

Chapter 5

Commentary

1 Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Master Yeshua Messiah

We come, now, to a new section in the epistle based upon the teaching Paul has given in the first four chapters. If we were to sum up the first section (Chapters 1-4) it seems obvious that Paul's main concern is the method or manner by which God brings a sinner into right standing before Him. That is to say, having shown conclusively that all, both Jew and Gentile, are at enmity with God because of their sin, and that no one is capable in and of himself to overcome this enmity, Paul goes on to outline the manner by which God, of His own mercy, reconciles the sinner to Himself, overcoming the utter inability of the sinner.

The opening verse of the new section (cf also v. 11) thus summarizes this "right standing before God" as "peace with God," the concept of *shalom* being grounded in the sense of that which is "complete" or "whole." *Shalom* in the Hebrew envisions things as they ought to be; life as God intends it.

We thus should understand the opening "Therefore having been justified by faith" (Δικαιωθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως) as gathering together the essential truth of 1:18-4:25, bridging the former section with what follows. And yet even in this summary statement there is an advancement, for Paul has naturally linked "righteousness" with "peace" which has thus further defined "righteousness."

The key thought of the former section has surely been summed up in the single word "justified" (δικαίω, *dikaioo*, on which see comments on 3:24 above), that declaration of the Almighty that an individual is righteous in His eyes. That He could make such a declaration and remain righteous Himself is possible only because of the vicarious sacrifice of the Messiah on behalf of His people. Combining then the substitutionary sacrifice of Yeshua with the declaration of righteousness as regards the sinner, Paul has summarized for us the divine method of bringing sinners into right standing with God.

To add the phrase "by faith" emphasizes the means by which personal right standing before God is obtained, namely, through acceptance of what God has said and commitment to life accordingly. Yet deeds of righteousness come as the fruit of faith, not as the means of it. One therefore obtains right standing before God through faith, not through the works of the Torah.

we have peace with God – The Greek text contains a variant at this point, some manuscripts having ἔχομεν, *echomen* (with *omicron*), the present indicative ("we have peace") while other manuscripts have ἔχομεν, *echomen* (with *omega*), the present subjunctive ("let us have peace"). Interestingly, the weight of manu-

scripts falls to side of the subjunctive reading (ⲥ* A B* C D K 33, 81, 181 etc.), but most translators and compilers opt for the indicative (found in ⲥ^a B³ G^{gr} P Y, etc.). Cranfield explains why:

Though the indicative ἔχομεν is a good deal less strongly attested than the subjunctive ἔχομεν, it is almost certainly to be preferred on the ground of intrinsic probability. It is clear from v. 10f that Paul regards the believers' peace with God as a fact. It would therefore be inconsistent for him to say here "let us have peace," meaning thereby "let us obtain peace" (Paul would anyway hardly think of peace with God as something to be obtained by human endeavor). If the subjunctive is read, we must understand it in some such sense as "let us enjoy the peace we have" or "let us guard the peace we have" (cf. e.g., Origen, Chrysostom). But this is not free from objection; for it would surely be strange for Paul, in such a carefully argued writing as this, to exhort his readers to enjoy or to guard a peace which he has not yet explicitly shown to be possessed by them.¹²⁸

Thus, it seems warranted to take the minority reading at this point and understand Paul to be making a statement of fact that, we have peace with God on the basis of having been declared righteous by Him.

The peace which is the possession of all who have been declared righteous on the basis of faith is not a subjective inner feeling, but an objective state of being at peace instead of being enemies. This is made clear by v. 10 (a summary of the section 5:1-9) in which our status as "enemies" has been done away with through the work of Messiah's "reconciliation." Here this is a most important fact, that God in His declaring the sinner righteous on the basis of his faith also extends Himself in friendship.

Whereas between a human judge and the person who appears before him there may be no really personal meeting at all, no personal hostility if the accused be found guilty, no establishment of friendship if the accused is acquitted, between God and the sinner there is a personal relationship, and God's justification involves a real self-engagement to the sinner on His part.¹²⁹

Thus, for Paul to combine the two concepts of "justified" and "peace" is not merely to employ theological synonyms but to show the logical extension of justification from God's vantage point based upon what He is. Since He is infinite in love, He will always extend Himself in relationship to the one He declares righteous.

128 Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.257, n. 1

129 Ibid., 1.258

through Adonai Yeshua HaMashiach – In the same way that justification is through the Messiah (3:24), so reconciliation is through the Messiah—the two are, in God's plan of redemption, bound together inseparably.

The combination of the names Lord, Yeshua, and Messiah (in one combination or another) is found also in v. 21 and in 7:25, as well as in 6:23 and 8:39. It seems as though Paul begins and ends major sections in this part of the epistle with this three-name formula.

What are we to make of the use of κύριος, *kurios* (Lord) in combination with Yeshua the Messiah? One cannot escape the emphasis that this combination of words places upon the sovereign, divine nature of the Messiah. To call Him “Lord,” a term repeatedly used by the Lxx to identify יהוה (YHVH) is surely to credit Yeshua as being Immanuel.

2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

“Through whom,” i.e., through Yeshua the Messiah—that we are participants in God's grace is the direct result of Yeshua and His work. Yeshua Himself taught that friendship with the Father was possible only through Him: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me.” (Jn 14:6)

we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand – The verb ἐσχήκαμεν (*eschekamen*, “we have obtained”) is in the perfect tense and may therefore express the idea that having gained access through initial faith/confession of Yeshua, this access remains the possession of all true believers. The concept of “introduction” (προσαγωγή, *prosagoge*) is most likely that of “the privilege of being introduced into the presence of someone in high station.”¹³⁰

Some of the major manuscripts (B D G it Or^{lat}) omit the phrase “by faith” in the verse, though most consider the phrase original. Why it would be omitted in some of the major manuscripts remains a mystery, though its omission would not alter the meaning of the text, for Paul surely teaches that our entrance into God's favor is gained via the avenue of faith.

into this grace – Paul uses the demonstrative “this” (ταύτην, *tauten*) in connection with the word “grace” to indicate a reference to what he has just written. We should most likely, then, consider the term “grace” (χάρις, *charis*) here to have direct reference to the “peace” just spoken of. We find ourselves at peace with God because by faith we have obtained forgiveness and right standing with Him.

in which we stand – The verb ἵστημι, *histemi*, “to stand” (it is in the perfect tense in our verse, ἐστήκαμεν, *estekamen*) can at times be synonymous with the simple verb “to be” (εἶμι, *eimi*) and in this text could thus mean “. . . into the

130 Ibid., 1.259.

grace in which we are.” But Paul’s use of the verb in Romans (3:31; 10:3; 11:20; 14:4) seems rather to be used in the sense of “stand firm” or “abide.”¹³¹ Thus Paul’s emphasis here is, once again, of the abiding position the believer has in his righteous standing before HaShem.

and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God – Our right standing with God considered here as “peace with God” is cause for rejoicing, but so is the prospect of God’s glory being revealed in us at the coming of Messiah. Paul’s use of the phrase “glory of God”¹³² indicates that he sees the revelation of God’s glory in connection with the victorious return of Yeshua and the glorification of the believer at that time. The ability mankind was given to radiate the glory of HaShem was marred by the fall but is restored through the redemptive work of Yeshua and will be fully manifest in those who are His at His return. It is thus the hope of His return and the ultimate completion of our sanctification that is the focal point of our hope. “Hope” here is the confident anticipation of that which we do not yet see (cf. Heb 11:1).

The status of “peace with God” which the believer now enjoys also guarantees his inevitable growth in holiness to the point where he will be perfectly restored as one who bears the very glory of God. This hope of seeing God’s creative act come to its ultimate end is all the more wonderful in light of the fact that Yeshua Himself became man—entered into the realm of humanness—thus showing that mankind, when he realizes his creative purpose, will indeed reflect the very glory of God.

3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;

While we rejoice in the hope of what is yet future, by faith we must also rejoice in our sufferings. Note well that Paul does not set this forth as an exhortation but as a mere statement of fact. This is so because of who we are—we are those who rejoice in tribulation because of the faith we have.

Rejoicing in suffering is not a foreign concept in the Rabbinic writings.

Our Rabbis taught: Those who are insulted but do not insult, hear themselves reviled without answering, act through love and rejoice in suffering, of them the Writ saith, But they who love Him are as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.¹³³

To him who gives thanks for his afflictions and rejoices over them,

131 Note the use of ἵστημι (*histemi*) in other Pauline letters: 1Co 7:37; 15:1; 2Co 1:24; Eph 6:11, 13, 14; Col 4:12; 2Tim 2:19; 1Pt 4:12.

