Introduction

Was it fair for God to condemn the whole world because of one man's disobedience?

If you answered "no"--you are the weakest link! Good-bye!

If you answered "yes"--you can begin to understand substitution.
God condemned the world through one man Adam.
God saved the world through one man Jesus Christ.

Can God save sinners in the person of Jesus Christ? The answer is found in this section of scripture!

I have at least 15 commentaries on the book of Romans. Serious students of this book agree this section contains one of the great theological sections in the whole Bible. In these ten verses Paul summarizes the theology of the preceding chapters. Most scholars also agree this is among the most difficult passages in the book of Romans to understand.

Have you ever tried to get a drink of water from a fire hydrant? Bring your glass--but expect every portion of your body to get wet! Albert Einstein said, "we should make things as simple as possible, but not simpler than they are." R. Kent Hughes outlines this passage this way: (1) The Ruin of Mankind (vv.12-14). (2) The Rescue of Mankind (vv. 15-19) (1) The Reign of Mankind (vv.20-21). The ruin, the rescue and the reign of mankind is the outline of the whole Bible.

Can God save sinners in the person of Jesus Christ? As we consider the flow of this passage--human beings have been ruined by sin, but as believers God's intention is for us to reign! Jesus Christ rescue's us from sin and makes it possible for us to reign with him.

Our destiny is to rule. The Bible says we will judge angels. 1 Peter 2:9;

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light".

Do you ever wake up in the morning and feel common, corrupt, condemned? You just don't feel like reigning! We are like the Philistine king in Judges 1:4-7. The Israelites captured and cut off his thumbs and big toes and afterward remarked with 'amazing philosophical detachment'; "Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off have picked up scraps under my table. Now God has paid me back for what I did to them" (v. 7). The Philistine was a king, but he could no longer function as a king. His thumbs were cut off so he could not pick up a scepter or a sword. His big toes were severed. You need those big toes to run and walk. When they are gone all you can do is limp around.
Jesus Our Substitute
Romans 5:12-21

All you can do is awkwardly pick up your food. Instead of dining like royals we pick up crumbs from under the table for sustenance (see R. Kent Hughes illust.113-114). In this passage--if you look carefully--you can see what was lost--you can restore what is gone and you can reign with Jesus Christ in heavenly places.

Ruin (vv.12-14)
Contrast: Adam's offense with Jesus' Free Gift (vv.12-15)

(v.12) "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world. . ." Follow Paul's logic. Sin enters the world, death follows, and like a moral plague all human beings are infected with the terminal disease.

This ruin is described in Genesis chapters 2-3. God gave the command;

Genesis 2:17; “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Genesis 3:6-7; "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings".

"because all sinned". The verb sinned is in the aorist tense. What that means is a completed action in the past. This may be hard to understand--but the Bible teaches all of us sinned in the act of disobedience in the Garden. We exist because Adam really existed. We carry more than just donated DNA, there is a sin signature of death. We are lost as a human race.

Our tendency is to blame others. But in this case--we can rightly ascribe the origin of human sin to our father Adam. You may at first think--"Wait a minute--why should I have to suffer the consequences of Adam's disobedience? In the Biblical world-view--Adam is a real person--but he is also the father of mankind and as such Adam is mankind. The theologians suggest Adam is not a mere representation of mankind, we are Adam. F.F. Bruce writes "Adam is mankind". And as Adam we sinned. "Thus all mankind was present and actually sinned in Adam"(R. Kent Hughes p.114).

Paul presents this powerful picture; we are all in the same boat. All human beings are cursed in Adam. We have Adam-solidarity. John Donne wrote;

"No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a manor of
Jesus Our Substitute
Romans 5:12-21

thy friend's or of thine own were: any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved
in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee".

3:11; "... both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: "There is
none righteous, no not one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks after
God".

