 18)

- a. Life in this life
- b. Life in the day of wrath (Rm 5.9-10)

3. The gift is the very obedience of Christ in keeping the Law and the commands of the Father.

- a. I can't keep the demands of the Law
- b. Christ kept them for me
- c. I was in Adam, dead and disobedient
- d. I am in Christ, alive and obedient in Him

Conclusion:

Proposition: If we tell ourselves (and God) the truth about our sin, the magnitude of his grace and gift will shine all the greater.

Remember this quote? "It is impossible to have an adequate conception of sin without an adequate conception of God."

Let me add to that... It is impossible to have an adequate conception of God's great gifts without an adequate conception of our sin and our God who overcame our sin.

Will you love God today, and determine to serve him with your whole heart?