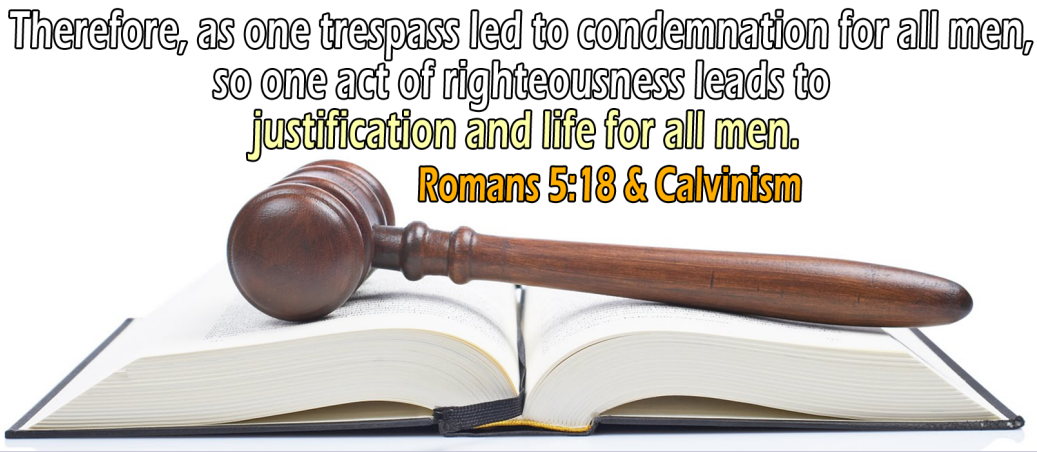
Romans 5:18-19, 'justification and life for all men'

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Therefore, as **one trespass** led to **condemnation for all men**, so **one act of righteousness** leads to **justification and life for all men.** 19 For 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.** Romans 5:18-19 (ESV)

(For a recent defense of this see here.)

This to me seems a pretty simply one, but it's going to be troublesome if people only quote verse 18 and you're not aware of verse 19 which clarifies verse 18.

Adam	Christ
One trespass led to condemnation for "***all***"	One act of righteousness leads to justification and life for "***all***"
One disobedience leads to "***the many***" made sinners	One obedience leads to the justification of "***the many***"

Throughout the discussion in Romans 5 the Apostle groups humanity into to groups: they're either in Adam or in Christ.

All those outside of Christ are in Adam, they are his natural children and have inherited the sinful nature from their father Adam, who is the root of the human tree. He was the representative of all the human race in the Garden.

But by the grace of God, we have another Federal Head, namely our precious Lord Jesus, who stood in the stead of His people (Matt 1:21; 2 Co 5:21; Tit 2:14, Jn 10:15, etc..).

Not all the human race is in Him, but only those who believe in Him. All those who do not believe *remain* in Adam.

It is clear from contrasting verses 18 and 19 (and Romans 5 in general) that Paul does not see the whole human race as justified because of Christ, as that would contradict the idea of Hell and what was said before chapter 5, especially Romans 1-2 and what is in this chapter: Romans 5:12, 14, 16-17.

Commentaries

The **ESV Study Bible** explains: [1]

Rom. 5:18 The **one trespass** of Adam, as the covenantal head of the human race, brought condemnation and guilt to all people. In a similar way, Christ's **one act of righteousness** (either his death as such or his whole life of perfect obedience, including his death) grants righteousness and life to all who belong to him. **for all men**. Some interpreters have advocated universalism (the view that all will be saved) based on these verses. But Paul makes it plain in this context that only those who "receive" (v. 17) God's gift belong to Christ (see also 1:16–5:11, which indicates that only those who have faith will be justified). The wording "**as … so**" shows that Paul's focus is not on the number in each

group but on the *method* of either sin or righteousness being passed from the representative leader to the whole group: the first “all men” refers to all who are in Adam (every human being), while the second “all men” refers to all believers, to all who are “in Christ.” On the translation “men,” see note on 5:12.

The **John MacArthur ESV Study Bible** explains: [2]

Condemnation. *See not on v. 16*. **One act of righteousness.** Not a reference to a single event, but generally to Christ’s obedience (cf. v. 19; Luke 2:49; John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38), culminating in the greatest demonstration of this obedience, death on a cross (Phil. 2:8). **Justification . . . for all men.** This cannot mean that all men will be saved; salvation is only for those who exercise faith in Jesus Christ (cf. Rom 1:16-17; 3:22, 28; 4:5, 13). Rather, like the word many in 5:15, Paul is using “all” with two different meanings for the sake of parallelism, a common practice in the Hebrew OT.

The **Reformation ESV Study Bible** explains: [3]

5:18, 19 Paul returns to the main thrust of his analogy, namely that there is a parallel between Adam and Christ in that condemnation and justification are the direct fruits of their actions. On the basis of the actions of “one,” “many” are constituted either sinners or righteous. Adam is the representative head as well as the physical root of all, and all sinned and fell when he sinned. In contrast, “by the one man’s obedience” those whom Christ represents are “made righteous” in Him. Christ is their representative Head, as well as the spiritual root of the new humanity, for through His resurrection they are given new birth and a living hope (1 Pet. 1:3; Eph 2:1-7)

John Gill in his **Exposition of the Entire Bible[4]:**

Therefore as by the offence of one,.... Or by one offence, as before, the guilt of which is imputed to, and

[judgment came] upon all men to condemnation; which word is used in a legal sense, and intends condemnation to eternal death, as appears from the antithesis in the text; for if "justification of life", means an adjudging to eternal life, as it certainly does, the judgment or guilt, which is unto condemnation, must design a condemnation to eternal death, the just wages of sin: and this sentence of condemnation comes upon all men, all the sons of Adam without exception, even upon the elect of God themselves; though it is not executed upon them, but on their surety, whereby they are delivered from it:

even so by the righteousness of one, [the free gift] came upon all men to justification of life; the righteousness of Christ being freely imputed without works, as it is to all the men that belong to the second Adam, to all his seed and offspring, is their justification of life, or what adjudges and entitles them to eternal life. The sentence of justification was conceived in the mind of God from eternity, when his elect were ordained unto eternal life, on the foot of his Son's righteousness; this passed on Christ at his resurrection from the dead, and on all his people as considered in him, when they, in consequence of it, were quickened together with him; and this passes upon the conscience of a sinner at believing, when he may, as he should, reckon himself alive unto God, and is what gives him a right and title to everlasting life and glory.

What **Charles H Spurgeon** had to say about Romans 5:17-18[5]:

All who are in Christ are justified by Christ, just as all who were in Adam were lost and condemned in Adam. The “alls” are not equal in extent —equal as far as the person goes in whom the “alls” were found. And this is our hope — that we, being in Christ are justified because of his righteousness.

This content is taken from this document

[1] ESV Study Bible, 2008 (Crossway). Taken from the Online Version at www.esvbible.org

[2] John MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible 2010, Crossway. Taken from the online version at www.esvbible.org

[3] R.C. Sproul, The Reformation Study Bible ESV 2005, Ligonier Ministries. Taken from the free online version at BibleGateway

[4] John Gill, Exposition of the Entire Bible on Romans 5:18-19. Taken from the Bible software The Word. See "Resources."

[5] Charles H. Spurgeon, C. H. Spurgeon's Expositions on Rom 5:17-18. Taken from the Bible software The Word. See "Resources."