



Have you noticed? Not everything in the world is good. Not everything is happy. Not everything in the world is beautiful. In fact, real evil exists in the world. You can pick up any newspaper and if you go through it, you'll read in the international section about terrorism, war and genocide. If you go to the national section, you'll find political payoffs, scams and churches set on fire. In the local section, you'll find abuse and theft. If you go through the business section, you'll find scandals, fraud and embezzlement. If you go through the sports section, you'll find drug use, illegal gambling and adultery. Go through the entertainment section and there are too many scandals and sins to even mention. No rational person can deny that real evil exists in this world.

It's a far cry from what we read in Romans, chapter 5. In the first half of chapter 5 the apostle Paul sort of paused and had a little celebration where he boasted in all the benefits of knowing Christ, most of all that we now have **hope**. We have a confident, eager and joyful expectation of sharing in the glory and radiance and beauty of God. But in the last half of chapter 5 Paul anticipates a question from a realist who's been reading the newspaper: How can you say that we have hope in light of all the evil in the world? We've all seen and felt that in the last few weeks, right? And it won't stop there. It's like the world is under a curse. "How can you be so full of hope, Paul? Get your head out of the sand."

So Paul will now answer those questions in the last half of chapter 5 by explaining first what's gone wrong with the world and then by giving us the only solution. He starts with what's gone wrong and he goes all the way back to Adam.

Sin and Death Have Come Into the World Thru One Man—Adam

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned— (v. 12).

Here we have three downward steps in human history. First, sin entered the world through one man—Adam. You guys all know the story, right? God created the heavens and the earth, and then finally on the sixth day he created human beings. God placed Adam and Eve in this beautiful garden and said, "It's all yours! Take care of it and enjoy it. But just one thing: See that tree over there? Don't eat from it. Stay away because if you eat from that tree you'll die." Now that shouldn't be that hard, right?

We have a lot of kids here this morning. Imagine your parents took you to Disneyland and turned you loose for a whole day. They say you can go on any ride you want, as many times as you want. Wouldn't that be awesome? There are almost 60 rides at Disneyland, so you have a lot to choose from. But imagine, before you start, your parents also point out **one** ride to avoid. They say to stay off that ride because if you hop on that ride you'll die. That's pretty much what God said to Adam, and you know what he did? He went straight for that ride and hopped on. That's how sin entered the world. It wasn't there before, but now it is.

That had consequences because the second downward step was: death entered the world as a result of that sin. God warned Adam, "As soon as you eat from that tree, you'll die." Just as Adam was the door through which sin entered the world, so sin was the door through which death entered the world. This death is both physical and spiritual. Even though Adam didn't die physically right away, he died spiritually in that he was alienated and cut off from the life of God. Remember the first thing they did after their sin? They hid from God. Eventually they did die physically.

Finally, this led to the third downward step: death spread to all people because all sinned. So this one action by Adam had a catastrophic affect on all people who've ever lived. That includes us! Like a disease, sin and death spread through the whole human race. Because of what Adam did, this curse of death hangs over all of us. Again this death has both a spiritual and physical dimension. Spiritually, it means we're under the judgment of God; under condemnation. Physically, it means we age and we die. We don't know how long people would have lived if Adam hadn't sinned, or even what would have happened to them, but death as we know it wouldn't have been part of our reality.

Now a question people often ask is, why should **we** pay the price for something Adam did? That's not fair. Notice Paul gives us the reason. He says, "death came to all people because all sinned." What's that mean? Some people think it means Adam was a bad example to the rest of us and so we all went on and sinned just like he did with the same results. Now even though it's true that we all sin, that's not what Paul says here. When he says, "because all sinned," he uses a verb tense that points to a single past action. He's saying the whole human race sinned in one single past action. That single past action was Adam's sin in eating from the tree. So Paul isn't saying we all die like Adam because we all sin like Adam, but rather we all die like Adam because somehow

when he sinned, we sinned. Somehow we were **in him** when he sinned.

Now, let's face it, that sounds strange to us, even unfair! That's because we're a very individualistic culture. We believe every person is responsible for his or her own actions. You work hard and make good choices and you succeed. But if you're lazy and make stupid choices you pay the price. All the credit or all the blame is on you. We see humanity as made up of as many individual, autonomous units as there are people. Why should I be blamed for something someone else did?

But the Bible takes a very different approach, not of human individuality but of human **solidarity**. By the way, people of other cultures than ours here in America get this. They understand better the idea that the individual is nothing apart from his family or clan or tribe. They understand how if someone does a bad thing it brings shame on their whole family. The idea of solidarity says you can be so knitted together with someone that whatever they achieve, you achieve, and what they do wrong, you do wrong. They understand how there could be a sense in which Adam's sin and shame is our sin and shame.

