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A Saving Savior

Romans 5:12-21

The story is NOT farfetched. A tourist traveling in the west purchases an “authentic” arrowhead only later to discover (in the fine print on the back) that his “authentic” arrowhead was, “Made in Japan.”

This account is NOT unbelievable because today words have lost much of their meaning. Look at the world in which we live; we have “real chocolate”, “genuine leather”, “authentic brass”, and “solid oak furniture.” Think of it! One hundred years ago the use of these words would have seemed strange. Yet, because our world has created

imitations of almost everything imaginable, in order to discern the true from the false, we add extra verbiage to the point of redundancy.

And so it is in the church. We talk about “true truth”, “born again Christians”, or the “Inspired Word of God” (in Bible times, all you needed was “the word of God”), language we understand in light of the age in which we live.

I want to discuss with you a redundancy necessitated by the state in which we live. I want to talk with you about a SAVING SAVIOR, for that is Paul’s focus here. Recall that in Romans 5 Paul transitioned into a discussion of Federal Headship (v. 12) where he introduces us to the two and only two representatives of mankind: Adam and Christ. Yet no sooner did Paul begin that he digressed, giving two qualifications about the work of Christ.

- In vv. 12b-14a we saw that Christ is an Essential Savior— “for in Adam, all die.”
- In vv. 14b-17 we saw that Christ is a Superior Savior — for “the free gift is not like the transgression.”

With these truths established, Paul now is ready to finish the thought he began: in v. 12, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin...” Romans 5:12. Notice in vv. 18 & 19, Paul repeats his initial thought BUT then finishes the comparison.

So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men [a repeat of v. 12a] even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. Romans 5:18

For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners [another repeat of v. 12a] even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. Romans 5:19

With that, we finally have come to Paul’s main point in this section in which he shows the MAIN difference between Adam and Christ. While Adam may be a type of Savior, Christ Actually Saved! We begin with Adam — for that is where Paul began.

Adam: The Savior of No One, vv. 12a, 18a, 19a.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin... Romans 5:12a

As we already have seen, the “death” referenced here has four elements to it:

- Spiritual death — the death of the soul and its consequent enslavement to

Satan.

- Moral Death — the loss of conformity to God’s character- His righteousness, holiness, and knowledge.
- Physical death — the separation of the soul from the body.
- Eternal death — the “second death” which speaks of eternal separation from God.

All of these are in mind here. On account of Adam’s work, all live and dwell in “death”! Skip down to v. 18 where Paul elaborates on this.

So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men...
Romans 5:18a

Recall, the word carries a twofold significance involving BOTH the judgment of guilty AND its resulting punishment (which is God’s wrath). That is the state of everyone represented by Adam alone! It is as if the executioner’s rope is around their neck (or the ax at the base of the tree which represents them, Matthew 3:10)! And yet, there is more.

For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners...”- the text literally reads, “the many were made transgressors. Romans 5:19a

While the word “sinner” in Bible times was a derogatory term used of non-Jews (Galatians 2:15), more generally it denotes the state of being a transgressor or breaker of the law (it is the opposite of being righteous or having a right standing when it comes to the law).

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. 1
John 3:4

To be a sinner is to be one who stands before God guilty of violating His law! That is the legacy Adam passed to his children — he made them/us sinners, lawbreakers, and so rebels!

It is so important that we understand that Paul is talking here NOT about what we have done and so merit, BUT what Adam has done and so merited for the entire human race. Yes, if a person rebels against God and sins, they are guilty before God and therefore deserve death/hell. Yet, way before this, before any of Adam’s children had been born, the race of man was “condemned”! In his sin against God, Adam’s sin-record was imputed/imparted to the rest of mankind such that Adam’s record is now our record before the Lord. As a result, the moment a person is conceived, they stand condemned before God!

And such is Paul’s first point: As a representative, Adam is the savior of no one! To have

Adam as your head is to be liable to sin, condemnation, and so death! Now against this backdrop, notice that Christ is a saving savior.

Christ: A Saving Savior, vv. 18b, 19b.

So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. Romans 5:18b

This is the key term in this section, a word we've looked at now a couple of times. Just like the "condemnation" brought upon mankind, "justification" does NOT reference a work of God in the life of an individual BUT an ACT (and so declaration) on the part of God addressing a sinner's legal standing before the law of God. Because of Adam, all stand as law breakers before God and therefore are condemned. Well, so it is with Justification. It addresses our legal standing before God. When a person is justified in the Bible it means that before God's bar of justice, they receive the declaration of "not guilty"! We see it in v. 19.

