

The Two Men of the Gospel

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November 9-10, 2013

Romans: Gospel of God Series

Romans 5:12-21

Every few years some enterprising writer or magazine produces a list of the 100 most influential people of all time, or the 100 greatest Americans, or the 100 greatest baseball players. These kinds of lists are very popular. You know, the 50 greatest rock songs, the 1000 places you need to visit before you die. This past month The Atlantic Magazine ran a story of the 50 greatest inventions since the wheel. They assembled a group of historians and technology experts and what they said was the greatest human invention since the wheel, according to all these experts – electricity was #2 and glasses were #5 – the 15th century invention of the printing press was the greatest invention of all time. It freed knowledge to spread easily and quickly throughout the world.

What about the 100 greatest Americans? The list of the greatest Americans almost always begins with Abraham Lincoln, who saved the Union and freed the slaves. And then it typically goes on to George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin. The top 10 almost always includes Martin Luther King, Jr., Franklin Roosevelt, and Thomas Edison.

Back in 1992 a scientist named Michael Hart wrote a book offering his list of the 100 most influential people of all time. Hart offended a lot of people by putting Jesus third behind Muhammad, who he considered to be more influential than Jesus because in Hart's opinion, Muhammad was both a secular and religious leader. He didn't even put Jesus #2. He put Isaac Newton, the physicist, second. I'm not aware of anyone ever worshipping Isaac Newton, or giving their lives to spread the Second Law of Thermodynamics among those who have never heard. I don't know of anyone who ever said that Isaac Newton saved my marriage, or it was because of faith in Isaac Newton that I got sober.

Who are the most influential people of all time? Who should be at the top of the list? #1 and #2 of all time influential people?

Well, in his letter to the Roman Church, the Apostle Paul constructed his list of the most influential people of all time. Who do you think Paul put at the top of his list? He didn't put in philosophers like Plato, or Aristotle. He didn't put at the top of his list politicians, or military leaders like Alexander the Great, or Julius Caesar. The top spot for the most influential person of all time, according to the Apostle Paul, was unsurprising. In the passage that we're going to look at today, Paul listed Jesus Christ as being by far the most influential man in all of history.

His #2 spot is more surprising. You might guess that Paul, who was trained as a Jewish rabbi, who had a strong background in the sect of Judaism called “Pharisaism;” Paul, who had a love of the Torah, the Old Testament Law, would have put Moses in his #2 spot. But in the text that we’re going to read today, Paul treats Moses as almost an after-thought, almost as a parenthesis in God’s plan. The #2 spot of all time of most influential people, Paul names Adam. Jesus Christ is #1; Adam, the first man, is #2.

I’m continuing in a series I started several months ago from the Book of Romans, a series that I’ve titled “The Gospel of God.” Today we’re continuing in that series in a message titled “The Two Men of the Gospel.” Let’s pray.

Romans 5:12–21 (NIV)

12 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— 13 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. 14 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. 15 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! 16 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. 17 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! 18 Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. 19 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. 20 The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, 21 so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Do you understand what the Apostle Paul is asserting in this passage? He is saying that the course of all of human history, including the course of our own lives, has been profoundly influenced by the actions of two men – Adam and Christ. How we live day to day, the road we’re on, our ultimate destiny depends on our relationship to these two men; Adam on the one hand, and Christ on the other. And either a person belongs to Adam and is under the sentence of death because of Adam’s disobedience, or a person belongs to Christ and is assured of eternal life because of Christ’s obedience.

Let me outline this second half of Romans 5 for you. In verses 12-14 Paul tells us that Adam is like Christ.

Romans 5:12–14 (NIV)

12 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— 13 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. 14 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.

And then in vv. 15-17 the Apostle Paul explains the ways in which Adam is unlike Christ.

Romans 5:15–17 (NIV)

15 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! 16 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. 17 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!

And finally, in vv. 18-21 Paul resumes the argument that Adam is like Christ.

