

Two Sinless Men

Romans 5:12-21

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Introduction: One thing everyone seems to agree on is that the human condition is bad and getting worse. The problem is human behavior. And...no matter how much the world progresses technologically, humans still act in ways that bring a lot of misery, destruction and death. Some want to ban all bad human behavior, but they have to behave very badly to accomplish that. They have to kill anyone who stands in their way and silence, marginalize or imprison any who oppose the “good” they want to do for humanity. The other side wants personal freedom but some people will use their personal freedom to take advantage of others. Corporate directors, for instance, have found ways to steal millions with stock manipulations...but thankfully it is legal!!!!

Why does humanity always seem to find the most destructive way to deal with its problems? The state of the world is demonstrably bad and getting worse, but the bone of contention is why. What is the reason for it? There is furious disagreement over the answer to it. I found dozens of explanations and solutions in just a few hours of research, but they all started and ended with humanity. As Protagoras famously wrote 400 years before Christ...”Man is the measure of all things.” The thinking goes like this: We create our own problems and we solve our own problems! We may be broken, but we can surely fix ourselves! Whatever seems true to any individual is in fact...true! There is no force or cause outside of mankind! But God sent His own Eternal Son into the world asserting the exact opposite about the human condition and its solution. We had a year of sermons from John on what Jesus actually said about it. Now we are in Romans and our text this morning goes to the heart of this problem. Let’s read it:

Romans 5:12-21 ¹² 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-- ¹³ for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. ¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. ¹⁶ The gift is not like *that which came* through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment *arose* from one *transgression* resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift *arose* from many transgressions resulting in justification. ¹⁷ For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. ¹⁹ For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. ²⁰ The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

There are a lot of precision arguments in this passage. It would be easy to grind them so fine that you will hate Romans five and probably me for preaching it to you. I did a lot of careful study now I want to preach the theme of this passage to you this morning. Douglas Moo commented on this saying....

“The power of Christ’s act of obedience to overcome Adam’s act of disobedience is the great theme of this paragraph. We must not so narrowly focus on what this passage has to say about sin that we fail to do justice to this theme.” *Douglas Moo*

Here God offers His Divine and Sovereign explanation for the human condition. It is the counterweight to every human philosophy and hypothesis. Let’s consider it in three parts:

- It is not your individual sin that brings you death. It is the sin of Adam [12-14]
- It is not your individual righteousness that brings you life. It is the righteousness of Christ [15-19]
- It is The Law that exposes your hopeless condition and Christ’s surpassing righteousness and grace. [20-21]

It is not your individual sin that brings death. It is the sin of Adam [12-14]

Therefore [12a]: “because of this” Paul says, the following conclusion must be reached. What has Paul just said? That we have salvation through trusting Christ and by no other means. “Trusting” being in Greek, the same word for “having faith.” Our salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone.

Romans 5:2 ² through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

Christ loved us and died for us while we were His enemies.

Romans 5:8 ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Now that we are His children there is no wrath. Condemnation is for His enemies and we are His children instead.

Romans 5:9 ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of *God* through Him.

Just as through one man sin entered into the world [12b]: Thus begins the explanation...God’s explanation...of how we all became enemies of God by nature and hopelessly guilty. It begins in the Garden of Eden in the third Chapter of Genesis.

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden '?"

Now Satan's first salvo was so effective that he has been using it ever since. He sows doubt about what God says and about God's reason for saying it. One example will suffice to prove this point. "Did God really say you should not trust in anything more than Him?"

Exodus 20:3 ³ "You shall have no other gods before Me.

If you say "Yes," then Satan will give you God's motive. "God is petty and jealous and demanding and controlling. He wants to take all the fun out of life and keep you miserable." But God's stated motives are entirely different. He forbids idols of any kind because they don't exist like He does and therefore cannot ever help you, save you, comfort you or protect you....ever!! God even describes people like this to Isaiah....

