

April 23, 2017 by Steve Brandon



Death to Life, Part 2

Romans 5:12-21

Death to Life (Part 2)
Romans 5:15-21

1. Two Men
2. Two Acts
3. Two Results

One of the most discouraging things about being a preacher is that most everything you say is forgotten. In fact, it is forgotten quickly. I can preach a sermon on Sunday morning, and on the way home, my kids can't remember a thing I said. And what is true of my children, is also true of many of you as well.

The truth of the matter is this: we forget a lot of stuff. However, I think that I can be encouraged this morning. Because, I think that my message from last week is a bit different. I think that I made my point well enough that I think you will remember this morning. At least, I hope so.

To test my hypothesis, I want to give you all a little pop quiz from my message last week. My hope is that many of you will remember. Now, last week, I preached from Romans 5:12-21. Perhaps with the text in front of you, you will be jogged in your memory.

Here's the question: what was my outline last week? Two men. Two acts. Two results.

Two men committed two acts, which led to two results. The two men were Adam and Jesus. The two acts were Adam's sin in the garden, and Jesus' sacrifice upon the cross. The two results were condemnation for Adam's sin, and salvation for Jesus' sacrifice.

Let me read the text for you now. And as I do, I want for you to listen for the two men who performed two acts which led to two results.

Romans 5:12-21

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

My message last week was entitled, "Death to Life," as the text deals with the journey that all of us who believe in Christ travel. We are dead in Adam's sin. But we are alive in Christ Jesus. My message this morning is entitled, "Death to Life (Part 2)."

Last week we focused primarily upon the first three verses, verses 12-14. It would be good for us to review, because those verses form the foundation of the verses we will be looking at this morning: verses 15-21. In verse 12, Paul writes, ...

Romans 5:12

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

The point of verse 12 is that we all guilty in Adam. In other words, it's not merely that we are guilty sinners because of what we do. We are guilty because of who we are! We are guilty because of Adam's sin. Because Adam sinned, we all will die!

Note that verse 12 doesn't say that "death spread to all men because all have sinned." That would be true enough. We all are sinners. And we all die because of our sin.

But verse 12 says that "death spread to all men because all sinned." When Adam sinned, we all sinned with him.

There are two views as to how exactly that takes place. It may be because we were really there in Adam, physically present in his loins, in much the same way that Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:10). Or, it may be because Adam was our representative, much like our voted public officials represent us in the affairs of the government. We live with their good and bad decisions, because they represent us. Or, it may be some sort of combination of these things.

Either way, the reality is this. Because of Adam's sin, we are all guilty before the Lord. The way we know this is that we all die.

Paul explained this by noting death was present in the time between Adam and Moses. Even though the people at that time had no law, they still died.

Romans 5:13-14

for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, ...

Adam was given a law to obey. We read in Genesis 2:15-17, ...

Genesis 2:15-17

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 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."

This was the command that the LORD gave to Adam: "Eat freely of any tree, ... but not from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." The LORD gave him a warning: "You eat from that tree, and you will die! In fact, you will die that very day." Now, of course, Adam did eat from that tree. And he died. He died spiritually, and that connection between him and the LORD was forever severed. The fact that he didn't die physically was a demonstration of God's mercy upon his life.

Now, Paul points out how Adam's sin was different than the sin of everyone else.

Romans 5:14

Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, ...

And the sin of Adam was unique from the sin of everyone else in the world. We all sin from a sin nature. But Adam sinned from a state of innocence! And Adam's sin was different than Eve's sin. She was deceived by the serpent (1 Timothy 2:14). But Adam sinned eyes wide open! And because of Adam's sin, we are all guilty and deserving of death.

One of the aims of my message last week was to show you all how bad we have it, how deeply entrenched in sin we are! We aren't simply guilty because we do bad things, but we are guilty in sin because of who we are! To be human is to be sinful. As Paul says in Ephesians 2:3, "we were by nature of wrath, like the rest of mankind."

This is who we are! Certainly, we are sinners by choice! And God's wrath rightly falls upon us all. That was Paul's point in Romans 1. He has made the world in such a way that it clearly shows God's "eternal power and divine nature" (Romans 1:20). And all who walk in their sinful ways do so in full accountability before the Lord.

But Paul's point in our passage this morning is that our problem goes deeper than this. It's not merely what we do. It is who we are!