Romans 5:18–21 (NIV)

18 Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. 19 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. 20 The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, 21 so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So, let’s look at vv. 12-14 together:

Adam is like Christ

Paul is drawing a parallel between Adam and Christ in these verses. He uses the phrase “just as” in v. 12:

Romans 5:12 (NIV)

12 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—

And the same phrase in v.18:

Romans 5:18 (NIV)

18 Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.

And in v. 19:

Romans 5:19 (NIV)

19 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.

And likewise, in v. 21:

Romans 5:21 (NIV)

21 so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

He is saying that Adam, the first man, is like Christ. He is as Christ. Paul uses a particular word in v. 14 that is really significant for our understanding of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. He uses the word “pattern.”

Romans 5:14 (NIV)

14 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.

Or more literally (some of your Bible translations have this), Adam was a type of Christ.

A lot of people read the Bible as if it were two separate books, almost entirely unrelated. They say, “Well, that was the Old Testament and we don’t need to bother with that. We are a New Testament people.” Or you hear folks say, “Well, that was the God of the Old Testament; but we worship the God of the New Testament Old Testament.”

Do you know one of the earliest heresies in the church’s history was one that tried to separate the Old Testament and the New Testament? To make Christianity a religion simply based on the New Testament and not the entire Bible, including the Old

Testament. Do you know you can't understand the New Testament unless you see how the entire message and ministry of Jesus is rooted in the story of Israel and the Old Testament? Jesus is the fulfiller, the culmination of everything that Israel, and indeed, what the entire Old Testament pointed to. The apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 1:20 says:

2 Corinthians 1:20 (NIV)

20 For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

In other words, all the promises of the Old Testament have found their fulfillment in Christ. Jesus said the same thing in John 5:39 in talking with the Pharisees. He challenges them saying:

John 5:39 (NIV)

39 You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me,

These Old Testament scriptures talk about me. After Jesus' resurrection he talked with two disciples on the road to Emmaus and we read in Luke 24:

Luke 24:25–27 (NIV)

25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Jesus is in the center of the Bible. Whether you are reading in the Old Testament or the New Testament, the Bible is a book about Jesus. Jesus is the Temple that the Old Testament points to. So many people are excited about some new archeological dig at the Temple site in Jerusalem and the possible building of the Old Testament Temple. Jesus is the Temple. We don't need a new Temple in Jerusalem. Jesus is the place where we meet with God. As the glory of God dwelt in the Holy of Holies in the Old Testament Temple, John tells that the glory of God dwelt and remained in Jesus. Jesus is our Holy of Holies.

Jesus is the great high priest who intercedes for us before the throne of God. We don't need a priest today to confess our sins to. Jesus is our priest. He is our mediator. Only his priesthood is eternal. His priesthood is perfect. Jesus is the final sacrifice that the Old Testament sin offerings and guilt offerings and burnt offerings pointed to. Only his sacrifice doesn't need to be repeated every day. It is a once for all final sacrifice. God is not looking for another sacrifice from you to pay for your sins. We have our only needed sacrifice in Jesus.

Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s purpose for Israel. But unlike unfaithful Israel, Jesus is the faithful Son who chooses to love and obey God. Jesus fulfills Israel’s national destiny to be light to the world and to bring all the nations in the world to God. Jesus is Noah’s Ark that saved God’s people from destruction. Jesus is the ram caught in the thicket that God supplied in place of Isaac. Jesus is the patriarch Joseph, loved by his father, rejected by his brothers, sold to the Gentiles, unfairly punished, but eventually becoming the right hand man of the king, who accomplishes the salvation of many.

Jesus is Jonah in the depths for three days, but raised. He is Amos warning us about a coming judgment. He is Jeremiah weeping over the nation as he sees judgment coming. He is Ezekiel prophesying the Temple’s destruction. He is Isaiah preaching comfort and good news to those in captivity. Jesus is the wisdom of the book of Proverbs. He is David’s Lord in the Psalms. He is the Passover Lamb, the Day of Atonement, and the Sabbath Rest. He is the exodus from Egypt, the end of the Babylonian exile, the Kinsmen Redeemer. He is the servant of Isaiah 49, and the mighty God of Isaiah 9.

