

Romans: The Good News of God

Adam and Christ

Romans 5:12-21

Rev. Freddy Fritz

April 13, 2008

Adam and Christ

Scripture

Years ago my daughter's third grade teacher started worshipping at our church. Before she started teaching, however, she used to work as a representative for Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF)—a ministry that reaches children with the good news of God. Lauren's teacher used to visit scores of pastors to introduce them to CEF and, along the way, heard many stories and jokes about pastors.

One of my favorites was about a couple who visited a church for the first time. They enjoyed the sermon and told that to the pastor as they greeted him at the door when they left.

The couple decided to visit the church again the following week. They were a little surprised when the pastor repeated exactly the same sermon. But, they said nothing to the pastor and just thanked him for the message.

You can imagine their surprise when they visited the church for the third week and heard the same sermon again! They decided to ask the pastor about it at the conclusion of the service.

"Pastor," they said, "we have been here three weeks in a row, and we have heard the same sermon three weeks in a row. Why?"

"Well," said the pastor, "I will preach a new sermon when you put this present sermon into practice!"

I tell you this story because you may feel a little like that couple after you hear today's sermon! I plan to repeat what I have preached the past two weeks. The reason I am doing that is not because I think you are not putting the sermon into practice but, rather, the truths in Romans 5:12-21 are so important, I want to be sure that you understand what the apostle Paul is teaching.

In Romans 5:12-21 the apostle Paul presents Adam and Christ as two "representative figures" whose acts determine the destiny of all who belong to them. Let's read Romans 5:12-21:

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— ¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. ¹⁶ And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ¹⁷ For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. ²⁰ Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:12-21)

Introduction

In his outstanding new book titled *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*, Tim Keller, pastor of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, New York, says that during his nearly two decades in New York City, he has had numerous opportunities to ask people, "What is your biggest problem with Christianity? What troubles you the most about its beliefs or how it is practiced?"

One of the most frequent answers he has heard over the years

can be summed up in one word: *exclusivity*.¹

We live in a culture in which many believe that all religions lead to God. In a video based on his book *3:16 Stories of Hope*, Max Lucado illustrates the odd nature of the statement that “all religions lead to God”:

All roads lead to heaven. Well, the sentence makes good talk-show fodder, but does it make sense? Can all approaches to God be correct? How can all religions lead to God when they are so different? We don't tolerate such logic in other matters. We don't pretend that all roads lead to London or all ships sail to Australia; all flights don't lead to Rome. Imagine your response to a travel agent who proclaims they do. You tell him you need a flight to Rome, Italy. So he looks on his screen, and he offers, “Well, there's a flight to Sidney, Australia, at 6:00 a.m.”

“Does it go to Rome?” you ask.

“No, but it offers great food and movies.”

“But I need to go to Rome,” you say.

He says, “Well, let me suggest Southwest Airlines.”

“Southwest Airlines flies to Rome?”

“No, but they win awards for on-time arrivals.”

You're getting frustrated, so you reiterate: “I need one airline, to carry me to one place—Rome.”

The agent appears offended: “Sir, all flights go to Rome.”

Well, you know better. Different flights have different destinations. That's not a thickheaded conclusion, but an honest one. Every flight does not go to Rome. And every path does not lead to God.²

Christianity (like many other religions, by the way) claims that there is only one way to God. In fact, Jesus himself said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

If you attended Joe Burns' excellent class this past quarter on “Developing a Biblical Worldview,” you may recall that he asked

¹ Timothy J. Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York, NY: Dutton, 2008), 3.

² *3:16 Stories of Hope* (Lionsgate, 2007).

and answered four questions:

1. Where did we come from?
2. What went wrong?
3. How can we fix it? And,
4. What is our purpose in life?

In today's message I want to look at essentially the second and third questions: What went wrong? And, how can we fix it?

Basically, the answer to the second question (What went wrong?) is that sin entered the world through Adam. And the answer to the third question (How can we fix it?) is that redemption entered the world through Christ.

Lesson

In Romans 5:12-21 the apostle Paul contrasts the work of Adam (the sinful, representative head of all humanity) with the work of Christ (the sinless, representative head of all redeemed humanity). This is summarized in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, where he says, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Today I want to summarize what we looked at in the previous two weeks in Romans 5:12-21. I want to examine the contrast between two men, two acts, and two results.

I. The Contrast between Two Men

First, let us examine the contrast between two men.

The apostle Paul is clearly talking about **Adam** and **Jesus Christ** in Romans 5:12-21.

He mentions **Adam** twice in this section, both times in verse 14: "Yet death reigned from **Adam** to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of **Adam**, who was a type of the one who was to come."

