

The True and Better Adam (Part 4)

Romans 5:12-21

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*Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church*

As I was thinking about the principle, that's here in this passage, we've discovered together, the principle of representation, this week I was reminded that one of the great joys of my life is my children. But I also remember that on the day my first daughter Lauren was born, in addition to that sense of overwhelming joy, and perhaps if you have children you'll appreciate this, I also felt, at the same time, a sense of the weight of the responsibility that came with this newfound duty and joy. For the first time in my life, another person was entirely dependent on me for everything. And that sense of responsibility motivated me to do some things that I had not done before. Among those was that I drafted a will and in that will I designated, I appointed, guardians for my daughter, and have since kept that will up to date, with guardians for my three girls.

Now, think about that for a moment, without any input from our newborn daughter, Sheila and I decided who would be her guardians. We chose, in the event of our death, who would represent us to her, and who, in turn, would represent her to others. Of course, we asked the potential guardians first, I advise that, but nevertheless we made this choice. And parents' right to choose guardians for their children is almost universally accepted. And yet, when children are very young they get no say whatsoever in who will represent them, even though that appointed representative, that appointed guardian, will make decisions on their behalf and they will either enjoy the benefit of those good decisions or they will suffer the consequences of those bad decisions.

Now, think about this, if it is legitimate for human parents to choose those who will represent their children, it is perfectly just for God to do the same for those who belong to Him by creation. And that is exactly what God has done. He has appointed representatives for the human race, for all of us, Adam, and for those of us who have come to faith in Christ, Christ as well. And it is this reality of representation that is Paul's point here in Romans 5, beginning in verse 12 and running down through verse 21.

Now, let me remind you that this issue is not peripheral, but, in fact, what we're studying together here in Romans 5 is at the very heart of the gospel. It is crucial to the gospel and without this truth there is no gospel, because the principle of legal representation is the only legal basis for our justification. It is the only way that God can treat you as if you had lived the life of Jesus Christ and still be just.

So, let me briefly review what we have discovered in this paragraph so far. The theme of these verses, simply put, is this, Jesus Christ is able to secure our justification because God appointed Him as our legal representative, just as He did Adam in the garden. But before Paul explains how Christ represents us, he first then needs to explain how Adam did. And so, he begins then with what is really the first part of this paragraph, and I've called it, Adam our representative, how sin, condemnation, and death came to all men; that's the essence of verses 12 to 14, Adam our representative.

And he begins in verse 12 by explaining Adam's representation. Look at verse 12 with me. Again, we've studied this together, I just call it your attention. He says, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned." In that verse Paul explains the relationship between us and Adam and his sin and guilt. And we pulled out from that verse, really Paul makes four fundamental propositions about our relationship to Adam. Again, just to remind you of them, number one, sin entered the world through Adam. Number two, death entered the world through Adam's sin. The third proposition is, death spread to all men because of Adam's sin. And then the fourth proposition, and really the heart of verse 12 is this, God credited the guilt of Adam's sin to all men.

You and I are legally guilty before God for Adam's sin because God appointed Adam as our representative. He stood in our place, he acted on our behalf, he made decisions for you as your legal representative. And if you're tempted to say that's not fair, let me remind you, we talked about this, nothing could be more fair. He was in a perfect situation to make the right choice, you're not. In addition, each of us would have made exactly the same choice, and so it was perfectly fair of God to make Adam our representative, and that's exactly what He did.

Now, as soon as Paul says at the end of verse 12, "all sinned" in Adam, he realized that that was as controversial a statement in his day as it is in ours, and so he immediately then defends that statement in verses 13 and 14. And he defends it this way, he says, just to prove to you that that's true, think about those people between Adam and Moses. They all died even though they didn't have the written law. In addition, even infants died even though they had not personally sinned and yet death is the penalty for sin. So why did those infants die? Why did those people who didn't have the written law die? And he says, there's only one explanation, it's because they were counted guilty in Adam, and they got the sentence of death just like Adam did. That's how he defends it in verses 13 and 14. And again, I'm just catching us up to date; we've looked at all of this together. So, that's Adam our representative.