Isaiah 44:14-20 He plants a fir, and the rain makes it grow. ¹⁵ Then it becomes *something* for a man to burn, so he takes one of them and warms himself; he also makes a fire to bake bread. He also makes a god and worships it; he makes it a graven image and falls down before it. ¹⁶ Half of it he burns in the fire; over *this* half he eats meat as he roasts a roast and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, "Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire." ¹⁷ But the rest of it he makes into a god, his graven image. He falls down before it and worships; he also prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god." ¹⁸ They do not know, nor do they understand, for He has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot comprehend. ¹⁹ No one recalls, nor is there knowledge or understanding to say, "I have burned half of it in the fire and also have baked bread over its coals. I roast meat and eat *it*. Then I make the rest of it into an abomination, I fall down before a block of wood!" ²⁰ He feeds on ashes; a deceived heart has turned him aside. And he cannot deliver himself, nor say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

And this is still how Satan tempts and deceives today. He promises satisfaction and fulfillment in something other than God....ANYTHING other than God.... and men will always take this bait. The question is....why do we always take the bait? We take it because we are born sons and daughters of Adam. Through one man the evil tyrant king known as SIN has entered humanity. It is in your DNA.

And death through sin [12c]: Separation from the source of life is a death sentence. If you need a certain food or medicine to live and you cannot get it then you may not die that moment, but you will die. We see children like this every day in Congo. They are still alive, but they will die because they are eating out of the gutter and drinking out of the sewer and no one cares.

Genesis 3:22-24 ²² Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"-- ²³ therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ So He drove the

man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

Would you like to live forever in your present condition? I didn't think so! This too is a grace to humanity. Can you imagine if every Pharaoh, Caesar, Hitler, Manson or Bin Ladin was still alive to work his spell on humanity?

So death spread to all men, because all sinned [12d]: "I would like to have a word with Adam," I have heard it said, "when I see him in heaven. If it had not been for him I would not be condemned!" And this is true. The verb sinned is a tense that means we all have already sinned. Our just sentence of death is established because of Adam. THIS DOES NOT PREACH in our day. It is unfair! When we complain that we must pay the price for what Adam did it is like saying that it is not that every descendent of the first eagle is also an eagle. Adam became a sinner and we are his descendents. The conclusion is inescapable. We are what our parents are and so on back to Adam. Men do not like this at all. They want to stand on their own two feet, but none actually can. Look at how we sin and harm one another. Paul realizes here that he needs to prove the point he has just made before going on with the rest of the argument. Here is that proof....

Until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law [13]: Men were lying, hating and killing for centuries before God issued the Ten Commandments. Just look at Cain! But.... If you never told your child not to jump on the sofa is it a punishable offense when they do it? No! It is after you have told them umpteen gazillion times and they still do it. Before God gave the Law at Sinai, He did not count men's sins against them.

Romans 4:15 ¹⁵ for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses [14a]: Leon Morris says this...

"Even though sin was not imputed, death reigned. Death is personified and regarded as supreme over mankind from the time of creation right up to the time of the giving of the law. Death was just as potent in the absence of that law as in its presence. There is an impressive absoluteness about "reigned." Death's sovereignty was complete." **Leon Morris**

Douglas Moo adds that Paul wants "his readers to understand that only the corporate sinning of all people "in and with" Adam can explain the universality of death. Paul's reference to the time from Adam until Moses implies that the "Law" he refers to in these verses is the law of Moses. Now obviously people who lived before Moses did not have God's law in this specific, concrete form. How then would they "transgress" and so be judged worthy of death? Only because they had sinned when Adam sinned and because , therefore, Adam's transgression was considered their transgression also." **Douglas Moo**

Even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam [14b]: God barred Adam and Eve from the Garden. It was therefore impossible for them or anyone else to break the one and only command that God had given to men...

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

Who is a type of Him who was to come. [14c]: So....Adam was the OT man who was pointing to Christ. And...they had several things in common. Neither had a human father. Neither was spiritually separated from God with a corrupt guilty heart. Both were sinless human beings!

Those old enough to remember the typewriter will understand the meaning of this Greek word. It describes an impression made by striking something. Used this way it indicates a form, pattern or example.

So Paul says that you and I sinned in Adam. Adam's sin made Adam a sinner by nature and guilty of death. We are Adam's children....death spread to all men....even over those who did not do what Adam did. Death then is Sovereign over all men and that means there is nothing on this earth that can oppose it or change it. Scripture will show us now how Adam was the type of Christ

It is not your individual righteousness that brings you life. It is the righteousness of Jesus [15-19]

But the free gift is not like the transgression. [15a]: But the type is never the same as the genuine. It is like it. It represents it, but it is not IT! The Free Gift is not anything like the inherited transgression.

For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. [15b]: The only thing the same here is this....Those who belong to Adam are through no action of their own, receiving the death Adam earned when he defied God. They are the sons and daughters of Adam. This is why Scripture says we are unable to save ourselves.

On the other hand... God acted graciously toward those who were dead to give, through no action of their own, eternal life which Christ earned for us when He totally and perfectly obeyed God from the heart.