(v.13) Given the deadly nature of sin and its horrible consequences, why does Paul say;
"But sin is not taken into account when there is no law". Does that mean--sin didn't
really count prior to the giving of the Law? No--because men died even in the Law's
absence. I think Paul is making a contrast and comparison. When the Law is absent we
fail to see the full consequences than when the Law is present. The Law makes sin
apparent and well defined. If God says,'Don't lie'. How many times do you have to lie
before you are a liar? If God says, Don't steal. How many times do you have to steal to
be a thief? If God says, Don't murder people. How many times must you kill to be
considered a murderer? Chuck Swindoll tells the story of his paper route. When he
would deliver the paper he found himself cutting a corner on one person's lawn. After a
while he had worn a little rut on the corner of the neighbor's lawn. One day he saw a sign
that read, "KEEP OFF THE GRASS. NO BIKES". And you guessed it, he rode the well
worn rut he had created. Swindoll writes, "The man shared with me a few things from
his heart". Whereas before, Swindoll's transgression was not fully seen (and in a sense
not reckoned) it was now sharply defined and accounted.

(v.14) What is Paul's main point? The human race remained under death and sin,
whether under the Law or not--why--because death reigned! Genesis 5--gives the
gruesome account of what happened before the law "and so and so died, and so and so
died".

Here is Paul's argument; the whole human race because of its solidarity with Adam stands
under the ruin of sin and death. We all actually sinned in Adam. "NOT FAIR". Wrong.
If God had put each of us in Adam's place we would have done the same! You might
think --no if it was me I wouldn't of caved in to the pressure! No--the same result would
have taken place--disobedience. God was wise and gracious. God allowed the whole
human race to be condemned by the action of one man (Adam). Because of that, God
could save the whole human race because of the obedience of one man (Jesus Christ)!
Fallen Angels cannot be saved because they are not a race of beings. They sinned
individually and must be judged individually. There can be no representative to take their
judgment for them and save them. Because you and I are lost in Adam (our racial head)
we can be saved in Jesus Christ who is the Head of the new creation. God's plan is
gracious and wise.

"Adam, who is a type (tupos) of Him who was to come". The word 'type'means
pattern. This is not because they were similar but dissimilar. How are they similar?
Adam is human. Jesus is human. What Adam did affected billions of people. What Jesus did affected billions of people. Adam could also be called an anti-type. Because what was true of Adam was not true of Jesus. Adam disobeyed. Jesus obeyed. Adam failed. Jesus succeeded (sorry Sun Myung Moon you are wrong). There is a greater distance between Jesus and Adam than between the greatest archangel the lowliest human. This is a mistake the cults make by seeing the first and second Adam has perfectly parallel.

Rescue (vv.15-19)
(v.15) "But the free gift is not like the offense" or the gift is not like the trespass. The sin of Adam brought death--the decaying degenerative process of breaking down the cells which leads to human death. But grace--not only does away with death, but grace can restore that which was taken from us! The trespass of Adam brings death--once--the gift of Jesus brings life--over and over again.

Compare: Adam's Sin And Christ's Obedience (v.16)
(v.16) Adam's disobedience brought death to billions. Jesus' obedience brought life and hope to billions. Jesus' death brought forgiveness for transgressions. Jesus' resurrection brought reconciliation for humanity. Who's work would you say is superior? Who is the weakest link? Adam--good-bye.

Do you recall the definition of justification? "Justification is the act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner righteous in Christ on the basis of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross"(Wiersbe p.522).

Examine: The Reign of Adam and the Reign of Jesus (v.17)
Paul is examining what was lost in Adam and gained in Christ. What Jesus did was far greater, infinitely greater.

Distinguish: The Act of Adam and the Act of Jesus (vv.18-19)
Now Paul sums up the greatness of our rescue.

We underestimate the power of sin and disobedience. Disobedience is more than just a failure to do what you are told. Disobedience is a struggle for power and superiority. When Adam disobeyed God--Adam substituted the authority of God for Adam's own authority. Adam decided he knew better than God--and at that point Adam claims to be better than God. Our disobedience to God is our grasping for equality with God!

But not Jesus. Philippians 2:6-11; who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a
Jesus Our Substitute
Romans 5:12-21

bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

On the one hand we see our devastating ruin in Adam. On the other we see our glorious reign with God in Jesus Christ.

