



Sermon Notes | Death and Life: Part II | Romans 5:12-21

INTRODUCTION

Last week we opened the study looking at the two most important figures that humanity has ever seen in human history, Adam and Jesus. These two figures are two men representing two very different humanity groups in all of history. Last week we focused on 'Adam', the head, the representative of humanity originally, and the 'humanity of death'. Adam's humanity, the 'humanity of death', called that because 'Adam's humanity' led to death. We cannot bypass that humanity naturally. We cannot say 'we don't like that' and drop it. Naturally, all humans are born into 'Adam's humanity', but that reality has consequences. Sin always has effects and consequences. Sin never is isolated. And so, Adam's sin was not an isolated matter, was not benign, was not just an 'Adam' thing. His sin in the garden was not an isolated thing, and it was consequential to us because Adam stood as the 'representative' of humanity, of mankind. Adam stood in that garden, and we stand in him. We were in Adam that day because Adam stood as mankind. We stood in his DNA, in 'seed form' in his body, all to be birthed in future time. And this is Paul's point: Sin came into the world through one man and spread to all men.

Romans 5:12

"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—"

Sin was in the world before the Law was given, but sin is not counted because of the Law. We did not die because of 'practical sin'. 'Death' came because of 'Adam's sin', yet 'death reigned' even though it was not like Adam's. From Adam to Moses there was 'death', there was transgression, and it was directly because of 'Adam'. They were already bound to 'death' due to sin and its consequences, death in sin, in actions, in practice, but even more so, 'death in the sin of Adam' and the 'guilt of Adam'. They 'inherited' death, and we too 'inherit death' and face the consequences of that sin. This was 'death's reign' spread from Adam and Moses, spread naturally. This reality is our natural state which is the 'humanity of death', but it need not be our ultimate and final state. Adam is a type of one who is to come.

Romans 5:14

"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 one to come was the 'other representative', the human figure 'JESUS CHRIST', the other man, 'the God Man'. His 'humanity' was 'the humanity of life'.

And so Paul moves on. In transition, Paul shows the 'two humanities' in contrast, the contrast of 'life' in contrast to 'death'. It is an apt contrast. We meet the 'second Adam', having similar structure, sitting on scaffolding that looks the same. Both 'headships' have similarities. Both are 'humanity' groups, both with 'heads', both with 'one act' having effects for all. Both groups have membership means which structurally and practically work the same, their 'headship' being either in Adam or in Christ. But the similarities end here for while the 'head' and 'representative' are the same, either in Adam or in Christ, the differences in their 'one act' actions and results are so vastly different that Paul takes the rest of the chapter to walk us through it. And so, today we look at the 'differences' between the two 'headships'. Paul sets forth the 'differences', and then drives the 'differences' home.

Romans 5:15-21

"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. 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. 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."

Broadly in view here, 'death' and 'life' are contrasted. 'DEATH' arrived in Adam and reigned in Adam. This is Adam's humanity. Whereas, 'LIFE' arrived in Christ and reigns in Christ. This is Christ's humanity.

I. LIFE'S REQUIREMENTS: (v. 15)

Romans 5:15

"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 free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many."

The 'free gift' is not like the 'trespass'. The 'free gift' is on display. Paul uses the strong adversitive, 'but the' as he refers to and sets apart the 'free gift'. He then describes the gift using the Greek word 'charisma', demonstrating that the 'free gift' is the 'one and original' gift, and it is unlike the 'trespass'.

Paul could have used the Greek word 'dorema', simply meaning 'present', but he wants to point out that this 'free gift' is different from an ordinary present, or from ordinary present-giving. This 'free gift' is a gift 'unearned', 'undeserved'. It is 'free'. It is bestowed by God, and given 'freely'. It is a 'gracious gift'. It is the same word used in I Corinthians 12 to state that the Holy Spirit bestows gifts, the 'charisma'. We do not choose the gifts. So then, it is a God-given gift, a 'free gift' arranged by God.

I Corinthians 12:4-11

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills."

