

## **"Death Passed Unto All Men ..."**

*"Therefore, as through one man sin entered the world and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned" (Rom. 5:12).*

Twice, in writings of Paul, the assertion is made that "*death*" entered the world through "*one man*" or Adam: this passage and that of 1 Corinthians 15:21f ("*For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive*"). Our interest in the Roman passage is to understand what death the Apostle had in mind, then learning that, to determine how "*death passed to all men.*"

All students of the scriptures understand that "*death*" is used in a variety of ways. "*Death,*" in its primary meaning and usage, means "separation" and is a reference to physical death; the separation of the spirit from the body (Ecc. 12:7). Students also know that men may physically live, but be spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1, 1 Tim. 5:6). The second death is a fearful reminder of the eternal fire into which the wicked will be cast after the judgment (Rev. 20:14). Our task is to show that Paul did not always use the word in the same sense and also to determine how he used the word in Romans 5:12.

Some commentaries are of the opinion that Paul used "*death*" both in Romans and 1 Corinthians in the same way, although some have the idea he meant physical death in the passages while others think he has spiritual death in mind. We can be certain how Paul used "*death*" in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 for the chapter is devoted to proving there will be a physical resurrection. Therefore, the death in the passage must be physical death for "*death*" and "*life*" are contrasted to each other. Is physical death the apostle's meaning in Romans 5:12? We do not believe so. Just as the context of 1 Corinthians 15 clearly indicates that physical death is the apostle's subject, so context in Romans five shows that spiritual death is the apostle's subject there. Look at it. Christ died to save us. Save us from physical death? If so, why do all men die? That life is given us in Christ is repeatedly affirmed -- refer to verses 17, 18, 21. The life Christ's death offers us is spiritual. The opposite of spiritual life, then, is spiritual death, NOT physical death. Spiritual death is the Apostle's subject.

Granting then that "spiritual death" is the death which passed unto all men through the sin of Adam, the next question is, "How is this passed to

man?" Are we born totally depraved as the Calvinists tell us? Or, as with others, is our flesh sinful? Just how is it that we may have death passed unto us by Adam's sin and yet not be "born a sinner?" The key lies in the phrase "*for that all sinned.*" Adam introduced sin into the world but man's identification as a sinner is based upon what each man does. In Romans 3:23 Paul concludes both of Jew and Gentile "*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*" This tells us the reason a man is a sinner is because he has sinned, not because Adam sinned. The Ephesians were dead in their trespasses and sins because they walked in them. They walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air; according to the spirit which worketh in the sons of disobedience. In short, all this describes man's personal actions, not the actions of another (Adam's) (Eph. 2:1f).

Now consider verse nineteen: "*For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous.*" Paul wrote of one -- who affects the many. One's disobedience (Adam) made the many sinners. One's righteousness (Christ) made the many righteous. The same "*many*" are affected by both Adam's disobedience and Christ's righteousness. But, are all righteous because of Christ's righteousness regardless of what they do? If so, then all are saved. Is that not right? But all are not saved. All are not made righteous because of the righteousness of Christ because all have not responded to Christ's offer. In the same manner, men are sinners, not because Adam's disobedience made them such but because there were disobedient themselves!

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