



Jesus is the Second and Greater Adam

Romans 5:12-21

Sermon for April 3 2022

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Introduction

We are studying the New City Catechism this year because it is an excellent summary of the central truths of the Christian faith. Today we are looking at Question 14. You'll find it printed in many different languages in your bulletin. I will read the question, and then let's read the answer together.

Question 14: Did God create us unable to keep his law?

No, but because of the disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, all of creation is fallen; we are all born in sin and guilt, corrupt in our nature and unable to keep God's law.

Let's look at today's scripture reading. Hear now the Word of the Lord.

Romans 5:12-21

12 When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.

13 Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. But it was not counted as sin because there was not yet any law to break.

14 Still, everyone died--from the time of Adam to the time of Moses--even those who did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did. Now Adam is a symbol, a representation of Christ, who was yet to come.

15 But there is a great difference between Adam's sin and God's gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ.

16 And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but God's free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins.

17 For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

18 Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone.

19 Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.

20 God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant.

21 So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Together we read Isaiah 40:8:

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever."

Let's pray together.

Father, please send the Holy Spirit to give me wisdom and truth as I preach. Please open our hearts and minds to your truth, so we can glorify you in everything we do. We ask this in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Point 1. Original Sin: Infected and Included

Paul says two things in verses 12 and 18 that seem to contradict one another.

"12 When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned."

Verse 12 seems to say that death spread to everyone because of our own sins. But then Paul seems to say something different in verse 18. "18 Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone" In verse 18 Paul says everyone is condemned to die because Adam sinned one time. Here's the question, is death and condemnation a result of my sin, or Adam's sin? It is an important question. First, let's talk about how Adam's sin has infected all of us, causing us to be sinners also.

The individualistic western world believes in personal responsibility. Adam was responsible for his own sin. God punished Adam and Eve because of their moral failure. We all inherit our genetics and our behavior from them. Because Adam was a sinner, his children, grandchildren, great grandchildren are all sinners, too. And God holds us responsible for our sinful choices. We have a habit of sinning because we are born with a sin nature. It's like an infection that we got from Adam. Ephesians 2:3 describes Christians this way: "3 All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else." We are all born with a sinful nature. This fact is called original sin.

But many people today do not believe in original sin. They believe that children are born innocent with pure and clean souls. If that is true, why do two-year-old children fight over toys? Who taught them to do that? Some say that evil comes to us from the world. Therefore, the job of parents is to protect their children from the world's evil. The secular solution to any kind of social problem is education. This secular viewpoint assumes that the human heart is naturally inclined towards good and simply needs to be directed away from bad. People will choose the good when they are given the right education and opportunity. Do you think that's true? I don't.

Because I can see the darkness in my own heart.

The world does not bring evil to us. We bring evil into the world. Why are there wars, poverty, racism, oppression, and abuse in the world? Because human beings do sinful things that flow from the sinful desires in our sinful hearts. It is not the world that corrupt us. It is human beings that corrupt the world.

We can do good things, of course. We don't sin all the time. But everything we think, feel, and do is affected by sin. It is like this container of water. The world believes we are born like this, with a clear conscience and clean heart. But the truth is this, sin entered the world through the sin of Adam. And all of Adam's descendants are infected with this sin nature. It affects every part of our lives.

In the same way every part of this water is stained or infected by this ink. But there is more to the story. We are also included in Adam's sin. Verse 18 says that "18 Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone." We are condemned to spiritual and physical death because of Adam's sin. That doesn't seem fair to people from individualistic cultures like the United States. But many of you are from cultures that understand collective responsibility. If you fail a class in college, you worry how it will affect your family. If your great uncle is an alcoholic and stumbles around town, you feel a sense of shame because of your relative's behavior. That kind of collective shame doesn't make a lot of sense to people in America. But it is a very biblical way of viewing things.

In Genesis and in Romans, God's Word puts responsibility for sin on the shoulders of Adam. Eve ate the fruit first, as you

know. But after they both ate, Genesis 3:9 says, "The LORD God called the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" God made Adam the leader of his household, therefore God made Adam responsible for what they both did.

Another example is in Joshua chapter 7. God's people suffered a bad defeat in battle. Listen to the reason why they were defeated. Joshua 7:1 says this: "1 But Israel violated the instructions about the things set apart for the Lord. A man named Achan had stolen some of these dedicated things, so the Lord was very angry with the Israelites. Achan was the son of Carmi, a descendant of Zimri son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah." Notice that God was angry with all of Israel. Achan was the only man who stole the items, but God said that the entire nation violated the instructions. Here is what happens next, in Joshua 7:22-26.

"22 So Joshua sent some men to make a search. They ran to the tent and found the stolen goods hidden there, just as Achan had said, with the silver buried beneath the rest.

23 They took the things from the tent and brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites. Then they laid them on the ground in the presence of the Lord.

24 Then Joshua and all the Israelites took Achan, the silver, the robe, the bar of gold, his sons, daughters, cattle, donkeys, sheep, goats, tent, and everything he had, and they brought them to the valley of Achor.

25 Then Joshua said to Achan, "Why have you brought trouble on us? The Lord will now bring trouble on you." And all the Israelites stoned Achan and his family and burned their bodies.

26 They piled a great heap of stones over Achan, which remains to this day. That is why the place has been called the Valley of Trouble ever since. So the Lord was no longer angry."

Achan sinned against the Lord as an individual. But God punished his sons, daughters, and cattle. God also punished the entire nation, causing them to lose a battle. This seems very unfair to modern American ears. However, this perspective is found throughout the Bible and human history. What I do affects everyone around me. And what everyone does affects me also.

Look at these examples from scripture.

Isaiah 6:5 "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."