But when you think about it, we do allow for this in certain situations. We give power to elected representatives, don't we? A President and Congress can declare war. We don't vote on that, but their decision affects all of us. Here's another example: a football team lines up to run a play and the right guard jumps offside. Who gets penalized? The whole team! But wait a minute, that's not fair. Why should I get penalized when he's the one who jumped offside? Because you're a unit, and you're bundled up together in such a way that what one does you all do. That's what Paul was saying when he says we all sinned in Adam.

Now you still may say that's not fair, but understand that God created you in such a way that if you were in the garden, you would sin just like Adam did. Isn't it funny how when I hold those babies in my arms for dedication I can see a resemblance to their parents already? And they'll grow up to take on many of the characteristics of their parents, not only in looks but in personality. The truth is, all of us have inherited something from Adam so that we look and act a lot like him. We'd have jumped on that one forbidden ride too. By the way, in a moment we're going to see why this idea of having someone represent us is, in the end, good news for us. But for now, understand Adam's sin impacted us because he was our representative and we're born in his likeness.

In verses 13-14 Paul breaks his thought (note the dash after v. 12) and turns to the question of the role of the law in all this.

To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking

a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

He says, all have sinned, but what about before the law was given? How can there be sin when there's no law to break? Paul wants us to know that "sin was in the world before the law was given." In other words, it was there before there was legislative proof of it. But what does he mean when he says, "sin is not charged to anyone's account where there is no law"? The verb meaning "taken into account" is a commercial word indicating sin is registered in God's official ledger as transgression. So while there was sin, it wasn't officially known as such. Yet people were still guilty before the law came. Even though there was no official record of their sin, their sins were still real. The proof of this is the fact that "death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses..." We know sin was there because death had a vice grip on humankind.

All of this explains what's wrong with the world. This is also why there are natural disasters, disabilities and depression in our world—because of sin. I'm not talking about these things being directly caused by someone's individual sin. It's more like sin and death has a grip on the whole world. Because of sin, nature doesn't always act in a rational way. And it doesn't seem fair because terrible things affect people who love God and those who don't. This is also why we can't all just get along. When Adam sinned, it not only alienated him from God, but also from others. That affected his family. One of his sons murdered his brother! I'm sure it affected his marriage too. All the marriage and family problems in life are there because sin and death control our world. It's why people are unhappy, angry and depressed. Sin leaves a hole in our heart nothing can fill. We try to fill it with relationships, popularity, hobbies or sports, but it's like putting a square peg in a round hole—it doesn't fit.

Now this sounds pretty depressing. I told you we'd talk about what's wrong the world today. But I also told you we'd talk about **the cure**. Paul has told us how one trespass cursed the whole world, but he goes on and tells us how the coming of Jesus changed all that.

Justification and Life Have Come Into the World Thru One Man—Jesus

But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision

of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (verses 15–21).

Here's a comparison between what Adam did and how it affects us, and what Jesus did and how that affects us. In some ways they're similar and in others they're different.

Of course, they're similar in the sense that one act makes all the difference. In Adam's case, one man brought judgment, condemnation and death to all people. Similarly, in Jesus' case one man brought justification and life to all people. One man brought in the reign of sin and death; the other man brought in the reign of grace. So here's the wonderful flip-side of this idea of representation. The truth that God deals with us in and through our representative is very good news! If we sinned in Adam and if Adam's disobedience is our disobedience, that means if there were an obedient man, he might be able to be our representative too. He'd be like a perfect second Adam. That's what Paul meant when he said up in v. 14 Adam was *"a pattern of the one to come."* That one can represent us before God's throne and through him we can have the life that in Adam was impossible. Gee, now I like this idea of representation, don't you?

Let's think a bit more about v. 19 where Paul says *"through the obedience of one man the many will be made righteous."* So what Jesus achieved wasn't just to remove the penalty for our disobedience, it was actually to obey **for us** as our representative. Adam was told he'd enjoy life and blessing if he obeyed God, but he chose to disobey. Jesus, the second Adam, knew he'd face torture and death if he obeyed God, and chose to do just that. He was obedient unto death. In fact, Jesus was obedient his whole life through. Even as a 12-year-old child about to enter his teenage years the Bible says he was obedient to his parents (Luke 2:51). We know every teenager thinks they know more than their parents, which can get them into trouble. But think of this: Jesus really **did** know more than his parents, yet he still chose to obey them. Why? Because that's what his Heavenly Father wanted. So when we read of Jesus' continual obedience culminating in the cross, we should remember that's a matter of life and death to us. If we're in Christ instead of Adam, his obedience is our obedience. Aren't you thankful Jesus obeyed

throughout his life? Remember how I mentioned that ledger earlier? Well, every act of obedience Jesus did is reckoned to your ledger as an act of obedience.