For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.
Romans 5:19b

Literally, *"the many will be made in accordance with right."* Most of us associate "righteous" with the concept of moral perfection- yet this is half of it. In both the Old Testament and New Testament, "righteous" implies that the demands of a relationship have been fulfilled, either with God or with man. See, "righteous" speaks of justice within the context of a covenant relationship — i.e., a relationship founded upon promise. Outside of this relationship, "righteous" has very little meaning. Thus, when a person fulfills an obligation that they have to God, they are said to be righteous.

Speaking NOT of his relationship with God as a son of Adam, BUT the calling God placed upon him as a king, David said this:

The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness [according to David's work as king] according to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord... 2 Samuel 22:21-23

From this see that "righteous" speaks of one's fidelity when it comes to the law of God, which in 2 Samuel 22 refers to the Law of the King.

With that, to be "made righteous" — in the context of the "condemnation" Adam gave to the human race — is to be given legally a right standing with God before the Law. As a result, all who are justified enter into the relationship God established with Adam in the Garden before the Fall! That is why Paul spoke here of the "justification of life" or

“the justification that results in life”! Look at v. 18b.

Even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. Romans 5:18b

What is the existential benefit that comes as the result of justification? Life! NOT life as this world knows it in this fallen state, BUT life as Adam knew it prior to the Fall! A life which is:

- Derived from God.
- Enjoyed with God.
- Realized in Christ.
- Consummated by the Spirit of God.

It is the life referenced throughout the Bible, frequently pictured in terms of life-giving water. Speaking to the woman at the well, Christ said this:

Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life. John 4:13b-14

Jerusalem as you may know is located in a desert (akin to AZ, NV, or NM). As such, the primary means of getting water throughout most of the year was by cisterns — holes dug in the ground which were lined with clay to capture rainwater.

Now, the water collected in this way was stale, hot, dirty, and filled with vermin. Yet, in the north there were bubbling brooks/fountains which came from an underground water system that came to the surface when water from Mount Heron ran in abundance. In contrast to the water of a cistern, this water was fresh, cool, and clean. That is the water/life we have in Christ. God gave this promise to His newly saved people.

Therefore you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation. Isaiah 12:3

The picture here is of refreshment and great blessing! Such is the life we have in Christ! It is as Christ said:

I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly. John 10:10

Yet what do we frequently do with this life? We ignore it in order to create our own. This is my favorite water —description when it comes to the life we have in Christ, “

For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of

living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. Jeremiah 2:13

And so, on account of the relationship which is restored with God on account of Christ's justification, we now can enjoy the life Adam had with God in the Garden!

On what basis is this life enjoyed? That brings us lastly to the avenue of His salvation: The active and passive obedience of Christ.

The Active and Passive Obedience of Christ, vv. 18b, 19b.

The final element to Paul's contrast between the Federal Headship of Adam and Christ revolves around the basis of the forgiveness the sinner has in Christ. And what is that basis? It is NOT based upon:

- Anything that we the sinner might do, think, or say.
- Our repentance, faith, good intentions, or good works.

Truly, it has NOTHING to do with the sinner at all! What then is "the basis"? Look at the text. It is twofold:

Even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. Romans 5:18b

This is talking about Christ's life of perfect obedience to the Law of God — what theologians call His ACTIVE Obedience. Through His virgin birth, Christ was placed under the same Law which governed Adam and his posterity (Galatians 4:4). And yet, unlike Adam, Christ perfectly fulfilled the law of God — He obeyed.

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.
Hebrews 4:15

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf... 2 Corinthians 5:21

We have a high priest who is, "...holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners..." (Hebrews 7:26) It is this that forms the basis for our Salvation: Christ's fulfillment of the law. And yet, there is more.

Even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.
Romans 5:19b

This is speaking of the offering Christ made of Himself when He died on the cross in the

place of the sinner. Theologians call this His PASSIVE Obedience. Having perfectly fulfilled the Law of God, what did Christ do? He gave up His life and so presented His record of obedience to the Lord in the place of our wretchedness...

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God...a 1 Peter 3:18a

That is why John said, “

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! John 1:29b

Christ- in obedience to God the Father- died in our place! Thus, the Hebrew writer asks, referencing the Old Testament sacrificial system.

How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish TO GOD, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? Hebrew 9:14

And so, through the AVENUE of SUBSTITUTION — through His active and passive obedience. We the sinner receive Christ’s life whereas Christ received our death! Summarizing this James Montgomery Boice wrote this:

In discussing the obedience of Christ, theologians usually distinguish between what is called the active obedience of Jesus and the passive obedience of Jesus.