Steve Leston said it this way: The problem of sin in your life is not as bad as you think it is. It is far worse. It reaches down into the deepest motives of your heart. It's not just the bad things you do. The victory that you have in Jesus isn't as good as you think it is. It is much better. If you really see how awesome the victory of Christ is, it will overwhelm you every day.

I love the way that Ray Ortlund, Jr. writes it in his devotional, prayer-like commentary on the book of Romans. He writes this prayer,

O divine Physician, your diagnosis of my condition is so much more profound than my own analysis of myself.

I would see myself as a wilted rose in need only of a generous watering.

You explain to me that, in fact, I am hemlock, growing vigorously in a world infested with hemlock, all from one common root.

My problem is not superficial.

My problem is not a little lie here or a lustful thought there.

My problem is not even a huge, shocking lie here and actual adultery there.

My real problem underlies all the surface manifestations of my sin, and it is the guilt and corruption of my very nature as a child of Adam.

O God, your gospel takes me deep, deep down, all the way to the very root of my condemnation, all the way back to Adam.

Now, O Lord, lift me up, very, very high into the richness of your grace in Christ, my Lord and Head.

In his holy name.

Amen.[11](#)

That is my hope and prayer for my message this morning. My hope and prayer is that we would go "deep, deep down" into our understanding of our sin through Adam, that we might be lifted up "very, very high into the richness of [God's] grace in Christ."

There is connection between Adam and Christ. Paul writes that Adam ...

Romans 5:14

... [Adam] was a type of the one who was to come.

This is a surprising use of the word, "type."

The word "type," comes from the Greek, and describes the impression made by impact. Do you remember the old typewriters? You pressed a button, and a lever would swing up and strike the paper, leaving ink on the paper in the form of the letter that was on the lever that struck the paper.

When Thomas was doubtful of the resurrection, he said, "Unless I see in his hand the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe" (John 20:25). Thomas wanted to see the mark, the type, that the nails made in the hands of Jesus.

This word in the Greek is often used metaphorically to describe an example or a pattern. Like when Paul told those in Philippi, "Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the *example* you have in us" (Philippians 3:17).

Peter used it the same when he exhorted the elders of the church to be "examples" to the flock. They were to be "types." They were to be "patterns."

Now, it is surprising here that Paul calls Adam a "type" of Christ. He calls him a pattern, an example. Because, in every way, Christ was just the opposite of Adam. Adam brought us into sin, but Jesus brings us out. Adam was sinful, but Jesus is the sinless one. Adam isn't the pattern of how we ought to behave!

This is why Paul, in verse 15 is quick to clarify his comments. Look at how verse 15 begins, ...

Romans 5:15

But the free gift is not like the trespass. ...

Look at how verse 16 begins, ...

Romans 5:16

And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin.

Verse 15 speaks about the acts of these two men, and says that there is a contrast. Verse 16 speaks about the results of these two men, and says that there is a contrast. And in the three following verses (17, 18, 19), Paul is going to continue to clarify his comments.

Adam isn't the pattern of how we ought to live. Adam is the pattern of how the action of one man can affect the outcome of many.

And what is interesting here is that Paul essentially says the same thing for 5 verses in a row! Verses 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 all say the same thing. He says that Adam performed an act, which led to a result. He says that Jesus performed an act, which led to a result.

Every single verse can be outlined the same way. So, what I want to do now is work our way through verses 15 through 19, and as I do, I want to apply the same outline in each instance. In every verse, we are going to see, Two Men, Two Acts, and Two Results. And as we look at that outline, I want to focus our attention upon the result of the actions of the two men, as here is where the riches lie.

1. Verse 15

Romans 5:15

But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.

Do you see the two men? "One man's trespass." "Grace of that one man."

Do you see the two acts? "One man's trespass." "Grace of that one man."

Do you see the two results? "Many died." "The grace of God and the free gift ... abounded for many."

Of course, this is the point that Paul is making in our passage--the trespass of Adam brought death to many, but the grace of God through the work of Jesus abounds to the many.

I want to focus your attention upon the single word, "abounded." That is, it goes beyond! To illustrate this, let's think gymnastics! My daughter is into gymnastics. Let's think how it works.

The little girl walks onto the stage. She awaits the nod from the head judge. She acknowledges the nod, and proceeds with her routine. Now, throughout the routine, the judges are watching carefully. They are watching for degree of difficulty, which raises the potential score. They are watching for flaws in execution, which deducts from the final score. In the end, a score is calculated. And in the end, the contestants are ranked according to their scores.