The second part of this passage begins in verse 15 and runs down through verse 21, and it's Christ our representative, how righteousness, justification, and life, came to the many. And here's really the focus of this entire section. Now, last time we looked then at how Christ surpasses Adam. You remember, in verse 14 he finishes by saying Adam is a type of Christ.

And as soon as he says that he realizes that could be misunderstood, I don't want you to think of Christ and Adam on the same level, and so let me tell you how Christ surpasses Adam. If you look at verses 15 to 17 you'll see twice he says, "not like," "much more," "not like," "much more." He wants us to know how Christ surpasses Adam.

And last time we saw how Christ does surpass Adam in His representation of us. In verse 15, because Christ brought us grace instead of judgment. In verse 16, because Christ brought us justification for our many sins instead of condemnation for Adam's one sin. And then in verse 17, Christ surpasses Adam because He brought us life instead of death.

Now, that's where we left off last time. Today, I want to finish this passage together. Now, we're going to cover four verses. I think this is close to a record in our study of Romans, so buckle up, here we go. Let's read it together, Romans 5:18,

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. 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. The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now, having shown us, in verses 15 to 17, the passage we looked at last time, how Christ surpasses Adam, Paul comes back to the heart of his argument to explain in the verses that we just read, particularly verses 18 and 19, how Christ replaces Adam. If you're a Christian you used to be in Adam, he represented you, but now you are in Christ and Christ represents you, Christ has replaced Adam as your representative.

Now, before we look at verses 18 and 19 together, let me just remind you of the flow of Paul's thought through this passage. It is one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament to follow, so I think it's important for me to remind you of what's really going on here. In verse 12 Paul begins to make his argument, but at the end of verse 12 in the NASB there is a dash. Why is that? Because Paul interrupts himself. He interrupts himself and then, beginning in verse 13 down to verse 17, he addresses two parenthetical issues, prompted by something he says.

At the end of verse 12 he says, "all sinned." So, in verses 13 and 14 he deals with the question, what does "all sinned" mean? But at the end of that interruption, notice in verse 14 at the end, he says, "Adam is a type of Christ." He interrupts himself a second time to explain how Christ is better than Adam. They're not to be put on the same tier, on the same, as peers of each other, that's verses 15 to 17.

Now, once he finishes those interruptions, in verses 18 and 19, that we just read together, he completes his main argument. This is the thrust of the passage, verses 18 and 19, and then in verses 20 and 21 he finishes out by dealing briefly with the role of the law in God's plan of redemption, and we'll talk about why he does that in a minute. So, what I want you to see is that verses 18 and 19 are key. Paul here presents the main argument, the argument that he began back in verse 12 before he interrupted himself, and now he completes it, he states it in its entirety.

Notice how verse 18 begins, "So then." Here is the result of what I'm talking about, here is the conclusion. And he makes his conclusion, or he summarizes what he's teaching, in the form of a comparison. Again, notice the key words in verses 18 and 19 "as," "even so," verse 18. Verse 19, "as," "even so." He's making a comparison, and specifically, he's comparing how God thinks of us and how God treats us now that we're in Christ, compared to when we were in Adam. So that's the comparison he's making.

So, Paul first reminds us then, that God now treats us, God responds to us, He treats us in a way, in keeping with Christ's actions, that's now. But before he gets to now, he goes back and reminds us to before. Before, when we were in Adam, here's how God treated us, He condemned us, and that resulted in the sentence of death. This is how God treated us when we were still in Adam, when Adam was our representative.

Notice the first part of verse 18, "So then," consequently, let me summarize my argument for you, he says, "as through one transgression," that is, Adam's sin, "there resulted condemnation," and, of course, that condemnation led to death, the sentence of death, "to all men." Now, notice the progression of what Paul says. He says, first of all, I want you to remember, Adam committed one sin. What was that transgression? What was that sin? He ate of the forbidden fruit. And that one transgression resulted in God's condemnation.

Remember the word condemnation, we talked about this, it means a legal verdict of guilty. One act of sin brought the legal verdict of guilty, not only on Adam, but on all Adam represented in the garden. And who is that? All of us, all mankind. That legal verdict of guilty on all of us resulted in a sentence just like in a legal courtroom, and that sentence was what? Death, it was death, death passed on every one of us. Notice verse 12, "death spread to all men."

