

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.**
(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)*

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Death Passed Through Into All

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After writing two issues on death, one might wonder if I am obsessed with death. Not true! I am actually obsessed with life, more specifically, immortal life, which is our great hope. However, to appreciate immortal life, we need to have a proper understanding of death, something that I believe is dreadfully lacking in our day, even among many Christians.

Well, I will leave this aspect of death to what I have already written. With this issue, I would like to move on to the truth that Adam passed death onto all mankind and that sin reigns in death.

Let us start with a verse as translated by the editors of the Concordant Version.

Therefore, even as through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death, and thus death passed through into all mankind, on which all sinned – (Romans 5:12 CV)

I have chosen this particular translation because it more closely captures the meaning of death entering into the world. For comparison sake, I offer the New American Standard translation of this verse.

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 – (Romans 5:12 NASB)

The NASB implies that death spread to men because of sin. It is true that death came through sin, the one sin of Adam. However, the CV makes it clear that after Adam it is death that passed through into all mankind and man sins because death entered into mankind. In other words, for us today, the reason for sin is death, not the other way around, as implied by so many other translations.

As I scan televangelism channels, I quite frequently hear preachers declare that mankind inherited sin from Adam. Technically, this is not correct. Mankind inherited death from Adam, and because we have mortal bodies, we sin. The warning to Adam was that **in the day that you eat from it** (that is, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) **you will surely die** (Genesis 2:17).

When Adam partook of the tree, his body began a very slow but nevertheless very deliberate process of decay. His body, along with Eve and all their children, became mortal, and they faced ultimate and total death of their bodies. For Adam, the process was a lengthy one that lasted for probably around 897 of the 930 years of his lifespan. Following the pattern of Jesus dying when He was around 33 ½ years of age, we could assume that Adam first sinned at the same age. At any rate, with 930 years under his belt, so to speak, Adam finally died.

With Adam, the order of events was that he first sinned, then he died. With the rest of us, the order is reversed. First we receive mortal bodies, and because we are in mortal bodies or bodies of death, as Paul called them, we sin. Consequently, we inherited from Adam the sentence of death and the process of death that leads to the cessation of life.

Now, let us look a little more closely at Romans 5:12 based on the CV.

First, Paul states that through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death. This was on Adam's side, not on the side of all mankind that followed Adam. In the beginning, there was no sin, and Adam had to break God's one command in order for sin to enter into this world. Then, once sin entered

into the world, death followed for Adam and his race. Paul later wrote that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). God was true to His word, and Adam and his race had to pay the wages of sin.

Second, Paul states that death passed through into all mankind. Notice that he did not state that sin passed through into all mankind. If he had, it would have meant that we inherited sin and not death.

Third, based on the CV translation, which I believe is the more accurate for this verse, Paul states “on which all sinned.” This is a slightly awkward phrasing. I would rephrase it to state “on account of death passing into all mankind, all mankind sinned.” In other words, after Adam, it is death that leads to sin. But let us not get too technical on the point, for the two are inseparable. Sin led to death and death is the breeding ground for sin. For Adam, it was sin first, then death. The wages of sin is death. For the rest of mankind, it is death first (i.e., the process of death) and then sin. Again, the wages of sin is death.

This order answers the question of why a baby straight out of the womb can die within seconds even though the infant had no opportunity to sin or rather never sinned. If sin were the reason for death, then a baby could not die until it committed its first sin or act of rebellion against God.

Let me state it two other ways. We are born to die, or we are born with mortal bodies. This is what we inherited from the first Adam, and this is only reversed in the last Adam at the resurrection, for Christ is the Resurrection and the Life. Until the first resurrection and transfiguration, death is the lot of all mankind, without exception. Even Jesus, the Son of God, died that all mankind might live one day in immortal bodies; not all at the same time, but all eventually.

The reason we sin is because sin reigns in death or, we could say, sin makes its home in death. As long as we have a mortal, corruptible body, sin has a place in which to reign or rule.

So that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal [eonian] life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:21 NASB [CV])

For believers, sin is not to reign over us any longer, but this does not negate the fact that sin is ever present and stands ready to take the reign of our body. Paul warns us.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts.... (Romans 6:12 NASB)

Sin leads people to lust in their mortal bodies. It is a corruption of life that leads to death. But thank God, believers have been given the grace of God that His grace would reign through righteousness to eonian life through the life of our Lord Jesus. Therefore, **even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus** (Romans 6:11).

Well, there is much to Paul’s Romans epistle, but the point that I simply want to make is that mankind inherited death from the first Adam. It took the last Adam to come to this earth, die on a cross, and be raised up from among the dead to reverse this death sentence upon mankind. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45). Our hope is to inherit the coming kingdom of Christ, and this comes through resurrection and transfiguration into the image of Christ, the King.

Death, not sin, is the real enemy of mankind. Remove death and sin has no place in which to reign; it will die or cease to exist as a force over man’s life. This is why it is imperative that death be abolished, and this is only possible as the resurrected Christ reigns until He puts all His enemies under His feet. He will reign until finally death, the last enemy, is abolished.

This is the hope of all mankind, for without it, sin will continue and mankind will not experience the all in all new of God, which is truly the love of God, for God is love.

(25) For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. (26) The last enemy that will be abolished is death. (1 Corinthians 15:25-26 NASB)