So, let's think about Adam. If you would judge his work, what sort of score would you give it? A zero! Perhaps better is a score that is in the negative. Because, not only did Adam's sin fail to even meet the minimum standard, it also plunged our race into sin. It would be like a gymnast, whose routine is so bad that it disqualified the entire team!

Now, what would you score the work of Jesus? I suspect that your score would be in the perfect score. Back in my days, it was the perfect

10--Nadia Comaneci!

But, that doesn't quite seem to catch the idea of this word, "abounded." Because, it's not just that Jesus performed well for himself. His performance was so good that it brought a disqualified team to stand on the winner's platform!

In other words, the work of Adam brought us low, but the work of Christ not only negated the work of Adam, but brought us much higher than ever before!

Romans 5:15

... much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.

It means this (and I mentioned this last week): in Christ, we are in a better position than Adam ever was. Adam was at the beginning of the competition. His outcome was in doubt. Would he obey and continue in the fellowship of God? Or would he disobey and bring death to us all?

But Jesus has secured the result! That in him, we stand as Olympic champions! And what's even better (to continue the illustration), we didn't have to endure the years of training. It was simply given to us on a platter. That's the meaning of grace, mentioned some three times in the verse, ...

Romans 5:15

... much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.

This is what we have in Jesus! It's far better than Adam ever had. Let's move to my second point.

2. Verse 16

Romans 5:16

And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.

Do you see the two men? "One man's sin."

Do you see the two acts? "One trespass." "Free gift."

Do you see the two results? "Condemnation." "Justification."

Do you know the difference between "condemnation" and "justification"? Condemnation is that sentence of a judge that declares you guilty and worthy of punishment. In the case of Adam, the punishment of the condemnation is death.

Justification, on the other hand, is that sentence of a judge that declares you innocent and free from all accusation. In the case of Jesus, we are declared to be righteous. This was the point of Romans, chapter 4. Abraham, by his faith, looking to God and trusting in him, was declared to be righteous.

Romans 4:3

For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."

Our faith goes up, and God's righteousness comes down.

Let's consider the illustration. Picture a courtroom. You have the judge. You have the jury. You have the defendant and his lawyer. You have the prosecuting lawyer. You have the stenographer recording everything that is said. You have the media in attendance to hear the trial.

The trial begins, and the background to the case is presented. The crime is described (in detail). The motive is assigned. Witnesses are called. Evidence is presented. Final arguments are made, "Judge and jury, the case is God v. Adam. God created the man and placed him in the garden. The garden was perfect. It had all the beauty you could ever dream of seeing. It had all of the fruit you could ever dream of eating. There was nothing lacking in the environment. But Adam did the one thing that was prohibited. Again, I emphasize, he did the ONE THING that was prohibited. He ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He had been given clear directions from the LORD. Adam clearly knew that such an action was wrong! And yet, he wanted to be like God, 'knowing good and evil.' Oh, he found out what good and evil were on that day. God had been good, but Adam had been evil. And it was clear from the beginning that death would be the result of eating of the fruit. Of this, there no doubt. Even the defendant would admit this, himself. "In the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die."

Oh, judge and jury, you must convict this man (and his posterity) to death. I rest my case."

And the condemnation came. And it came hard. You can read about it in Genesis 3. The serpent would roll on his belly the rest of his life. The woman would bear children in pain. The man would labor and toil for his daily food.

But Jesus reversed all of that!

Romans 5:16

... but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.

We read in Romans, chapter 3 of how this took place. It's not by denying the sin of Adam. Nor is it by denying the evidence or by declaring a mistrial. It's by informing the judge and jury that the punishment has been paid.

Romans 3:23-26

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

In other words, Jesus took upon himself the wrath that was due us! He became "a propitiation by his blood." That is, the sacrifice of Jesus satisfied the justice of God. And Jesus, by his sheer grace, brought us out of condemnation into justification. Such is the good news of this text.

Let's move on, ...

3. Verse 17

Romans 5:17

For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

Do you see the two men? "One man's trespass." "One man Jesus Christ."

Do you see the two acts? "One man's trespass." The abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness."

Do you see the two results? "Death reigned." "Grace and righteousness will reign in life."

Did you notice the repetition of the word, "reign." "Death reigned." "Much more grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life." The picture here is of a king and kingdom. On the one hand, you have Adam and his kingdom of death. And on the other hand, you have Jesus and his kingdom of life.

