Romans Lesson 9 (2018)

**THE INFLUENCE OF ADAM AND CHRIST**

Romans 5:12-21

Key Verse: 5:19

“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.”

In the previous passage, Romans 5:1-11, Apostle Paul gave a brief account of the spiritual blessings of those who are justified by faith in Christ Jesus. We, who have been justified by faith, can now have a peaceful relationship with God and access into the unlimited grace, in which we now stand. We can also rejoice even in times of troubles and sufferings in this world when we are convinced of God’s plan behind them and his absolute love for us. The main idea of the justification by faith alone is that God’s salvation is a gift – God’s amazing gift for sinners who put their trust in Christ Jesus.

Having made a huge claim that those who believe in Jesus now have peace with God and are no longer under God’s wrath might have raised another question from his audience, “*Wait a minute, Paul! How could you make such a huge claim, knowing that the world is full of sin and death, that one person can be so influential to many people?”* Today’s passage, 5:12-21, seems to conclude the subject of the justification by faith in Christ Jesus. We see a series of comparison and contrast between Adam and Christ, which illustrate the crucial influence of Adam and Christ Jesus to humanity. The main point of Paul’s argument in this passage is that the influence of Christ Jesus is far superior to that of Adam. Let’s see how superior Christ Jesus is to Adam and what spiritual impact Christ has in my life now and in my eternal future.

In verses 12-14, Paul describes the first man Adam’s influence to all humankind. Look at verse 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.” Paul’s comment here about Adam is based on Genesis chapter 3. The Lord God commanded Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But the devil didn’t directly tempt Adam. But he went to the woman, Adam’s wife- Eve. And she fell into the devil’s temptation and ate the forbidden fruit by sharing it with her husband Adam. So it should be said “*just as sin entered the world through one woman and death through sin…”* Instead, Paul said “just as sin entered the world through one man (Adam)” Why? It’s because Adam was the leader who was responsible for the family. In fact, according to Paul’s description in verse 12, there are three chain reactions: 1) sin entered humanity through one man: Adam, 2) death entered the world through one man as a penalty for sin, and 3) death spread to all human race, because all sinned. Sin and death became the universal problem in human history because of one-man; Adam’s sin of disobedience. God said to Adam in Genesis 3:19, “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.” So sad! And Adam is the bad guy. But that’s not the real point that Paul wanted to make here.

Look at verses 13 and 14. “To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone’s account where there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.” These verses are very tricky and hard to understand. Here, Paul talks about some innocent or ignorant people who lived and died between the time of Adam and Moses. Since they didn’t have the law of God, they didn’t know better. But they all died. Death reigned over everyone, just as much over nice people as over nasty people, just as much over ignorant people as over instructed people, just as over innocent babies and infants as over corrupt adults. In fact, that’s what has always happened in the world and is happening even today.

We know that the wages of sin is death (Ro. 6:23). It means that we die physically and spiritually because of the sin we committed. Yes, we deserve it. Most of us would agree that we are sinners both by nature and by behaviors. King David confessed in Psalm 51:5, “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” Here, David was talking about his sinful nature. And we all sin because of our sinful nature. But what Paul tries to tell us here is a little different. He is telling us that we are sinners not just because of our sinful nature and sinful behavior, but also because of what Adam did, which we call “original sin.” This is a legal matter. It sounds so unfair. But whether we like it or not, it is what it is. Think about this.

We know that we suffer not just because of our own mistakes and sins but also because of the mistakes and sins of others, including our parents, grandparents and great grandparents. We inherit not just good things but also bad things from our ancestors. Some children suffer because of their parent’s mistakes and sins. The influence of our ancestors is very crucial to our lives, and our influence is very crucial to our children and next generations. Sin has a multiple and transgenerational influence. According to Paul, the consequence of Adam’s sin brought death not just on himself but also on all humankind. As a matter of fact, one act of his disobedience completely demolished the entire human race.

Paul’s actual point is stated at the end of verse 14 “…**Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.”** According to this statement, Adam is not just a bad example but he is also a “pattern” or “type” of one who would follow him. Who is the one to come? He is Jesus Christ. In fact, Adam is a type of Christ Jesus. What does it mean that Adam is a type of Christ Jesus? It means that Adam was an example or a prefiguring of Christ.

How does Adam’s act anticipate Jesus Christ? According to Paul, Adam’s one act, which had a universal impact, anticipated Christ’s act, which also had a universal impact on all humankind. What Paul was saying here is that Adam and Christ similarly influenced all people in history. But the quality of their influence is completely different.

