

The Reign of Life

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[0:00] Open your Bibles up to Romans chapter 5.

We are in week 2 of three weeks in this passage, Romans chapter 5 verses 12 through 21. So we're not rushing through this particular passage.

We're taking our time, in fact we're taking our time throughout the book of Romans. And I know often times we wonder why go so slowly. Why not speed it up a little bit.

There's certainly nothing wrong with speeding up a little bit and going a little faster. But I linger and I dwell on certain passages and on certain books because I firmly believe that as we increase in our understanding of the gospel and of the work of Jesus, our capacity to respond to Him increases.

The goal is not just to give you more information. The goal is not to make you more theologically astute as we go through this very theological letter. The goal is to make you a better worshiper of Jesus.

[1:14] And so we're going to take time this morning and ask God to help us to see and understand better what Jesus really accomplished in His life and death for us. So Romans chapter 5 beginning in verse 12.

I'd like you guys to stand with me as we read from God's Word. The Apostle Paul writes, 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.

For indeed sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 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.

But the free gift is not like the trespass. 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. 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.

[2:24] 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.

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.

Now the law came in to increase the trespass. But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness, leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We give you great thanks, Father, that your Spirit inspired Paul to write these words and ask you to help us as we go to greater depths this morning in trying to understand what is revealed about Jesus here.

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. You guys, take a seat. In the beginning of the Gospels, near the beginning of the Gospels, we read the account of Jesus after His baptism as He strides out into the wilderness at the prompting and leading of the Holy Spirit to engage in a war, in a battle that had been going on literally for millennia, for thousands of years.

[3:55] There in the wilderness, Jesus encounters the serpent of Genesis chapter 3. He encounters the devil himself. And he engages in a battle that began that day in Genesis chapter 3 when the serpent crawled to Adam and Eve and tempt them to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Of course, in the garden, Adam utterly failed as a leader of his family and as a leader of humanity. Whereas Jesus, on the other hand, will succeed in every way as He is tempted by the devil out in the wilderness.

Adam had everything going for him. He was in paradise. He was in the midst of the Garden of Eden. He had abundant food all around him in all the other trees and plants that they were permitted to eat from.

Jesus was fasting for 40 days in the wilderness, living in a world stained and soaked by sin, not in a paradise, but out in the wilderness, in the rugged places, in the difficult places, hungry and tired and in need of companionship, alone with only the angels ministering to Him in the presence of His Father.

And yet Jesus wins a victory where Adam failed. And in fact, in every way that Adam failed in the garden, Jesus succeeds in the wilderness.

[5 : 16] The serpent came and tempted Adam and Eve. He came and tempted them to eat a fruit that looked to be good to the eyes. It was desirable to eat, Moses tells us in Genesis chapter 3.

While they had their fill of all the fruit of the garden, this one fruit that they were denied was desirable. It looked good to them. And Satan played upon that to draw them into his net.

Jesus, on the other hand, hungry, no doubt weak from the lack of food, is tempted by Satan to turn bread into stones. Not a difficult feat for a man not long from that time who would turn a couple of fish and a few loaves of bread into enough food to feed thousands of people.

This is not difficult. He will turn water into wine in days. This is not a difficult feat for Jesus. He could have done it. And yet Jesus is not seduced by what would look good and taste good and satisfy His cravings.

Satan in the garden twisted and denied the Word of God. And Adam and Eve fell for it. Satan in the wilderness. He quotes the Scriptures to Jesus, twisting their meaning, trying to get Jesus to test the validity of the Scriptures.

[6 : 28] If they're true, throw yourself down and He'll save you. That's what the Scriptures say after all. And Jesus does not give in to this twisting and testing of God's Word.

And He commands, and He says, He reminds of the command, You shall not test the Lord your God. And Jesus refuses to give in to this twisting of God's Word. And then finally, in the garden, Satan promises Adam and Eve that they will be able to set their own course.

That's really what the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is about. It's about whether or not Adam and Eve will have what is right and wrong determined for them by the rightful king of the world, God Himself, and whether they will function as His obedient governors over the rest of creation.

Or, will they choose instead to try to determine for themselves what is right and wrong? Will they try to walk down a path where they decide good and evil?

And we know the path that they chose. Jesus is offered by Satan on a high mountain all the kingdoms of the earth without, mind you, the suffering that He would have to go through to obtain His own crown.

[7 : 35] And yet Jesus withstands the temptation. This age-long battle between Satan and God, this age-long battle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman predicted in Genesis chapter 3 finds its sort of culmination there in the garden.

And yet it's not over in the garden. Jesus will continue to be tempted throughout His life. He will continue to deal with weariness throughout His earthly ministry. He will continue to deal with people pressing against Him.