You don't need to look long at our planet to see the reign of death working away. You take a newspaper and see the news. It's a murder here. It's a crime there. It's strife here. It's disaster there.

Take the obituaries. Every obituary is a testimony to the reign of death on our planet. But Jesus came to reverse the curse of death. He died in our place, that life might reign in him.

Now, it's not that everything is fully realized right now. Our flesh isn't eternal. Our flesh will die. Ashes to ashes and dust to dust.

But there is hope beyond the grave. For every believer in Christ, you could take the obituary and transform it. "... and entered eternal life with Jesus!"

But that which is in the future should affect our lives today. This is what Paul argues in chapter 6.

Romans 6:5-11

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

But we will get into that in future weeks. Let's move on, ...

4. Verse 18

Romans 5:18

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

Do you see the two men? This is assumed.

Do you see the two acts? "One trespass." "Act of righteousness."

Do you see the two results? "Condemnation for all." "Justification for all."

In many ways, this verse is a summary. It nicely and succinctly wraps up Paul's point. One man did one act and it led to condemnation. But one man did another act and it led to justification. This verse is really a resumption of the parenthesis that began in verse 12. That's what the, "Therefore," (at the beginning of the verse) indicates.

Romans 5:12

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

Romans 5:18

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

We have already talked about the condemnation and justification. What is of significance here is the use of the word, "all."

At the cost of overstating the point, Paul brings the parallel into full force. Death spread to all men everywhere. Life spread to all men everywhere.

Now, at this point, we need to be careful, because Paul is in no way teaching universalism. He, himself, speaks of judgment that awaits those who fail to believe. Paul addresses this in Romans 9-11. He does so with anguish in his heart!

Romans 10:1

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

Paul believes in everlasting life as well as everlasting death. Life to those who believe. Death to those who don't believe.

That's why, I think, he brings the balance in the next verse.

Romans 5:19

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

He changes the "all" to the "many." In verse 19 it's the "many" who are made sinners. And it's the "many" who are made righteous.

Now, it's not that Adam's disobedience didn't affect everyone. As if there were some who weren't made sinners. This is contradicted above (in verse 12). But it's the parallelism that Paul is painstakingly trying to put forth. Catch this, even to the danger of not being theologically precise in every word. In some ways, you might say it like this: Paul is being more poetic than theologically precise.

But, he is theologically correct in the clear meaning of the text. "There were two men, who performed two acts, leading to two results."

Thus, to read verse 18 as theologically correct, you might put it this way.

Romans 5:18

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for the many.

But that fails to be parallel. And the way that Paul wrote it brings home his point more poetically. But the point of application is this: are you part of the "many"?

What is so interesting here in our passage is that Paul makes so little mention of "faith" and "belief." Now, it's not that faith is unimportant. Indeed, it is very important. It's that Paul is writing to a believing community, assuming faith.

Romans 5:1

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God."

Romans 5:2-5 assume the faith. But I'm not assuming it here. Do you believe? Are you living your life in the results of Adam's sin? Or, are you trusting in the life-giving sacrifice of Jesus Christ?

Let's finish up with ...

5. Verse 19

Romans 5:19

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

Do you see the two men? "One man." "One man."

Do you see the two acts? "Disobedience." "Obedience."

Do you see the two results? "Made sinners." "Made righteous."

The parallel shows in that he talks about how we were, "Made sinners" in verse 12, and how we were, "Made righteous" in verse 19. This is the parallel in which we must glory!

I have one final application by way of a story:

On June 25, 2006, First Sergeant Gilad Shalit was on duty for the Israel Defense Forces near the Israel-Gaza border. Hamas militants crossed the border and abducted Shalit, taking him as a prisoner. After more than five years of captivity, he was released on October 17, 2011. He is now a free man in Israel.

His release, however, didn't come without a cost. Israel granted freedom to 1,027 Palestinian prisoners, some of whom have spent decades

behind bars for their crimes against Israel.

In one small way, this exchange of prisoners represents our redemption in Christ. One life was given in exchange for the many. Gilad Shalit was given in exchange for more than a thousand Palestinians. In the same way, the one man, Jesus Christ, was given in exchange for many.

“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” (Romans 5:19).

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on April 30, 2017 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] A Passion for God, Raymon C. Ortlund, Jr., p. 80