

## HOW JESUS REPLACED WHAT ADAM ERASED

### Romans 5:12-21

Good morning! We're continuing our series on the Book of Romans I'm calling "Power to Change". We're now on the 14<sup>th</sup> part of this series. We're in chapter 5.

Now, there are five major divisions in the book of Romans. We can summarize these five divisions by the words Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, Sovereignty, Service. We've looked at the first two sections. The basic message of the first three chapters of Romans is everybody has sinned and we're all to be condemned because of that. Then comes Section Two which is the good news -- Salvation. Paul says, There's a way out! The way out is that we're justified, not through works; but we get right with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Today, we finish up the last ten verses of Section Two. In just a few brief verses, Paul summarizes the philosophy and history of mankind and why we have the problems that we do. He answers questions like

Why is there evil in the world?

Why do people die?

Why is there sin in the world?

Why does human nature never change?

What's going to happen to babies when they die?

What happens to people who have never heard the gospel?

This section deals with these issues.

I've entitled this message, "HOW JESUS REPLACED WHAT ADAM ERASED." Let me read our passage for today.

The first question we're going to answer is: Why is there evil in the world? We find the answer in verse 12, "*sin entered the world through Adam*" -- one man.

Adam was a real person and because of his disobedience sin entered the world. What was his disobedience? He ate the fruit. Both Adam and Eve willfully took the fruit and ate it. God had said, you can eat everything in the garden except one thing and what did they go after? The one thing. Isn't this typical? Anytime there is a prohibition we immediately go after it. Don't walk on the grass. We walk on the grass. Wet paint. We touch the wet paint. Don't turn on red. We turn on red. It's against the law, therefore I want to do it! Sin entered the world because of Adam.

**Why do people die?** *"death came through sin"* There are two diabolical twins - sin and death. They always go together. Death is a direct result of sin. The Bible says, *"The wages of sin is death"*. What is death? Obviously, we know what it is. But there are actually three different kinds of death as the Bible teaches:

**1) Physical death.** This is universal. We all die. *"...people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment."* (Heb. 9:27) It has already been determined. God knows when. But there was no physical death in the world until Adam sinned. Theoretically Adam would have lived on and on. The Bible says that death came because of sin. Sin made him imperfect. It separated him from God, the source of life. And thus, he lost the power that gave him life, like an appliance, when you unplug it from the electrical outlet, it stops working, it dies. Back in Genesis 2:17, God had said, *"...for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die."* But did Adam die immediately? No. He lived on for several hundred years. Just like an electric fan that when you turn it off, the fan blades keep spinning until it stops. The Bible says that one day to God is like a thousand years to us. Adam lived 930 years, well within one day to God.

**2) Spiritual death.** This is much more serious than physical death. This is the major consequence of sin in the Bible. When Adam sinned, his spirit died. We are physical beings with a spirit within us. So, Adam's spirit was disconnected from

God. This spiritual death was passed on to everybody in the human race. All of us are born spiritually dead. That's why Jesus said, *"I have come that you might have life."* You don't need life if you've already got it. Ephesians 2:1 Paul is speaking to Christians, *"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins."* How can you live and be dead at the same time? He's talking about spiritual death.

*"...you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient... But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved."* (Ephesians 2:2, 4-5) Paul is saying that before you become a believer you're spiritually dead. Folks, every person born in this world is born spiritually dead.

**3) Eternal death.** This happens when you're dead spiritually and you die physically. You leave this world and your soul goes to either heaven or hell—eternal life or eternal death. Some believe, like the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Iglesia ni Cristo, that hell is not real, that eternal death is merely going out of existence. You just disappear. But if Jesus was talking about a literal heaven and literal eternal life then he must be talking also about a literal hell and a literal eternal death. It cannot be literal on one hand and then figurative on the other hand. You don't compare apples to oranges, right? So, physical death and spiritual death equals eternal death.

v. 12 *"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people..."* Everybody dies. Romans 5:12 states two things: there is universal sin because Adam is the father of all of us, and there is universal death.

Notice Paul says "sin" not "sins". He's talking about the sin nature. It's like if a pregnant mother has an infection -- is it possible for her to pass this infection to

the baby she's carrying? Of course. So, it's possible for generation after generation to carry down a defect. Just think of congenital diseases.

Sin is a spiritual defect. The Bible says Adam is the father of us all and when Adam sinned he was carrying in him the physical and spiritual genes of everybody that was to be born and he passed on the infection called sin. Because of our tendency to sin, we naturally want to do the wrong thing.

Some people think man is basically good. I don't think anybody that's said that has ever been a parent. If you've raised a child you know! Do children, when they're born, have an automatic self-will? A baby is a very selfish creature! They live for themselves, not for anybody else. How many of you had to teach your kid to lie? To be disobedient? It comes naturally. It is a natural tendency to want to do what's wrong. The Bible says it's because we're a part of the human race and when our father Adam sinned he passed on that infection, that sin nature, to be our own boss, to do our own thing. He passed it on down.

