

# Romans 5:15-17

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*Through one man's sin, there was condemnation for all. From the free gift there is justification for many. One man's sin brought death to all men, but those who receive the free gift of righteousness gain life through Jesus.*

The sin of Adam brought sin and death into the world, and death has reigned ever since. The mortality rate of people has been one hundred percent (Hebrews 9:27). *The free gift of God's grace through Jesus is not like the transgression of Adam. But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many* (v 15).

*The transgression of the one (Adam) brought death to many. But the free gift of justification is not like the transgression of Adam. The transgression of Adam caused death for all who followed, save Jesus. But the free gift of being justified in the sight of God only benefits the many who receive it by faith. The free gift of Jesus brings a completely different result than Adam's sin. Adam's sin brings death. But the free gift of Jesus's death brought justification in God's sight, through God's grace.*

Now Paul adds that *the gift Jesus gives is not like that which came through the one who sinned [Adam]. That is because on the one hand the judgment [death] arose from one transgression [of Adam] resulting in condemnation. The condemnation was that sin entered the world. Paul contrasts, saying but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification* (vs 16).

The *many transgressions* refers to the sins of the world, all of which were placed on the cross with Jesus (Colossians 2:14). The death of Jesus, bearing the sins of the world, resulted in *justification* in the sight of God, for all who believe (Romans 4:1-3).

*When Adam sinned, his sin brought condemnation into the world. The world was cursed. Sin entered the world. Death entered the world. In complete contrast, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus brought to humans a free gift.*

*A gift is something that is given without obligation. The gifts of God are irrevocable (Romans 11:29). The Greek word translated free gift in verse 15 is one word, "charisma." The translators properly add free to emphasize the root nature of a gift. A true gift comes without strings. There are no direct or implied obligations. Through faith in Jesus, we gain a free gift of being justified in God's presence.*

When Abraham believed God, it was counted to him for righteousness (Romans 4:3). This was even though Jesus had not yet died for Abraham's sin. Jesus's death on the cross counted for all humanity in all times. It applies to all who believe, including Abraham.

Abraham benefitted from Jesus's sacrifice and God's grace. But Abraham could not have benefitted from righteousness through the law of Moses because it did not yet exist. Once again,

Paul's explanation of justification by God's grace is superior to the competing Jewish "authorities'" explanation of justification through the Law.

Next, in verse 17, Paul repeats that sin entered into the world through one man (Adam):

*For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*

*The transgression of the one refers to the sin of Adam. Through that sin, death entered the world. Henceforth, death reigned through the one, meaning that we all inherited the adverse consequence of Adam's sin. But the gift of Jesus is manifested as an abundance of grace. In spite of sin and death, Jesus's death on the cross gives to humanity the gift of righteousness. This gift is available to all of those who receive the free gift, which is given through the abundance of God's grace.*

*The competing Jewish "authorities" have argued that Paul's teaching of grace naturally leads to the conclusion that, "We all ought to sin a lot because a) it is more fun and b) we get away with it because Jesus's grace covers it." Paul is elevating an opposing view: sin is death. When we were estranged from God, we were stuck in death, with no way out. But through the abundance of grace given by God, we now have the opportunity to receive the gift of righteousness which will reign in life.*

*It seems very probable that this letter to the Roman believers is, in part, intended to support Aquila and Priscilla, who were fellow Jews who preached the gospel with Paul in Greece, and are now returned to Rome where they have started a church in their house (Romans 16:3-5; Acts 18:2, 18, 26). The defense of grace that Paul gives in this letter will help Aquila and Priscilla disprove the slander of the Jewish "authorities" and provide clarity as to why believers ought to live by faith, not by keeping the Jewish law.*

*The inferred presumption made by the opponents of Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila is that sin is more desirable. (In chapter 2, Paul exposed the reality that in actuality they are routinely living in sin). But Paul is making the argument that sin is death. The world was condemned through sin. Jesus delivers us from sin. Why would we live in sin (death) when we can live in harmony with God's (good) design (righteousness). When we live in God's (good) design, we can be fulfilled. His (good) design can reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. This is a vastly superior way to live. And it is available to all who have believed.*

*We can choose life in the Spirit, or the death and loss of the world.*

The free gift entered through one man (Jesus). We are justified in God's sight by grace, through faith. But it does not stop there. The righteousness of Jesus reigns in our everyday life by grace, not by following religious rules.

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>15</sup> But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus**

Christ, abound to the many. <sup>16</sup> The gift is not like *that which came* through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment *arose* from one *transgression* resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift *arose* from many transgressions resulting in justification. <sup>17</sup> For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.