In other words, here's what Paul is saying. All of those Adam represented in the garden, every human being, encountered the guilty verdict that Adam earned for us, and the sentence Adam earned for us, which was death. What does that mean practically? It means every one of us in this room was born spiritually dead to God, without connection to God. We didn't know God, we weren't known by Him in an intimate relational sense, there was a distance, an alienation, Paul describes it in another place, that was the reality.

So, we were born spiritually dead and we were born, I hate to tell you who are younger this, those of you who are older understand this, we were born with a decaying body that will eventually die; it's happening to every one of us. So, spiritual death, eventually physical death, and if our circumstances remain unchanged by divine grace, we will endure what John the Apostle calls the second death, which is eternal suffering in hell. That's what we had in Adam. God treated us like Adam deserved to be treated, because he was our representative.

But that's no longer true for us who have repented and believed in Christ, because Paul, in the second half of verse 18 says, now in Christ, now that we're in Christ, we have justification, resulting in life. How can that be? Again, notice verse 18, "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men," that's how God treated us in Adam, "even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men." Now God treats us like Jesus and His one act of righteousness deserve to be treated.

Now, what is this one act of righteousness? Clearly, he's talking about Christ and he's talking about something Christ did, but what is the one act of righteousness? Well, there are two views of this, two options in terms of how biblical scholars land. Some would say this one act of righteousness refers solely to Christ's death on the cross. That's the one act of righteousness. They would point back, for example, to Romans 3. Go back to Romans 3:24, which says that we are justified, we're declared right with God, "as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." And then, in verse 25, Paul focuses on one act, His public death "as a propitiation," as a satisfaction of God's wrath "in His blood." So, in other words, they would say, the one act of righteousness is Jesus' death for sins on the cross. And certainly, no one would argue that that's not included, everyone would say that's included, but there are those who say that's all that "one act of righteousness" means.

There's a second view. Others would say that the one act of righteousness is Christ's entire life summarized, including His supreme act of obedience, His death on the cross. Now, there are good men on both sides of this issue, there are orthodox evangelical believers who take different views here. I lean toward the second because I think the evidence supports it. I would tend to go where John Murray goes. He says this, "It was in the cross of Christ and the shedding of His blood," listen to this, "that His obedience came to its climactic expression, but obedience comprehends the totality of the Father's will as fulfilled by Christ."

You read the gospels and again and again you hear Christ saying, I came to do the Father's will and I have done it. You get to John 17, and just before His arrest and His crucifixion, He says, "I have accomplished all that you gave Me to do." He hasn't been crucified yet. Clearly, He came to do more than merely to be crucified.

What we're really talking about here, when we talk about the fullness of Jesus' life, as His act of obedience, is what theologians refer to by two names, the active obedience of Christ and the passive obedience of Christ. Now, those are not great labels because Christ didn't do anything

passively, but it's trying to underscore two realities. Let me take those apart for you, because I think that what's being said here.

First of all, when we talk about His active obedience, we're talking about Jesus obeying the precepts, all the precepts Scripture commands of the righteous, that's His act of obedience. For 33 years Jesus obeyed every command in Scripture that's given to the righteous. That's, by the way, this part of the ministry of Christ, is why He couldn't just come down and do the passion week. It's why He needed to be here for 33 years, because He needed to live a full orb'd life and in that life, fulfill everything God requires of the righteous. You say, does the Scripture teach this? Absolutely.

In fact, Galatians 4:4 says that, "when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman," then he says this, "born under the Law." That is, Jesus was born with a responsibility to keep God's law. Why? In order "that He might redeem those who were under," the responsibility to keep God's, "Law," but haven't. There is a connection between the work of Christ and His living under and obeying the commands of the law. Jesus Himself was aware of this. You go to the early days of His ministry in Matthew 3:15 and He goes to be baptized by John the Baptist.

