

PROLOGUE TO PRISON

Paul's Epistle to the ROMANS

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Chapter 11

THE NEW RACE

Romans 5:12-21

This is one of the most difficult passages in Romans because of the language and because of the theme. Paul has concentrated here tremendous truth, deep and high and broad. We might entitle this particular portion of Paul's letter "A Brief Resume, The Consequences of Sin and the Gift of GOD." It is as though the apostle arrests the progress of his argument in order to clarify the universality of sin, covered in the first three chapters, and the efficacy of GOD's gracious provision in JESUS CHRIST, covered in chapters 4 and 5, and continued through chapter 8. Here is another of those sweeping, comprehensive overviews of which Paul is so amazingly capable. In relatively few words he frames a philosophy of history and man.

Here is an insight into Paul's anthropology and the Christian view of history. He begins by explaining how sin entered the world of man; he does not discuss the origin of sin but assumes it, showing how it infected humanity. He begins, "**Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.**" No explanation for the origin of sin, he simply declares that it entered into the human race through the disobedience of one man, and through that one man passed upon the whole human race as did death its inevitable consequence. Man was not able to stop the spread of this sinful infection because all men sin; thus the infection spread throughout the human race.

Verses 13 through 17 are parenthetical. He raises a subject in verse 13 which anticipates verses 20 and 21. He says in verse 13, "**Until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law; nevertheless, death reigned from (in the no-law days) Adam to Moses.**" Why then the law? The answer comes at the end of the chapter in preparation for chapters 6,7 and 8. The purpose of the law is to make man aware of his sinfulness, or as he puts it in the 20th verse, "**that the offence might abound**" so that man, aware of his need, might allow the grace of GOD to abound in his life, a practical theme for later discussion. The point is that even though there was no law until the time of Moses, sin was in the world and death by sin.

Remember Paul's statement concerning Gentiles? In the first chapter he said there was a law in the human heart identical to that which GOD gave Moses on Mt. Sinai, and though the Gentiles do not have Moses' law, they have its essence written in their hearts. When they disobey this inner law, their conscience either excuses or accuses them. The law was built into the human

heart when GOD created man. Notice that Paul is talking about sin, not sins. He is talking about something endemic in the nature of man, not his misdeeds.

In the Westminster Shorter Catechism defines sin as "Any want of conformity to or transgression of the law of GOD." Since it is more than misbehaving, more than transgressing GOD's law, sin means failure to be all that GOD expects us to be. Sin has to do with man's nature as well as his conduct, and what Paul is saying is this, "*One act of disobedience by Adam wrought a constitutional change in human nature, and this constitutional change was transmitted to all of Adam's descendants.*" * In other words Paul is discussing "original sin," he is saying that men since Adam are born as sinners. Of course this is unacceptable to our modern world.

* *Stifler on Romans*

On one occasion, when discussing this in a young marrieds' class, I used one of my children as an illustration of "original sin." At the close of the service a young father who was getting his doctorate in psychology at the University of California in Los Angeles approached me. He was irked to say the least, that I had had the temerity to illustrate it with one of my children. When he finished his criticism, I asked him what he believed. He said he believed babies are born into the world morally neutral. "Can you demonstrate this?" I asked.

"No," he answered.

"You reject the doctrine of original sin because it cannot be demonstrated, but you accept this psychological view although it lacks any proof; how do you explain that?" I asked.

Was not his hostility an example of human aversion to Biblical truth, rising from a built-in antipathy to GOD which is the essence of what is called "original sin"? I reminded him that not too many years ago we were being told by psychologists that babies were born into the world positively good and that only an unfortunate environment produced bad children. He said, "We don't believe that any more!" Psychology seems to get nearer and nearer to the Biblical doctrine of original sin.

General Carlos P. Romulo of the Philippines expressed this view when he said, "*We have harnessed the atom, but we will never make war obsolete until we find the force that will bridle the passions of men.*" Bruce Catton, editor of Heritage Magazine and one of the leading authorities on the Civil War, expressed it in an address on the theme, "*What 1861 Has to Say to 1961*," when he pointed out that the problem in 1861 was identical to the problem in 1961, human nature. Nothing has happened to change human nature in a century. "**All have sinned.**" All are sinners. The Psalmist cried out, "**In sin did my mother conceive me**" (Psalm 51:5).

At the end of the 14th verse Paul points out that the first man, whose act of disobedience transmitted sin and death to the whole human race, was a type of another who should come; and in verses 15-17 he writes of GOD's remedy in this second man, come to cancel the infection which entered through the first man. By a series of contrasts Paul demonstrates the quality, the strength, the adequacy, the certainty, of grace in CHRIST. "**But not as the offence, so also is the free gift.**" Why? Many died through one's trespass; many have trespassed, and through one act of righteousness many are made righteous! As the disobedience of one man brought death to

all, the obedience of one brought to many righteousness and life. The free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin, for the judgment following one man's sin brought condemnation, but the many who were condemned are made righteous by one man's obedience.

In the same way that this sin and death, transmitted through the first Adam, affects the whole human race, the grace of GOD in JESUS CHRIST, on the grounds of His righteousness and obedience, will be transmitted to all who will receive it. Therefore, if the sin and death which resulted from Adam is certain, the righteousness and life which comes from JESUS CHRIST are certain. Just as the whole human race has been infected by Adam's transgression, so those who will receive the free gift can be benevolently infused with righteousness and eternal life. So Paul summarizes, verses 18-19, **"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."** One man's disobedience, many were made sinners; one man's obedience, many will be made righteous.