132 Rom 1:23; 3:23; 15:7; 1Co 10:31; 11:7; 2Co 4:6, 15; Phil 1:11; 2:11; 1Ti 1:11; Tit 2:13.

133 b.*Shabbat* 88b.

God grants life in this world and, in the world to come, life without end, “for a lamp are the commandments and the Torah is light” (Prov. 6:23). Why, then, did Moses merit that his countenance should shine, even in this world, with a light destined for the righteous in the next world? Because . . . he was ever striving, yearning, watching to establish peace between Israel and their Father in Heaven.¹³⁴

Truly, God is good to Israel, even to the pure in heart. That is, the sufferings which He has brought upon them are good. For whom are they good? For the pure in heart, to purify the heart of the righteous (Ps 73:1).¹³⁵

Indeed, the Rabbinic teachings are replete with admonitions about receiving suffering as from HaShem and for the good of the one who suffers.

knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance – Several words exist in the Greek to bring forward the idea of “knowing.” The word used here (which is a common word, *εἰδότες*, *eidotes*, is from the root *οἶδα*, *oida*, which means “to perceive,” “to see” (in the sense “understand”).¹³⁶ Here Paul refers to the knowledge which faith brings, a knowledge which claims absolute validity. This knowledge allows the believer to know that the tribulation he may be enduring at any given time is suffering which HaShem has allowed for the believer’s good and His glory. It is not that the believer rejoices in tribulation because he believes that if he does so he will merit God’s favor, but because the believer has come to know that God subjects those He loves to periods of tribulation in order to teach them how to wait patiently for His deliverance.

Now this is true for the believer, but it is not generally true for mankind. As Calvin remarks, tribulation causes “a great part of mankind . . . to murmur against God, and even to curse his name.”¹³⁷

In contrast to the unbeliever, then, when the child of God receives suffering within the context of sustained faith, he receives it as God’s fatherly discipline and rather than producing bitterness or anger it produces patience or perseverance (*ὑπομονή*, *hupomone*). This Greek word is made up of two words, *ὑπο*, *hupo*, “under” and *μένω*, *meno*, “to remain.” It may come from the idea of carrying a load which one is required to remain under it even though it is heavy. As with the athlete who is willing to endure some measure of pain during training in order to condition himself for the competition, so the child of faith can recognize that

134 *Tanchuma*, quoted from Montefiore & Loewe, *Rabbinic Anthology* (Schoken, 1974), p. 543.

135 *Midrash Psalms* on 73:1, p. 167a, §1.

136 cf. Rom 6:9; 13:11; 1Co 15:58; 2Co 4:14; 5:6, 11; Gal 2:16; Eph 6:8, 9; Col 3:24; 4:1; 1Pt 1:18.

137 Calvin, *Commentaries*, 19.191.

tribulation trains for the struggle to be righteous.

4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;

The patience or perseverance which tribulation brings yields yet another godly attribute, “proven character” (δοκιμή, *dokime*). This word (and cognates) is grounded in metallurgy in which a metal is heated until molten and the impurities separated in order to refine the metal to its purest state.¹³⁸ Thus the translation “proven character” used in the NASB, which speaks of character which has been refined through suffering.

Furthermore, this proven character is able to produce “hope.” Cranfield writes:

To have one's faith proved by God in the fires of tribulation and sustained by Him so as to stand the test is to have one's hope in Him and in the fulfillment of His promises, one's hope of His glory (v. 2), strengthened and confirmed.¹³⁹

Once again, “hope” is used in the sense of that which is expected by reason of that which is certain. It is therefore “the looking forward to something with some reason for confidence respecting fulfillment; hope, expectation” (*BDAG*, “ἐλπίς”).

5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

The hope that is the result of persevering via faith is a hope that does not put those who cherish it to shame by proving illusory. Paul seems clearly to be relying upon numerous texts in the Psalms which teach that faith in God does not disappoint or cause those who call upon him to be ashamed.¹⁴⁰ When by faith the child of God hopes in Him, this hope will always be shown to be well-founded.

because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts – This is the first occurrence of ἀγάπη (*agape*, “love”) in Romans (a cognate form was used in 1:7). We may question whether the genitive construction (“love of God”) is objective or subjective. Objective genitive would yield the meaning “love to God”

138 Note the use of δοκιμος (*dokimos*) in 1Pt 1:7, “that the proof (refined residue) of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Yeshua the Messiah.”

139 Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.261.

140 Ps 22:5; 25:3, 20; 119:116 (Lxx= 21:6; 24:3; 118:116) all of which contain the verb καταισχύνη (*kataischune*) preceded by the negative: “not ashamed,” the exact construction found here. Cf. Is 28:16 as well.

(where God is the object of the love) while a subjective genitive would yield “God’s love to us,” i.e., God is the subject Who acts in love. Is the hope we have of an enduring nature because we love God or because He loves us? It seems to me that a statement of God’s love for us is a much greater proof of why our hope does not disappoint than an argument based upon our love for Him. Furthermore, our ability to persevere in tribulation is better formulated on the basis of God’s love for us than upon our love for Him, because in the midst of suffering when we find our strength gone, and thus our ability to love diminished, God’s love for us remains as firm as always and thus forms a foundation upon which we may rest in hope.

Thus, the fact of God’s love for us has been “poured out within our hearts.” Paul uses the metaphor of “pouring” (ἐκχεῖν, *ekchein*) as fitting when speaking of the giving of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:17ff and the report by Peter in Acts 10:45, the Spirit is spoken of as “poured out,” no doubt based upon the metaphor of water in the act of cleansing such as that given by Ezekiel in his prophecy.¹⁴¹ The metaphor of “pouring” is also used of God’s wrath, mercy, and blessing. That Paul should thus combine the love of God with the giving of the Spirit in the metaphor of “pouring” is very natural.

The meaning, then, is that God has lavished upon us His love (spelled out more specifically in the following verses) and made us to know it absolutely and actually by giving us the Spirit Who dwells within us, and Who, therefore, communicates to our very souls this love that otherwise we would not comprehend. The ultimate proof that our hope in God will not disappoint us is in the manner in which we have come to know God’s actions toward us in redemption and salvation. The fact that God has graciously given us the Spirit to dwell within us is a guarantee (עֲרָבוֹן, *‘erabon*, ἀρραβών, *arrabon*, “pledge, down payment” cf. Eph 1:14) that He will maintain His faithfulness in every way, even to bringing us to be with Him, face-to-face, as it were. It is thus by the very work of the Spirit in illuminating our minds that we are able to comprehend the love of God which has been poured out in our hearts.

6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Messiah died for the ungodly.

The verse begins ἐτι γὰρ (*eti, gar*, “For still”) and is then followed by a second ἐτι at the beginning of the second clause.¹⁴² This construction is a little

141 cf. 36:25ff; Joel 2:28 [Heb. 3:1]

142 The textual variants substitute a number of different readings since this is a less than common Greek construction. Alford opted for εἰ γε (*ei ge*) which is read by B and the Coptic, though he suggests a possible confusion with a liturgical phrase χριστὸς ὄντων ἡμῶν ἀσθενῶν ἐτι (“Christ, when we were weak, still . . .”); Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*. 5 vols. (Moody, 1958) 2.357.

unusual, though it is possible that ἔτι was placed at the beginning of the sentence for emphasis, and then repeated after the genitive absolute for the sake of clarity. We might thus translate, “For still, while ourselves being dead, still at that very time Messiah died on behalf of the ungodly.”

Surely this verse dispels the notion of Poor Richard that “God helps them that helps themselves”! Paul has already shown that Scripture teaches the utter helplessness of the sinner when confronted with the need to atone for one's sin. Since mankind is incapable of beginning the process, the only hope he has is that God Himself might step in and accomplish what would otherwise be impossible. The metaphors of “death,” “birth,” and “creation,” used of the event of regeneration, all speak to this issue of inability. For the one who is dead is unable to bring himself to life; the one who is unborn is unable to affect his birth; and the one who is uncreated is unable to bring about his own creation.