The apostle Paul mentions **Jesus Christ** three times in this section, in verses 15, 17, and 21: "But the free gift is not like the

trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man **Jesus Christ** abounded for many" (5:15); "For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man **Jesus Christ**" (5:17); and "so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through **Jesus Christ our Lord**" (5:21).

Moreover, the apostle Paul stresses that he is talking about two individuals—**Adam** and **Christ**—by using the word "one" to refer to each of them.

Actually, the word "one" is used thirteen times in Romans 5:12-21! Sometimes, it refers to the act of either **Adam** or **Christ**, but always in reference to the "one man"—either **Adam** or **Christ**.

Now, the reason I mention this is because it is clear that the apostle Paul wants us to understand that **Adam** and **Christ** are extremely important in our understanding of history.

Let's see why.

II. The Contrast between Two Acts

Second, notice the contrast between two acts.

Each man—Adam and Christ—committed an act that had repercussions that impact people even today. Let's begin with Adam.

After God created and placed Adam in the Garden of Eden, "the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die'" (Genesis 2:15-17).

Adam had only one, single, simple, and clear command to obey. Unfortunately, he did not obey God's command. He disobeyed, and ate of the fruit of the tree. And the consequences for his disobedience were catastrophic, not only for himself but also for all humanity, as we shall see in a moment.

Christ, on the other hand, came into the world to undo the consequences of Adam's act. He was required to obey not just one, single, simple, and clear command, but he was required to obey all God's commandments, which are summarized in the Ten Commandments.

And just as Adam was tempted by Satan, so Jesus was also tempted by Satan. However, whereas Adam fell into sin, Christ did not. He obeyed God fully and completely.

I am not sure that we can fully comprehend the magnitude of the difference between the two acts. Adam lived in the Garden of Eden. There was no sin in the world. There was absolutely nothing even to tempt him to sin—until Satan deceived Eve. Adam only had to obey one, single, simple, and clear command. And yet he failed.

However, Christ lived in a world that was riddled with sin and temptation. He was tempted daily, and not just by Satan in the wilderness. He had to obey the entirety of God's commandments. And yet he succeeded.

So, summing up the contrast between the two acts, the apostle Paul says in verse 18, "Therefore, as **one trespass** led to condemnation for all men, so **one act of righteousness** leads to justification and life for all men."

The **one trespass** refers to Adam's act of disobedience in the Garden of Eden, when he ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

But what does the **one act of righteousness** refer to? It seems to me that the **one act of righteousness** refers primarily to Christ's death on the cross. He had been obedient all his life, just as Adam had been obedient all his life, until he ate of the fruit. And even though Christ's active obedience throughout his life was important and necessary, it was his passive act of obedience on the cross that finally recovered what Adam had lost. Christ's death on the cross is the **one act of righteousness** to which the apostle Paul is referring.

So, Adam's act refers to his disobedience by eating of the

fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

And Christ's act refers to his obedience, particularly his death on the cross.

III. The Contrast between Two Results

And third, observe the contrast between two results.

You have two men: Adam and Christ.

And you have two acts: disobedience and obedience, or in the language of the text—one trespass and one act of righteousness.

What, then, were the results?

The apostle Paul gives us the results most clearly in verses 18-19: "Therefore, as one trespass **led to condemnation for all men**, so one act of righteousness **leads to justification and life for all men**. For as by the one man's disobedience **the many were made sinners**, so by the one man's obedience **the many will be made righteous**."

It is extremely important to note that Paul is using the word **all** and **many** in two different senses. Paul is saying that all people—universally—are condemned and sinners. However, he is not also saying that all people—universally—are justified and made righteous. The first **all** and **many** refer to all people universally, that is, all people in Adam, whereas the second **all** and **many** refer to all people in Christ. Paul is not a universalist. That is, he does not believe or teach that all people universally will go to heaven and be with God. No, only those who are in a relationship with Christ will go to heaven.

Now, it might well be asked, "How can the result of one man's act affect others? Are we not responsible for our own actions?"

The reason the act of one man affects others is because of what is known as "federal headship" or "federal representative" in theology. The word "federal" comes from the Latin word *foedus*, which means "covenant." Thus, a federal representative is a person who, through a covenant relationship, represents or stands in for

someone else.³

It is much easier for people from an Eastern culture to accept this idea. They typically understand and accept the concept of a person who represents or stands in for someone else. So, they don't have trouble, for example, with arranged marriages. A father ordinarily represents his child in the choice of a spouse. I can't imagine my children saying to me, "Dad, whoever you choose for me to marry, I will happily accept"!

Western culture typically has difficulty with the concept of federal headship, as we pointed out several weeks ago. We usually only recognize the legitimacy of such a person we voluntarily choose to be in that relationship to ourselves.