Now, think about this, this is a baptism of repentance. Jesus doesn't need to personally repent, and yet He shows up to be baptized, and John responds as you and I would respond. He says, Lord, I need to be baptized by you, you don't need this. And what does Jesus say? He says, "permit it at this time, for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus was aware that in His life He needed to fulfill all righteousness, on the behalf of us, not only to earn the right to be the Redeemer, but to earn the righteousness that would one day be credited to us.

In Hebrews 5:8, we read, "He learned obedience from the things which He suffered." That doesn't mean Jesus was at some point disobedient, it simply means He grew in His understanding and development in obedience as He matured, through the things which He suffered in this life. This is His active obedience. Jesus obeyed all the commands of Scripture that you should have obeyed but haven't, and He did so in your place. This is the active obedience of Christ.

But then there's the passive obedience of Christ. By this we mean Christ bore the penalty that Scripture demands for sin. This is the passive obedience. Again, it's not passive in the true sense, it simply means that He was receiving that penalty from God. In that sense it was passive, but He accepted it freely and willingly. He, in obedience, agreed to bear the penalty for the sins of His people. Again, Scripture is clear on this front. You remember, in the garden of Gethsemane, in Luke 22:42, Jesus is praying and what does He say? "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me."

Don't misunderstand, Jesus isn't wimping out here on death, there are a lot of people who have gone to death as martyrs bravely, Jesus did as well. That's not what's going on here. What's the cup? The cup is the wrath of God, the separation from the Father that He'd never known. And He says, Lord, if there's a way for that not to happen, then remove this cup. And then He says, "nevertheless, not My will, but" what? "Yours be done." In other words, He was obedient in bearing the sins of His people. In Philippians 2:8 we read, "He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." So, when you read in verse 18, "this one act of righteousness," or you read in verse 19, "obedience," understand, we're talking about the collective obedience of Jesus Christ, His life as an act of obedience, those 33 years of perfection and His willingness to die for the sins of His people.

Now, go back to verse 18. What are the results of Christ's act of righteousness, "through one act of righteousness," that is, in His entire life of both active and passive obedience, "there resulted justification of life to all men." Now, don't be confused, we've gone through this before, but that "all men" stumps some people. They come to that and they think this means that everyone is going to be saved. There are heretics who come to the conclusion of universalism from a passage like this. That's not what Paul is teaching. We've looked already at Romans 2 where it says God "WILL RENDER TO EACH MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS." That God will judge based on the law written on the heart, those who only have that. He will judge, based on the law written in Scripture, those who have that. So, he's not talking about universalism.

Nor is Paul talking here about potential justification for all men. That's what some Armenians tend to do with this passage. Paul never uses justification as a potential. He's talking about a real legal decision God makes about individuals. So, who are the "all men"? Well, just like in the rest of this passage, the "many" and "all" connected to Adam are those Adam represents. And who is that? Everybody except for Christ. The "many" or the "all" that are in Christ are whom? Those Christ represents. So, read it again. He's basically saying the "all men" here are all who are represented by Christ, all who have received the free gift of His righteousness, all who have repented and believed. Or, as Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 15:22, "as in Adam all die," if you're in Adam, if he's your representative, you die, "all in Christ," all who have Him as their representative, are "made alive," that's the idea.

Now, look at verse 18, and let's put it all together. God now treats us differently than He did before, He now treats us based on the actions of Christ. And because of that we receive instead of condemnation, a legal verdict of guilty, verse 18, the first part, we receive justification, a legal verdict of righteous. And instead of death in Adam, we receive life in Christ, eternal life. So, that's the comparison in verse 18.

In verse 19, Paul makes a related but separate point. Notice how verse 19 begins, "For," here is the reason that God treats us as Christ deserves to be treated, it's because God now regards us based on Christ's actions. That is, He thinks of us, He considers us, He reckons us, to be a

certain way because of Christ's actions. And again, he starts by reminding us of what was true before, when we were in Adam. In Adam, God regarded us as what? Sinners. As sinners.

Look at verse 19, "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners." The Greek word translated disobedience here is, it's a very picturesque word. It literally means to hear alongside, to hear alongside. What it means is not to truly hear, it's like you're kind of listening, but not listening. And it comes to mean to refuse to hear. And then it eventually comes into the idea of a refusal to obey.