The word translated “helpless” (NASB), “powerless” (NIV) is ἀσθενής, *asthe-es*, meaning “weak,” “powerless,” “feeble,” “sick.” This word is used of “weak faith” (1Co 9:22), of those who were sick (Ac 4:9), as well as those who were physically weak (1Co 11:30). Here it speaks about the inability to gain right standing before God on one's own efforts.

at the right time – The death of Messiah was not determined by man, but by God. The Scriptures are clear on this matter: Mk 1:15; Lk 22:22; Ac 2:23; Gal 4:4. While the events leading up to the crucifixion may have appeared to some as though they were random and the result of unforeseen calamity, the truth of the matter is that God determined from all eternity (Rev 13:8) that His own Son should take upon Himself the sins of all His chosen ones.

Messiah died for the ungodly – Messiah's death on behalf of sinners is spoken of throughout the epistle (3:25; 4:25; 6:10; 7:4; 8:32; 14:15) and surely is one of the primary refrains of the Apostle. Here, in our text, as well as 8:32 and 14:15, the preposition ὑπέρ, *huper*, is used, translated “for,” or better “on behalf of.” The emphasis is upon substitution of a vicarious nature, one on the behalf of another, but especially one who is innocent on the behalf of one who is ungodly. The Greek ἀσεβής (“helpless”) describes the impious person, the one who is without any connection to God, who is rightly condemned by his deeds. This forms one of the truly amazing aspects of God's grace, as Paul now goes on to show.

7-8 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Messiah died for us.

The amazing aspect that Paul here highlights is that the righteous God should ever want anything to do with unrighteous sinners, not to mention laying down the life of His beloved Son for them!

While it is clear that these verses are given to clarify and amplify the meaning of the former “Messiah died for the ungodly,” it has not always been agreed upon as to how this verse should be understood. Is the “righteous man” of the first clause simply clarified by the “good man” of the next clause, or is the “good man” a better prospect for self-sacrificing love than the “righteous man?” Still others have suggested that we’re not talking here about laying down one’s life for a person, but for a cause (taking the word “righteous” and “good” as neuter). Another option is that “righteous” refers to any person of upstanding character, while “good” refers to one’s own benefactor.¹⁴³

Whatever the exact meaning of the terms, the general meaning is clear: we might be able to understand why a person would give up his life for the sake of a righteous or good man, but, in fact, the Messiah gave up His life for neither—not a righteous nor a good person, but instead He gave up His life for the ungodly. This truly is the mystery of God’s love!

But God demonstrates His own love toward us – This contrast of God loving the ungodly is surely a demonstration of the greatest of love! The verb *συνιστάναι* (*sunistanai*, from *συνίστημι*, *sunistemi*), “to demonstrate,” “to prove,” was used in 3:5 but most likely should be understood here in the sense of “prove.” Most interesting in this regard is that Paul uses the present tense, “God demonstrates,” even though the cross is past. The very fact that the death of Messiah occurred remains a proof in the present of God’s love; so does the fact that the historical event of the cross continues to bear present reality in redeeming sinners and reconciling them to God. Though Messiah died nearly 2000 years ago, the reality is that this event continues to be the greatest demonstration of God’s love for the ungodly.

Note that God’s love is contrasted with that of man’s by the emphatic “His own love” (*τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἀγάπην*). God is able to love in an infinite way, with an infinite capacity. As such, His love forms the model for all genuine love.

We may rightly ask how God’s love is demonstrated by giving Messiah to die for the ungodly. Would it not be more natural to say that Messiah’s love was demonstrated? But here we have, as often, the accepted theological axiom of the Apostle, that the Father and the Messiah are one, so that what the Messiah does can be rightly accredited to the Father, and *vice versa*. It is for this very reason that the Apostle can say, without hesitation or explanation, that God purchased the church “with His own blood” (Acts 20:28).¹⁴⁴ Thus, as far as the Apostle is concerned, the pain and suffering which the Messiah underwent on behalf of

143 since the term was used in this way and the presence of the article before *ἀγαθοῦ*, *agathou*, might suggest this usage.

144 I am aware of the textual variants in this verse, some of the Byzantine manuscripts having *κύριος* (*kurios*, “Lord”) rather than *θεός* (*theos*, “God”) but the clear weight of manuscript evidence is on the side of reading *θεός*, and in addition, this is surely the more difficult reading.

those for whom He died was no less the pain and suffering of the Father, and that in the death of the Messiah the Father's love is surely demonstrated as is the love of Yeshua for His own.

while we were yet sinners, Messiah died for us – This is parallel to the former “while we were still helpless.” Thus, our helplessness is the result of our sin. Yet God did not wait for us to respond to Him, for we were unable. He forgave us while we still clung to our sin—while our lives were characterized by it. Here, the designation “sinners” refers to the primary characteristic of the unregenerate life. We may rightly extrapolate from this that once a person is born from above, this prime characteristic of being “sinner” changes. Even though we all sin and continue to battle against the flesh, the primary or most obvious attribute of a child of God is not that of “sinner” but of “holy one” (ἅγιος, *hagios*, often in the plural and translated “saints,” meaning “holy ones”). Passing from darkness to light is an actual passage that results in a changed life and an ongoing process of being conformed to the image of Yeshua.

9-10 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

This *kal v'chomer* (light and heavy) argument is a favorite one of the Sages. If something is true for the greater, then it surely is true for the lessor. Thus, in this case, if the act of reconciliation of sinners to God required the very death of the Son (the greater case), surely it is true that maintaining our lives through His living must be true. Or to say it another way, if the greater task is loving the ungodly, then surely we can expect God to love those who are holy.

The participle “having been justified” (δικαιωθέντες, *dikaiothentes*) picks up the theme of v. 1, which is itself a concluding summary of 1:18-4:25. Paul is linking together “how one gets in” with “how one stays in.” In both cases, coming into the family of God and staying in the family of God are the result of God's omnipotent and eternal love and grace whereby He reconciles the sinner to Himself and provides for his eternal salvation. If our “getting in” was the result of God reconciling us to Himself through the death of His Messiah, then we may well reason that He will also “keep us in” through His life. The object reconciled is far too valuable to ever be lost.

We are justified “by His blood” (ἐν αἱματι αὐτοῦ,¹⁴⁵ *en haimati autou*), that is, by His death (v. 10). The shedding of blood, so well portrayed in the sacrifices of the Tabernacle and Temple, depicts a violent death—a death of a victim, not death by natural means. Whenever we encounter this sacrificial language applied to the work of Messiah we must gather together all we know of the sacrificial

145 The ἐν (en) most likely denotes “by means of” or “by virtue of,” not sphere.

ritual as foreshadowing His ultimate sacrifice.

we shall be saved – The future tense emphasizes a very real aspect of salvation, namely, that ultimately we are saved from the fury of God's wrath in the final day of judgment. Thus, at times the words "saved" or "salvation" refer to our final rescue from the sentence of "guilty" to be uttered by the Judge of all the earth. Yet this salvation is not only future, but has present realities (note the use of "now" [νῦν, *nun*] in v. 11). Indeed, the Apostle has already told us that God's wrath "is being revealed against all ungodliness" (1:18). So while there is a clear future reality to our salvation, there is, nonetheless, a present and real salvation for all who believe.

We should be careful to gather all of Paul's words together and not try, based upon this verse, to make a rigid distinction between the efficacy of Yeshua's death (blood) and His resurrection (life). Granted, Paul says we have been justified by His blood and that we are saved by His life, but in 4:25 he teaches that we were justified as a result of His resurrection. The point is that Paul does not envision a separation between the death and resurrection of the Messiah, for surely one without the other is either impossible or worthless. Rather, the work of the Messiah in all aspects is the fountain from which our salvation flows.

For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God – Here we have, for the first time in this epistle, the use of the word "reconcile" (καταλλάσσειν, *katallassein*). The verb is found only in Pauline epistles (1Co 7:11; 2Co 5:18, 19, 20) and the same is true of the noun (καταλλάγη, *katallage*). The definition of this word has already been described in the opening phrase "we have peace with God" (5:1).

When definitions are sought in the Greek of the 1st Century for this word group, it is hardly surprising that one finds no use of it in a religious sense. In Hellenistic religion the relation between deity and man was not conceived of as the deeply personal thing that it is in the Bible. In the salvation described by God in the Scriptures, reconciliation to Him is the essential element. Sin has brought enmity between the Creator and His creation, but in the outworking of salvation this enmity is removed. This enmity involves both God's hostility toward the sinner (His wrath) and the sinner's hostility toward God (enemies). But there is a great difference in how this hostility is done away with, for with man the removal of hostility is tied to a dramatic change within him, while the removal of God's hostility involves no change in His character at all. Rather, God's hostility toward the sinner is the direct outworking of His righteous character which demands that justice be served and therefore that sin be punished.