For example, we choose someone to have "power of attorney" over our affairs. We allow that person to make legal transactions with our assets and even our lives that is fully binding.

But we do have federal representation in our society. The government is in fact a form of federal headship. The government acts on behalf of its citizens. If the government says that all its citizens shall pay taxes, then all its citizens pay taxes.

One cannot say, "I do not support the payment of taxes. Therefore, I won't pay them."

Oh yes, you will. You do so because your representatives have acted on your behalf.

You could, however, consider paying your taxes like the one satisfied taxpayer, whose letter was recently sent to me. He wrote:

Dear Internal Revenue Service:

Enclosed you will find my 2008 Tax Return showing that I owe \$3,407.00 in taxes.

Please note the attached article from the *USA Today* newspaper, dated 12 November, wherein you will see the Pentagon (Department of Defense) is paying \$171.50 per hammer and NASA has paid \$600.00 per toilet seat.

³ Tim Keller, *Romans*, 69.

Romans: The Good News of God

I am enclosing four (4) toilet seats (valued @ \$2,400) and six (6) hammers (valued @ \$1,029), which I purchased at Home Depot, bringing my total remittance to \$3,429.00.

Please apply the overpayment of \$22.00 to the “Presidential Election Fund,” as noted on my return. You can do this inexpensively by sending them one (1) 1.5” Phillips Head screw (see aforementioned article from *USA Today* newspaper detailing how H.U.D. pays \$22.00 each for 1.5” Phillips Head screws).

It has been a pleasure to pay my tax bill this year, and I look forward to paying it again next year.

Sincerely,

Another Satisfied Taxpayer

So, we do have federal representatives in our culture, even though we may not like it too well.

God created Adam to be the federal representative of all humanity. However, Adam disobeyed God. The result of his one act of disobedience brought sin and death to himself and all humanity. In other words, the result of Adam’s one act of disobedience was imputed to all people. The reason people die is because of the imputation of Adam’s sin to all humanity. His original sin leads to actual sins as we grow out of infancy.

God also created Christ to be the federal representative of all redeemed humanity. Unlike Adam, Christ obeyed God. The result of his one act of obedience brought righteousness and life to all those who would be redeemed by him. In other words, the result of Christ’s one act of obedience was imputed to all the elect. The reason people can go to heaven is because of the imputation of Christ’s obedience to his own people.

So, you have two men: Adam and Christ.

You have two acts: disobedience and obedience, or in the language of the text—one trespass and one act of righteousness.

And you have two results: condemnation and justification.

Conclusion

I referred to two questions earlier. I hope you see more clearly the answer to each question.

What went wrong? Adam sinned, and death spread to all men because all men sinned. Adam's sin was imputed to all men.

How can we fix it? By believing that Christ's work, that is, his one act of righteousness, is for us.

When you entered this world, you came under the condemnation of God. Why? Because you are living under the federal headship of Adam. His one act was imputed to you. You were spiritually dead; that is, you had no relationship with God. You will one day die physically. And, unless you change your federal representative, you will one day die eternally too.

However, the good news of God is that you can change representatives. You can ask God to make Christ your representative instead of Adam.

You can tell God that you acknowledge that you are a sinner condemned to die. You know that you break God's laws. You no longer want to live that way.

Tell God that you acknowledge that he has sent Christ to undo the act of Adam. You believe that Christ perfectly obeyed every single command. You believe that he died on the cross to pay the penalty for every sin of yours. You believe that his righteousness can be your righteousness.

When you submit and surrender to Christ, you will discover that God no longer condemns you. Instead, he now justifies you: he declares you "Not Guilty" and you are no longer under the condemnation of Adam's sin.

If you have never transferred your allegiance to the federal headship of Christ, you can do so today. Amen.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and **membership** in his church family,
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,
equip them for their **ministry** in the church
and life **mission** in the world,
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can be found at:

1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/Sermons
2. www.sermoncentral.com/contributor_profile.asp?ContributorID=11181
3. www.sermonaudio.com/search.asp?SpeakerOnly=true&currSection=sermonsspeaker&keyword=Freddy%5EFritz

Please give your input and leave your feedback at websites 2 and 3 when requested to do so. This helps with evaluation and planning of sermons.

Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church (PCA)

Answers for Life!

Address: 19911 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa, FL 33647

Telephone: (813) 973-2484

Fax: (813) 973-4673

Email: Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org

Web site: www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org

PRAAYER:

Oh Lord our God, I thank you for the federal headship of Jesus Christ.

If there is anyone here today who is still living under the federal headship of Adam, I ask that you will grant that person the gift of faith and repentance, and help him or her to trust in Jesus Christ alone for the gift of eternal life.

And all of this I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

CHARGE:

Go and glorify God in all that you think, do, and say! And as you do, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.