That's about as far as the similarities between Adam and Christ go. But notice there are several differences as well. Of course there are differences in the actions of each. Adam's actions are called sin, trespass and disobedience. Jesus' actions are called not just obedience and a righteous act, but a gift of grace. Jesus' death on the cross was more than sheer obedience to God; it was an undeserved gift for us, an act of love, mercy and compassion. Another difference, as we've seen, is the result of the two deeds were exactly the opposite. Adam's deed resulted in death while Jesus' deed resulted in life. Adam's deed resulted in condemnation while Jesus' deed resulted in justification.

But here's the real clincher: Adam's deed resulted in the reign of death while Jesus' deed resulted in a different reign. We'd expect him to say the "reign of life," but look what he says in v. 17. He says, *"those who receive God's abundant provision of of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ."* When we were in Adam, we were ruled by death. That means more than just a funeral at the end of our life. Death is emptiness, loneliness, misery, depression, boredom and restlessness. Sin and death reigned over us. But now **we** reign in life. This takes us back to the garden. Did you know God created Adam and Eve to rule? He placed them in the garden and gave them dominion over all that he made. They were made to live like Kings. When the serpent came into the garden to tempt Eve, Adam should have grabbed it by the throat and thrown it out of the garden. He had that kind of authority over creation, but he lost it when he ate.

Now through the **new** Adam, we can be restored to our rightful place as co-regents under God. Not defeated by life, but able to reign over sin and death and all the pressures, circumstances, suffering and troubles of this life. Our spirit can be alive and joyful. We reign in life now. Love, joy, peace, glory, and gladness fill our hearts even in the midst of all the heartaches and pressures of life. In the next chapter Paul will say we can *"walk in newness of life"* (6:4).

The greatest difference between life in Adam and life in Christ is that the power and scope of Jesus' work is far greater than the damage Adam did. Twice Paul says "how much more" to show us Jesus's work can undo and more than make up for all the effects of Adam's work. Down in v. 20 he even says *"where sin increased, grace increased all the more."* The English understates what Paul really says here. A better translation would be that grace "super-abounded" all the more. Through the cross, grace overwhelms sin and life triumphs over death. It not only breaks the curse but it makes everything new.

By the way, this all puts a whole new spin on Christmas, doesn't it. Look at the difference the coming of Jesus into the world made. It reminds me of C.S. Lewis' *Narnia* series. A young girl named Lucy is the first child to discover the land of Narnia. She enters Narnia through a wooden wardrobe that sits in an empty room in a house where she and her brothers and sister are staying. One moment she's walking through a wardrobe filled with coats, then she feels the branches of trees, and next she finds herself standing in the woods with snow under her feet. She soon meets a faun called Mr. Tumnus who tells her about the White Witch.

Lucy asks, "The White Witch? Who is she?"

"Why, it's she that's got all Narnia under her thumb. It's she that makes it always winter. Always winter and never Christmas; think of that!"

"How awful!" said Lucy.

And it is awful. The White Witch is an evil creature of great power, but Lucy also learns about a lion named Aslan, who will come into the world of Narnia to break her curse. In doing so he also fulfills old prophecies which spoke of his coming. One went like this:

Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight,
At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more,
When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death,
And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again.

Meanwhile Narnia is a world in slavery to the White Witch. It's under a curse and waits for that curse to be lifted. It's a world much like ours. Narnia's perpetual winter is a symbol of our dark world before Jesus came and brought the good news of salvation. At the end, when Aslan comes in sight, Christmas comes to Narnia at last. The long, dark spell of winter is broken, and the newness of spring arrives in all its beauty. With the coming of Jesus at Christmas, the curse on our world has also been broken, and God offers newness of life for all who believe.

Here's the bottom line: You can have the first Adam or the second Adam. You can connect the dots from yourself to either Adam or Jesus. Who will represent you? You don't have to be stuck with the first Adam. The way you get connected with the second Adam instead of the first Adam is **by faith**. When we put our faith and our trust in Jesus' work rather than our work we're bundled up with him, and whatever is true of him is true of us.

John Stott writes, "So then, whether we are condemned or justified, whether we are spiritually dead or alive, depends on who we belong to — whether we still belong to the old humanity initiated by Adam, or to the new humanity initiated by Christ."

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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