But reconciliation is the direct outflowing of God's character as well, for it comes from His infinite love. It is interesting to note that in all of the uses of the verb καταλλάσσειν, every time God is the subject the verb is in the active voice, while those occurrences which have man as subject are in the passive. Thus "God reconciles" but "man is reconciled." God is therefore always the initiator—never

man. This harkens back to the quote from Psalm 14 or Psalm 53 (Rom 3:10-11) in which Paul emphasizes “there is none who seek for God.” Thus, if reconciliation is to occur, it must be as the result of God’s initiative toward the sinner.

Yet though the active voice is always used of God when the verb *καταλλάσσειν* comes into play, 2Co 5:20 shows us that from Paul’s perspective there was still the necessity of man to respond to God’s call for reconciliation: “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Messiah, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Messiah, be reconciled to God.” Surely, while God must be the initiator in the whole reconciliation process, the very fact that a term like “reconciliation” is used indicates strongly that man does not play a purely passive role. Quickened by the inner work of the Spirit, the soul pressed upon by God responds from the gift of faith which he has been given. And in that response of faith, the sinner lays hold of the eternal reconciliation which has been purchased for him by the blood of the Messiah.

much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. – This parallels the *kal v'chomer* argument already given in v. 9. If the love of God demonstrated in the death of the Messiah is able to overcome the enmity which existed between Himself and those who were ungodly, then surely this same love will extend itself to maintain and guard those who are now reconciled.

11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Yeshua Messiah, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

What does the opening “not only this” refer to? Most commentators supply the idea of reconciliation, so that they take the meaning to be, “And not only are we reconciled to God. . . .” However, it may well be that the primary theme in mind in this paragraph is that of “salvation” in general, and specifically being saved from the wrath of God, a theme which has been picked up again in the previous clause (“we shall be saved through His life”). The point, then, is to stress the tense of the verb (future) and contrast it with the present: not only shall we be saved in the world to come, but we already exult now. The *eschaton* has broken into the present by the coming of Messiah.

we exult in God (*καυχώμενοι ἐν τῷ θεῷ*) – “we exult” is a present participle which may well indicate continuous action: “we keep on exulting.” This is a bit of a paradox, for Paul himself informs us that we also “groan within ourselves” (8:23) as we await our final redemption. How is it, then, that we continually rejoice while at the same time we groan? The answer comes enwrapped in the element of faith, for faith brings into the present what, in reality, awaits the future. The very knowing that God will maintain His promise to bring us to Himself does, even in the midst of our groaning, cause us to exult. Thus, our exultation is “through Adoneinu Yeshua HaMashiach,” for it is in His finished work that we are able to possess this abiding faith. It is through the finished work of Yeshua on

our behalf (death, resurrection, ascension, intercession) that we are able to look beyond the groaning of this sphere to the joy of the עוֹלָם הַבָּא, 'olam haba', the world to come.

12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

Paul begins this section with “Therefore” (Διὰ τοῦτο, *dia touto*) and it seems most likely, both on the basis of the Greek grammar as well as the context, that he intends his readers to understand that what follows is the inevitable result of the truth stated in the previous section (vv. 1-11). The fact that reconciliation exists between sinners and a just God is the result of the application of Messiah's work to the sinner via faith. Thus, those who have right standing with God do so as a matter of God's undeserved love by which they have been transformed from enemies of the Most High into His dearest friends. But what Paul now goes on to teach us is that this undeserved love of God whereby He brings into right standing those who otherwise would be condemned, goes well beyond the individual—it has an effect as wide as the effect of Adam's sin. For if the sin of Adam cast its effect upon all mankind, then in like manner the existence and work of Yeshua HaMashiach affects all. Adam condemned all who would come through him—Yeshua redeems all who would come to Him. The parallels between Adam and Messiah are thus close and direct.

just as through one man sin entered into the world – Paul uses “just as” (ὥσπερ, *osper*; the protasis) but does not follow it with the expected “so also” (the apodasis). In fact, he enters into an explanation (vv. 13-15) and a kind of long parentheses (vv. 16-17), and only in v. 18 comes back to the original theme. Apparently the parenthesis became so long that he is compelled, in v. 18, to repeat his “just as” and follow it immediately with the expected “so also.”

With this in mind, we must understand that throughout this section it is Paul's intention to show the parallels (some in similarity, others in contrast) between Adam and Yeshua. Though he does not state it explicitly until v. 18, it is clear from the structure of the section as well as the content that this is the Apostle's intention.

through one man – Sin is almost personified or at least quantified, for it comes “through one man,” i.e., as the result of one man. It is surely to be noted that the avenue for sin into the world is considered as Adam, not Eve, even though she was the first to disobey. The *Apocalypse of Moses* 32 has Eve declaring “. . . all sin is come into the creation through me.”¹⁴⁶ b. *Yevamot* 103b shows that at least some of the rabbinic authorities of the Talmudic period believed that sin was passed on to Eve's children:

146 quoted from Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.274.

When the serpent copulated with Eve, he infused her with lust. The lust of the Israelites who stood at Mount Sinai, came to an end. The lust of the idolaters who did not stand at Mount Sinai did not come to an end.

Indeed, Ben Sira states this exactly:

From a woman did sin originate, and because of her we all must die.¹⁴⁷

Yet the rabbinic material also contains hints that some held to the belief that Adam's sin caused death and decay to be imputed to all of mankind's generations.¹⁴⁸

Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight which He hath made crooked (vii. 13)? When the Holy One, blessed by He, created the first man, He took him and led him round all the trees of the Garden of Eden, and said to him, "Behold My works, how beautiful and commendable they are! All that I have created, for your sake I created it. Pay heed that you do not corrupt and destroy My universe; for if you corrupt it there is no one to repair it after you. Not only that, but you will cause death to befall that righteous man [Moses]."¹⁴⁹

[Then the Lord God formed] the man: for the sake of Abraham. R. Levi said: It is written, The greatest man among the Anakim (Josh 14:15): "man" means Abraham, and why is he called the greatest man? Because he was worthy of being created before Adam, but the Holy One, blessed be He, reasoned: "He may sin and there will be none to set it right. Hence I will create Adam first, so that if he sins, Abraham may come and set things right."¹⁵⁰

In one sense, the Golden Calf of Exodus played a similar role in Judaism as Adam does in Pauline theology, for every generation carries a bit of the Golden Calf (i.e., the sin and consequences of Israel's rebellion at Sinai):

R. Oshaia said: Until Jeroboam, Israel imbibed [a sinful disposition] from one calf; but from him onwards, from two or three calves. R. Isaac said: No retribution whatsoever comes upon the world which does not contain a slight fraction of the first calf [i.e., the molten calf in the wilderness], as it is written, nevertheless in the

147 *Ben Sira* xxv.28[24].

148 for a thorough discussion of this topic, i.e., a rabbinic understanding of sin, see the comments of Ephraim Urbach, *The Sages* (Harvard, 1979), pp. 422ff.

149 *Mid. Rab. Eccl.* vii.13.

150 *Mid. Rab. Gen.* xiv.6.

day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them. R. Hanina said: After twenty-four generations [the doom foretold in] this verse was exacted, as it is written, He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, cause the visitations of the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand.¹⁵¹

Yet though it is clear that the Sages taught the passing of death from one generation to another as a result of Adam and Eve's sin, the passing of a "sin nature," something Christian theology insisted upon from the earliest years, is not a general tenet of rabbinic theology. Man is endowed with freedom of will and thus becomes a sinner entirely on the basis of each person's choice, not because of a predisposition inherited from one's forefathers. Though death is passed on from Adam and to each generation, the presence of sin is the result of individual choice. And, it is not universally agreed upon that death and sin are always linked. Death is a matter of God's providence for each person, according to Aki-va, but one's evil deeds can shorten one's life. However, one's good deeds cannot lengthen it because the length of days has been determined.¹⁵² Death is thus the result of providential decree, not necessarily the reward for evil deeds.¹⁵³

Since many of the Sages denied the passing of the sinful inclination from one generation to another, they also denied the Pauline (and later Christian) insistence upon the need for redemption from the "sin nature." In general, rabbinic teaching of the Talmudic period was that each person is created with both the ability to do good and to do evil, and that the freedom of choice in the individual is the deciding factor. In this way, the keeping of the Torah is the antidote against the sinful inclination,¹⁵⁴ and therefore the constant emphasis upon Torah study and doing of the *mitzvot* is better appreciated.

Furthermore, since God is the One who created both the evil and good inclinations within mankind, one need not be "redeemed" from the evil inclination—one needs rather to control it—to subdue it through the doing of the *mitzvot*.

