

Reigning in Life – Romans 5:12-19

Paul here is helping us to understand what God has done by drawing parallels, by contrasting one thing against the other. Paul does this in order to help us realise just how glorious and magnificent our salvation is – we'll fail to see how wonderful God's love for us is, if we have no sense of what he suffered in order to show his love to us. We'll struggle to fully comprehend how brilliant our righteousness in Christ is if we fail to appreciate how appalling sin and self-righteousness is.

By paralleling Adam with Christ, death with life, Paul is holding up to us how emphatically contrasting the two are and the conclusion he reaches and which has immediate application for us here today is this, 'you're either in Adam or in Christ, you're either under the reign of death or you are reigning in life'.

1) Reign of Death – In Adam

Death reigned before Moses instituted the law. Death reigned before the hope the Jews had in the commandments. Death is prevalent in the world, and yet we do everything we can to avoid it. From Botox to cryogenics; from focussing on the family to seeking fame and recognition, there is a desire to defeat death and gain immortality in some fashion or another. From the moment we take our first breath the inevitability of death looms large for all.

Paul reminds us that death came from 'one man's' disobedience; 'one man's' trespass. Because of one man's sin, the whole of humanity was under the power of sin; physical death; spiritual death; separation from God - because Adam ate the fruit. Because Adam wanted to be like God and know good and evil, but when Adam ate the fruit he knew evil and was contaminated by evil.

While it might seem to be unfair to judge all mankind because of Adam's sin, Paul reminds us that "*death spread to all men because all sinned*" (v12). Yes Adam's sin condemned all people, but all subsequently sinned anyway – none can seriously say: "it would have been different had I been there". We're all guilty personally. This has been the argument Paul has been using from 1:18 until now.

Q. How do people react to the subject of death? What methods do people use to try to avoid death?

Q. "Sin and suffering is all Adam's fault" – in what way does Paul agree with this argument? In what way does he disagree?

2) In Christ

As Adam's actions affected all humanity, Christ's actions have an even greater effect. "*For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ*" (v17). While Adam disobeyed and ate the fruit of the tree, Christ was obedient to death, even death on a cross. While Adam wanted equality with God, Christ had equality with God and willingly humbled Himself. Like Adam Christ entered the world without sin, like Adam he was tempted, like Adam he faced the challenge of obedience, unlike Adam Christ remained without sin, unlike Adam he overcame temptation, unlike Adam he was obedient.

The gospel that Paul has been unpacking in these chapters explains that His righteousness is accredited to us as our own and Jesus' obedience is accredited to us as our own. The cross and the resurrection of Christ is the reversal of sin's devastation. Where Adam brought death and sin, Christ by putting death to death, has brought us life!

Q. How can we be encouraged by Christ's obedience in His mission, compared to the disobedience of Adam?

Q. How does Jesus dealing with sin compare to Adam's action? How does Jesus do 'much more' than Adam?

1) Reign in Life

You'd expect the reversal to be that 'In Christ' we come under the 'reign of life', having come out of the 'reign of death'. Paul says it differently. We are no longer under the reign of death, instead we can reign *in* life. Because bodily death is not the end, it affects how we live today. The things the world tells us that make a life successful or not have to do with the assumption that death is the end; make you mark, be competitive, have your moment in the spotlight. No wonder for so many who get there, there is so much disappointment, because still nagging away is the sense that there is more; death doesn't mean annihilation – there will be a reckoning.

For those who are in Christ, we reign in life knowing that everything done in faith, every Christ like act – no matter how secret it might be – will make its way into eternity and will not be lost. Our perspective on death and our handling of death is one of perhaps the most powerful witness to the truth of the gospel we can give to the world around us. This hope we have is not in any unlikely scientific breakthrough. No our hope is that "*the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead lives in us*" (Romans 8:11).

Q. How does our view of death change how we live day-to-day? How does this affect our purpose and meaning?

Q. How does our view of death change our reaction to the loss of a loved one? Our reaction to terminal illnesses?