

***Romans 5:12-19. <sup>12</sup> Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned— <sup>13</sup> for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. <sup>14</sup> 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 was a pattern of the one to come. <sup>15</sup> 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! <sup>16</sup> Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. <sup>19</sup> 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.***

**This has meaning for all of us! This is a big deal!**

- 1. Adam's disobedience made us sinners**
- 2. Christ's perfection makes us righteous**
- 3. This is a big deal for our daily lives.**

Picture a long twisting row of dominoes. Each one is standing up on its end and there is a long line following the first. If the first drops, what happens? It knocks into the other and sets off a chain reaction that is inevitable and unavoidable. One domino knocks over the other and it goes on and on and they all fall down; and it was that first block, that first domino, that started it all, this chain reaction. One little, two inch tall, rectangle was responsible for knocking over all the others and creating a big mess.

Likewise Adam's sin led to a deadly chain reaction that is now unavoidable for all those that have come after him. One little sin affects and infects us all. Adam stood idly by as Eve took the apple and ate. A single act of disobedience by the first human beings makes us all doomed to fall. A single act of disobedience means that we deserve to topple over into eternal death and condemnation.

That one trespass has an effect on all of us. Human beings are not born innocent, we are now born sinful. And then after being born into this world we cannot avoid sin. We are no longer born in the image of a holy God, but we inherit the image of a sinful man. Sin is a stain that we all inherit. It is set deep into the fabric of our being and we

cannot scrub it away. It is embedded into our very DNA and it has a deadly effect for all of us. No matter how hard we try we cannot keep God's laws. We are all flawed. We break God's commands. We are sinners and now death comes for all because all sinned and the wages of sin is not only temporal death, but eternal death. Adam's sin had a dreadful, unavoidable, effect for us all. Paul reminds his readers of this inescapable truth. ***Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.*** Adam was the first sinner and so inevitably we are all descended from his line are affected by his disobedience.

One might think that Adam and Jesus are complete opposites. Adam sinned and brought death. Christ Jesus was perfect and brought forgiveness and righteousness. And yet Paul takes not of one point of comparison between Christ and Adam that is simple and singular. What each one did has meaning for everyone else in the entire human race. Every human being was made sinful through Adam. Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. As we read this section it is clear that Paul is actually more interested in setting up a contrast between Adam and Jesus than he is comparing them. Yes their actions have results that are for everyone, but what Christ Jesus did was by far, much greater. It has meaning for us all. It was a big deal.

In a way Adam had it easy. God created a perfect world. God formed him and gave him life and placed him in paradise and told him to follow one command. Do not eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. One command to follow, surrounded by paradise, and Adam failed. And this world has never been the same. His sin brought sin and death to us all. His sin ruined God's perfection and brought condemnation to the sinner. One act of disobedience affected the entire human race, it infected us all.

Jesus did not have it easy. He came to do what Adam could not do, and it was not only Adam who failed, but it was generations of sinners who would come after Adam. In the generations between Adam and Moses there was no 10 commandments to break, but certainly the people were still sinful. After all they had been infected by Adam's sin. Generations of sinners who would come after Moses would have a written code to tell them right from wrong, yet they could not make themselves righteous. They could not obey. They could not be perfect. Adam's sin had its effect and influenced them. Billions of people, who lived before, during, and after Jesus lifetime - including you and me - could not do what he would do. He would follow the commands of God perfectly. Through his obedience he would bring enough innocence, enough righteousness for all. He would end the reign of sin and death and he would bring life.

His work was remarkable for unlike Adam, Jesus was not dropped into an ideal setting. He was not placed in garden of perfection and given one command. Rather, Jesus had to leave paradise and he had to come to a world that was wrecked by sin, and thoroughly trashed by transgressions. He came to a world of hunger and hatred, lust and desire, sin and death. Born of woman Jesus arrived to follow all of God's commands. He came to follow the will of God and be our substitute and our perfection, to follow all the commands that mankind had broken.

To do this he became one of us. He was tempted in every way and yet was without sin. And this remarkable love and determination and obedience were all certainly on display when Jesus was tempted in the desert. Made weary by hunger he still went head to head with the evil foe and defeated him for us. Unlike Adam, Jesus did not give into the devil's cunning schemes. He was our perfect substitute.

