

“Included or Excluded?”
(In the Life of Christ!)

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Let's read Romans 5:12-19 *“12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned 13 sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. 14 Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come. 15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. 16 And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. 17 If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. 18 Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. 19 For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.”*

This passage is a great summary of what we know to be the bad news, and an even greater summary of how Triune God has redeemed us from that bad news, which is Good News! I would like to use it today to encourage you in the Good News of Christianity!

The book of Romans was written by the Apostle Paul relatively late in his ministry, probably in the late 50's CE. "During this time Paul started churches composed of both Jews and Gentiles. In these newly founded churches, questions arose about how Jews and Gentiles were related to each other: How do Jews and gentiles relate to God, now that Christ has come? Do both groups become members of God's people the same way? What does it mean if gentiles are more receptive to the gospel than the Jews? How should Jews and gentiles relate to each other "in Christ?"

As with most groups who are different from each other, these two groups didn't always think highly of each other and it was difficult for them to come together based on their cultural and historic perceptions. This problem is still widespread today isn't it? It is obvious that there is still a problem among us human beings in relating with one another! Remember September 11, 2001? How about the current war in Iraq, or the AIDS crisis in Africa and the world? We human beings murder one another, steal, kill, and cheat one another, destroy the animals and environment, and often think the worst of one another. We seem to be mostly "selfish to the core," and we have a most difficult time believing good things of others (with good reason), but we find it especially difficult believing God's Good News, that everything has been fixed up in Jesus (**Luke 18:8!**) So what has happened? Surely a Good God didn't create us in this state from the beginning, did He?

No, our Good and Triune God did not create us in this state (**Gen 1:31!**) **Roman's 5** clarifies what happened! **Read Romans 5:12-14**, "*12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned 13 sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. 14 Yet*

death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.”

This passage in Romans gives us some clue as to how we got in this condition of bad news, sin and death. **Adam sinned! But what do we mean by “sinned?”** In our overly moralistic view of Christianity, we tend to think that if we just stop doing all of the “wrong” things and do only “right” things then everything will be fine and we will all live in a garden of paradise again. Whereas good morality can foster good in our relationships, if we meditate deeply on behavior, we might come to see that it is not a true observation that our actions will improve everything.

First, when we act in ways that are wrong, it usually stems from wrong thinking first, doesn't it? Even if we think something is right, at first, once the results come up wrong, we discover it was wrong thinking or misperceptions that led to the disaster (whether on our part or someone else's.)

Second, isn't it also possible to do the “right” things for the wrong reasons, like telling our parents we love them so that they will give us money, even though inside we might really hate them? Is it right to speak encouragement to our parents? Yes! But is it right to encourage them if we don't mean it and have ulterior motives? NO! According to the bible, this is exactly how sin works! Our actions could be “right” and our thoughts and motive could still be “wrong!” Sin is actually something that begins in our minds and not in our actions (**Gen 3:1-7**) Sin is an internal problem of misperceiving, and wrong actions are the external signs that show we have an internal perception problem. In other words, the only reason we act wrong is because we fundamentally follow wrong thinking! But why do we misperceive and think wrong in the first

place? In short, the bible gives us two basic reasons why we misperceive, and this is what Paul is addressing:

1.) **Humanity's first parents were confronted by an evil being that tricked us into**

believing that God was lying to us. In Adam and Eve's decision to believe the "Father of Lies", great damage was done to our human souls, and our minds were plunged into complete and utter darkness and confusion that has influenced everyone (**Gen 3:1-15, John 8:44, Rom 3:23, 5:12-19.**) This confusion made it impossible to see God accurately. Mankind could no longer see God the Trinity as they really were. When they believed Truth, they saw God, as God really was, Good! When they believed the lie, they saw God in a bad way, even though God was still the same Loving Being! What we all end up doing, in our bad believing, is that we start to project our bad thoughts onto God and think that God is now thinking like us!!! Have you ever gotten caught doing something wrong to someone else, and then you expected them to do the same wrong to you, only worse? It may have never even crossed their mind to do the same thing to you, but because your wrong thinking and acting have tainted your mind, you live in paranoia and fear that they will do the same wrong thinking and acting toward you! Many of us can identify with that! Think about how many troubles in our lives are caused by misperception!