Do you get it? Everything – every prophet, every prophesy, every sacrifice, every bit of the law, every promise, every symbol – everything Israel was or ever hoped to be was fulfilled in Jesus, the servant of the Lord. It all points to Jesus. Jesus is the center. Jesus is the meaning. Jesus is the climax. Jesus is the culmination.

Paul asserts here that the life of Adam, the first man, points ahead as a pattern, as a type to Jesus Christ, who the Apostle Paul calls the last Adam.

1 Corinthians 15:45 (NIV)

45 So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.

Adam was the head of God’s original creation and Christ is the head of God’s new creation in which Christ is restoring everything that was damaged by Adam’s sin.

There are so many connections between Christ and Adam. It was in a garden that Adam sinned; and it was in another garden that the last Adam, Jesus Christ, agonized and died to save people from sins. The first Adam ate from a tree that caused us to die and the last Adam died on a tree that caused us to live.

The main point of connection between Adam and Christ is seen in v. 19 which literally says:

Romans 5:19 (NIV)

19 For just as through the [act of] disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the [act of] obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

There was one act of disobedience by Adam, eating the fruit of the tree that God said should not be eaten from, that opened the door to sin and death for the rest of humanity. And it was one act of obedience by Jesus Christ that opened the door to salvation. Paul is almost certainly referring to Christ's death on the cross.

Now before we continue to compare and contrast Adam and Jesus, I think it is important for me to say:

Adam is a real person

I happen to believe that the Bible is God's inspired Word and when biblical texts are properly interpreted, according to their purpose, context and literary genre that is the type of literature that it is, that the Bible always speaks truth to us. It doesn't mislead us. So I am one of those people who believes in a real literal historical Adam and a real historical Eve and a real historical fall. And I think this is the most natural reading of what the Apostle Paul is saying here in Romans 5. I think Paul believed in a literal, not a figurative or mythological, but a literal Adam. So I believe that the Bible, properly interpreted, always speaks the truth to us.

And I also generally believe in the findings of modern science – that the earth is likely billions of years old and that life gradually emerged on our planet through some kind of divinely guided process that is commonly known as evolution.

Now, I know that many Christians say that you can't believe in both at the same time – the divine inspiration of scripture which teaches a literal, historical Adam, and a literal Fall of humanity into sin, and the science of evolution. You have to pick one or the other. And you may absolutely feel this way. Some of you have read many books, or have visited the Creation Science Museum which would strongly disagree with what I'm saying. Some of you may feel that you need to pick one or the other – either the Bible or modern science.

I am well aware of the incredible heat around this subject that you must be either/or – either you believe the Bible is telling the truth, or you believe that modern science is telling the truth. But if you've listened to me for any length of time, or picked up my new book called Both-And, you know that I am a huge believer in both-and Christianity. That many things that people have historically kept apart, I believe can be brought together and held in tension including thoroughly biblical Christian faith and modern science.

Most of the Christians, who are my heroes, including CS Lewis and John Stott, Tim Keller, JI Packer hold to this position. They believe in a both-and; both the Bible properly interpreted and modern science. Listen to John Stott, the great 20th century Bible expositor and one of the two most influential evangelicals of the 20th century along with Billy Graham. Here is what Stott says:

Surely the human fossil and skeleton records indicates that the Genus-Homo existed hundreds of thousands [if not millions] of years ago...But were these species of Homo "human" in the biblical sense, created in the image of God, endowed with rational, moral and spiritual faculties which enabled them to know and love their Creator? Ancient skeletons cannot answer this question; the evidence they supply is anatomical rather than behavioral. Even signs of cultural development do not prove that those involved were authentically human, that is, God-like. The likelihood is that they were all pre-Adamic hominids, still homo sapiens and not yet homo divinus [the God-like man], if we may so style Adam.

Adam, then, was a special creation of God, whether God formed him literally "from the dust of the ground" and then "breathed into his nostrils breathe of life," or whether this is the biblical way of saying he was created out of an already existing hominid. The vital truth we cannot surrender is that, though our bodies are related to the primates, we ourselves in our fundamental identity are related to God.

