

Romans 5:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Analysis

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners—the διὰ τῆς παρακοῆς (dia tēs parakoēs, 'through the disobedience') of Adam, οἱ πολλοί (hoi polloi, 'the many') were καθίστημι (kathistēmi, 'constituted/appointed/made') sinners. This isn't merely that Adam's example led others to sin (Pelagianism) but that his act legally constituted his descendants as sinners before God. The passive voice indicates something done to them, not merely their imitation of Adam.

So by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous—through Christ's ὑπακοή (hypakoē, 'obedience'), πολλοί are constituted δίκαιοι (dikairoi, 'righteous'). This obedience encompasses Christ's entire life of perfect law-keeping (active obedience) and His death as penal substitute (passive obedience). The future καταστάθουσιν likely emphasizes eschatological completion while not denying present reality (believers are already justified). Christ's obedience doesn't merely enable justification—it constitutes it, being imputed to believers.

Historical Context

The Reformation hinged on understanding this verse's implications. Medieval scholasticism emphasized infused righteousness (grace making believers inherently righteous); Reformers insisted on imputed righteousness (Christ's righteousness credited to believers' account). The parallel to Adam is decisive: we were 'made sinners' not by becoming sinful but by Adam's sin being charged to us; similarly we are 'made righteous' not by inherent transformation but by Christ's

righteousness being credited to us. Sanctification follows but doesn't constitute justification.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does understanding Christ's 'obedience' as both His perfect life and atoning death affect your view of what saves you?
2. What is the difference between being 'made righteous' (declared righteous by imputation) and 'becoming righteous' (moral transformation)?
3. If Adam's one act of disobedience made you a sinner apart from your choice, how does that illuminate Christ's obedience making you righteous apart from your works?

Interlinear Text

ὥσπερ γὰρ διὰ τῆς παρακοῆς τοῦ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου
as **For** **by** G3588 **disobedience** G3588 **of one** **man's**
G5618 G1063 G1223 G3876 G1520 G444

ἁμαρτωλοὶ κατασταθήσονται οἱ πολλοὶ οὕτως καὶ διὰ
sinners **be made** G3588 **many** **so** G2532 **by**
G268 G2525 G4183 G3779 G1223

τῆς ὑπακοῆς τοῦ ἐνὸς δίκαιοι κατασταθήσονται οἱ
G3588 **the obedience** G3588 **of one** **righteous** **be made** G3588
G5218 G1520 G1342 G2525

πολλοί
many
G4183

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 5:21 (Righteousness): For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Romans 5:18 (Righteousness): Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

Philippians 2:8 (Parallel theme): And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Romans 5:12 (Sin): Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

Ephesians 1:6 (Creation): To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Romans 5:15 (Parallel theme): But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.