So then, on one side of the contrast, there is the 'trespass', that being, man's false step, and on the other side is God's response, the 'free gift', the unearned gift from God.

Genesis 3:15

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

'Death' came through Adam and many died. Paul dealt with this in verses 12-14 of Romans.

Romans 5:12-14

"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 sin indeed 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 to come."

And then Paul moves on to address the 'free gift'. Whatever this gift is, it is a gift of quality, worth 'much more' than the 'trespass'.

Romans 5:10

"For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."

The 'trespass' brought death. It was awful! But on the other side, the 'free gift' brings much more than death. Everyone wants more than death. Yes, 'much more'. And something is greater, 'much more' than 'death' and decay, 'much more' than sin, 'much more' than strife. 'Death' is not the final word! 'Much more' is the 'grace of God'. The 'free gift' comes by this

man Jesus and His 'grace'. It is not about 'what'. It is about 'who'. Who then is 'much more'? The 'new Adam' is the 'much more'! He is 'The One' who was to come, 'JESUS CHRIST'. The 'free gift' is not the 'grace of God' itself, but is 'by the grace of Christ Himself': Grace being, 'the unmerited favour', embodied in the Christ, and it abounded for many.

And we consider the two sides, 'the action' of the two Adams, more closely. For the first Adam, the action was merely 'a trespass'. Original sin was 'an act' in a moment; it was but 'an act' in his life, something he did, one act that he did during his life, and while it had consequences, it was a single act, and did not take up his life. This was the first Adam's act, his contribution to humanity, which brought on 'sin and death' for humanity. But for Christ, the action of the second Adam, it was more than a 'single' action. Christ's action took His whole perfect life that led to the cross, and the laying down of His whole life by His own will, and the blood shed of that perfect life, resulting in the victory over the grave. Christ Himself, His perfect person, and His perfect work of action: this was 'the gift of grace' given. With this came the offer that humans could 'repent' from first 'Adam's humanity' and be found in 'Christ's humanity'. It is a complete package of 'grace in Christ'. To have life means that you have more 'in Christ', abounded for many. And abounded means, over and above. This is 'life's requirement': to have 'life in Christ', and to have it abundantly.

Romans 5:15

"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."

II. LIFE'S RESULT: (v. 16)

Romans 5:16

"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."

Paul takes us from the 'nature' of the contrast under the two 'headships' and now goes to the 'result' of the two 'humanities'. In the first Adam, the result was 'death' and 'judgment'. Adam brought 'condemnation' before God, guilt, 'legal guilt' in the heavenly court, the legal judgment resulting in death. Death was weighing heavy, and hanging over humanity. The decision rendered, the sentence was made. It was an 'inherited' guilt, with no payment, no atonement, no way of making it right. It was a life of self. Thus was the result of Adam's 'headship', an action of 'trespass' which resulted in DEATH!

But under the new Adam, under Christ's 'headship' the resulting outcome is LIFE in Christ Himself, and in that new life was 'justification', that is, to be made right in God's sight! The 'free gift' of Christ brings clearance from the sin, and a 'not guilty' sentence. Christ brought pardon and 'justification'. In Christ, we have been granted 'citizen recognition', and the legal standing of being 'guilt free', but this only comes in Christ, in standing in Christ. This was an action that we humans were unable to do for ourselves, unable to do on our own. It was imputed by Christ Alone! Christ gave His Life, His perfect

Life, and by this 'act' He imputed new life, He made right that which was wrong. He gave us standing before God. This is 'Life in Christ'!

And so, death's result: It is a matter of this or that. There is only one choice. There is no middle ground. One can only be 'condemned' in Adam or 'justified' in Christ.

John 3:18

"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."

Death is the default for humanity. Whoever does not believe will face judgment, and as Christ said, is condemned already. But for the believer, there is Life in Christ, being justified in Him and by Him.

John 3:36

"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."

Romans 3:23-25a

"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith..."

Romans 5:16

"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."

