

THE POWER OF ONE MAN

Series: Righteousness Revealed

Romans 5:12-21

Chadron Berean Church

Have you ever thought about how much influence one person can have? Just one person can impact the world in incredible ways. Take Thomas Edison for example. He has a record 1,093 patented inventions, including the light bulb, the record player, and motion picture camera. Albert Einstein developed quantum physics and the theory of relativity. Abraham Lincoln set 3.5 million slaves free with the emancipation proclamation. Because my wife fell and hurt her back recently, there was a story out of India that stood out to me. In the last century, there was a man by the name of Dashrath Manjhi who lived in the mountains as a shepherd with his wife. One day his wife fell on the mountain slopes and because they could not get her to a hospital in time, she died from her injuries. After her death, the man spent 22 years with a hammer and chisel carving a path through the mountain ridge cutting the drivetime to a nearby town from 45 miles to 4 miles because he never wanted that to happen to anyone again.

One person is all it takes to change the world. One person can affect great good. However, one person can also affect great evil. One person can destroy while another can build up. One person can start a fire, and another put it out and rescue many lives. And that is the heart of this passage we are in in Romans 5 this morning because we're talking about the power of two men who changed the world singlehandedly—Adam and Christ. History is the story of these two men and how their actions alone have helped shaped our world and transformed lives. And if you've wondered why we're all sinners and why Jesus had to die on that cross for us, Paul answers these questions in Romans 5. Last time we looked at the benefits of justification. This time we look at how justification overcomes the Fall that began with Adam.

I. FIRST MAN: SIN & DEATH IN ADAM. (5:12-14)

12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all mankind, because all sinned— 13 for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not counted against anyone 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 violation committed by Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

So the first man Paul brings up is Adam. It is through the one man, Adam, that sin entered the world and death through sin. And this gets us into what is called the doctrine of original sin. This is a topic that we could talk about in great length and great depth, but I just want to keep it practical and down to earth this morning. On a side note though, I would like to point out though that none of what Paul says here makes sense without a literal, historical person named Adam who was the first person God created. What that means is that you cannot mix evolutionary theory with the creation account in Scripture. Old and New Testament, including Jesus, teach that Adam and Eve

really existed and because of the Fall into sin in Genesis 3, the world is the way it is. If Genesis 1-3 did not happen and Adam is a fictional being, nothing else in the Bible matters. Genesis 1-3 is the foundation for the rest of the teachings in Scripture.

When Adam sinned, death, both physical and spiritual, spread to all men. As the head of the human race, Adam affected all of his descendants after him, which includes us. He plunged all of mankind into sin and death and condemnation. And I know what some of you are thinking because I've thought it too. You think, "Well that's not fair! Why should we be punished for his actions? Why should we have to pay for Adam's sin? Why would God condemn the world because of the act of one man?" Well, I think if we're honest with ourselves, we would've done the same thing in Adam's shoes. What do you do when you see a sign that says, "Wet paint. Don't touch." You want to touch it to see if it's dry. If a door says, "Do not enter." You say, "Just one little peek." Well, Adam wanted one little taste of the tree that God said not to eat from. God didn't create robots forced to love Him, so God gave Adam the choice to love Him. Love is a choice. It's a verb, not a feeling. Adam had all the freedom in the world and all the trees in the garden to eat from but to prove his loving allegiance to God all he had to do was obey God and not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But he disobeyed. Eve was deceived, but Adam disobeyed.

We all make decisions that impact those who come after us or are under our care. In many ways we are the product of others' decisions. Just as the president's choices affect the nation or the parents' choices affect the children, so our decisions affect others. The reason why so many of us are here in Nebraska is not just because this is where the wagon wheel fell off, but because our ancestors emigrated to America from Europe. Their decision resulted in you being in this place. Similarly, Adam's decision resulted in his descendants being born in a state of sin. It's one of the facts of life that we all enjoy or suffer the consequences of the decisions of those who preceded us. And we all have to suffer the punishment for our sins ultimately, not only because Adam sinned, but because we all sin. Now let's talk about physical death and spiritual death.

