

Romans Lesson 7 Articles

Reconciliation is a personal relationship; it cannot be a unilateral action on the part of God alone. He has provided forgiveness for all people through the once-for-all death of his Son. *Only when that forgiveness is accepted by faith is the compact completed and reconciliation takes place.* God's part is finished; our part is a matter of individual decision.¹

We may contrast the two Adams as follows: (1) The first Adam was made from the earth, but the Last Adam (Christ) came from heaven (1 Cor. 15:47). (2) The first Adam was the king of the old creation (Gen. 1:26–27), while the Last Adam is King-Priest over the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). (3) The first Adam was tested in a perfect garden and disobeyed God, while the Last Adam was tested in a terrible wilderness and obeyed God; and in the Garden of Gethsemane, He surrendered His will to God. (4) The disobedience of the first Adam brought sin, condemnation, and death upon the human race, but the obedience of the Last Adam brought righteousness, salvation, and life to all who will believe. (5) Through the first Adam, death and sin reign in this world (vv. 14, 17, 21); but through the Last Adam, grace reigns (v. 21) and believers can “reign in life” (v. 17).

The OT is “the book of the generations of Adam” (Gen. 5:1–2) and ends with the word “curse.” (Mal. 4:6). The NT is “the book of the generation of Jesus Christ” (Matt. 1:1) and ends with “no more curse” (Rev. 22:3). The paradise of Genesis that Adam lost is restored in Revelation through the cross of Christ.

What Paul is teaching here is the unity of the human race in Adam (see Acts 17:26). When he says in v. 12 that “all have sinned” he means that all of us sinned in Adam when he sinned. We are identified with him as the “head” of the human race, and his sin is our sin, his death is our death. Paul's argument in vv. 12–14 goes like this: We all know that a man dies if he disobeys God's law. But there was no law from Adam to Moses, yet men died! We know that Adam died because he disobeyed a divine law; but the generations from Adam to Moses did not have such a law to disobey. Then death must be from another cause, and that cause is Adam's sin. Because we are born “in Adam,” we inherit his sin and condemnation. But in His grace, God has given a “Last Adam,” a new “Head” who has by His life and death undone all that Adam did in his sin. Paul now presents several contrasts between salvation and sin:

v. 15–16—*The offense vs. the free gift:* Adam's offense brought condemnation and death, while the free gift of God's grace brings justification and life.

v. 17—*Death vs. life:* Death reigned as king because of Adam, but now believers reign in life (right now, not only in the future) through Christ, and have abundant life!

v. 18—*Condemnation vs. justification:* Adam's sin plunged the human race into condemnation; Christ's death brings right standing with God. Adam hid from God; in Christ we have free access to God!

v. 19—*Disobedience vs. obedience:* Adam disobeyed God and made us all sinners; Christ obeyed God and, through faith in Him, we are made righteous.

v. 20—*Law vs. grace:* God did not give the Law to save mankind, but rather to reveal sin. But God's superabounding grace met the demands of the Law when Christ died, and then supplied what the Law could not supply—salvation from sin.

Now, the important question is this: Am I “in Adam” or “in Christ”? If I am “in Adam,” then sin and death reign over my life and I am under condemnation. If I am “in Christ,” then grace reigns and I can reign in life through Christ, and sin no longer has me in its slavery (the theme of chapter 6). In 5:6–11, Paul teaches substitution—Christ died for us on the cross. But in 5:12–21, he goes further and teaches identification—believers are in Christ and can live in victory over sin.

Hallelujah, what a Savior!²

¹ Mounce, R. H. (1995). *Romans* (Vol. 27, p. 138). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament* (pp. 376–378). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.