Consider this passage in four parallels: two men, two acts, two results, two races. Two men, the first Adam, the last Adam (Adam in the Hebrew is the word for man); Adam and CHRIST. About these two men the entire human race polarizes. Two acts: The first, disobedience; the second, obedience. GOD placed the first Adam in a perfect environment with no inward compulsion to sin, a free moral agent. Everything around him was an inducement to live righteously, to obey GOD. There was one restriction, **"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it"** (Genesis 2:17).

Is it not significant that in a perfect environment this one prohibition became the central preoccupation of our first parents. It was as though they were blind to the blessing of GOD because here in focus was a prohibition! What a perversity in the human heart, **"For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do"** (Romans 7:19). The very desire or will to do good somehow stimulates the desire to do evil. There it was, **"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it,"** and this restriction became bigger than all the privileges with which GOD had endowed their world, and they disobeyed.

The last Adam, entered an imperfect world, a world infected with sin, in which the consequences of sin had been accumulating for millennia. He too was without sin, He too could choose, except now the environment was sinful, and He chose to obey. He said, **"the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."** He said, **"Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God"** (Hebrews 10:7). He said, **"I do always those things that please him"** (John 8:29). JESUS was a man. He was a man like Adam with the equivalent choice but with a great disadvantage because the environment was evil, and He obeyed. The first Adam disobeyed; the last Adam obeyed. Recall when JESUS came to John the Baptist to be baptized, and John, humbled before the One whose shoelaces he was not worthy to stoop down and unloose, declined; but JESUS said, **"thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness"** (Matthew 3:15).

JESUS CHRIST could have chosen the way of self-will, He **"was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"** (Hebrews 4:15). He could have chosen to obey the devil in the wilderness temptation. He could have chosen on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36) to

return to His glory rather than surrender to the ignomy of the cross; but, **"being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!"** (Philippians 2:6-8) He took the long road of obedience from heaven's glory to the indescribable shame of death by crucifixion! Obedient, perfectly obedient, so that when JESUS CHRIST hung on the cross, there was no sin in Himself that needed to be covered; He was a perfect man as well as GOD, a perfect mediator between GOD and man.

Two results - the first Adam disobeyed, and sin was transmitted to the whole human race and death by sin. The last Adam obeyed, and GOD's grace transmitted righteousness to all who will receive the free gift and eternal life which results from this righteousness.

Finally two races. The old man. That race of people who, having the same choice in a sense which Adam had in the garden, decided against GOD, against CHRIST, which is the way the choice is manifested today since His advent. ***Refusing the free gift of GOD, the way of righteousness, they remain "in Adam," and suffer eternal separation from GOD.*** Then there is the second race, The new man. ***Those who receive the free gift of grace in JESUS CHRIST, who are made righteous and who will live eternally in fellowship with the Father.*** Around these two Adams polarize the whole human race.

The important thing to see is that every human being has in essence the same choice that our first parents had in the Garden. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:16-19).

These two races are eternal races, one living eternally separated from the Father, the second living eternally in fellowship with Him. The practical point is, you choose the race to which you will belong. Each of you has this choice. You decide whether you will continue out into eternity a member of this old race of which the first Adam who disobeyed, was the progenitor; or having been born of GOD through the grace that is the LORD JESUS CHRIST, you will be a member of the new race which lives forever in eternity with the Father.

Years ago a friend, having occasion to take a train trip, got on the train early, took a window seat, opened his Bible and began to read. As the coach filled up, the seat beside him was left vacant because "nobody wants to sit beside a fanatic who reads a Bible in public." Finally the coach was full; and just before the train pulled out, a man walked into the coach rather jauntily, whistling, observed the empty seat, the man reading the Bible, walked past. Suddenly it dawned upon him that the only empty seat was beside the Bible-reading man; he walked into the next coach, apparently found no empty seats, and finally the victim of terrible circumstances, he found it necessary to seat himself on the aisle seat next to the man reading the Bible, but he sat as close to the aisle as he could. He expected the Bible reader to "nail him."

Nothing happened; my friend was silent, and finally the passenger exploded, and said, "I suppose you are a preacher!"

My friend said, "Yes, I am a preacher."

Well, this was the worst; imagine a man being a captive audience to a preacher in a train! Finally the man said, "Suppose you believe GOD is going to send everybody to hell."

My friend said, "No, I don't believe GOD will send anybody to hell." The man was greatly relieved; at least the preacher had a degree of intelligence.

My friend waited a moment; then he said to the man seated beside him, "***No sir, GOD will never send anybody to hell. He has done everything He could to keep men out. Over the gate of hell is a Cross, and on that Cross is a man, the Son of GOD. You can't get into hell without turning aside that man on the Cross. He is there to keep you out.***"

That is it, eternity with GOD is contingent upon man's choice. GOD, who created man in His image with freedom of will, will not impose even heaven upon man in violation of that freedom. The way of everlasting life in fellowship with the Father has been provided in the Son, available to all men. "**Whosoever will may. . .!**" What do you will?

~ end of chapter 11 ~

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