The contrary inclinations in mankind were described in rabbinic literature as *yetzer ra'* (יֵצֶר רָע, also with the article, יֵצֶר הָרָע) or "evil inclination" and *yetzer tov* (יֵצֶר טוֹב, also with the article, יֵצֶר הַטוֹב) or "good inclination." The following gives a general picture of the Sages teaching on this duality within mankind:

1) The *yetzer ra'* was created in man by God:

151 b.*Sanhedrin* 102a.

152 b.*Mo'ed Qatan* 28a; m.*Eduyot* ii.9, and Urbach's comments, *The Sages*, pp. 264-266.

153 though evil deeds can hasten death, showing the ambiguity which the sages were willing to live with when it came to the intersection of providence and free will.

154 cf Rom 8:3 "For what the Torah could not do . . ."

Raba said: Though God created the *Yetzer ha-Ra*, He created the Torah as an antidote [lit. spice] against it.¹⁵⁵

- 2) God created within man the ability to overcome the *yetzer ra'*

Thus the Holy One, blessed by He, said to Israel: My children, I have created for you the Evil Inclination, (but I have at the same time) created for you the Torah as an antidote. As long as you occupy yourselves with the Torah, he shall not have dominion over you.¹⁵⁶

- 3) Though the Torah could enable one to overcome the *yetzer ra'*, it could never eradicate it altogether:

When Israel heard the words Thou shalt have no other gods, the Evil Inclination was eradicated from their hearts. Then they came to Moses and said to him: Moses, our teacher, be an emissary between us, as it is said: Speak thou with us, and we will hear. Now therefore, why should we die? What benefit will there be if we perish? Forthwith the Evil Inclination returned to his place. Thereupon they went back to Moses and said to him: Moses, our teacher, would that He revealed Himself to us a second time, would that He would kiss me with the kisses of His mouth. He answered them: This will not happen now, but in the time to come, as it is written: And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh (Ezek 36:26).¹⁵⁷

- 4) One must overcome the *yetzer ra'* or it will gain more and more control over one's entire being:

And the evil inclination is like a king over two hundred and forty-eight parts of the body. When a person goes to perform a precept, all his bodily parts become indolent, because the evil inclination in his bowels is king over the two hundred and forty-eight parts of a man's body; but the good inclination is only like one confined in prison, as it is said: For out of prison he came forth to be king (Ecc. 4:14)—this refers to the good inclination.¹⁵⁸

- 5) The righteous and wicked can be determined on the basis of how each control the *yetzer ra'*:

155 b.*Bava Batra* 16a.

156 *Sifre Deut.* §45, p. 103. cf. b.*Berechot* 61a.

157 *Mid. Rab. Cant.* i.2, cf. b.*Sukka* 52a; b.*Sanhedrin* 92b.

158 *Avot de-R. Nathan*, Version I, xvi, 32a

The righteous are ruled by the good inclination . . . the wicked are ruled by the evil inclination . . . average people are ruled by both.¹⁵⁹

While there are many parallels and similarities which we may draw between the later rabbinic view of sin and Paul's teachings, the differences are clear. First, the Apostolic Scriptures nowhere ascribe the presence of the sinful nature to the creating hand of God. Herein lies a very important difference between the later rabbinical viewpoint and that of the Scriptures, for the Scriptures ascribe (as we shall see below) the presence of evil in the world and within man as the result of man's own sin, not as part of God's creation. Since God declared that all He had created was good, the Apostles could not envision that an inclination toward rebellion and sin could have been part of the original work of creation. It could not have been labeled "good." For Paul, the sinful nature was inherited from Adam as a result of his sin and rebellion, and that it was, in some measure, contrary to the original purpose of God's creation, and must therefore be eradicated and ultimately put to death if mankind is ever to regain his ability to accomplish the end for which he was created.

Secondly, Paul is clear that the Torah, in and of itself, has no ability to overcome the sinful nature. This is a major difference between Apostolic teaching and the later rabbinical dicta found in the Mishnah and Talmuds. The inability of mankind to "pull himself up by the bootstraps" is a clear teaching of Yeshua, Paul, and the other Apostles, yet it is a standard teaching of so-called "rabbinical judaism" that man, endowed with a free will, is able to pit the good inclination against the evil inclination and win the battle if one but tries hard enough and if one gains strength from the Torah. In contrast, Paul teaches that such strength can come only from the indwelling Spirit, an indwelling which is the direct result of the redemption won for believers by Yeshua. As far as Paul is concerned, apart from the power of Spirit, one is unable to subdue the deeds of the flesh.

Surely the Holy Spirit utilizes the Torah, that is to say, empowers and encourages (even convicts) the child of God to walk in righteousness according to the commands of God's gracious teaching (Torah). But the Torah, in and of itself, is unable to overcome sin in the life of any individual—it simply has no reforming power with in it. The power of the Torah is that which the Spirit supplies as He writes it upon the heart.

Thirdly, a primary difference between Paul and the rabbinic teaching is that the final victory over the sinful nature has been won by Yeshua, and only by appropriating His redemption via faith is there hope of overcoming one's sinful nature. For Paul, the sanctifying work of the Spirit in connection with the Torah is directly tied to the priestly work of Yeshua in His sacrifice, resurrection, ascension and intercession. While it therefore is necessary for the child of God to appropriate by faith the means of sanctification which God provides, his sanctifi-

159 b.*Berechot* 61b.

cation is, in the final analysis, the purchased reward of Yeshua’s death and life.

Is Paul’s view of the sinful nature new, or is it substantiated by the Tanach?

Having given a very brief survey of the rabbinic view of the *yetzer ra’* and the *yetzer tov* (evil and good inclinations) and how this informs their view of the “sinful nature,” it is worthy of our time to investigate what the Tanach says in regard to this issue. If the rabbis of the Talmud differ so radically with the views of Paul on “original sin” (and the passage we are presently studying is the primary text in which Paul deals with this issue), a fundamental question must be raised, namely, is Paul’s teaching something new or is he simply restating an accepted interpretation of the Tanach? What does the Tanach have to say about the sinful condition of mankind?

The Tanach teaches that the heart of man is inherently evil:

Gen 6:5

MT	NASB
וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי רָבָה רָעַת הָאָדָם בְּאָרֶץ וְכָל־ יֵצֶר מַחְשְׁבַת לְבוֹ רָע כָּעַל־הַיּוֹם	Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Note that the word translated “intent” is יֵצֶר, *yetzer*; the very term adopted by the Talmudic sages to describe the “evil and good inclination.” Yet here the statement of HaShem Himself is that the *yetzer* of man is only evil all day long. In fact, in the Tanach the noun יֵצֶר, “intent” (built upon the verb which means “to fashion,” “to shape,” “to create”) is never followed by the adjective טוֹב, “good” when referring to mankind. As Gen 6:5 states, fallen mankind had come to be characterized only as evil in terms of his heart’s intent.

Gen 8:21

MT	NASB
וַיֵּרַח יְהוָה אֶת־רִיחַ הַנִּיחֹחַ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־ לְבוֹ לֹא־אֶסָּף לְקַלֵּל עוֹד אֶת־הָאֲדָמָה בְּעִבּוֹר הָאָדָם כִּי יֵצֶר לֵב הָאָדָם רָע מִנְעֻרָיו וְלֹא־אֶסָּף עוֹד לְהַכּוֹת אֶת־כָּל־חַי כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי	The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, “I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.

Once again the term יֵצֵר, *yetzer*, is used, this time with לֵב, *leiv*, “heart.” Speaking of mankind in general, HaShem states that the “intentions of the heart are evil from his youth.” The parallel to 6:5 is obvious. The addition of “from his youth,” however, takes 6:5 a step further. Investigating the 19 occurrences of “from youth” (מִן + נְעוּר) in the Tanach¹⁶⁰ it becomes clear that the expression defines a general starting point when describing one’s life, so that “from my youth” generally means “all of my life.” What it surely emphasizes, however, is that the ability to sin is not something one must learn or which requires practice, but is something which naturally occurs in all of mankind.

Jeremiah 17:9

MT	NASB
עֵקֶב הַלֵּב מָכַל וְאָנֹשׁ הוּא מִי יֵדְעֶנּוּ	“The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?