2.) **Being free, distinct beings, we are able to believe Truth as well as believe a lie.**

Triune God knew we would not be free to experience their good life if we were "robots", so they made us free to make decisions in life. We are like God in this way (**Gen 1:26,**

2:15-17.) Ideally, People do not have children so that they can have “robots” or a few more people to help clean the house! People have children so that they can have others to share their lives and families with! God does the same!

The Apostle Paul understood these issues hindering our relationships well and clarifies on them in his epistles. He knew that there had to be a change in humanity’s thinking and perception if there was going to be a change in our actions (**Rom 12:1-2**), but He also knew that if we were to be saved from these bad actions, and live as we were initially created to live, we needed some “outside/inside” help (**Romans 7:14-24**), but more importantly, Paul knew the good news that Someone from the “outside” had already gotten inside of our humanity and effected just the change we needed! (**Romans 7:25, II Cor 5:14-21!**) God the Son, the One in, through, by and for whom we were all created, sustained and connected to God (**Colossians 1:15-17**), had become a man and, without ceasing to be God, had literally undone our sinful misperceiving and chaotic human mess!!

Being “lost” and not perceiving God correctly in our sinful humanity, we had no way to save ourselves or even recognize how “lost” we were, but God had already determined to fix such a broken situation by grace before the world was even created (**Eph 1:3-14**). This is what Paul means by the free gift given to us in **Romans 5:15-17**, *“15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. 16 And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses*

brings justification. 17 If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

In more modern language, what Paul is saying is that if the physical man Adam had such a negative influence on all of us (and we don't even live, move, or have our being in him), then think how much of a positive influence and affect Jesus had on every human being in His Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension, because everyone DOES exist and have their real life and vitality in Him!! One of the early church father's, Irenaeus, also saw this connection with Christ and all of humanity in **Romans 5** and developed what he called his "recapitulation theory."

The *POCKET HISTORY OF THEOLOGY. Olson / English* has this to say of Irenaeus, "Irenaeus set to work on a deeper conception of redemption, which is known as his "theory of recapitulation," from the Latin work *capitus*, which means "head." *Recapitulatio* literally means "reheading" or "providing a new head." Of course, Irenaeus was not thinking at all of a literal head, as the top part of a body, but of "head" as the source or origin of something, such as the head of a river or stream. The incarnation is an act of recapitulation – Christ not only "sums up" all of humanity, he also provides humanity with a new "head," a new beginning [Eph. 1:9-10, 20-23]. Irenaeus sought to show that the gospel of salvation taught by the apostles and handed down from them centers on the incarnation, the flesh-and-blood existence of the Word, the Son of God. Therefore he emphasized every point of Jesus' life as necessary for salvation. For Irenaeus [and most of the church fathers after him], incarnation itself was redemptive, not merely a necessary step toward either Christ's teachings or the cross event.

The incarnation became, for Irenaeus, the key to the entire history of redemption and to personal salvation. The incarnation itself is transformative, for it began a process of reversing the corruption of sin that results in alienation from God and death. Recapitulation, was Irenaeus's theological expression for how the physical incarnation of the Word in Jesus Christ works to transform humanity. In a literal sense, the entire human race is "born again" in the incarnation. It receives a new head – a new source, origin, ground of being – that is unfallen, pure and healthy, victorious and immortal. It is "fully alive," both physically and spiritually. In the background of this thinking, of course, are Paul's reflections on Adam and Christ in Romans 5. Without some awareness of that all-important passage, it is impossible to grasp what Irenaeus is teaching. His theory of recapitulation is an extended and sustained interpretation of Romans 5.