The gift is not like *that which came* through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment *arose from one transgression* resulting in condemnation [16a]: What Christ did is infinitely superior to what Adam did. Adam brought death to all men with a single defiant transgression of God. Death to an entire race of beings. This is astounding to ponder.

On the other hand the free gift *arose from many transgressions* resulting in justification. [16b]: After centuries of wickedness and evil, the flood, the wars the treachery, adultery and murder....after thousands of years of that God sent His own Son into the middle of it as a free gift of grace and mercy to justify any sinner who would trust in Him.

Adam lived in a perfect world with a perfect wife and defied God bringing judgment on all humankind. Jesus lived in wicked, sin soaked world surrounded by evil, betrayal and death and obeyed God perfectly bringing justification to all who trust in Him.

For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, [17a]: Adam is the father of human creation and gave us death as his legacy.

Much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. [17b]: Jesus is the New Creation and by Grace gave us the gift of His righteousness leading to Eternal life.

2 Corinthians 5:17-19 ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, [18a]: Men have always objected to this assertion by God. It seems unjust to us that one man could so ruin the entire race of humanity. But....we cannot receive something from our fathers that they do not have to give. Adam was dead to God by his choice and had only that to give to all men.

Even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. [18b]: Since the coming of Christ men have objected also to this declaration. Men are by default...Self-Righteous. They do not like to be called sinners, or lost or hopeless or needy. The Gospel insists that the only righteousness that saves is Jesus Christ's. It is His obedience to God...His sinless life...that is credited to any sinner who will believe Him and put their trust in Him. ONE ACT of righteousness gives life to all who believe.

Hebrews 10:12-14 ¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

A sinless priest offering a sinless offering for helpless sinners.

Mark 2:17 And hearing *this*, Jesus said to them, "*It is* not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

This is your Savior. So look on Him! Do as the Baptist admonished....

John 1:29 Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Romans 5:19 ¹⁹ For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

How many ways can this be said? Verse 19 is a summary statement. One final time Adam's disobedience made us sinners! Christ's obedience makes us righteous!

It is The Law that exposes your hopeless condition and Christ's surpassing righteousness and grace. [20-21]

But the Ten Commandments! Gospel preachers of Grace have always been accused of giving people license to sin. They are accused of teaching that it does not matter what you do because you are not obligated to the law. The people of Paul's day accused him of trying to destroy the law by saying the same thing. The Pharisees accused Jesus of it as well, prompting Him to say....

Matthew 5:17-18 ¹⁷ "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

To the Jew and to the self-righteous in our day as well the Law is everything! To God Jesus Christ was everything! The Law was never given to make men righteous. It was not for failure to keep the law that men died! This is absolutely crucial to the Gospel. It is not a side point.

If breaking The Law is the reason men die then keeping the Law will be the reason men will live. This nullifies the Cross. Why in the world would God send His own Son into the world to die for sinners if there was some other way to be saved? Paul made this exact point also to the Galatians.

Galatians 2:21 - 3:1 ²¹ "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

The Law came in so that the transgression would increase [20a]: So why did God give the Law? To demonstrate beyond any doubt that men are sons and daughters of Adam. They are spiritually dead and physically dying and yet they deceive themselves with their own self-righteousness and religion. This is the perfect way to return to the central theme of these chapters. Salvation is through Faith Alone in Christ Alone. Men are lost when they are born as Adams offspring. No amount of religion, morality, or even Law Keeping will ever save them.

Galatians 3:21-22 ²¹ Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. ²² But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Romans 3:19-24 ¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰ because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin. ²¹ But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the

Prophets, ²² even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, [20b]: The grace of God poured out in the incarnation and death of Christ has kept pace with all the wickedness of men. There is no sin for which Christ did not die. There is no sinner who may not come to the foot of the Cross. Christ's one act of obedience is sufficient for the trillions of sins of men.

So that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. [21]: God returns to the idea of sovereignty here at the end. A sovereign reigns and no one can oppose him. And so it is with death. Only OUR RIGHTEOUS Jesus breaks that wicked monarch's hold on us. He reigns sovereign in grace and that grace gives eternal life which is wholly undeserved by all who come to Him in faith. Thinking about these very thoughts, Paul broke into one of his spontaneous songs of praise to the Corinthian church...

1 Corinthians 15:50-58 ⁵⁰ Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. ⁵⁵ "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; ⁵⁷ but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in* vain in the Lord.