Adam's disobedience was his selfish sinful unwillingness to hear God, to listen to God. It was his active choice to rebel, to eat of the forbidden fruit, and "through Adam's," notice what verse 19 says, "through Adam's disobedience the many." Who are the many? All of those Adam represented in the garden, all mankind, "the many were made sinners." Now, in English that can be confusing because we use the word made in a variety of ways. It can sound like, you know, God created evil in our hearts in some way. That's not at all what this word means.

The Greek verb translated made here is not the normal word for made, it's a word that never means to change someone's character, that's not what's happening here. In fact, the most common New Testament usage of this word is to appoint or to change someone's status. Paul uses this verb only three times in all of his letters, twice here in verse 19. The only other time he uses this word made is in Titus 1:5 where it translates, "appoint elders in every city," appoint. Appoint is the word there. So, in other words, this word means to recognize someone as having a certain status and to treat them as that status deserves, just like you do with an elder.

When we appoint elders in this church, as Paul charged Titus to do, we don't change that man's basic character, he doesn't come down here and we, sort of, wave the wand and he becomes a different person. No, we acknowledge him to be an elder and treat him as an elder should be treated.

That's what happens to us in Adam. Because of Adam's disobedience, God put us in the category of sinners and He treated us as such. Before our birth, unrelated to our own actions, He did so solely because of the actions of Adam, whom He'd appointed as our representative. Remember that, that becomes crucial. But now, again, for us that used to be, that's before in Adam, but now it's changed. Now in Christ, God regards us, He thinks of us, He considers us as righteous.

Notice again verse 19, "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so," in the same way, "through the obedience of the One the many," that is, all He represents, "will be made righteous." The Greek word for obedience here is the opposite of the word disobedience, but it's, again, it's a very picturesque word. This word literally means, to listen under. That is, to truly listen, to submit to what you hear and then to do it. Paul here says, "through the obedience of the One," underscore that in your Bible, "the obedience of the One,"

it's not your righteousness that saves you, it's not your obedience that saves you, it's the obedience of the One, Jesus Christ, "through the obedience of the One," all He represents, "the many will be made righteous."

Now, notice "will be made," that's future tense, don't misunderstand, that doesn't imply that justification is future in some way for us, he's already explained back in chapters 4 and 5 that justification is a present reality for us. We've already been declared right with God. Go back to chapter 5 verse 1, "having been justified," it's already happened. So, why does he use the future tense then? He's making the point that this is God's common way of operating. From this point and forever, whenever another person repents and believes, they will be made righteous. And again, what does that mean? It means to appoint, it's the same word. God appoints them as righteous, He regards them as righteous, He places them in the category of righteous.

Charles Hodge, the great commentator on Romans, writes, "The disobedience of Adam was the ground of the many being placed in the category of sinners and the obedience of Christ was the ground on which the many are to be placed in the category of the righteous." Lloyd Jones is even more direct, listen to what he writes, "Look at yourself in Adam, though you had done nothing, you were declared a sinner. Look at yourself in Christ and see that though you have done nothing, you are declared to be righteous."

That's the parallel, "as," "even so," "as," "even so," just like you did nothing and you were condemned in Adam, you do nothing and you are declared righteous in Christ. God recognizes us as righteous and treats us as if we were righteous solely on the basis of the obedience of the One, our representative. So, you see then, that verses 18 and 19 are at the heart of Paul's argument, they are at the heart of the gospel.

But Paul's not done, he can't finish this section until he answers a, sort of, an aside, a question he knows that the Jews would have throughout this discussion, and so he ends in verses 20 and 21, he ends this section, by addressing how the law fits this scheme he's been explaining, how the law fits the plan of redemption. Because the Jews, listening to this portion of Romans read in the churches in Rome, would have immediately thought to themselves, wait a minute Paul, you've talked about Adam, that's Genesis, you've talked about Christ, that's the New Testament gospels, what about all that stuff in between? What about Moses? What about the law? What part does that play in the plan of redemption?