Brothers and sisters, I believe that much of the war between biblical faith and modern science does not need to be fought. Again, I know that some of you feel very differently about it and very strongly in the opposite direction. I respect that. But I would offer this word of caution to those of you who think that God's inspired Word is at war with the findings of modern science. It may be that you are reading into the text scientific information that the author never intended. 1600 years ago the great St. Augustine spoke about the problem of using the Bible to go to war against the science of his day. Here is Augustine's caution to Christians living in 400 AD:

It is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel [non-Christian] to hear a Christian, while presumably giving meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense. We should take all means to prevent such an embarrassing situation, in which people show up vast ignorance in a Christian and laugh at it to score...If they find a Christian mistaken in a field which they themselves know well, and hear him maintain his foolish opinions about the Scriptures, how are they going to believe those Scriptures in matters concerning the resurrection of the dead, the hope of eternal life, and the kingdom of heaven?

Augustine is saying it is really wise for Christians to not go around combating the findings of science on the basis of a supposed interpretation of the Bible because this will lead non-believers to doubt the Bible on matters that are really vital to people's salvation. God entering this world in the person of Jesus Christ, Christ's death for us on the cross, his resurrection, and so on.

Now, if you are interested in reading more about the subject of the Bible and science and you are a good reader, there are two books I would like to call your attention to.

Francis Collins, who is the winner of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, is the man who led the human genome project which mapped the entire 3 billion letter sequence of our human genetic code and the man who is currently the head of the National Institute of Health, this Francis Collins is also a great follower of Jesus and lover of the Bible. And by the way, he plays the guitar pretty well and loves to lead worship. I've actually been in a worship set with him. Francis Collins wrote a book titled:

The Language of God by Francis Collins

We have copies at our Cooper Road Bookstore.

There is a second book that might be also helpful. It is titled:

The Language of Science and Faith by Karl Giberson

So, Adam is a real person.

Adam is related to us

Romans 5:12 and 18 (NIV)

12 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—
18 Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.

The Apostle Paul says that death came to all people; separation from God and condemnation came to all people because of our relationship to one man – Adam. How are we related to Adam?

We are genetically related to Adam

You know, your genetics determines so much of who you are. Genetics determine your blood type – whether A, B, AB or O. Genetics determine your physical characteristics. There are genes that determine whether your earlobes are attached or detached, how big your earlobes are. Genes determine your height, the color of your hair and eyes, the shape of your nose, whether you have dimples. We use DNA testing to trace a child's paternity. Your genes can result in some disorder like Downs Syndrome, or Cystic Fibrosis, and even some forms of cancer are genetically linked. Private companies now offer personalized genetic testing so that you can find out your family history by genetic genealogy. It was in this way that descendants of the slave girl, Sally Hemmings, proved that they actually descended from President Thomas Jefferson's relationship with his slave, Sally Hemmings.

We all carry in ourselves the DNA of the first man, Adam, and the first woman, Eve, who disobeyed God. We're genetically related to Adam and share Adam's characteristics.

We're socially related to Adam

There is a fascinating book written several years ago called:

Social Intelligence by Daniel Goleman

Goleman shows the impact of other people's emotions on us – the impact of other people's emotions on our emotions; the impact of other people's emotions on our physical body. Dan Goleman says:

When someone dumps their toxic feelings on us – explodes in anger or threats, shows disgust or contempt – they activate in us circuitry for those very same distressing emotions. Their act has potent neurological consequences: emotions are contagious. We “catch” strong emotions much as we do a rhinovirus – and so can come down with the emotional equivalent of a cold. You can absolutely see this in your own situation. You walk into the house and your spouse is in a horrible mood and you can feel that immediately and that changes your mood.

If you are around hopeful people, encouraging people, inspiring people, your whole mood changes and it releases health-giving chemicals in your body. And on the other hand, if you are around people who always tear you down, or who are always in a foul mood, that affects you not only emotionally, but physically. The sin of our first parents spread like a contagion not only genetically, but socially. We are genetically related to Adam and we are socially related to Adam. And we are, most importantly, spiritually related to Adam.