People wanting to give Him a crown before the time is right. Jesus will face more temptations. And yet Jesus, Paul tells us, is obedient all the way to the point of death on a cross.

And it's this contrast between the response of Adam to temptation and the victory of Jesus over sin and temptation that Paul draws our attention to here in Romans chapter 5.

But Paul wants to give us a deeper understanding of the comparison and contrast between Jesus and Adam. In fact, if you'll notice in the text that we're looking at this morning, at the end of verse 14 we're told that Adam was a type of Him who was to come.

[8 : 50] That being, of course, Jesus. And last week I told you that a type in the Bible is an Old Testament person or thing that corresponds to a person or thing in the New Testament.

And yet the person or thing in the New Testament far exceeds that which we find in the Old Testament. So the example I gave you last week was of the Passover Lamb which points ahead to Jesus, the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world.

You have a type in the Old Testament, the Passover Lamb, that points to the antitype, Jesus as the slain Lamb of God in the New Testament. And we find these sorts of things throughout Scripture. But here the type that Paul draws our attention to is the one of Adam and Christ. Adam is a type of Christ. He in some ways corresponds to Jesus and is like Jesus and yet in significant ways he is far different from Jesus.

And we said last week also that the way in which Adam corresponds to Jesus, the way in which Adam is like Jesus is that Adam is the head and representative of a people. Adam represents all of his descendants.

[10:01] He is the head of all humanity. So the actions of Adam in the garden affect all of his descendants. Everyone in Adam is affected by what Adam does in the garden.

And last week we said that there are three basic effects that flow out of Adam's sin. We call this the doctrine of original sin but we shouldn't let that frighten us away from it.

Doctrine is just a word for teaching. So all we're talking about is the teaching concerning the effects of Adam's sin on the rest of the world. And we said there were three last week. One is hinted at in Romans chapter 5.

The other two are clearly spelled out. The one that is hinted at is that Adam passes on to all of his descendants a sinful nature. We come into the world already fallen.

We don't fall at some point in time when we reach a supposed age of accountability. We are already sinful and fallen from conception on and from birth on.

[11:01] That's why the Apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter 2 that we were dead in our trespasses and sins. That's why he describes us a couple of verses later in Ephesians 2 as those who are by nature, that is by birth, children of wrath.

That's who we are. And we inherit that from Adam. But that's not Paul's main focus in Romans 5. As I said, he hints at that. He hints at the fact that we are spiritually dead in Romans 5.

But his focus is upon the other two results of the sin of Adam in the garden. We described those last week as the universal reign of death over all of Adam's descendants.

Real, physical death. And you can see it throughout the passage. If you'll just look through and glance through some of these verses. Verse 12, just as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin and so death spread.

Verse 14 tells us that death reigned. Verse 15 tells us that many died through one man's, Adam's trespass. Verse 17 says that death reigned through that one man, that is, Adam.

[12:09] So over and over we have the theme of death as a consequence of Adam's sin, but not merely a consequence for Adam and Eve but a consequence for all those in Adam.

And guess what? That's us. That's every human being descended from Adam. And there's not another line that we can trace ourselves back to. You and I are all of us descendants of Adam. And therefore all of us are born destined to die. It is reality. And then secondly, last week we said that the last effect that Paul highlights here of Adam's sin is that of judgment and condemnation. And you can see that in several places in this passage. Verse 16, for the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation. Verse 18, therefore as one trespass led to condemnation for all men.

Verse 19, by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners. And I told you last week to be made a sinner here in this context is to be given the status of a sinner.

[13:17] So that Paul wants us to see that because of Adam's sin we are consigned to death and we receive the condemnation that he earned for his sin.

That's the doctrine of original sin in a nutshell. But believe it or not this passage is not mainly about original sin.

This passage is not mainly about teaching us the effects of Adam's sin in the garden. That's not Paul's main point. Paul's main point is to show us the work of Christ that counters Adam's sin. He only highlights the fruit of Adam's fall so that we can see the glorious grace that we receive in Christ and how that in every way Christ overturns and supersedes what Adam brought into the world.

And so just as we can summarize what Paul highlights about the fruit of Adam's fall here in two ways so we can see two ways in which Paul highlights and contrasts the work of Christ.

[14:27] But first notice the contrast itself. It's made clear in verses 15 and 16 that Paul wants us to see that while Adam corresponds to Christ in that he is the head of a race that he is the leader of a people and Jesus likewise is the head of a race the leader of a people nevertheless we want the contrast seen more strongly.