When Adam was alive he carried all the genes of the entire human race. You and I were actually in Adam. He was created perfect. Then he blew it! Every chromosome that makes up all of us can be traced back to him. When Adam lost his connection to God, his perfect genes went into disarray and that's what we inherited. As years and centuries went by, these genes became more and more imperfect. That's why you see in Genesis that people's lifespan decreased significantly, 900, 800, 600, 500, 400 until it settled down to around 100 at the time of Abraham. Note too, in Genesis 6, people became so evil that God had to send a worldwide flood. Then, he reset the world by saving Noah and his family. But Noah and his family, of course, still carried the stain of sin. And it continues to wreak havoc among mankind. Why do we still have wars after thousands of years and hundreds of peace treaties? Because human nature has never changed. No

matter how educated and smart we get, do we still have people fighting? Sure. Because human nature has not changed in thousands and thousands of years.

**What about people who have never heard of the good news?** Are they going to heaven or hell?

**v. 13 "To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law."** God says that even people who have never heard the Law, the Bible, God's truth, that they still have a sin nature too whether they know the Law or not, simply because they're part of the human race. The fact that they die proves it. If you could ever find some person who never sinned, they'd never die. But obviously even people who have never heard of the Bible die. But if they didn't have a sin nature they wouldn't die.

Paul explains this by giving an example from the Old Testament. He's talking to Jewish people, remember? He says, the Law is what makes us sinners -- God gave us the law and we break it. The Law exposes our sinful nature. How can God judge you for a law that you don't know about? He can't. What about people who have never heard of the laws of God? What about the people who have lived from the time of Adam until Moses? The Law wasn't given until Moses' day. Thousands of people. For those people there weren't any laws. But they still sinned, obviously, because they had the sin nature and they died to show it. But he says, **"... sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law..."** Sin was present during that time before God gave the laws, but He didn't hold it against anybody. God couldn't condemn people for breaking a law that didn't exist. There was no standard. Paul goes on, **"Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam..."** (Rom. 5:14)

Adam broke a command -- God told him not to do it and he broke it. We broke it too but it doesn't condemn us. It is our sinful nature that condemns us, not

individual sins. We'll reap the results of individual sins here on earth, but those sins won't send us to hell. We put so much emphasis on what we do. God says it's who we are. We need to realize it's not what we do but who we are. The sins we commit are just symptoms of our sinful nature.

When you understand that you have a sin nature you're going to understand why you struggle with sin. Have you ever found yourself saying this: "The thing I don't want to do, I end up doing. And the things I want to do I end up not doing. Even though I know it's right I don't do it. Even though I know it's wrong I do it anyway." Paul talks about this in chapter 7. I've had a lot of people come to me in counseling and say, "I don't know why I do this. Why do I continue in habits that are bad for me and I keep on doing them?" All of that makes sense when you realize you have a basic nature problem inside of you. That's the bad news.

The good news is that Jesus Christ came to change that nature. He came to treat not the symptoms, but the disease of sin that has infected all of us. That's what this passage is more and more about. Paul says even though people's sins were not counted against them before the Law came, but because they have the sinful nature, it caused them to die. Do babies die? Sure. But they've never had the chance to sin. They don't even know there is a law against sin. They die because they are part of the human race.

**What happens to babies when they die?** The Bible says they are safe. They're not saved but they are safe. Psalm 116:6 says, ***"The Lord protects the unwary."*** I think that includes people who are mentally challenged and go all the way through life never having enough common knowledge to know what commitment means. Literally the verse means "preserves" -- He saves them. They are not saved in the sense that we are but they are safe.

Let's look now at this ***"...Adam who is a pattern of the one to come."*** (Romans 5:14b) So, Paul starts to talk about Jesus Christ. How is Adam like Jesus Christ?

Adam blew it for the human race! Jesus saved the human race! How is Adam like Jesus? How can you compare them?

Paul's burden in this passage is quite simple. He wants to compare and contrast what Adam did with what Jesus Christ did. And he wants us to understand that what Jesus did was far greater than what Adam did. What Jesus accomplished was greater than what Adam started. That's the whole message of these verses in a nutshell. What Adam did was vast in its results, but what Jesus did was greater in every way.

### I. Three Great Contrasts

He begins by giving us three great contrasts, one in verse 15, one in verse 16 and one in verse 17. In verse 15 he points out that what Jesus did was greater in its nature.

#### A. Adam's Trespass versus Christ's Free Gift.

“But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!” (v. 15)

The word “trespass” means to go beyond the border. You “trespass” when you enter someone's property illegally. It's what happens when you deliberately break a rule. Someone may draw a line in the sand and say, “If you cross that line, you'll be in trouble.” Trespassing is what you do when you say, “Oh yeah! You just watch me.” And you step across the line.