We are spiritually related to Adam

We are not told by the Apostle Paul what it means in v. 12 when he says:

Romans 5:12 (NIV)

12 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—

What does it mean that “all sinned?” I have always understood the phrase “we have all sinned” to mean that we all individually sin. The reason each one of us dies is because each of us sins and every one of us commits acts of sin. And as the penalty for our sins, we die, just as Adam died. Now, it is absolutely the case that we all sin. In the Old Testament Solomon tells us that there is no one on earth who does not sin.

But I don't think that's what Paul is getting at here. As I said before, this passage is trying to draw a comparison between Adam and Christ. Adam is the picture, the pattern, the type of Christ. But the parallel breaks down, if we say that we die because of our own individual acts of sin because on the other side of the coin, we would have to say that we are saved because of our own individuals acts of righteousness. So what does this phrase mean that death came to all men because all have sinned?

Well, I think we have a clue to the meaning of "all sinned" by looking at the original language. Here the Greek for "sinned" is in the aorist tense and the aorist expresses one act that occurred in the past, not many acts, but one act. The aorist tense is like a pin prick. It is one point. It says that all sinned because of one act of sin. And then we read these verses in 18-19:

Romans 5:18–19 (NIV)

18 Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. 19 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.

Here I think the best explanation for what is going on because all sinned or all were made sinners is what is called by theologians the Doctrine of Imputation. Adam's sin is imputed to us. The meaning of "all sinned" is that we are all accounted sinners, all of us are put in the category of sinners, all of us are deemed by God as having sinned, all of us are regarded as sinners, judged to be sinners, viewed as sinners, not because of our own sin – although all of us do sin – we're all accounted to be sinners because of one man's sin, Adam. We're all viewed as having sinned; when Adam sinned his sin was put in our account.

How do we make sense of this? How can it be that we are all spiritually separated from God because of one man at some point in history sinned? Theologians have debated this, but I think the best explanation for this mystery is that God made Adam, the first man, our representative. Adam was the leader of the human race, the ones that would be in relationship to God, that would bear God's image and represent God's good rule and good reign to the rest of creation. God, in effect, said to Adam: Adam, I make you the representative, the head of all coming after you and who will proceed out of your loins; I'm going to make a covenant with you. Every benefit you enjoy will pass to your descendents forever and ever.

And every punishment you suffer will likewise pass to your children after you, forever. Adam, your actions are not simply going to have personal affects. When you decide to throw a big rock in a pond, the ripple effects will continue to reverberate throughout human history. Everyone is going to be affected because of you.

Now, some of you might say, “I don’t understand this. How is just for God to hold me accountable for what Adam did a long time ago? Why should I die because of another man’s sin? I don’t understand this.”

I do think there are some analogies in human experience, they’re not perfect analogies, but they are close enough. If a leader of another country declares war on us; let’s say that Putin from Russia declares war on the United States, or Khomeini from Iran declares war on the United States, we don’t just go to war against Putin or Khomeini or the other leaders. We find ourselves at war with the whole nation. Certainly, that was the case in WWII. When the leaders of Japan decided to bomb Pearl Harbor, we did not only retaliate against those leaders or just against the men who dropped the bombs. We declared war on all of Japan. So if a leader sins, our human experience is that that leader’s sin can affect all of the people that he or she is leading.

But I would suggest something else that is even more important. Not only did God appoint Adam as a representative for those who followed him, but God appointed a last Adam, Jesus Christ, to be the representative of all who are attached to Christ. This idea of imputation, of accounting, of declaring something to be true of us because of another doesn’t just work in one direction towards condemnation and death, but it also works in the other direction towards justification and life. If you can’t understand why you should be accountable because of Adam, do you understand why you should be acquitted because of Christ? If you can’t understand why Adam’s rebellion should cause you to die, do you understand why Christ’s righteousness should cause you to live forever? If you think it is unfair that you should be condemned because one man ate from a tree, do you think it is more just that you are pardoned because another man died on another tree?

Our assurance, our security is that salvation is not based on what we do. It is based on the activity of another, namely Jesus Christ. Paul goes on and says that:

Adam is unlike Christ

Romans 5:15–17 (NIV)

15 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! 16 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. 17 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!