And so, Paul briefly explains. He's going to address this more fully in the next couple of chapters, but he briefly explains here the crucial role that God's law plays. Look at the beginning of verse 20, "The Law came in so that the transgression would increase." Now again, under the inspiration of the Spirit, Paul chooses his words carefully and he chooses a very unusual word here. The word "come in" is not the normal word for "come in" in the New Testament. It's only used two times in the entire New Testament, here and the only other time

it's used, it's in Galatians 2, where it's talking about the Judaizers who "sneaked in" to the churches.

That's what he says, "the law sneaked in," it slipped in. He's not being critical of the law, he's basically making a point, he's saying the law doesn't serve a primary role in the plan of redemption, it serves a secondary role, it slipped in, it sneaked in. So, what is the role of the law? Well, in a nutshell, it's this, the law prepares us for Christ, the law prepares us for Christ. How? Well, very briefly, Paul explains.

First of all, it prepares us for Christ because it increases the knowledge of sin. Look back at chapter 3 verse 20, he says, "the Law," "through the Law comes the knowledge of sin." It's through God's law we learn what sin is. Go to chapter 7 verse 7, "What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary," Paul says, "I would not," personally, "have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COVET.'"

I mean, think about this for a moment, coveting, desiring something somebody else has, that doesn't seem like a very bad thing, right? I mean, on its surface, it's like, how serious could that be? But then the Ten Commandments come along and God says, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and guess what? You now know, ooh, that's sin, I shouldn't do that, this is wrong. It increases the knowledge of sin.

You know, I can say this because my wife's still out in California, she's kind of like the law in my life, because I'm kind of a, you know, I'm kind of a free spirit, I'm not troubled by a lot of things. So, I'll give an example, we were, sort of, exploring one day, some construction, and some, there weren't roads in this new community or anything, it was just kind of wide open, and I thought, this will be interesting, let's go see what this is like. And so, we start riding through it and pretty soon I'm enjoying myself pointing out the development and what they are going to be doing. And my wife says, Tom, there's a no trespassing sign. You know what my first response was? Don't tell me that. You just ruined a good afternoon. I didn't need to know that. I was enjoying myself. Why? Because knowledge of the law brings an awareness that you are breaking the command. The law makes it clear what God forbids and what He demands, that's how I know what sin is.

Secondly, the law also prepares me for Christ by increasing the seriousness and the guilt of sin. It turns sin into rebellion. Look at chapter 4 verse 15. We already saw this together. Paul says, "where there is no law, there also is no violation." It doesn't mean, if there's not the law it's not sin. I mean, you break a law without knowing the law, you're still guilty, right? He's not saying that. What he's saying is, where there isn't a written law it's not as serious as when you know the written law, you've seen the no trespassing sign, and you do it anyway; it's much more serious. What was at first sin against the substance of the law written on the heart, Romans 2,

becomes willful rebellion against the clear written commands of God; it becomes much more serious.

Number three, and this is surprising, the law increases the frequency of sin. Is it because something's wrong with the law? No, it's because something's wrong with us. It draws out our sinful hearts. We crave that which we most are forbidden from doing. That's our sinfulness. Look at chapter 7 verse 8, Paul using himself as an example, and this whole idea of coveting, the command you shall not covet, chapter 7 verse 8, "But sin," that is, my sinfulness, my fallenness, "taking opportunity through the commandment," "YOU SHALL NOT COVET," "produced in me coveting of every kind." Do you see what he's saying? He's saying, once I knew the law it didn't prevent me from sinning, it encouraged me to sin more because I am fallen and I want what I can't have.

And if you doubt if that's true, let me just send you on a little experiment. Take your own children, young children, or take somebody else's young children, or your grandchildren, and put them in a room and let them play a little while, and then say to them, okay, enjoy yourself, you can do whatever you want, don't touch that. It doesn't matter what that is, just point out something and say don't touch that. And then leave and, sort of, spy back on what happens. They may have had no interest in whatever that was at all until you said it, but once you said it, it becomes keenly interesting, they don't want anything but that. That's our fallenness. That's human nature. That's how the law works. It increases the frequency of sin because of our own twisted nature. By the way, this is why legalism doesn't work. Because legalism has, not only does it not have any power to control the flesh, but make more laws than God has and you excite the flesh.

