

Romans 5:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Analysis

That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord—Paul concludes the Adam-Christ typology with paired reigns. Sin ἐβασίλευσεν (ebasileusen, 'reigned') ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ (en tō thanatō, 'in/through death'), exercising tyrannical dominion through humanity's mortality and condemnation.

But grace βασιλεύσῃ (basileusē, aorist subjunctive, 'might reign') διὰ δικαιοσύνης (dia dikaiosynēs, 'through righteousness') unto ζωὴν αἰώνιον (zōēn aiōnion, 'eternal life'). Grace doesn't reign through overlooking sin but through providing righteousness—Christ's imputed righteousness securing justification. The goal is not temporary reprieve but eternal life, διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν (through Jesus Christ our Lord)—the full title emphasizing His person (Jesus—Savior), work (Christ—Messiah), and authority (Lord—κύριος). All salvation is through Him, from first to last.

Historical Context

This verse's majestic conclusion summarizes Romans 5's argument: two humanities under two heads experiencing two destinies. Adam's headship results in sin's reign unto death; Christ's headship results in grace's reign unto eternal life. The church fathers saw this as cosmic warfare—sin and death defeated, grace and life enthroned. The verse anticipates Paul's fuller development in chapter 6

(dead to sin, alive to God) and chapter 8 (no condemnation, eternal life secure in Christ).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does grace reigning 'through righteousness' differ from grace that ignores sin or merely shows pity?
2. What does it mean practically that grace 'reigns' in your life—how would your daily decisions differ if grace is truly king?
3. How does the phrase 'by/through Jesus Christ our Lord' emphasize that He is not merely helper but the exclusive source and channel of grace?

Interlinear Text

ἵνα ὡσπερ βασιλεύσῃ ἡ ἀμαρτία ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ
That as hath reigned G3588 sin G266 unto G3588 death G2288
G2443 G5618 G936 G6266 G1722 G2288

οὕτως καὶ ἡ χάρις βασιλεύσῃ διὰ δικαιοσύνης εἰς
so even G3588 grace hath reigned by righteousness unto
G3779 G2532 G5485 G936 G1223 G1343 G1519

ζωὴν αἰώνιον διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν
life eternal by Jesus Christ G3588 Lord G2962 our G2257
G2222 G166 G1223 G2424 G5547

Additional Cross-References

Romans 5:14 (Kingdom): Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

Titus 2:11 (Grace): For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

Romans 8:10 (Righteousness): And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

Romans 6:23 (Sin): For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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:

Romans 6:14 (Grace): For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Romans 5:17 (Grace): For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

Romans 6:16 (Righteousness): Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

1 Peter 5:10 (Grace): But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you.