We've seen how Adam is a type of Christ, is like Christ. The life of Adam and the life of Christ have profound significance for those who belong to them. But there is a difference.

The measure of effect

Paul says in v. 15:

Romans 5:15 (NIV)

15 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!

And in v. 17:

Romans 5:17 (NIV)

17 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!

God's grace is abundant. God's grace is overflowing; it never runs out. Do you remember the story of the Prodigal Son? He left his father and we find him lying in a pig sty spent and exhausted. This, by the way, is what sin does to us. It always deceives us by promising more than it can deliver. Sin always promises more pleasure, more security, more love, more power, more fulfillment, but it never delivers. Sin always robs us. It always exhausts and depletes us.

Anyway, the boy is lying there in the pig sty and he thinks, "My father's hired servants have bread to spare." Bread to spare. This is the same Greek word as the word Paul uses for "abundant grace" "overflowing grace." All the servants of my father, he says, have bread to spare. What a picture of grace. When Jesus multiplied the loaves, the disciples picked up baskets full of extra bread. That is the same Greek word – abundant, overflowing. When you are related to God and you are walking in the Spirit, there is always more than enough, more than sufficient, overflowing, super-abundant, bread to spare.

We don't understand the much more of grace, the abundance of grace, the overflowing bread to spare of God.

When I was in 6th grade our grade put on a production of Oliver and I got to play Oliver. The image most of us have of God's grace is like the scene in Oliver. Oliver was an orphan boy living in this horrible orphanage with a master who was very mean. One day Oliver walked up to the front of the dining hall with his little bowl out and he asked the master in a trembling voice, if he could have more. And the master screamed, "More?"

More? Never before has a boy asked for more!” He chased Oliver around the room seeking to beat him.

But asking our Father for more grace is not like Oliver asking the master for more food. Our Father has bread to spare. There is plenty of grace. Your heavenly Father delights to give you more grace.

David in the Psalms say:

How many are your gracious thoughts concerning me. How vast is the sum of them. If I were to count them they would be more numerous than the grains of sand in the sea.

That God would have one gracious thought about us, maybe we could believe that. But the number of gracious thoughts that God has about you and me are more than the grains of sand on the seashore.

Christ is unlike Adam in the measure of the effect of Christ’s life. He lifts us higher and then takes us down. And Christ is unlike Adam:

The means of connecting

I said before that the connection with Adam is a natural connection. It is a physical connection. We inherit the sin of Adam genetically by just being naturally conceived. But the connection with Christ is very different. We inherit the righteousness of Christ only when we believe. V. 17 tells us this. Look at this with me.

Romans 5:17 (NIV)

17 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!

There is no condition placed on the reign of death. It automatically follows from Adam’s sin. Death is the inevitable and natural consequence of Adam’s sin. It’s a given. Adam sins and without more death reigns. But look at the other side of the coin. The Apostle Paul writes:

Romans 5:17 (NIV)

17 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!

We must receive God’s abundant provision of grace. Who reigns in life? Everyone? Is eternal life an automatic? Does it flow as the result of a genetic connection to Jesus?

No. The only ones who reign in life are those who receive God's provision of grace. We have to receive.

The Bible always points out this ground of separation between those who are condemned and those who are justified and receive eternal life. If you do nothing, you will die. If you sit back and close your heart to God's offer of pardon for sin; if you let God's Word just roll off of you like water off a duck's back, you will never connect with God. You are automatically connected to Adam. To have eternal life, to have a relationship with God that will change you forever, you must receive. You must open up your heart and welcome Christ in.

The Two Men of the Gospel

Rich Nathan

November 9-10, 2013

Romans: Gospel of God Series

Romans 5:12-21

- I. Adam is like Christ
 - A. Adam is a real person
 - B. Adam is related to us
 - 1. We are genetically related to Adam
 - 2. We are socially related to Adam
 - 3. We are spiritually related to Adam
- II. Adam is unlike Christ
 - A. The measure of effect
 - B. The means of connecting