So, the law can't prevent sin, can't save us from sin. In fact, it only makes our problem worse, we sin more. And so, Paul adds another function of the law in Galatians 3:24, it serves as a tutor to drive us to Christ. "Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith." So, the law increases our knowledge of sin, it increases the seriousness and guilt of sin, it even increases the frequency of sin, and all of that makes me say, you know what? I am never going to be made right with God by keeping His law. And it drives me to Christ. So, the law has a crucial role that prepares us for Christ.

But, Paul also wants us to know the greater role of grace and he introduces this in the middle of verse 20 through verse 21. This is only the second time that Paul has mentioned the contrast between the law and grace. It's a theme he's going to come back to and develop at length in chapters 6 and 7, so I'll leave that for then, but here he's simply pointing out that although the law caused sin to increase, verse 20, in the ways we talked about, the law caused sin to increase, "where sin increased," where sin grew is the word, "grace abounded."

Now, that word abounded is not the same word for increase, it's a totally different Greek word. It means to have way more than enough. So, sin grew, but grace then was way more than

enough. But Paul isn't content to say that. He makes up his own new Greek word. He takes that word and he adds a prefix to it, the Greek word from which we got our word hyper. Grace hyper-abounded, grace super-abounded. It's impossible for me to really capture this. I mean he's saying, look, if your sin flows like a mighty river through your life, then the grace of God is like the Noahic flood, it drains it away, it washes away, that's the idea. Sin increases with the law, but grace comes in like a raging flood and washes it all away. Grace hyper-abounded, it super-abounded.

Now, why did God make His grace super-abound to us? Well, to end and to replace the reign of sin and death in our lives. Look at verse 21, he says, "grace super abounded," "so that," here was the purpose, "so that, as sin reigned in death," or we could say, "as sin and death reigned," that was in Adam, that's what happened because of Adam our representative, "even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

You see, sin and death reigned through Adam and through the law. God's law produced sin in us because of our fallenness, and that sin led to a guilty verdict, condemnation, and that guilty verdict of condemnation brought the sentence of death. "Even so," he says, verse 21, "grace reigns through Jesus Christ our Lord." I love that. "Grace reigns." God's grace provides us with the gift of righteousness he's talked about in this paragraph and that righteousness, the righteousness of Christ credited to us, results in our justification. We're declared right with God based on "the obedience of the One." And that justification then results in eternal life. Grace reigns.

John Stott writes, "Nothing could sum up better the blessings of being in Christ than the expression, the reign of grace. For grace forgives sins through the cross, grace bestows on the sinner both righteousness and eternal life, grace satisfies the thirsty soul and fills the hungry with good things, grace sanctifies sinners, shaping them into the image of Christ, and one day grace will destroy death and consummate the kingdom." Grace reigns.

Notice what he says, grace reigns through our Lord Jesus Christ. Really, what he's saying is this, Jesus Christ our Lord reigns in grace. We live in a kingdom overseen by Christ our Lord and His reign is characterized not by sin and death but by grace and life.

What a powerful passage, but, you know, I don't want to leave us there because I want to make sure we understand how Paul intended us to apply this. So briefly, let me give you the key lessons we learn from these verses. Very briefly, there are four of them, key lessons we learned from these verses.

Number one, our justification in Christ happens exactly the same way as our condemnation in Adam. In other words, you contributed nothing to your condemnation in Adam. You didn't sin, Adam did, he sinned as your representative. You did nothing to contribute to your condemnation. And in the very same way, this is Paul's point, you contribute nothing to your

justification. You contribute nothing. Our acceptance with God is not based on our faith, it's not based on our good works, our moral character, or anything in us whatsoever. Instead, our acceptance with God rests entirely and completely on the obedience of the One, our representative.

But there is a key difference because, how did you get to have Adam as your representative? You were conceived and born, that's it. You did nothing else. You were conceived and born. You were his descendant. Therefore, you were in Adam; he was your representative. But how does Christ become your representative? Well, this is a bit of a trick question because there are really two answers. There's one from God's perspective and there's one from our perspective.

