

## HAMARTIOLOGY (23)

In the next series of verses, Paul specifically contrasts what a person has in Jesus Christ with what a person received from Adam. It is obvious from the contrast that the doctrine of imputation is clearly the issue, because there is absolutely nothing that we could have personally done to receive the wonderful benefits described in this section. Furthermore, it is noteworthy to point out that two specific nouns show up time and time again - gift (vv. 15-twice, 16, 17) and grace (vv. 15, 17, 20, 21). Both nouns contain a specific article which indicates Paul is explicitly speaking of “the specific grace gift” in which God declares a sinner righteous and imputes to him the righteousness of Jesus Christ. What has been imputed to us in Adam is far inferior to what has been imputed to us in Jesus Christ.

### **Romans 5:15**

The first superiority that a believer in Jesus Christ receives concerns the area of the death penalty. The penalty pronounced by God for the offense which Adam committed was the penalty of death; but to those who believe on Jesus Christ, there is the actual reception of the great grace gift of life. Just as one sin brought death, so one death of Christ can bring life. When we see the devastation Adam’s sin brought, we can begin to see the gracious salvation Christ’s death brought.

One may ask - who are the many who did not die? 1) Enoch - **Genesis 5:24**; 2) Elijah - **II Kings 2:1, 11**; 3) All who are raptured - **I Corinthians 15:51-52**

### **Romans 5:16**

The second superiority that a believer in Christ has is that of righteousness as opposed to condemnation. God judicially decreed that we were condemned in Adam and He also judicially decrees that the believer is righteous in Jesus Christ.

Dr. Griffith Thomas observed that one single lapse of Adam brought us a Divine judgment of condemnation, but one judicial decree of righteousness - which God gives at the moment of salvation - is given in spite of many lapses. Think of the superiority factor in this doctrine of imputation; one sin of Adam brought us a decree of condemnation, but one decree of righteousness brings us into an eternal relationship with God in spite of many sins ourselves.

### **Romans 5:17**

The third area of superiority is in the area of destiny. Through the work of one man, Adam, death reigned, and through the work of one man, Jesus Christ, righteousness reigns. There are both positional and practical implications here. Positionally speaking, one who believes on Jesus Christ is destined to reign with Jesus Christ. Eternal death is no longer a potential, but an eternal reign becomes a reality. Practically speaking, one who has believed on Jesus Christ can either choose to allow transgressions to reign in life or righteousness to reign in life.

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### **Romans 5:18-19**

The fourth area of superiority is in the area of justification. These two verses clearly state that just as the judicial declaration of condemnation came by one man, so the judicial declaration of righteousness comes by one man. As Dr. S. L. Johnson has so well-stated, “We are condemned through no fault of our own and we are justified through no merit of our own.”

The same God who declares us dead in Adam, declares us forever alive in Jesus Christ. It is important to observe that both verbs “made” in **verse 19** are passive, meaning the action just happens to the person. The person is the recipient of the action. God makes the decrees and the person receives the ramifications of the decrees.

### **Romans 5:20-21**

The fifth area of superiority is in the area of law, sin, and righteousness. The law of God shows a person precisely where and how he violates the standards of God, and that clearly establishes the hopeless condition of man. But we learn that part of the reason for giving the law was so grace could abound at a greater level.

The law of God reveals every area in which we have sinned against God; and the more sin that is revealed by the law, the more one is led to see how gracious God really is. When a sinner honestly admits how sinful and vile he is, and then considers that God has judicially declared him righteous in Jesus Christ, it becomes very evident that “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.”

In the final analysis of things, there is only one cure for imputed sin. There is only one possible way for an individual to be declared righteous by the same God who declared one sinful and guilty, and that one way is by faith in Jesus Christ. “Whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish but shall have everlasting life.”

**QUESTION #12** – What is the status of an unbeliever?

As we have just observed, all people are sinners by nature, by practice, and by imputation. The only way this can be remedied is by faith in Jesus Christ. It stands to reason that one who has never invited Jesus Christ into his or her life is in a very serious and potentially dangerous situation. God’s assessment of an unbeliever is neither positive nor flattering:

- 1) **Romans 3:9** - All are “under sin.”
- 2) **Romans 7:14** - All are “sold into bondage to sin.”
- 3) **Romans 11:32** - All are “shut up in disobedience.”
- 4) **Galatians 3:22** - All are “shut up under sin.”

These references clearly state how God views the unbeliever - as completely imbedded in sin. Any unbeliever, whether Jew or Gentile, is, as Dr. Chafer said, “... absolutely condemned and utterly without merit before God” (Vol. 2, p. 318).

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The only way an unbeliever can remedy his status before God is to believe. It is **only** faith in Jesus Christ which will move God to assess the unbeliever's condition differently (**John 3:16; Romans 3:26; 4:5; 5:1; Ephesians 2:8**).

If one refuses to believe on Jesus Christ and relies upon anything else to make him right with God (works, religion, accomplishments) the status remains the same - the person is "under sin" by the classification of God and is heading toward the condemnation of God.

Again Chafer is eloquent when he says: "... men are either lost, being under sin, which is to be meritless before God in the issues related to their salvation, or they are perfected forever in Christ by the saving grace of God, which salvation is divinely secured to all who believe" (*Ibid.* p. 320).

Satan is one who knows who is and who isn't a believer. Since he is out to deceive the whole world, the unbeliever is obviously much more susceptible to satanic deception (**Revelation 12:9; 20:3, 8**). Prior to one accepting Christ, the following realities are operative:

- 1) **II Corinthians 4:3-4** - The truth of the Gospel is hidden to those heading to hell because Satan is blinding their minds.
- 2) **Ephesians 2:1-2** - The entire direction of one's life is moving on a course being directed by Satan.
- 3) **Colossians 1:13** - The program that one is really part of is a satanic program and a kingdom of darkness.
- 4) **I John 5:19** - Every unbeliever in the world is under the power of Satan.

An unbeliever is in a terrible state. Satan's power is controlling the unbeliever and God's classification is damning the unbeliever. The only way out for the unbeliever is to believe on Jesus Christ and invite Him into his life. When one does this, God decrees an eternal status change that exists forever. Where is the power found that can produce this transformation? It is the Word of God - faith comes by hearing the Word of God (**Romans 10:17**).

**QUESTION #13** – What is the relationship of a believer to sin?

The importance of this subject must never be minimized in the ministry of the local church. Although some do not like to hear teaching about sin, the truth is, this is a very critical matter to the local church for several reasons:

**(Reason #1)** - The majority of people in the church will be believers.

The Bible was given by God to develop the believer, not the unbeliever (**II Timothy 3:16-17**).