The active obedience of Jesus refers to his submission to and active conformity to the law of Moses. Do you remember how in Galatians Jesus is described as having been ‘born under law, to redeem those under law’ (Galatians 4:4–5)? This means that when Jesus became man he deliberately subjected himself to the law of Moses, so that when he went to the cross to die for our sin, it might be known that he did so as a perfect sin-bearer, ‘a lamb without blemish or defect’ (1 Peter 1:19)...

The passive obedience of Jesus Christ is something else. It refers to his submission to the cross. Do you recall how Jesus wrestled with this in Gethsemane? He prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me...’ (Matt. 26:39). Jesus was not asking if he could somehow escape the cruel death of crucifixion. It was his being made sin for us that troubled him. He was to be placed on the cross, and the full weight of the sin of men and women was to be placed on him and punished there. The Father was even going to turn his back upon him. That is what Jesus dreaded and what he referred to when he asked if there were not some other way open.

This was Jesus’ passive obedience, and it is what Paul is referring to when he

speaks of ‘the obedience of the one man’ through which ‘the many will be made righteous.’ Christ’s active obedience qualified him for this role. But it was his one act of passive obedience, corresponding to Adam’s one act of disobedience, that atoned for our sin and made it possible for the Father to credit Jesus’ righteousness to our account. (Boice 2005, 605)

Such is the saving work of our saving savior! Unlike Adam who as a Federal Head condemned mankind, Christ as the Second Adam redeemed all who would rely upon Him for salvation! And so, through Christ’s substitutionary work on the Cross

- Life is freely given and
- Fellowship with God is restored! Christ truly is A Saving Savior!

Now the question is this: Are you benefiting from the saving work of Christ? To do that, first you must be His child. How does this happen? We must take our focus and confidence off ourselves (that we are good enough) and rely upon Christ’s cross work as the offering for our sin. After the Philippian jailer release Paul and Silas, he asked a very important question:

He said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ And they said, ‘Believe [trust, rely, depend upon] in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved...’ Acts 16:30-31a

Salvation comes to a person when Christ becomes their Federal Head — which occurs when the sinner turns from self-trust to Christ trust!

If you have and are doing this, then with Paul, we must ask ourselves this:

Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Galatians 3:3

I think this is the place where most of us live our lives. We know Christ is the Savior and is our Savior, BUT we live as if His continuing approval is predicated upon what we do. When we do that, do you know what happens? Listen to Paul’s description:

You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. Galatians 5:4

Paul here is NOT talking about our justification (that was the first three chapters). Rather here he is talking practical, Christian living.

Accordingly, Paul’s statement about “falling from grace” is NOT in reference to the STATE of grace, BUT its PRACTICE — living day in and day out by the grace of our Lord! When we “seek to be justified by law” we truly have abandoned the life of grace!

What would it look like to live by grace? It means that we live moment by moment knowing that at all times God looks upon us as His child. And so, we live knowing that at all times it is well with our soul before God — even when we sin!

And so, when we sin, we do NOT run from God BUT to God knowing that He loves us. That means we do NOT look to ourselves or a religious activity to endeavor to restore God's favor. RATHER when we sin, we have the assurance that in Christ we could never lose the favor of God! Accordingly, if we are living by grace: when we sin, we will NOT run from God but to God. Grace draws us to Christ in our weakness! Dr. Bryan Chapell put it this way:

We can acknowledge the truth of God's free grace without applying it to how we approach God for forgiveness.

We *say* that we are forgiven on the basis of grace alone and not through any merit of ours. But, then, we *act* as though God grants forgiveness only if we qualify for it by being sad enough for sin long enough to make God happy. We turn repentance into a merit badge that earns God's grace by the depth or sincerity of our grief.

We need to be careful what we are trusting. Yes, we are to grieve for our sin and, yes, we are to be sincere about our repentance. But repentance depends upon the sufficiency of grace, not the adequacy of our remorse.

True repentance humbly receives God's mercy, it does not strive to leverage grace from his heart by increasing the weight of our grief. Repentance is more a depending than a doing— more a leaning on our Savior than a measuring of our tears. Sincere grief for sin delights God; manufactured grief denies grace.

If we would know the blessings of grace, we do not point to our tears, but to Christ's blood; not to our spiritual discipline, but to Christ's provision; and, not to the sufficiency of our sorrow, but to the sufficiency of our Savior."

That is what it means to live by grace!

References

Boice, James Montgomery. *Romans (Volume 2 of 4)*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005.