From God's perspective, ultimately Christ becomes your representative because God sovereignly chose you to be His own. In other words, we're talking about election. Is that what the Scriptures teach? Absolutely. Listen to Ephesians 1:4, "the Father chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." He chose Christ to be our representative. He chose us to be in Him. So, think about this, at the cross when Jesus was dying for sin, God had already made Him your representative, He did it in eternity past, so as he died He didn't die generically for people, He died for you, you were one He represented and He died for your sins. Long before you had ever been born, or ever repented and believed, God had already appointed Christ to be your representative because He had chosen you to be His.

But, there is another way that Christ comes to represent you because election ensures your eventual salvation, but election doesn't accomplish your salvation. So, savingly, personally, practically, Christ becomes your representative only when you receive the free gift of righteousness that's described in this passage. When God gives you life and into that life He brings and gives you the gift of repentance and faith, and you hear the gospel, and through that gospel God draws you to Himself, the effectual call, and you use that faith and repentance that God has given you to exercise, and you believe and you repent, at that very moment Christ becomes your representative, you have now been placed in Christ. So, justification happens exactly the same way as condemnation.

Number two, second lesson, the principle of representation is what makes justification possible. Remember, God is righteous, He's just, He says, "the soul that sins, it will die." He can't treat you like you lived somebody else's life. The only way God can do that is through this principle of legal representation. God appointed Adam as our representative and then having made him our legal representative, He could credit Adam's sinful act to us and treat us as if we had done it; that was perfectly just of God. In the same way, God appointed Christ as the representative of His people, He credited Christ's righteousness to us and then treats us as if we had done what Christ did, and that is equally just for God to do. In other words, both rest on the same legal precedent, the same legal principle. Just as representation brought us condemnation, it brings us

justification. You can be as certain of your justification in Christ as you are of your condemnation in Adam because both stand on the same legal precedent.

Number three, and this is really the point of the passage, having Christ as our representative assures us of the security of our justification. You see, this is in a larger section of Romans. Remember, chapters 5 through 8, that's talking about our security, the security of our justification in Christ. So, why would Paul talk about all this deep theology stuff in the middle of a section supposed to be giving us security? Here's why, because this reminds us that we now have a new representative and as long as He represents us, our eternal future is secure. Until Jesus Christ sins, until He rebels against the will and Word of God, as Adam did, until He acts selfishly and sinfully to fulfill His own desires, as Adam did in the garden, until He fails to be perfectly righteous, we are secure in Him. And obviously, you know, none of those things can ever or will ever happen.

Christian, you are more secure than the Rock of Gibraltar, you are more secure than the universe. Can I say this respectfully? You are as secure in your position as Jesus Christ Himself is, because you are in Him, He is your representative, and He will never fail you like Adam did, and you will always, eternally, get the credit for what He does.

And number four, throughout this passage God is inviting others to receive the free gift of righteousness that is found in Jesus Christ. He's inviting you. If you're here today, you're not in Christ, you've never repented and believed, you are in Adam and God has condemned you and you will suffer forever in hell if you die in that state. But God is gracious and He's offering you to be in Christ, to receive the gift of righteousness, not for anything you do, but because of "the obedience of the One." It can be yours if you are willing.

How do you get that free gift? Well, you have first got to turn loose of what you have in your hand, you've got to turn loose of your own sin, that's called repentance, and you have to then put your faith in Christ. Even as we read from Luke 14 this morning, you've got to be willing to follow Him. That's biblical faith. And in response, you receive the gift of righteousness. It can happen today if you're willing to turn from your sin and embrace Jesus Christ as Lord. Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for Your amazing Word. Lord, this is a deep and profound passage, don't let us get lost in it. Father, help us instead to see the richness that's here, help us to understand that it's in grasping these truths that we gain the security that's in our justification, because we now have a new representative, once and forever, and we will always get the credit for what He has done and will do, and it will be nothing but righteousness, nothing but what pleases You. And that's how You will regard us. And that's how You will treat us forever. Father, encourage Your people, build us up, help us to leave here thinking about these things and meditating on them and living in the light of them.

And Father, for those here this morning who are not truly in Christ, who are still in Adam, who still bear the guilt of his sin and of theirs, the condemnation, the verdict of eternal death, Father, may this be the day when they repent of their sins and believe in Christ unto justification and life. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.