

God in Redemption

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(1873-1960)

"Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." ~ Romans 5:18-21

The closing verses of Romans 5 have been the standing perplexity of theologians. Yet nowhere has the Holy Spirit written for our learning plainer conclusions, and never has tradition been blinder than in the treatment of this magnificent passage. Believe the passage as it stands, and the divine logic is irresistible.

It contains a comparison between the first and the last Adam. What the first Adam was, and is, to the whole human race, the last Adam is, and will be also, to the whole human race.

"Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Romans 5:18).

There follows a reiteration of the comparison with its Divine logic, so that the fact might be stated again, not only as a climax in the purpose of redemption, but as a future goal in the history of the working out of the redemption of all men.

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:19).

The company of the righteous is identical in person and number with the company of the sinners to which the passage refers.

So that we have two phrases in these two verses, by which we can establish beyond question the identity of those under discussion. These two phrases are “*all men*,” and the “*many*.” Of this company it is declared in the first place, that “*all men*” and the “*many*” were made sinners and come into condemnation; and in the second place, that “*all men*” and the “*many*” will be made righteous, not simply saved but made righteous.

If this plain simple language – and God could not have made it plainer – does not mean what it says, but infers something quite the opposite, so that the comparison used is not a true one, then we may well pause to ask how ever it came about that on such a subject, and at such a climax in his argument, Paul did not tell us exactly what he meant.

If he meant that all men would be influenced by Adam’s sin hopelessly and completely, but only some of the race would be affected actually by Christ’s cross, here was the place to make this difference once and for all clear. Instead, however, he uses universal terms, and logical comparisons, which, if the last suggestion is true, are not only bewildering but positively untrue, without the faintest hint to the contrary.

The apostle does more than this. He introduces a vivid contrast.

*“But **not as** the offence, **so also** is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many”* (Romans 5:15).

Let the reader note that the contrast here is in an absolutely opposite direction to the conclusions of ordinary theology. Most of us were taught that there was such a contrast between the effect of Adam’s sin and Christ’s righteousness that by the fall all were lost, and by the Cross some would be saved. The contrast here in verse 15 is the direct opposite of this conclusion. It is between the effect of the acts of the two Adams, and is such a contrast that the grace of God hath “***much more ... abounded***” in the Cross over the act of the first Adam.

If a human act was effectual for ruin, how much more shall a Divine act be effectual for salvation? The Apostle repeats this contrast later in the closing verse of the argument, when he sums up with the words, “*where sin abounded grace did **much more abound***.”

It is incomprehensible that such reckless language would have been chosen, if the Apostle did not mean just what the words declare; especially in the entire absence of any modifying or cautionary phrases.

The compound word here implies, “not only abounding,” that is, bursting forth round about; round about all ages, round about all nations, round about all sorts: but “superabounding” – that surrounding all those rounds, and with surplus and advantage over-flowing all: not only abounding grace, abounding unto all, to the whole world, but grace superabounding: that is, if there were other worlds, grace would bring salvation even unto them. (Dr. Clarke).

The argument reveals the principle upon which God is working out His purpose with the hu-

man race. It declares that the principle upon which God is working to the redemption of all is the same principle by which the universal fall of man came about. Through one man's sin the whole race was involved surely and hopelessly. Adam's offence did not merely make it possible for men to sin and merit condemnation, it made it *impossible* for them to do otherwise.

Through another Man's righteousness therefore, even the Man of Calvary, the human race was saved, as through Adam it was lost. And as all men, born or yet unborn, will not escape the contamination and condemnation of that act of sin in Eden, so to all men there will eventually come the blessed results of that act upon Calvary.

When we catch the thought of the two federal headships, the logical issue is so clear that the statement of the fact of redemption being co-extensive with the fall in its reach and results is so evident in the passage that faith leaps to appropriate the truth.

The subject of the federal headship of Adam and Christ has been put so clearly by D.M. Pantou that we cannot do better than quote at length from his pen:

“So the Holy Ghost says: ‘*By one man*’ – the fountain of human blood; the sample man, because no man can deny that he too would have acted exactly as Adam did – ‘*sin entered into the world, and death by sin;*’ entered, for both sin and death are for ever aliens in the universe of God; and so death passed unto all men ‘*for that all have sinned*’ (Romans 5:12) in Eden.

“When God made Adam He made all men; for the race is no aggregate of isolated and independent units, but an entity of organic and dependent generations: and, since God made of ‘*one blood*’ all the nations of men, sin introduced anywhere is sin introduced everywhere. The fall of Adam was the fall of souls at this moment not yet born; and the fact of their sinning, when born, will for ever prove the truth of the doctrine.

“Upon this organic fall of all in the one God builds the whole structure of redemption; for He takes this very principle of solidarity, which was our ruin, and makes that solidarity the organ of the world's salvation. ‘*For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners*’ – sinners by a representative act, sinners by a fouled nature inherited, sinners ourselves by active choice – ‘**even so**’ – God taking the solidarity which ruined as the solidarity which shall redeem – ‘*by the obedience of the One shall many be made righteous.*’

“The helpless fall of the race into death through the act of a lonely man is countered by a helpless salvation for the entire race wrought by a Man as lonely and unique. That is, God incarnate in human flesh, the Second Man, is so organically one with the race as a race – so the Son of man, not a son of man – that His righteousness is imputed to all as actually and as really as is Adam's sin. The first Adam was the federal head of the race; the last Adam is equally the federal head of the race; the first Adam, the law-breaker, is replaced by the last Adam, the law-fulfiller: the first man acted for all mankind, and plunged the world into ruin; the Second Man acted for all mankind, and lifted the World into salvation: Adam was the author of death to all: Christ is the author of life for all.

