

## Understanding Imputed Righteousness

The Bible repeatedly warns man to be cautious about whom and what he hears. We see this exemplified in the first two people, Adam and Eve. They listened to Satan's words, then acted upon their belief in what Satan said. In doing so, they disobeyed God's commands and incurred God's wrath. Their punishment was two-fold: spiritual and physical death. The apostle Paul states in Romans 5:12 that sin entered the world through their sin. Adam and Eve are referred to as 'man' in Genesis 1:27. Both Adam and Eve sinned. Their transgression was 'one' (v. 18). "So then, as through one offense the result was condemnation to all mankind, so also through one act of righteousness the result was justification of life to all mankind." Their transgression is what Paul means by the 'one man' in Romans 5:12, 15, 19, and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22.

The text of Romans 5 does not say we are punished because of Adam's disobedience. Paul never said that we inherited Adam's sin. Repeatedly in this chapter, Paul addresses the matter of how sin entered the world—he said it was by one transgression. Paul also wrote of this in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22. "For since by a man death came, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive."

In comparing these texts, it is clear that the man Adam is not meant. The word 'man' here is generic to distinguish man from the animals and from God. As such it included Eve. As we have recently studied, did not Eve sin prior to Adam? The context will define when the man Adam is meant (cf. Genesis 1:27; 1 Corinthians 15:45). What Paul then is saying is that sin (and death because of that sin) entered the world through one (a single) transgression. Notice in Romans 5:12 that Paul says that the consequence of their transgression (death) passed; not their transgression. The reason that death passed is because ALL SINNED, not because an individual person (Adam) sinned. We are not born sinners because Adam (or Eve) sinned. We become (or are made) sinners when we commit sin, just as Adam and Eve became sinners by committing sin. "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). After explaining how and why the 'wage' (death) passed, Paul then explains how 'life' passes on to us through Jesus. This life is the eternal life that was a 'gift' which God purposed for man through Jesus (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 1:4-5). When we obey, as Christ obeyed (Hebrews 5:8-9), this 'gift' is received. We do not receive the 'gift' without our own obedience any more than we incur the 'wage' by someone else's disobedience. We do not receive the 'gift' on the merits of Christ's obedience. Christ's obedience to the will of God made it possible for us to be made righteous (Romans 5:12, 19). But we must obey God just as Jesus did.

Obeying God is how we express our love to God (John 14:15; 15:10; 1 John 2:5; 5:2-3; 2 John 1:6). To obey constitutes walking in love. Walking in the truth is obeying God's word (3 John 1:4). Eternal life is the 'gift' Paul speaks of, and the 'gift' passes on to all who obey after the manner of Jesus' obedience. It is not Jesus' righteousness which passes on to us, but the eternal life that passes. Our obedience is to be of the same nature as Jesus'. As was true of Abraham, when our faith is perfected by obedience, righteousness is imputed to us (Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; James 2:21-23). rb