Reign (vv.21-22)

Discriminate: Law and Grace (vv.20-21)

(v.20) "Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound". Does your head hurt right about now? Is it hard to think about these things? Paul is saying the law was added so that the trespass might increase. Why? Because where sin increases, grace increases all the more. The Law was never given to us to make us do right, but rather to expose our wrong. So many people think Christianity is a religion of do's and don'ts. In witchcraft and ritual magic--the motto is "Do what you will. Do no harm". But they never define harm. And witches do--it is a subjective standard based on what I believe is harmful. God's law is perfect. Converting the sinner. God's law reveals and exposes our imperfection and makes us long for a savior. God's law reveals our disease and makes us long for the cure. God's law exposes our utter failure and makes possible a way out because of Jesus Christ's utter success.

"grace abounded much more". The expression defies translation. The expression means "super-increased--"super-abounded". But even that doesn't quite express the meaning. Its not like when you supersize your value meal at McDonalds where you get a bigger drink and bigger fries. It would be like if you ordered a McDonald's value meal and then they gave you the whole restaurant--but that's not enough, they gave you the whole chain, but even a billion burgers is not enough. If they could establish a restaurant on every star, in every galaxay every where--you might begin to satisfy the meaning of the presence of grace in the universe.

Let me tell you the story of Mel Trotter. He preached Jesus Christ at the beginning of the last century in the Chicago area. He was a drunk who had fallen so low that on the evening he stumbled in the Pacific Garden Mission and received Jesus Christ, he was intoxicated from the cheap whisky he had purchase with the shoes he had stolen from a dead girls corpse. The transformation was amazing. Within eight years he was ordained
to the ministry, became an outstanding evangelist and founded more than 67 rescue missions. My friend Raul Ries had been sent home from Vietnam for threatening to frag his commanding officer. In anger and rage he decided to kill his whole family, kill as many police officers as he could, and then turn the gun on himself. While watching a broadcast of Calvary Chapel on TV with Chuck Smith, he heard the gospel, recognized his sin and God's love and gave his life to Jesus Christ. Today he is the Pastor of one of the ten largest churches in California and holds crusades all over North and South America.

When you strip away all the theological gobbldy-goop—in the final analysis—no matter how great your sin, no matter how profound your transgression, God's grace superabounds. No one is beyond the grace of God.

(v.21) But what is the purpose of this grace?

"so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign in righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Look back at verse 17. "the gift of righteousnesswill reign in life (not in heaven) not in the sweet bye and and bye—but in the glorious here and now.

Conclusion

What are we to make of all this? What does this mean in the real world in which you live? Review the greatness of our ruin. Why? This is where we must begin. In order to really receive Jesus as our Savior we must look squarely into the corrupt nature of our soul and the sin in our life. This is why Jesus strips away our self-righteousness and delusion on the Sermon on the Mount. This is not some ethical treatise on how we should live our lives. It is God's expectation—and it reveals our absolute failure. We do not love God with our whole heart. We lie, and cheat and steal. We lust in our hearts toward each other, and hate each other and given in the right circumstances might even kill each other. Our existence is colored by sin and our ruin in Adam is so great we have no human way out of our miserable circumstance.

But knowing how great our sin—our ruin—we need to review the greatness of our rescue. We see Jesus. We see Him and we love Him and we long for Him and we see his sacrifice and his love and his mercy and his invitation. We see his substitution and resurrection. We encounter grace. Grace sufficient to heal and and humble and restore. We see a sacrifice so great it not only satisfies Adam's transgression but every transgression in every age committed by everyone.

When we think about our ruin and we think about rescue we can now begin to contemplate what it means to reign with Jesus Christ. Our thumbs and toes are restored
Jesus Our Substitute
Romans 5:12-21

and we can hold a scepter and walk like royalties. At the risk of taking a profound passage and making a radical simple statement—this reign can be summed up in one word. LOVE

We contemplate God's love, we receive God's love, we allow God's love to permeate every corner of our life, and we begin to put on the royal robe and crown and live like Jesus always intended us to live. Think about it. Knowing God loves us, allowing his affection to permeate every pore of our lives, we reign in life—to his glory!