1. Physical death

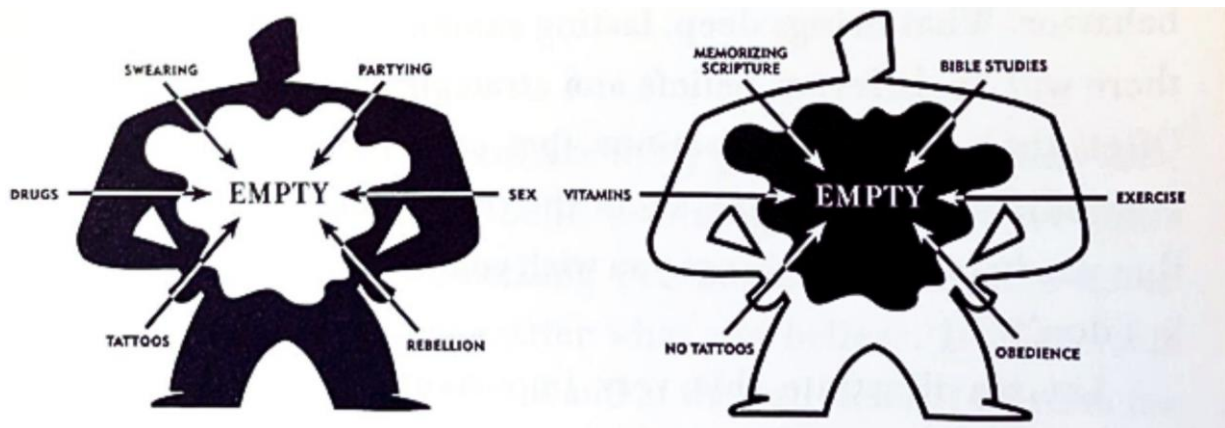
In Genesis 1-2, the world was a perfect paradise. It was "very good." Adam and Eve lived together in harmony with the animal kingdom and the planet. They were transparent and flourishing. There was no death or suffering in the world. It was the way God intended it to be. However, in Genesis 3, through the influence of Satan, man sinned against God. He wanted to be his own god. And God warned Adam that in the day he ate of that tree they would "surely die." Every tombstone, coffin, and cemetery are evidence of sin and the truth of God's Word. They would die physically.

Just as parents pass on physical characteristics and physical problems, so Adam passed that physical death to us. Just this week one of the family members on my wife's side revealed that she officially had Huntington's disease. All the kids now know they have a 1/3 chance of getting Huntington's disease. It's a sad reality. But even sadder is the reality that every child of Adam has a 100% chance of getting the sin disease. We are all born depraved and helpless to remedy this disease, and the consequence of this disease are far worse. We need to be saved from this disease or we will spend eternity in hell.

2. Spiritual death

Here we have to define death. Death means separation, never annihilation. When we die, we don't cease to exist. We are separated from God's goodness in hell if we are without Christ. But there is also a spiritual death/separation the Bible talks about that took place between man and God at the moment Adam sinned. Sin separate man from God in a relational sense. They became enemies of God and that fellowship—that spiritual connection with God—was broken. This is why we feel so distant from God at times. It's because naturally, without Christ, we are spiritually dead.

I like to think that at the Fall man lost his *FM* frequency—the *Faith Man* died. His spiritual antennas lost their sensitivity or reception to the things of God. No amount of human effort putting on tin foil and adjusting our spiritual rabbit ears can repair our connection and make it strong again. So now, all that is left is *AM* frequency—the *Adam Man* or *Animal Man*—man out of touch with God and running on his own instincts and what he thinks is right. The animal man or natural man concept comes from 1 Corinthians 2:14 which says, “*But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised.*” This is why so often people don't come to Christ, or you try to share the gospel with someone and there's a blank look on their face. It's like there's a wall there and they just tune out. It's because they're spiritually dead. They need the Spirit of God to stimulate them to an understanding of the gospel and convince them of it. This is why we must depend on the Holy Spirit when preaching or sharing the gospel. This is why Jesus said we need to be born again (John 3). As Ephesians 2 says, we are dead in sin and need to be made alive in Christ.



I also think it is plausible to say that because man is spiritually dead, he has an empty void in his heart. There is a vacuum where God's Spirit should be and the natural/unspiritual man is constantly trying to satisfy that vacuum—that longing or desire for something more—with things of the world, be those things positive or negative. A rebellious man will try to fill it with sinful ways (partying, drugs, rebellion) and a sincere man will try to fill it with what he deems as good things (exercise, good deeds, religious activity). But none of these things will satisfy him because only the Spirit can fill that void and that only happens when we come to faith in Christ. When we come to Christ, the Spirit of God comes to dwell in us again and we are the Faith Man again. We are restored in our relationship with God, the main relationship we were created for.

We must be born again/made spiritually alive through faith in Christ.

In verse 13-14 Paul begins to explain **the relationship between sin and the Law**. He says, “13 for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not counted against anyone 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 violation committed by Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.” So basically, even though the Law came much later than Adam at the time of Moses, sin was in the world and death reigned that whole time because we’re all sinners. Even though there was no transgression of the Law, death reigned because of sin.



One of the helpful things to keep in mind when reading Romans is that transgression is different from sin. Transgression is a specific type of sin. Transgression means a law was given that has been broken. It means “to go beyond a boundary that has been previously defined.” If you, as a kid, do something wrong and you don’t know it is wrong, it’s still a sin but not a transgression. However, once your parents tell you it’s wrong and they lay that boundary, and you decide to cross it anyway it, it becomes a transgression. Both are sinful, but the Law clearly defined it as sin. The Law came to reveal sin (make it plain), holding the world accountable (3:19). It even increased sin (5:20) because like I said, if we see a sign that says, “Don’t touch,” we’re more likely to touch it. Paul talks about that in Romans 7, so we won’t spend a whole lot of time on that today. We just want to introduce that concept.