Verse 15 the free gift which comes through Christ the free gift notice is not like the trespass not like it it's not like the trespass or 16 the free gift again is not like the result of that one man's sin not like that which came through that one man's sin so the gift of which Paul is speaking here contrasts with the results that flow from Adam's sin and so what is that free gift in what ways does it contrast with Adam's fall and the effects of Adam's fall two things that we want to notice from this text about the free gift that Christ has earned for us the first one obviously contrasts with the death that comes about because of Adam's sin you have here a mention over and over of life so verse 17 says that the free gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one man

Jesus Christ so just as there's been a reign of death because of Adam so in Christ now there can be a reign a ruling of life verse 18 in the middle one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men and then finally that righteousness that we're going to talk about in a moment leads to eternal life in verse 21 so there is life that contrasts with death if we come into the world consigned to death because of what Adam did by faith in Christ we can have the promise of eternal life so that Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 as in Adam all die so also in Christ all shall be made alive Jesus in his resurrection becomes the pattern for us Easter which is coming up in a few weeks Easter Sunday is not merely about the resurrection of Jesus it's about the promise of future resurrection for all those who are in Christ if death is promised for all those who are in Adam then life is promised for all those who are in Christ real life physical life that will last and endure forever that hope is held out to us but that hope of life through Christ can only come to us through righteousness the second aspect of Christ's work that Paul highlights here because if Adam brings both death and condemnation into the world

Jesus brings life and righteousness or as Paul says in this passage life and justification but they're not they're not equal realities in other words they don't just stand as and related sort of things justification and life there's another sort of relationship between the two justification actually is the cause of life righteousness is the cause of eternal life notice how it's worded here in verse 21 just as sin reigned in death grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life so the life that we hope for the hope that we have to live forever with Christ in the resurrection is grounded in this other aspect of Christ's work that Paul calls righteousness or justification salvation and so I want us to dwell there just for a moment this morning and ask what exactly does Paul mean by that and how how do we receive that and the first thing that we need to recognize is that the righteousness spoken of here is not our personal righteousness the sin that's credited to our account the sin of Adam credited to our account is not overcome by us personally performing acts of righteousness no

Adam's sin and guilt credited to our account is countered by Christ's righteousness credited to our account they are equal in a sense and yet opposites Adam's sin is credited to us Christ's righteousness therefore is credited to us let's see this in the text let's pay attention to how Paul talks about this verse 16 the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin for the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation so the judgment that comes upon us follows one trespass one trespass all it took was Adam's fall in the garden and all of us in Adam received condemnation judgment followed one trespass leading to condemnation but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification verse 17 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

[20:15] Jesus Christ you see righteousness here is a free gift it's a gift it's something that's given to you it's not something that you do it's not something that wells up within you that you produce it's something that's given to you that cannot be said of personal righteousness personal righteousness is not a gift it's a product that you produce Paul here is concerned with another righteousness righteousness doesn't come from within us righteousness that comes from outside of us and as counted as ours that's what justification means justification means not that you are made righteous or that you become righteous justification means that you are declared righteous so just as through

one man's trespass judgment came bringing condemnation so also through Christ comes justification comes the declaration you are now righteous notice verse 18 as one trespass led to condemnation for all men so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men and then of course verse 19 uses this language we've seen it already made a sinner because of Adam's sin but now because of Christ's righteousness the many are made righteous and again it's very important that we pay attention to the meaning of the words here because in English the phrase made righteous could mean that we're actually turned into righteous people righteousness is actually worked into who we are but the Greek is quite different from the English translation here because the Greek means that you are appointed righteous it means that you are put into the position of someone who is righteous not that you are made righteous from the inside out you are appointed to the position of being seen and declared by God himself as being a righteous person in other words you are justified by God that's the point that Paul is trying to make here what Paul writes here in this half of Romans 5 is not disconnected from everything else that he has been saying in this book we spent the first four chapters with Paul hammering home the doctrine the teaching of justification by faith he hasn't forgotten that he hasn't left that behind but his purpose in chapter 5 is to get beneath that and to give us some assurance that that justification that that legal declaration that God makes about sinners that that can actually belong to us that's the point of Romans 5 he wants to give us assurance he wants to give us a firm foundation for believing that we are among those justified we are among those declared to be righteous and that we will receive all the fruit that flows from that and here in this half of Romans 5 he assures us that just as the the core of our problem lies in Adam and what Adam did so also the solution lies in the second Adam in Christ and what he did so what does Paul mean when he says that one act of righteousness leads to justification what is that one act of righteousness what exactly has Jesus done to enable us to be declared righteous by God it's tempting to think and many interpreters approach the passage in this way to think that the one act of righteousness is the death of Jesus on the cross and it's tempting to simply limit this down to that because of the way it's worded one act of righteousness corresponding to one act of disobedience so it's tempting to try to narrow this down to one event in the life of Jesus but I think that we would be a bit off base there because as I mentioned earlier Paul conceives of the death of Jesus to be the culmination of his life of obedience to God he was obedient not in death Paul says in Philippians but all the way to the point of death in other words the one act of righteousness is actually a long list of righteous deeds performed by Jesus the one act of righteousness is a summary of his entire life which culminates in his death upon the cross so when Jesus does battle with Satan in the wilderness he is performing a righteousness on our behalf that we need because I don't know about you but I don't fare all that well many times when I face off against the temptations of the enemy I falter I stumble I give in sometimes to his prodding I fall for his tricks many times just as Adam did and yet Jesus enters the wilderness to do battle on our behalf to win what Adam lost and to do what we cannot do Jesus lived his entire life thirty some odd years free from sin so the writer of Hebrews says that he was made like us in every way except without sin Jesus entire life is an act of righteousness performed on our behalf so that his perfect righteousness might be counted to be ours and then as a result of the counting of his righteousness to our account we receive life life comes to us we have real hope now because of what Jesus has done and never because of anything that we have done now I suppose at this point having spent some time last week and now this week dwelling on original sin and what