The context of this Jeremiah text speaks of the difference between those who trust in the Lord, and those who trust in man (17:5-8). Why does Jeremiah insert this “wisdom” saying here? Apparently he does so to explain why, if righteousness brings blessing and wickedness yields the curse, anyone would choose wickedness. The point is that man, if he follows his own heart, will inevitably stray from what is right, for his heart is deceitful and sick. עֵקֶב, *‘akov*, rendered “deceitful,” has its root in the word for “heel” (note the name יַעֲקֹב, *Ya’acov*), which also means “cunning” or “deceitful.” אָנֹשׁ, *‘anush*, is the Hebrew term translated “desperately sick” and usually carries the sense of “incurable” (cf. Is 17:11, Jer 17:16). Once again the Scriptures make a very broad statement regarding mankind’s sinfulness. The prophet describes the “heart” because by doing so he describes basic intent of mankind’s volition.

Psalms 51:5 [Hebrew 51:7]

MT	NASB
הֵן בְּעֹזֶן חֹלְלֵתִי וּבְחַטָּא יִחְמַתֵּנִי אִמִּי	Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.

This remarkable statement by the Psalmist puts the issue of sin (עֲוֹן/חַטָּא, *chata’/‘avon*) at the point of conception. What does the Psalmist imply by this?

160 Gen 8:21; 46:34; 1Sa 12:2; 1Sa 17:33; 2Sa 19:8; 1Ki 18:12; Is 47:12, 15; Jer 3:24; 22:21; 48:11; Ezek 4:14; Zech 13:5; Ps 71:5; 71:17; 129:1; Jb 31:18

Kraus writes:

The basic declaration of the judgment doxology in v. 4 is further expanded by means of profound insight into man’s fateful deterioration into guilt as it is expressed in vv. 5-6. עוֹן and חַטָּא have from the hour of birth been the determining forces under whose signature life began. The petitioner wants to say that the primordial cause, the root cause of my existence is interwoven with corruption.¹⁶¹

Surely in the context of confession, David recognizes that the bent of his heart was naturally inclined to sin against the Almighty, and that this condition was one of his basic nature—that which proceeds from his very conception within his mother’s womb.

Psalm 58:3 [Hebrew 58:4]

MT	NASB
רְשָׁעִים מֵרַחֵם תָּעוּ מִבֶּטֶן דִּבְרֵי כָזָב	The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth.

Again, the Psalmist puts the bent to sin as co-terminus with birth itself. The word translated “estranged” is תָּעָה, “to be confused,” “wander,” “stagger.” It is used of erring in spirit in Is 29:24 and describes sheep who “go astray” (Is 53:6), causing iniquity to be placed upon the sacrificial animal. The word’s parallel here with “speak lies” surely denotes sin. And if this is the case from birth, then it is certain that the nature which produces such activity is a sinful one.

Job likewise speaks of the inevitability that those who enter this life do so as sinners (14:4; 15:14f; 25:4). Other writers in the Tanach agree: Ecc 7:20, 29; 9:3; 2Chron 6:36 (cf. 1Ki 8:46); Ps. 130:3; 143:2; Jer 13:23.

Thus, it seems quite clear that from the perspective of the Tanach, mankind is, by nature, sinful—that it is an inevitability that everyone who is born into this world will be reckoned as a sinner by God. What is more, the Tanach is equally clear on the fact that no one is able, in and of himself, to reverse this tendency to sin. As Job says, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? There is no one” (14:4) and Jeremiah agrees: “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil” (13:23).

If we collate the words of Yeshua on this subject, we find Him in concert

161 Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59* (Augsburg, 1988), p. 503.

with the Tanach. His insistence upon the necessity for a new birth must be understood against the backdrop of teaching which saw all who were born into this life as sinners. If the bent to sin is a generational issue, then the only way out of this is a new birth, and it is to this that Yeshua gives His attention when conversing with Nicodemus (Jn 3). The answer for the inevitable sin which comes through generational ties is nothing less than a new birth. Yeshua also teaches that the heart of mankind is wicked and sinful (Mk 7:21-23) and that mankind has a natural tendency to love darkness rather than light (Jn 3:19). Furthermore, Yeshua clearly taught that left to himself man will not come to righteousness. Only when drawn by the Father will one respond in faith and follow righteousness (Jn 6:44, 65).

We see, then, that the rabbinic perspective of offsetting *yetzer hara* and *yetzer hatov* (evil and good inclinations) simply lacks Scriptural foundation. Nowhere in the Tanach can one find Moses and the prophets declaring the existence of the *yetzer hatov*, “the good inclination” in mankind in general. In every case when fallen mankind’s intentions are referenced, it characterizes them as evil and contrary to God’s ways and character. Only through the divine impartation of a “new heart” can righteousness become the norm (cf. Jer 31:31ff; Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 36:26). The fact that the metaphor of a new heart is used once again emphasizes that the sinful bent is part and parcel of the fallen human nature.

Let us now turn back to Romans and the parashah in which Paul most clearly defines this issue of sin which is inherited from Adam.

12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned

As noted above, Paul clearly states that sin “entered the world” (by which we should most likely understand the “world” in the sense of “mankind”) through the sin of one man, i.e., Adam. Adam is held responsible in the primary sense for the presence of sin in the world, not Eve, though she was the first one to take the forbidden fruit for food. By this we must understand that Adam stands in some kind of representative relationship to his progeny. If the doorway for sin was simply the first to sin, then Eve would have filled that position but she does not—Adam does. This gives insight into the frame-of-reference from which Paul is writing.

and death through sin – Death follows sin like a shadow—wherever you find sin, there you likewise find death. God, from the beginning, linked death (both spiritual and physical) with sin (Ezek 18:4).

and so (καὶ οὕτως, kai houtos) – “as a natural consequence.” In the same way that children are born and carry the characteristic of the parents, so it was the expected phenomenon that sin, and death intertwined with it, would be passed on to each successive generation.

death spread to all men – The use of the word “spread” (διήλθεν, *dielthen* aor. act. ind. from διέρχομαι, *dierxomai*) gives sin the perspective of a communicable disease. As the Tanach portrayed a concept of sin through the laws of purity in which uncleanness could be transmitted through contact, so the bent to sin, in reality, is inherited. It spreads from one generation to another.

because all sinned – This phrase is not as easy to interpret as it may first appear. The Greek (ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον) could literally be translated “upon which all sinned.” There are a number of ways this phrase has been understood:

- 1) because of the death which passed to all, all sin
(taking ᾧ, “which,” to refer to ὁ θάνατος, *ho thanatos*, “death” as its antecedent; note: the article is often used with abstract nouns)
- 2) because everyone sinned in Adam (taking ᾧ, “which,” to refer to ἓνος ἀνθρώπου, “one man,” and ἐπί, *epi*, “upon” as equivalent to ἐν, *en*, “in”)
- 3) because everyone sinned because of Adam
(same as #2 but understanding ejpiv to mean “because of”)
- 4) because everyone sins personally
(taking ἐφ’ ᾧ as meaning “because” and disavowing any direct connection to Adam other than that he is followed as a bad example).
- 5) because everyone sins personally
(taking ἐφ’ ᾧ as meaning “because” and understanding the connection to Adam as real, i.e., everyone sins on their own because they participated in sinning in Adam).
- 6) because everyone sins personally
(same as #4 but everyone sins because they have received a corrupt nature from Adam. In other words, it is inevitable that death will pass to all because, having received a corrupt nature from Adam, all will inevitably sin).
- 7) and the proof is everyone sins
(taking ἐφ’ ᾧ to mean “and the proof is.” Thus, death passes upon all men, the proof being that all sin, something which inevitably results in death.)

#1 is difficult and somewhat forced, because the clause seems to function for the purpose of explaining how sin came to all men, not merely restating the obvious fact that it did.

#2 was championed by Augustine and later Latin writers, but seems to stretch the syntax a bit, for ἓνος ἀνθρώπου, “one man” is too far away grammatically to be a natural antecedent.

#3 was held by Chrysostom and a number of other ancient writers but is unlikely for the same reasons as #2.

#4 was held by Pelagias because he could never accept anything charged to a person's account for which they were not personally involved in the act.

#5 was and still is held widely, on the basis that ἐφ' ᾧ grammatically must mean "because." This view differs from #4 in that there is a real connection to Adam in that everyone in a real sense sinned in Adam. Thus, the bent to sin comes from having a real corporate solidarity with Adam, the first sinner.

#6 is also popular and is a very natural way to understand the phrase. It understands ἐφ' ᾧ to be similar in usage as 3:23.