In verse 14 Paul gets into the typology of Adam to Christ when he says, “Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.” Him who was to come is Christ and Adam is a type (better, anti-type) of Christ, whom Paul calls the “Last Adam”. In 1 Corinthians 15:45 Paul says, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.” In a similar vein of thought, the rest of this chapter develops several contrasts between Adam and Christ.

II. SECOND MAN: LIFE & RIGHTEOUSNESS IN CHRIST. (5:15-21)

15 But the gracious gift is not like the offense. For if by the offense 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, overflow 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 offense, resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the gracious gift arose from many offenses, resulting in justification. 17 For if by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. 18 So then, as through one offense the result was condemnation to all mankind, so also through one act of righteousness the result was justification of life to all mankind. 19 For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. 20 The Law came in so that the offense would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 so that, as sin reigned in death, so also grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This is one of the most amazing passages, but I'll be honest, it's hard to preach. There's just so much here. So I'm just going to restate what it already says in a way that might make it more digestible. This passage reveals through contrasts that Christ has more power to save than Adam has to doom. What Adam did, Jesus undid. Adam, in the garden, failed; Christ, in the wilderness, prevailed. Through one act of disobedience by Adam, the whole world was condemned; through the one act of obedience by Christ on the cross, the whole world could be justified. Adam brought condemnation, but Jesus brought grace. Adam made many sinners, but Christ makes many righteous. Adam increased sin but Christ increases grace to cover sin.

What an incredible thought! We have gained so much more in Christ than we ever lost in Adam. And Christ is able to do this because even though He is a man like us, He is also fully God. While being a man, He is not a descendant of Adam. Being conceived by the Holy Spirit in the virgin Mary, He never had an earthly father so He didn't inherit the sin nature we possess. The sin nature was never passed on to Him. Therefore, He never sinned and never deserved to die. But He died in our place because He loved us. Adam imputed his sin to us, but our sin was imputed to Christ on the cross. Because of that He can now impute His righteousness to us.

This is why you don't want to say it's unfair that you are paying for Adam's sin because the principle is true in reverse—we freely receive grace and righteousness through Christ's obedience, not our own—and that's not fair either for Christ. If God was fair, we'd all be condemned forever. But thank God for mercy and grace. The other day we ordered a pizza, and they got the order wrong. When we called the pizza place back, they said we would have to pay for a new pizza. I couldn't believe it! My exact words were, "That's ridiculous! We shouldn't have to pay for their mistake!" And then I bit my tongue a few minutes later when I was reminded that Jesus, full of mercy and grace, paid the ultimate price for our mistake. He paid the price for our sins in full and that's why Paul can redundantly call justification/salvation a free gift.

The righteousness (of God) that justifies is a free gift through faith in Christ. (1:16)

Grace by definition must always be free. Gifts are always free. You never work for a gift or for grace. As soon as you do, it's not a gift anymore but something you've earned. It would now be a reward. What Paul is saying is that Christ did all the work for us—and that is the good news of the gospel. We cannot earn salvation. We cannot be obedient enough or good enough. He did it all so that we can freely be given the gift of salvation and restored in our relationship with God. This is both an invitation and an ultimatum. Just like Adam, every one of us must make a decision. Will we reject the gospel and be our own god? Or will we humble ourselves and receive Christ? I invite you to trust in Christ as Lord and Savior today. You can do that right now by calling out to Him in your heart, even as I continue to preach.

Grace always outpaces our sin.

This next principle is one for the believers. The grace afforded us in Christ is so free and so sufficient that in verses 20-21 he basically says that grace will always outperform our sin. This is not a reason to live in sin or saying that grace covers all peoples' sin. Remember, the condition for

having your sin covered by grace is faith in Christ. But the radical principle remains: the Law increased sin, but where sin increases, grace increases all the more. Grace superabounds over sin. It's always a step ahead of sin. If sin takes one step, grace takes two. If sin takes five steps, grace takes 6. Some of you need to hear that this morning because you might feel like a sinful failure on so many levels. As a believer, you might have had your worst day in a long time recently. You really blew it and did some things you shouldn't have. You have godly sorrow over it. But you need to know that grace outpaces your sin even on your worst day. When sin reaches its high-water mark, grace floods over it still. One man said sin cannot erect a dam so high that grace cannot overflow it.

In 1492, Spain minted a coin that said there is no more beyond Spain: *No Plus Ultra*. They thought they were the end of the world. Well, after Christopher Columbus sailed the ocean blue, they had to re-mint the coins to say *Plus Ultra*. There is more beyond. As a sinner you may be tempted to think that your sin is just too much for God. There is no more grace available. But *Plus Ultra*. There is always more beyond in Christ. But He's the only one. He's the only man who has the power to change your life by the power of His grace. He is the one man who can make all the difference in your life, bringing hope and healing and spiritual health and freedom to your life.

As His followers, we too can help change the world. Changing the world happens one Jesus-follower at a time, living the way God always intended in the day-to-day moments. Someone said, "One smile can start a friendship. One word can end a fight. One look can save a relationship. One person can change your life." Remember to bring Jesus into your day-to-day moments. Remember the power of one.