In verses 15-17, Paul compares and contrasts the impact of Adam with the impact of Jesus Christ. Read verses 15-17. “But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man’s sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through one man, Jesus Christ!” (Diagram #1 & 2)

The main point of Paul’s statement in these verses is that what Christ has done for us is far greater and superior to what Adam did. Not only did Christ Jesus reverse the effects of Adam’s sin by bringing justification in place of condemnation, but he also brought us abundant life. Jesus Christ’s grace overflows in many people so that they may live in triumph over the power of sin and death now and forever. The grace of Jesus is far greater than the scope of our sin and shame. No matter the negative impact of one man Adam’s sin might have in our lives, the grace of Christ Jesus is far greater and can reverse our status in Christ Jesus. Jesus Christ is a total game changer in our lives. If anyone truly trusts in Christ Jesus, he or she can be a new creation! (2 Cor. 5:17) We can always have a new beginning in Christ. The impact of Adam to humanity is fatal. But the impact of Christ Jesus is far better and greater than that of Adam.

In verses 18-19, Paul summarizes his point. Look at verses 18 and 19. “Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.” In these verses, Paul uses the terms **“all people”** and **“the many”** interchangeably. The offer of God’s grace is universal, but it is effective only for those who believe in Christ.

In verses 15-19, Paul uses the term “one man” nine times, six times to describe Adam and three times to describe Jesus Christ. It seems that Paul used the repeated term “one man” in order to highlight the idea that both Adam and Christ Jesus are individual persons and also heads or representatives. As a matter of fact, the first Adam, by his disobedience, has brought sin with all its consequences both for himself and for all those who are in him. The last Adam, Christ, by his obedience has brought salvation from sin and all its consequences for those who are in him.

All human races in history are related to Adam by their birth. As a result, sin, death and condemnation reign over them. We are like the two criminals hung besides Jesus on the cross. But we can be connected to Christ by believing in what he did for us on the cross. In other words, we go to heaven, not because we behave better or work hard for God but only because of our connection to Christ through our faith in Jesus Christ who obeyed God to the point of shedding blood. And what Jesus did on the cross is truly amazing work of salvation for us. It’s the complete game changer in human history. Let us read verse 19 again. “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.”

Before ending the session, Paul realized that justification by faith in Jesus Christ can still make his Jewish audience uncomfortable and upset. So he again addresses God’s original purpose of giving the Law through Moses. Look at verses 20-21. “The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Many Jews considered the law of God as the primary source for their salvation. They memorized them and tried to keep them. But they misunderstood God’s way of salvation. God’s purpose of giving them the law through Moses was to illuminate their sinfulness before God. In fact, the law had just a secondary role in God’s salvation history. It didn’t provide them salvation. As long as they depended on the law, sin and death reigned in them. However, when God provided Jesus Christ, God’s remarkable gift of grace has surpassed the power of sin and death and has given people right standing with God and resulted in eternal life for those who believe in Jesus Christ.

In today’s passage, we learned that we are guilty before God not simply because of our sinful nature and terrible behaviors before God. They are very serious problems. But the deeper problem we have is that behind all our sinfulness, sinful tendency and behaviors, there is a mysterious connection with Adam whose sin became our sin and whose judgment became our judgment. We are cursed even before doing anything. In other words, all humankind, including noble people and innocent children, are doomed to perish because of their connection to the first Adam by birth.

We don’t like to admit the fact that we are condemned simply because we are connected to Adam. We say, *“Adam is the bad guy. Why should I pay the consequence of his sin?”* But we cannot just blame him as if we are righteous and completely innocent. Why not? It’s because we also share the guilt through our own sinful behaviors. We are sinners not only by birth, but also by nature and behaviors. As long as we remain in Adam, we are completely doomed and have no way out. We are under the curse. We need someone who can remove the curse of Adam. Who can do this?

In fact, Jesus is the second and last Adam who was to come. He stood in Adam’s place and brought salvation to those who believe in him.

This reminds us of what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:22, “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” 1 Corinthians 15:45 also states, “So it is written: ‘The first man Adam became a living being’, the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.” 1 Corinthians 15:47-49 states “The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.” In Jesus, who is the Last Adam, we have the hope of eternal life because what he did on the cross was far greater than what Adam did.

In fact, without Christ Jesus, the world is full of sin and death. Every day so many people die, including young and old, rich and poor, noble and nasty, innocent children and devote Christians. Why is the world so full of death? We still don’t understand many things that happen in the world. But we learn that all of humanity is in trouble because sin entered the world through the first man Adam, meaning that death through sin and death became universal problem. The only way to end this curse is through faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in Jesus is the only sure way to be justified because the grace of Jesus is far greater than the power of sin and death and the curse of Adam. There is no other name through which we can be saved, except Jesus Christ. Justification is truly amazing grace.

Now, if any of us here is longing for God’s gift, he or she must admit that they are a condemned sinner in Adam and trust in Jesus Christ. If we are in Christ, we are no longer under the curse of Adam. Jesus is willing to welcome anyone and share his amazing blessing with us. To be born in Adam was not our choice. But now to remain in Adam or to remain in Christ is your choice. I want us to conclude his sermon by reading Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Let us not remain in Adam, but remain in Christ by faith moment by moment and experience and enjoy the joy of salvation. Blessed are the justified in Christ Jesus.