“The Holy Ghost says: ‘*by the offence of one*’ – for however often Adam sinned afterwards, we fell only by one act that introduced sin itself – ‘*judgment came upon all men to condemnation; **even so***’ – God turning solidarity, the organ of condemnation, into solidarity, the organ of grace – ‘*by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.*’ As Adam ruined us through sin foreign to us, without our fault; so Christ has saved us with righteousness foreign to us, without our merit: and the Holy Spirit thus rests our entire redemption on the historical, actual, personal fall of the first man countered by the historical, actual, personal death and resurrection of the Second Man.

“So, as one man condemns all, the Other justifies all; and both these acts are completely finished in Adam and Christ ... As we were lost in Adam six thousand years before we were born, so we were saved by Christ two thousand years before our birth. We are as helpless in our salvation as we were in our fall.”

The difficulties in the way of the acceptance of the literal interpretation of this passage owe their existence to the following reasons, amongst others:

1. The innate tendency of the human mind to choose the lesser ideal of God.

Instead of modifying the negative passages by those that affirm a redemption co-extensive with the fall, the human mind has persistently preferred the opposite method, and modified this great passage. The first thing to be removed, before the altered perspective of the Divine ultimate is accepted is this tendency to gauge God by His attributes of justice and righteousness, rather than by His nature which is Love. The former are not sacrificed to the latter, but are means by which love realizes its goal.

2. The confusion of the process of salvation with the goal.

All the dread warnings and threatened judgments of the New Testament have to do with the process by which the goal is reached. The administration of redemption is in the hands of the Son of God. Into His hands the Father has delivered all things (John 3:35). The failure to see this has resulted in those activities of Christ, as Judge of mankind, being projected into eternity, instead of being kept within the bounds of His kingdom, which is strictly in time and will be delivered up to the Father at the end of time.

3. The confusion of the special salvation of this age with the general salvation of all men, to which God equally pledges Himself in His Word.

“*He is the Savior of the Body*” (Ephesians 5:23). He is also the “*the Savior of the world*” (John 4:42; I John 4:14; I Timothy 4:10). These two distinct functions were present to the Lord’s own mind when He affirmed the certainty that “*All that the Father giveth Me **shall come to Me,***” and with equal certainty declared that “*I, if I be lifted up from the earth **will draw all men unto Me.***”

That first company are being thus drawn by wondrous ways of grace from all classes and out

of all conditions of men under circumstances that reveal the sovereignty of God that lies back of their salvation, the Saviour deliberately limited to the Father's will and choice. "No man can come unto Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him."

It was given to Paul in particular to unfold in his epistles this twin truth. He boldly declares that in the dispensation of the fullness of times God will gather together in one all things in Christ, and that we in this age who have "**first** trusted in Christ," have by sovereign grace been "predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Ephesians 1:9-12).

The same double issue of the Cross is again presented in the Colossian epistle. The definite undertaking to fully reconcile all things eventually by means of that Cross, is given side by side with the earnest of it in the actual reconciliation of the believers of this age.

*"And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet **now** hath He reconciled"* (Colossians 1:20-21).

As this was the inspiration of the Savior's ministry, so it was of Paul's, who rejoiced that the living God was "*the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe*" (I Timothy 4:10); and who therefore bent his energies to the accomplishment of the first out-working of salvation, and endured all things for the elects' sake that they might also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory – that special salvation which carries with it the glories of the ages to come, in which the administration of redemption, by means of judgment and grace, goes on apace under the ministry of Christ and His church.

How sadly man has misunderstood this dual purpose and dragged the glorious doctrine of election into the dust, is manifest in the distorted view of predestination presented by the popular theology of the day. Basing everything upon one sentence – wrung from one passage, with utter disregard for context, kindred passages, translation, or the words of Christ to the contrary – we are told that predestination simply means that God foreknew who would believe and predestinated such for salvation! This is contrary to every other utterance of God on this great subject. "*Ye have not chosen Me but I have chosen you*" was Christ's explanation of the matter, and Paul emphatically declares that election was prior to, and independent of, the actions of the sample case he gives of Jacob and Esau,

"(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger" (Romans 9:11).

The summing up of the Apostle's argument on this very point is,

"So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Romans 9:16).

All is based upon God's "good, and acceptable, and perfect will." Man would invert the order and base all upon the fickle will of man, enslaved by sin (John 8:34). Having mistaken the present purpose of God in this age so hopelessly it is little wonder the larger issue is obscured altogether.

The distortion is due to the effort to explain away the apparent favoritism of God for some, with his apparent rejection of others, and to square the doctrine of election with the fundamental principle in God's dealing with men that He is no respecter of persons. Thus grace is turned into works, and faith, the gift of God, becomes the minimum of man's effort that saves him. How far removed is this conception of the Gospel, to that far-flung vision of grace which sees a chosen company gathered and perfected in one age, that such may be the co-workers with Christ in His consummating work in the ages to come, on behalf of the rest.

A thousand insuperable difficulties, involving God's character and impoverishing Calvary's power and scope, attach to man's pitiable attempt to "steady the ark of God." All such problems are solved and crowned with inextinguishable glory, when it is seen that the election of some is on the way to the inclusion of all. To the man first called alone this principle was enunciated, when God said to Abraham,

"I will bless thee ... and thou shalt be a blessing ... and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3).

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