[26 : 55] Christ has done to counter it I suppose it's possible for some of us to begin to think in our minds this is all a bit confusing this is a lot to sort of pack away into our minds and I said last week that we were going to dig a little bit deeper I said to you that you don't find gold on the surface of the mountain you have to dig down and that's what we're trying to do trying to see the gold the treasure of Christ's work for us and in our place but I realize that there may be some of us here who are still thinking in our minds that's a little difficult to handle that's a little that's a bit much to wrap my mind around I'm having trouble seeing how believing in Jesus can overcome all the things that I have done never mind Adam and what he did never mind that that's confusing to me that seems beyond my grasp at this point in my walk with Christ and my knowledge of the Bible

I'm merely troubled at this point with all of my own sins and trying to conceive of how the death of Jesus might overcome my personal sins well Paul doesn't leave that unaddressed in this text did you hear what we read earlier verse 16 the contrast once again 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 many trespasses what could he possibly have in mind as he mentions many trespasses what could the apostle Paul possibly be thinking of he's only got his mind fixed on the one transgression of Adam he's only focused on the one sin of Adam that we have recorded for us in the book of Genesis so it's not as if he's conceiving of multiple sins of Adam credited to our account oh no that one sin in the garden was quite enough of Adam's sin counted credited to our account to do us in that's not his thought I don't think

I think he has in mind Adam's sin compounded by all of our sins added to that we do have a personal problem we have a problem of the crediting of Adam's sin to our account because we were in Adam when he sinned but we also have the fact that we come into this world as sinners and we act that out throughout our lives and we in fact have on top of Adam's trespass many trespasses of our own and they vary don't they they come in all different shapes and sizes some of us are tempted constantly to gossip and pass on what we've heard about others some of us are tempted to pride to becoming puffed up about things some of us have things that have happened in the past in our lives that every time we think of them every time the enemy reminds us of them we feel afresh the condemnation that we know we deserve for the things that we've done

I want you to hear Paul's words from 1 Corinthians chapter 6 he says do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God do not be deceived neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who practice homosexuality nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor revilers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God and that reads as a description of people that go to church it's not just a description of people out there it's us maybe you haven't done all the things on this list I doubt that anyone here has done everything on this list but there's something here that strikes at all of us at some point in our lives in the past something in here describes us and yet he says in verse 11 such were some of you but you were washed but you were sanctified you were justified in the name of the Lord

Jesus Christ and by the spirit of our God there is no list of trespasses no matter how heinous they may be in our minds or even in reality there is no list of sins that the righteousness of Jesus cannot triumph over and for us to begin to think that our sins are in some way beyond the pale beyond the ability of Jesus to deal with is for us to impugn the righteousness of Jesus himself it's Christ's righteousness that is the free gift that we receive it's Christ's obedience that is counted as ours and I guarantee you his obedience outstrips all of your disobedience his righteousness towers over your unrighteousness which is why over and over over and over Paul talks about how Christ's work surpasses the work of Adam because his righteousness and his obedience are enough to cover the sins of all those who trust in him and his righteousness and his obedience are enough to undo what Adam did and to cover over all of your sins and so this morning my prayer for us as a congregation is that we would begin to savor what Jesus has accomplished for us and in our place not merely on the cross preeminently on the cross but not merely on the cross but throughout his entire life earning for us a status that we do not deserve and yet given to us freely so that all those in [33:14] Christ all those who have Christ as their head and no longer Adam all those who trust in Jesus they have his righteousness counted as theirs and his resurrection life promised to them let's pray to whoever