Adam's one act, his one 'trespass' brought forth many 'condemnations'. Adam's sin stained all who were yet to come, resulting in many consequential 'trespasses' and therefore many 'condemnations'. One sin 'condemned' the world, and Adam could not undo the problem, could not revise the outcome. He had no power to break the power of sin. One 'head' condemned the world.

On the other hand, one 'free gift', the reverse transaction, following the many 'trespasses', cancelled out all of the sin, not by one sin at a time with a divine hammer, not hammered out, but cancelled, revised, clearance and pardon established, 'justification' completed. One 'head', one perfect life, ONE perfect SAVIOUR, one perfect action, redeemed it all. Christ Alone, life given, had the power to cancel the sin of the world.

Commentator Charles Cranfield has stated,

"That one single misdeed should be answered by judgment, this is perfectly understandable, but that the accumulated sins and guilt of saints, in all ages, should be answered by God's free gift, this is the miracle of miracles utterly beyond human comprehension."

This is the gracious gift of Christ, the gift that covers our trespasses. How can this be?

The Obvious Application:

One sin has enough power to condemn the world.

What of the power of our own sin?

What of the power of our own accumulated sin?

What of our habit of being light on our sin?

What danger do we face?

Sin is not powerless. It is potent.

Sin is always 'greater than we think'.

Let the WORD testify to this truth:

Through one sin, one act of stubborn pouting, Cain lost a brother.

Genesis 4:3-11,

"In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering but Cain and his offering he had no regard so Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.'

Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Where is Abel your brother?' He said, 'I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?' And the LORD said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.'"

In an act of thoughtless worship to God, Aaron lost two sons.

Leviticus 10:1-2

"Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD."

Moses lost entry to the Promised Land due to his sin.

Numbers 20:6b-12

"... And the glory of the LORD appeared to them, and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother; and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to

the congregation and their cattle.' And Moses took the staff from before the LORD, as he commanded him.

Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, 'Hear now, you rebels; shall we bring water for you out of this rock?' And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock. And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore, you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.'

One act of hoarding the shiny toys of Jericho, after God had told them not to, and Achan lost his life, along with his whole household.

Joshua 7:10-12, 16, 18-26a

"The LORD said to Joshua, 'Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings. Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction. I will be with you no more unless you destroy the devoted things from among you.'"

"So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel near tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was taken... And he brought near his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. Then Joshua said to Achan, 'My son, give glory to the LORD God of Israel and give praise to him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide from me.' And Achan answered Joshua, 'Truly I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I did; when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath.' So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was hidden in this tent with the silver underneath. And they took them out of the tent and brought them to Joshua and all the people of Israel. And they laid them down before the LORD. And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan the son Zerah, and the silver and the cloak and the bar of gold, and his sons and daughters and his oxen and donkeys and sheep and his tent and all that he had. And they brought them up to the Valley of Achor. And Joshua said, 'Why did you bring trouble on us? The LORD brings trouble on you today.' And all Israel stoned him with stones. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day."

And Saul lost the kingdom through one act of impatience and an unlawful sacrifice.

I Samuel 13:1-14

"He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him. So Saul said, 'Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings.' And he offered the burnt offering. As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him. Samuel said,

'What have you done?' And Saul said, 'When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the LORD. So I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering.' And Samuel said to Saul, 'You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you. For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you'."

Uzzah presumes on his own version of holiness and loses his life.

II Samuel 6:5-7

"And David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the LORD, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it for the oxen stumbled, And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God."

David himself lost his family and the security of his home due to taking a stroll on a rooftop with wandering eyes and a lustful heart.

II Samuel 11:2-5, 14b-15, 26-27, 12:9-12

"It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, 'Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?' So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, 'I am pregnant'."

"... David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. In the letter he wrote, 'Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die'."

"... Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also."

"When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband. And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD."

"Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And

I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun."

In one act of greed, Elisha loses his servant, Gehazi. Gehazi, sees opportunity, is not honest, and loses his own health and that of his descendants in punishment.