Christ is the second Adam of the human race, and in him "God recapitulated in Himself the ancient formation of man [Adam], that He might kill sin, deprive death of its power, and vivify man and therefore His works are true." When Irenaeus wrote that in Jesus Christ God "recapitulated the ancient formation of man," he meant that in the incarnation the Word [Logos] took on the very "protoplast" [physical source] of humanity – the body of Adam – and lived the reverse of Adam's course of life that resulted in corruption. All of humanity is descended from that protoplast, the first Adam. In order to reverse the Fall and renew the race that fell because of Adam, the Word had to live through it. From Mary, then, the Word took "the very same formation" as Adam – not just one like it. Adam was in some mysterious way reborn of Mary as the humanity of Jesus Christ." (*Underlines are mine – TJB*)

There is some disagreement in the church on the issue of how far-reaching Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension actually were on mankind. Some agree with Irenaeus that the work of Christ impacted everything in creation. Others disagree and believe that the work of Christ was limited in its effect on creation. For example, some in the latter camp argue, "God's designs are always efficacious and can never be frustrated by man. Had God intended all men to be saved by the death of Christ, then all would be saved. It is clear that not everyone is saved because the bible teaches that those who reject Christ are lost. Therefore, it stands to reason that Christ could not have died for everyone, because not everyone is saved. To argue that Christ died for everyone is in effect to argue that God's saving will is not being done or that everyone will be saved, both of which propositions are clearly false."

You can see a little of this conflicting thought coming out in most bible translations in **Romans 5:18-19**, which says, "**18** *Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. 19* *For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.*" Whereas verse 18 is pretty clear in the New Revised Standard Version that "all" means everyone, verse 19 can appear pretty hazy. The first part of verse 19 says that, "*the many were made sinners*", but we know from Paul's earlier declarations, and our own eye witness, that the word "many" means "all" (**Rom 3:10-12, 23.**) The same Greek word for "many" (4183 Polus) is used again in verse 19, but by translating "Polus" using the English word "many", it sounds as if "many" doesn't mean "all" just "some." My personal belief is that most translators KNOW that the word Polus means "all", because most Christians believe strongly that the bible teaches that every human being has sinned (with the exception of Jesus Christ).

However, because of how it sounds to say that “Adolph Hitler, or Stalin, or my mean and nasty brother-in-law” have been made righteous in Christ, it becomes too much for our moralizing brains to handle without blowing all of our legalistic circuits!! These translators would rather have us struggle to make sense of the first “many” than the second one! ☺

I think the key to this controversy is to stick with Paul’s overall theology about Christ, and let the objective reality of Jesus’ Divine/Human Revelation be the primary rule of faith. Paul had no problem seeing everyone as “especially saved” in the Christ in Whom we are all connected, and yet at the same time, speaking of how we can be all be “saved”, but not especially so, if we do not believe we are saved and reject and oppose the truth (**I Tim 4:9-10.**) Can you imagine how much better the Jews and gentiles would have gotten along if they believed and embraced that all people were included in the life of God? Can you imagine what would have happened to the walls of exclusion within the Church at Rome if everyone’s inclusion in Christ were the rule of faith? Can you imagine what would happen to society at large if the Church began to live as one in the shared and inclusive unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Paul knew, and that is why I believe he spoke the Gospel in this way to the Roman Church! The bottom line though is...

What do YOU believe – the Truth of Humanity’s adoption in Jesus (which would foster a better view of, and relationship with, your fellow man – from your side), or do you believe something else (something that perpetually fosters division between you and your fellow humans?) **What do YOU experience** – the assurance, rest and confidence of humanity’s inclusion in God, in Christ, OR the anxiety, fear and worry that come along with seeing ourselves and others as excluded from the life of God? (**Romans 7:4-25, Heb 3:12-15**) You have a choice as to what

you will believe but Triune God is intent that we make only one choice “**Choose Life that you may live!**” **Jesus IS the Light and Life of all men!** (Gen 2:15-17, Deut 30:19-20, John 1:1-5, 14:6)

Bibliography. [The New Revised Standard Version](#) "The scripture quotations contained herein are from the **New Revised Standard Version** of the Bible, copyright 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission. All rights reserved."

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