Psalms 106:6 "Both we and our fathers have sinned; we have committed iniquity; we have done wickedness."

Jeremiah 14:20 "We acknowledge our wickedness, O Lord, and the iniquity of our fathers, for we have sinned against you."

The choices of our ancestors in the United States also impact us today. If you look at this map of Richmond, Virginia, you can see different parts of the city were marked red, yellow, blue, or green. This map is from 1923, 99 years ago. The government in the United States has a program that insures home loans, making it easier for people to buy homes and build wealth. But until the 1960s, these home loans were not available to residents of neighborhoods with high numbers of Black and immigrant

residents. These neighborhoods were marked red on the map. Banks could not offer government-insured loans in those neighborhoods.

But those loans were available to white people, like my grandparents who lived near Chicago. 99 years ago my grandparents could buy a home and build wealth. They used that wealth to buy a larger home, start a business, and send their children to college. Black and immigrant residents in the red and yellow areas couldn't get home loans. And they were often prohibited from moving into White communities. Therefore, black and immigrant families were stuck in cycles of poverty. They could not build wealth to pass down to their children and grandchildren.

Today in America, 71 percent of White households own their homes, compared to 41 percent of Black households. This is my point: redlining policies did generational damage to minority families and communities. But generational wealth has benefited me and many people who look like me.

It is a biblical principle that the sins of one generation affect the next generation. God says it like this in Exodus 20:5, "I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected--even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me."

In today's scripture passage, Paul is saying that all human beings carry a burden of shame and guilt because of the sin of Adam. "Everyone sinned" in verse 12 means that "everyone sinned in and with Adam."

Let me summarize the first point. We are infected by the sin of Adam, and also included in the sin of Adam. Why is it critical to understand this? Because our salvation depends on it. In the same way that we are included in the guilt of Adam we are included in the grace of Jesus Christ. If you don't hear me say anything else today, hear this: God counts us as guilty because Adam is our father. But God counts us as innocent when Jesus becomes our Savior. Everyone is born a sinner because we are all children of Adam. But we can be born again as children of God, when we trust in Jesus Christ.

Point 2. Jesus is the Second and Greater Adam

The world finds it hard to accept that Adam's sin causes our condemnation and death. Christians don't like the idea very much, either. But it is crucial that we understand and believe it, because it is the only way we can be saved by Christ's blood. Look with me again at verses 17 to 19.

"17 For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

18 Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone.

19 Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous."

I don't think I can say it more clearly than that. God made Adam responsible for the sin of both Adam and Eve. And God made Jesus responsible for your sin and mine. Does it seem fair that we are born in a state of sin and condemnation because of Adam's sin? No it does not seem fair. But is it fair that Jesus had to die for your sin? No it does not seem fair. But it is true, and that is why we worship and glorify God for his marvelous love and mercy.

Death, pain, and evil rule over the world because of Adam's sin. Yes, we sin also. But our sin nature comes to us from our father Adam. Life, joy, and righteousness rule over Christians because of Christ's obedience. Eternal life comes to us from our Savior Jesus Christ. It happens at the moment we trust in Christ. When give your life to Jesus, two things happen. First, the blood of his sacrifice washes your sin away. The pure and perfect blood of Jesus is the only thing that can remove human sin. The second thing is that happens is God gives us amazing grace as a free gift. If you are trusting in Christ, then his perfect record of righteousness becomes your record of righteousness. When God the Father looks at you, he doesn't see a descendent of Adam stained with sin. Instead, the Father sees you united with Christ, so you have the same clear record as his sinless son Jesus.

Satan wants you to believe you are still under condemnation. Satan wants you to think that God can't love you and God won't listen to your prayers. But Satan is a liar. If you are united to Christ, then you have new life within you. That new life gives us the power to say no to sin. And one day we will live in heaven where there is no sin, no pain, and no death.

There is one more thing we need to highlight before we finish. In verse 15 Paul says: "But there is a great difference between Adam's sin and God's gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ." And in verse 17 Paul says: "But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness." Why does Paul say almost the same thing twice?

Because Paul wants us to understand God's miracle math. For example, imagine that you owe the bank \$100,000 for your house. You have a \$100,000 debt that you cannot pay, because you are physically disabled. But the bank has mercy on you. The bank forgives the debt. You now owe nothing. What a gift! But that is not miracle math.

I will explain miracle math. Imagine that we each have a debt of sin worth \$100,000. We cannot pay it because we are morally disabled. But God has mercy on us. When we trust in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, our debt is erased. We receive the

gift of forgiveness as verse 15 says. We now owe nothing! But that is not the real miracle. God does more than forgive our debt. We also receive the gift of Christ's righteousness as verse 17 says. God puts a credit in our moral bank account that is worth one million dollars, or one hundred million dollars! That is why Paul says "even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness." When we trust in Jesus we receive forgiveness for our moral debt and we also receive a credit to our moral account. God the Father sees us clothed in the perfect record of his son Jesus. That is a miracle.

Pastor John Piper says it like this:


"When Adam sinned, we sinned and we died.

When Christ obeyed, we obeyed and we lived.

As Adam's sin is imputed to us and we die, so Christ's righteousness is imputed to us and we live."

This is an amazing truth. When you believe it, God sets you free from guilt and shame and the burden of the law. Do you believe it? I hope so! Let's pray now in the name of Jesus, thanking the Father for his marvelous grace.

Father in heaven, we come to you in the name of your Son Jesus. We do not have a right to speak to you directly on our own. But we have been blessed with a righteousness that is not our own. It is a free gift of grace, making us sons and daughters of the King of the Universe. Help us live with confidence and joy, peace and gratitude. So we can glorify you in all we do. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

 One Voice Fellowship