II Kings 5:19b-27

"But when Naaman had gone from him a short distance, Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, 'See, my master has spared this Naaman the Syrian, in not accepting from his hand what he brought. As the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him. So Gehazi followed Naaman. And when Naaman saw someone running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him and said, 'Is all well?' And he said, 'All is well. My master has sent me to say, 'There have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothing. And Naaman said, 'Be pleased to accept two talents.' And he urged him and tied up two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of clothing, and laid them on two of his servants. And they carried them before Gehazi. And when he came to the hill, he took them from their hand and put them in the house, and sent the men away and they departed. He went in and stood before his master, and Elisha said to him, 'Where have you been, Gehazi?' And he said, 'Your servant went nowhere.' But he said to him, 'Did not my heart go when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Was it a time to accept money and garments, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male servants and female servants? Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever.' So he went out from his presence a leper, like snow."

Paul states that all of these Old Testament accounts bring vivid warning that sin is potent and has power and effect, and that the examples have been written for our benefit and instruction.

I Corinthians 10:11-13a

"Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore, let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man."

But the 'power' of Christ's gift will be 'much more'. In Christ we have 'hope'. Christ gives us 'hope' because in Him we have had our sin cancelled. 'Cancelled sin' is 'Life's result'. In Christ, there is 'justification' for all; all are made to have 'right standing' before God in Christ.

III. LIFE'S REIGN: (vs 17)

Romans 5:17

"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."

Paul now returns to the 'death/reign' language. 'Death reigned' in Adam, and in all who are in Adam. We die as a direct result of Adam's sin which spread to all, adding to our own sin by practice and corruption. By Adam's one 'trespass', Adam brought death to all who are in his group. In the same way, that is, by the same structure, one 'gift' by Christ brings life to those who are in His group. Christ Alone brings life to those in Christ. 'Life reigns' in Christ Jesus! And this 'life' in Christ is 'abundant life'. It points to our resurrection to come, that which He promised, as He did to the Church in Thyatira. Authority has been given to Christ Jesus, by God the Father, to 'reign' with us, and us with Him.

Revelation 2:26-27

"The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father."

Revelation 20:4

"Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."

The martyred in Christ will 'reign' with Christ in the Kingdom, but there is yet another sense of 'life's reign', that being 'life everlasting', everlasting life, even now. Christ Himself explains by means of His prayer:

John 17:3

"And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

In Christ we 'live eternally' now! By our position in Christ, 'life reigns' now in Christ. There is no glorified body just now, but we are in Christ, and no longer in Adam and 'death'. Today, 'life reigns' in you now! Yes, we will live after we die, but we 'live' now. 'Life reigns' in us now. Therefore, live as you ought, for you are no longer living the 'enslaved life' in Adam. We have a new master in Christ. (We will learn more about this in chapter six.)

But this new life is not universal. Adam's group involves all humanity by default and all start out by living in 'death'.

Christ's humanity group is not all people without distinction. There is a 'limiter'. Not all are going to accept and receive Christ. Only those who 'receive' Christ, 'receive' the abundance, the 'grace', the 'free gift', the 'righteousness', the ONE MAN, JESUS; only the 'receivers' through Christ and in Christ, will be given 'eternal life'.

'Life reigns' through Christ, through the ONE Man Christ, and in Christ, 'life reigns' in us. This is our hope for tomorrow, and our 'new life' for today. This is 'justification', our new position in Christ, a right position before God the Father.

All people have the default setting of 'death', but not all will stay there, for those who 'receive' Christ will gain 'new life'. Two 'humanities', two possessions. Which is your humanity? Which is your possession? What have you 'received'? Is your possession in Adam with the consequences of guilt and death alone, or is your possession in Christ Alone with the abundance and grace of 'life', the undeserved 'gift', the 'righteousness of Christ', able to live as you ought finally, with the 'new master', with sin cancelled, with the 'righteousness of Christ'?

'Death' or 'Life'? Study it rightly! Live it fully! Who 'reigns' in you? Two realities, two humanities. We deserve death, and death is our default position, yet Christ has offered us an abundant 'gift of life'. What choice is yours?