Jesus came to give us the perfection that Adam could not provide. He came to save us from the inevitable destruction of hell that loomed for those who inherited sin. He came to bring the joy of salvation and eternal life in heaven to those who were condemned to suffer the agony of hell. He came to save those who came before him, after him, and those who lived during his lifetime. This was more than a simple chain reaction that just sort of happened; this was a merciful and gracious act of God. This was a gift of grace that was unnatural and unearned. This was a fount of grace that erupted in the middle of things and spread out to many who came before him and the many people who would come after him. This is a gift of God that overflowed to the many. That's amazing, remarkable, fantastic; right?

Today we live in a society where things have a tendency to lose their luster when something becomes common and widespread. For example if a person got a car when they were first introduced, well, that was something. If you had a phone or a television when those first came out, that was a big deal. Now most everyone has a phone in their pocket, one or two cars or more, and multiple TV's many of which now have HD displays. Remarkable things can be viewed as common when they become widespread.

We must be careful neither to lump sin nor grace into this category. Yes, sin infects us all. But it is serious for each one of us. The sin that each of us is born with leads to death. It causes us to sin in countless ways and our sin deserves judgment and condemnation from a holy God. We cannot simply brush off our sin as just something that everyone has to deal with. Sin is a big deal. It has wrecked and ruined an entire world. But Jesus came to be our conquering hero. He came to give us the sure hope of heaven and to save us from toppling over into condemnation.

Jesus came and the gift is greater than the trespass. He came to set us free from the power of sin, death, and the devil. He came to give us more than Eden, he came to give us heaven. His perfect life and innocent sacrifice accomplished this. This is a big deal and so each year we ponder his bitter passion and we celebrate with great joy his resurrection. And each day we are strengthened by his victory in our fight against our enemy the devil. In our daily bouts against temptation and the tempter we have the assurance that Jesus won the victory for us. We are more than conquerors through Christ Jesus. We can resist the devil and he will flee from us. We don't have to fall into his traps because Jesus has set us free. Jesus was perfect for us. Jesus resisted the devil and all of his temptations. Jesus defeated the devil in the desert and then struck a crushing blow to Satan on the cross.

Jesus defeated Satan, the tempter, and he has defeated Satan, the accuser. Those are the two roles that the devil is fiendishly good at playing. Satan is the master of dangling temptations in front of us, deceiving us to think that if we follow him we will

find satisfaction and quick and easy thrills and happiness, but when we listen to him, when we fall into temptation his roll quickly changes. The tempter becomes the accuser and he haunts us with his accusations. The devil whispers, *“How could you do this and sin against God?”* His whispers turn to screams, *“He will never love you! He will never forgive you! You will surely rot in hell for your many sins!”* But our Savior silences those accusations. His perfect life and innocent death assures us of his love and care. His gift of salvation overflows to us and washes away our transgressions. Christ Jesus wraps us in his righteousness and we are covered, we are safe, we are righteous, and the endless perfection of heaven is ours through faith in Jesus.

And so now we fight against temptation with this assurance of victory. We will never be perfect on this side of heaven, but when we fall into temptation and sin we will not be given over to despair and the devil’s lies. Instead we will be led by the Holy Spirit to repentance. We will experience Godly sorrow over our sins, but we will not be crushed by the weight of sin. We will turn from sin and live for him who lived his whole life for us. The Spirit of God reassures us of these remarkable truths through word and sacrament. We are forgiven. Christ’s righteousness is ours. The Lord proclaims in his word time and time again that Christ Jesus lived and died for all people. In the holy supper our Lord gives us his body and blood and assures each one of us that you are forgiven, his blood was poured out for you. And in Baptism the righteousness of Christ is wrapped around you like a warm blanket. Through faith in Jesus we have been made righteous through the obedience of our perfect Savior. This is a blessed gift that is so much greater than the trespass. It did not simply bring us back to where Adam was, but it will bring us to where we will be with Jesus in endless perfection.

This is big deal for each and every day of our lives. Jesus may have done this for millions upon millions of people, but this good news is mine, this good news is yours. This good news has significant meaning for us all. When the devil tries to sneak and deceive us with his crafty ways. When he tries to get us to doubt and overlook this significance of this truth, the Spirit guides us and strengthens us. And Christ Jesus assures us that we have the victory through him.

And so with believing hearts we hear these words again and we are strengthened by them. ***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 the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. 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 other words: this is a big deal! Jesus won the victory over Satan for you. Praise be to our Savior, our conquering hero, the Lord our righteousness, Jesus Christ. Amen.