#7 the burden of proof for this option is on finding ἐφ' ᾧ to mean "and the proof is," something which might be difficult since the exact construction (ἐφ' ᾧ, prep. ἐπί followed by relative neuter pronoun ὅς in the dative) is found only 3 other times in the Apostolic scriptures, 2Co 5:4; Phil. 3:12; 4:10. Phil 4:10 may have the sense of "the proof is" (in the sense of "indeed"). Fitzmyer¹⁶² appears to have provided substantial evidence to support ἐφ' ᾧ meaning "the proof is."

If we consider the wider context of vv. 12-21, it is clear that Paul's primary purpose in this section is to show both the similarities as well as the disimilarities between Adam and the sin which entered into the world through him, and Messiah with the righteousness which He gives to those who believe in Him.

In this regard we may rightly ask why Paul feels compelled to find a parallel between Adam and Messiah at all. The first and most apparent reason to find a parallel between Adam and Yeshua is the place Adam played as the first man, i.e., as the *editio princeps*, "first edition" (as it were) of mankind. In a sense Adam should have stood as the model *par excellence* of what a human should be, he being formed by the very hands of the Creator. Yet in his disobedience he casts forever a mold in which mankind would be seen, a mold tainted and marred by sin. The glory of man, then, is forever tarnished by the first man. In this regard, one of the purposes of Messiah's redemption was to restore to mankind the glory with which he was created. As such, the Messiah would come as the last Adam, the Man who would not fall to temptation and would, in His righteous triumph, be the model which God has always intended for mankind.

But there is a second aspect of the parallel between Adam and Messiah which Paul no doubt wishes to emphasize, an aspect which is connected to the whole concept of imputation (λογίζομαι, see comments above on 5:4-5). As noted above, the concept of imputation or reckoning is simply to accredit to someone what is rightfully his. Thus debt is reckoned to the one who has incurred debt, just as, in the same way, credit is applied or reckoned to the account of one who has made payment. In this way, the righteousness of Yeshua is accredited to the account of the one who believes, for in believing the sinner lays hold of the

162 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S. J., *To Advance the Gospel*, 2nd Edition (Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 349ff.

righteousness of Messiah as his own possession through God's grace. The means, then, by which righteousness is reckoned to a sinner is faith. By faith, the sinner is able to acquire the righteousness (obtain right standing before God) of Yeshua, his savior, precisely because the redeemed sinner is viewed as ἐν χριστῷ, *en xristo*, "in Messiah." To whatever extent Yeshua is seen as righteous in the sight of God, so is the one who is "in Messiah." Our union, then, with the Messiah, is obtained through the avenue of faith.

The parallel to Adam is clear: we find ourselves "in Adam," not through the avenue of faith (the new birth), but through physical birth. Even as those who are in Yeshua are seen by the Father as righteous, so all who are in Adam are seen as transgressors. The corruption which entered the world through Adam attaches itself to all who are "in him."

Now we may take this second parallel a step further, for even as those who are "in Messiah" by faith are reckoned or considered as righteous by God, so are they made righteous through the indwelling Spirit who leads them to live righteously. In the same way, those who are "in Adam" by birth are not only viewed or reckoned by God as unrighteous, but also are led by the corruption of their nature to engage in sin. Thus, the character of the life of any individual is in concert with his standing before God: those who are reckoned as righteous before Him pursue righteousness, and those who are considered as unrighteous walk in the ways of unrighteousness.

It would seem, then, that taking the wider context would lead to the conclusion that either #6 or #7 above provide the best interpretation of the phrase "because all sinned," i.e., the phrase emphasizes that solidarity with Adam through birth connects each person to the sin of Adam which in turn is worked out through one's own sinful actions.

13 for until the Torah sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no Torah.

The opening "for" (γάρ, *gar*) indicates that Paul is here supporting something in the previous verse, and the most natural connection would be the last phrase "because all sinned." Paul explains how it was possible to say "all sinned" even though generations existed before the giving of the Torah. His explanation is straightforward: even though the Torah had not yet been given, sin still existed in the world, and people still sinned.

but sin is not imputed when there is no law – Most commentators understand this phrase to mean that somehow, before the giving of the Torah, while sin existed and the sinner was held responsible for his sin, it was not until the giving of the Torah that sin was seen for what it truly was. Cranfield is representative of this view:

οὐκ ἐλλογεῖται [not reckoned] must be understood in a relative sense: only in comparison with what takes place when the law is present can it be said that, in the law's absence, sin is not reckoned. Those who lived without the law were certainly not 'innocent sinners'—they were to blame for what they were and what they did. But in comparison with the state of affairs which has obtained since the advent of the law sin may be said to have been, in the law's absence, 'not registered', since it was not the fully apparent, sharply defined thing, which it became in its presence.¹⁶³

However, it seems likely that Paul held that the Torah, as the revelation of God's immutable character and holiness, existed before its giving at Sinai. Therefore, the same standard of righteousness existed before Sinai, and the imputation of sin was likewise extant even before the written Torah was revealed.

The argument would follow this pattern: 1) there is no imputation of sin apart from Torah; 2) the penalty for imputed sin is death; 3) all men who existed between Adam and the giving of the Torah died; 4) therefore, sin must have been imputed even though the written Torah had not yet been given.

The eternity of the Torah is well established in the Rabbinic literature:

R. Yudan said: The world was created for the sake [lit. because of the merit] of the Torah. R. Joshua b. Nehemiah said: For the sake of the tribes of Israel.¹⁶⁴

When the Torah was about to be given to the Israelites, a loud noise went forth from one end of the earth to the other; terror seized the peoples in their palaces, and they sang, as it is said, 'in their palaces all say Glory' (Ps 29:9). They gathered together to Balaam and said, 'What is this tremendous noise which we have heard? Is a new flood coming upon the earth? He replied, 'God has sworn that He will never bring another flood.' They said, 'But perhaps He is going to bring a flood, not of water, but of fire?' He replied, 'He has sworn that He will never again destroy all flesh.' Then they said, 'What then was the noise?' He replied, 'God has a precious treasure in His storehouse which has been stored up there for 974 generations before the creation of the world, and now He proposes to give it to His children.' . . . Then they said, 'May God bless His people with peace.' (Ps xxix. 11).¹⁶⁵

163 Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.282.

164 Mid. Rab. *Gen.* xii, 2.

165 b.*Zevachim* 116a. The figure of 974 is derived from the following calculation: The Torah existed a thousand generations before the Creation (Ps 105:8). There are 26 generations between Adam and Moses: 1000-26 = 974.

. . . The beautiful Torah, which You have hidden away since the creation and for 974 generations before creation, do You purpose to give it to one of flesh and blood? (i.e., Moses)¹⁶⁶

Some Sages taught that Adam and the Patriarchs kept the Torah, while others suggest that they kept only Noahic laws:

R. Judah said: it was fitting that the Torah should have been given through Adam. Whence does this follow?—This is the book of the generations of Adam. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: 'I gave him six commandments, and he did not remain loyal to them; how then shall I give him six hundred and thirteen precepts, viz., two hundred and forty-eight positive precepts and three hundred and sixty-five negative precepts?' Hence it is written, And He said la-adam—I will not give it to Adam. But to whom will I give it? To his descendants: hence, This is the book of the generations of Adam.¹⁶⁷

Paul has already shown that all mankind (both Jew and Gentile) are guilty before God because all are sinners. Here he stresses that the universal guilt of mankind is legally connected to the universal application of the Torah. Even before its actual giving at Sinai, the Torah functioned to condemn sinners. In the same manner that Adam was condemned for disobeying God's commandments, so all mankind stands condemned before the bar of God's justice, because all mankind are transgressors of the Torah. The irrefutable proof of this is that death became the norm for all who came from Adam, proving that the penalty given to Adam (the penalty for transgressing God's commandment is death) is passed on to all of mankind even though each new generation is not given a similar test for obedience as was given to Adam.

14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

The connection of death with sin continues as Paul unfolds his teaching on mankind's plight. Death is said to "reign," ἐβασίλευσεν, *ebasileusen*, aor. act. ind. of βασιλεύω, *basileuo*, "to reign as king," "to have royal power." Paul's metaphorical sense of sin as "king" sets the stage for his description of sinners as "slaves to sin." This metaphor gives power to sin and inability to mankind to overcome the rule of sin.

Since it is without dispute that people experienced death during the generations from Adam to Moses (just read the generational accounts in Genesis), it

166 b.*Shabbat* 89b.

167 i.e., this book belongs to the generations of Adam. Mid. Rab. *Gen.* xxiv.5.

must likewise be true that they were reckoned as sinners by the One Who holds in His hand both life and death. But Paul's specific point here is that each generation was counted as sinful and awarded the penalty for sin, i.e., death, even though they had not sinned in exactly the same way as Adam had sinned. That is to say, they were not given a specific test or prohibition as was Adam—yet they sinned in such a way as to be deserving of death. This proves, then, beyond dispute, that Adam's sin (the corrupt sinful nature) as well as the penalty for sin, was passed on to all his offspring. Adam as the representative of mankind is therefore shown, and this sets up the comparison with Yeshua as the representative of His people. The actions and attendant penalty/reward of each representative are imputed to those they represent. It is in this way that Adam stands as a "type" of the Messiah who was to come.

A "type"¹⁶⁸ denotes a mark made by striking, an impression made by something, such as an impression used as a mold to shape something else (e.g., 6:17), hence a form, figure, pattern, example. The word gains a specialized use in biblical interpretation: a "type" is a person or thing prefiguring (according to God's design) a person or thing pertaining to the time of eschatological fulfillment. Thus,

Adam in his universal effectiveness for ruin is the type which—in God's design—prefigures Christ in His universal effectiveness for salvation.¹⁶⁹

In this way, in vv. 15-21 Paul shows the parallels between Adam and Messiah, first (vv. 15-17) the manner in which the parallel demonstrates the contrast between the two, and secondly (vv. 18-21) the similarities.

Paul refers to Yeshua as "the coming one" (τοῦ μέλλοντος, *tou mellontos*) which reminds one of Mt 11:3 (=Lk 7:20):

"Are you the Coming One, or shall we look for someone else?"

Some have suggested that the term "affikomen," the matzah hidden away at the Pesach seder, derives from the Greek ἀφικόκομενος, *aphikokomenos*, aor. participle of ἀφικνέομαι, *aphikneomai*, which would be translated "the coming One." Since in the seder the broken matzah, wrapped and hidden away, and then brought back to the table, symbolizes the Pesach sacrifice according to the Sages, this "coming one" as a Messianic symbol makes good sense. We are not certain, however, how early this tradition of the affikomen existed in the Pesach seder. The term אֶפִּיקוֹמָן, *'aphikoman*, is found in the Mishnah at m.*Pesachim* 10:8, but Jastrow (p. 104) considers the meaning "dessert," relating it to a Greek form ἐπιχώμιον, *epikomon*, but normally the Greek for "dessert" would be ἐπιφορημα, *epiphorema*. The form ἐπιχώμιον is uncertain. Blackman translates אֶפִּיקוֹמָן as

168 Used also of Adam in 1Co 10:6ff, Greek τύπος, *tupos*

169 Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.283.

“Passover offering” (*Mishnayoth*, 2.221), but notes that traditionally the word has been taken to mean “sweetmeat or dessert.”

Note also that Paul specifically states that those who came in the generations following Adam, died even though they had not sinned in the same manner as Adam (καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς μὴ ἁμαρτήσαντας ἐπὶ τῷ ὁμοιώματι τῆς παραβάσεως Ἀδὰμ). What we should most likely understand this to mean is that though the people following Adam had indeed sinned, they had not broken a specific command of God as Adam had, for they were not given a similar test of obedience as God had given Adam (“in the day that you eat you will surely die”), or as God would give to Israel after receiving the Torah at Sinai. Here, once again, Paul links sin and death, and shows that even though the specific sin may have been different in kind and even quantity, sin, regardless of its “shape or size” was still worthy of death. “The soul who sins shall die” (Ezek 18:4).

15 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, Yeshua Messiah, abound to the many.

The comparison of Adam with Yeshua as the “last Adam” continues now as Paul unfolds the parallels. It might be helpful to lay out these comparisons in a table:

Adam	Yeshua
Sin entered into the world through one man, and death came from sin (v. 12)	The gift of righteousness will reign in life through One, Yeshua the Messiah (v. 17)
By the transgression of one the man died (v. 15)	The grace of God and the gift of grace of the One Man, Yeshua the Messiah, abound to the many (v. 15)
Judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation (v. 16)	The free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification (v. 16)
Through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men (v. 18)	Through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men (v. 18)
Through one man’s disobedience many were made sinners (v. 19)	Through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous (v. 19)

Verse 15 begins Paul's detailed comparison of Adam and Yeshua as the representatives of their respective peoples. The opening statement is straightforward: "But the free gift is not like the transgression." How is it different? What is the negative comparison Paul wishes to point out?

A number of suggestions have been given. Calvin¹⁷⁰ believes that the difference pointed to by Paul is this, that "there is a greater measure of grace procured by Christ, than of condemnation introduced by the first man." In other words, the free-gift is unlike the transgression because it comes with exceedingly more power than the transgression. Cranfield¹⁷¹ simply thinks Paul wants to point out the obvious, namely that the transgression brings condemnation while the obedience and righteousness of Yeshua yields justification. In addition to these two suggestions I would also add that there may be an emphasis upon the words "free gift" (τὸ χάρισμα, *to charisma*), for the transgression differs from the free gift in this important way, that the death which came as a result of Adam's sin was a penalty well deserved, but the life which becomes the possession of the believer is his entirely by grace—he deserves none of it.

These contrasts, then, set up the reverse *kal v'chomer* argument, that if the act of a mortal man (Adam) could so affect mankind and bring all under the domain of sin, then how much more could the work of the Messiah accomplish God's purpose for redemption. And, the purpose of God is realized through the outworking of His grace, for even the coming of the Messiah is stated here to be the result of God's grace.

the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Yeshua the Messiah – Why does Paul mention both of these (the grace of God and the gift of Messiah), since surely the grace of God encompasses the work of Yeshua? Most likely the grace of God (the Father) is seen in sending the Messiah, while the gift by the grace of the one Man is most likely the justification we receive as the result of His death and life for us (note "gift of righteousness," v. 17). Once again, the inclusion of the word "gift" emphasizes the difference between the transgression of Adam and the grace of God—the former attracts a punishment well deserved, but the grace comes entirely by grace, not as a reward for good deeds done.

It should also be noted how clearly Paul intends his readers to see the humanity of Yeshua—"the one Man, Yeshua." Whether or not Paul was facing an increased number of pre-agnostics in the congregation at Rome as well as in other cities, it seems clear that he intends his readers to affirm the truth that Yeshua, though eternally with the Father, became incarnate as a man—truly man and that without reservation. Errors of Christology either deny Yeshua's manhood or His divine nature. While explaining the manner in which these co-exist within the Messiah is impossible, we nonetheless affirm both to be true, that He is fully man

170 Calvin, *Romans*, 19:206.

171 Cranfield, *Romans*, 1.284.

and fully divine and that as such He is Immanuel ("God with us").

The characteristic of God's grace as a gift, i.e., that which is given and not earned, is emphasized by the word "abound," "... did the grace of the one Man, Yeshua Messiah, abound to the many." The word is ἐπερίσσευσεν, *ep-erisseyusen*, aor. act. ind. from περισσεύω, "to abound," "be extremely rich or abundant," "overflow." The word is often used by Paul to describe the riches of salvation (2Co 3:9), of love among believers (2Co 8:2), or of thanksgiving that the redeemed soul offers (2Co 4:15). The word was used in the classics to describe those who were superior in rank or in acumen, as well as those who were wealthy. Paul thus expresses the grace that has been given as that which was lavished, not in small measure, but in abundance, making sinners rich. "For you know the grace of our Lord Yeshua HaMashiach, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty you might become rich." 2Co 8:9.

16 And 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.

Here we have a second difference between the condemnation which came as a result of the sin of Adam, and the righteousness which comes through Yeshua. The contrast is obvious: Adam's transgression was singular, resulting in death to all, but the work of Yeshua dealt with many transgressions, resulting in justification to those who believe. Thus, the gift is far more powerful (for it overcomes many transgressions) than the disobedience which was only one sinful act.

Furthermore, as noted earlier, the one act of Adam is contrasted to the obedience of Yeshua in that Adam's sin secured condemnation while Yeshua's obedience won salvation for the elect. So while Paul wants to eventually note a similarity between the work of Adam and that of Yeshua, he wants, first and foremost, to show the real dissimilarities.

Note also that justification is linked to the free gift. Justification cannot be earned, it must be awarded.

17 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, Yeshua Messiah.

Paul continues, now, to substantiate what he has just said. It seems, on the basis of the similar structures, that this verse is given to support the claims of 16a (that a difference between Adam's sin and Messiah's obedience is the difference between one sin and many transgressions) rather than 16b (that Adam's sin yields