That's what happened in Eden. God drew a line in the sand and said, “Don't cross it.” Adam said, “Watch me.” And he deliberately “crossed the line” when he ate the forbidden fruit.

By contrast when Jesus died on the cross, he died for others. What Adam did was an act of total selfishness. He didn't care that others would be hurt by his foolish decision. When Jesus died, it was totally for others. He had no sin of his

own, so he couldn't be dying for himself. His death was self-sacrificing. That's why Paul calls it "God's grace" and "the gift."

Adam was thinking only of himself. Christ was thinking of others. Thus in the very nature of what these two men did, Christ's deed was greater than Adam's misdeed, even as love is greater than selfishness.

There is a second contrast in verse 16. Not only is Jesus' death greater in its nature, it is also greater in its power.

#### **B. Adam's Sin Brought Condemnation; Christ's Death Brought Justification.**

**"Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed the sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification." (v. 16)**

Think of it this way. How many sins did Adam have to commit in order to bring condemnation to the world? Only one. That's all it took. One sin and the world was plunged into darkness. One man, one sin, condemnation comes to the whole world. On the other side of the ledger, how many sins were forgiven in the death of Christ? Paul says "many trespasses." He doesn't mean "many versus all" but "many versus one."

What Jesus did is far greater because his deed was "provoked" by many sins. What Adam did was his own fault, yet it affected the whole world. What Jesus did paid the price not just for Adam's sin but for the sins of the entire human race—from the time of Adam till the end of the world. Thus the power of Jesus' death is far greater than the power of Adam's single, solitary sin. Verse 17 brings us the third contrast: What Jesus did was greater in its effect.

#### **C. Because of Adam's Sin, Death reigned. Those Who Receive Christ Reign in Life. 17**



“For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.”

Don’t let that complicated verse trip you up. Just focus on two words: Death and Life. Death reigned. That’s our heritage from Adam. Death reigns on the earth because of Adam’s sin. What keeps the mortuaries in business? What keeps the undertakers going? Why do cemeteries stay in business? Why is it that they never run out of customers? The answer is simple: Death reigns. That’s our heritage from our spiritual father Adam. He sinned and as a result death now reigns on the earth.

It doesn’t matter whether you are important or not. Someday you will die. Someday your family and friends will follow the hearse that will lead to your grave. It happens to all of us sooner or later. It doesn’t matter whether you are rich or not. Someday you will die. It doesn’t matter whether you are a peasant or a person of power. Someday you will die. In this world, as a direct result of Adam’s sin, death reigns.

But there is a way out. There is a way to reverse what Adam did. There is a way to overcome the reign of death. It comes, Paul says, to those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and the “gift of righteousness.”

## II. Two Great Results

We come now to the two great results that flow forth from Adam and from Christ. If you are in Adam, you have one set of results; if you are in Christ, you have something else entirely.

### # 1: Condemnation or Justification 18

“Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.”

I think this is easy enough to see. One man, one act of selfish disobedience, with the result being condemnation for “all men.” That’s our inheritance from

Adam. Because of him, we are all born “condemned.” Because of him, we are all guilty before God, deserving the flames of hell. Note that the condemnation is universal. It comes to “all men” without exception. Apart from Jesus Christ, the whole human race stands condemned by Almighty God.

On the other hand, Jesus Christ died and his act of righteousness results in justification that brings life for all men. Is Paul here teaching universal salvation? Not at all. Verse 17 clearly says that the gift of righteousness provides life for those who “receive” it. You don’t have to do anything to be condemned. Condemnation is Adam’s “gift” to you. But if you want to be justified, you must “receive” the free gift by faith.

When Christ died, he died for “all men” without exception and without distinction. In some mysterious sense, his death paid the price for the sins of the entire world, even for those who do not receive him. However, the effect of that wondrous death will never be made real in your life until you personally—by a conscious choice—receive God’s gift by simple faith.

## # 2: Made Sinner or Made Righteous 19

“For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

Here we have the second result—Adam’s sin results in the whole human race being “made sinners”—that is, declared guilty before God. On the other hand, Christ’s death results in “the many” (those who receive him by faith) being made righteous.

So we are either “made sinners” (which is our universal lot as sons and daughters of Adam) or we are “made righteous” through Jesus Christ. To make it more personal, you are either “in Adam” or “in Christ.” The only question is, How does one move from being “in Adam” to being “in Christ?”

In one of his books Dr. Charles Ryrie tells a story from the early days of corneal-transplant surgery. It happened that a certain criminal on death row volunteered to donate the cornea from one of his eyes so that a blind person could see. The doctors in charge of the surgery went ahead and chose a recipient who actually came to the prison to meet the condemned man in person. It made for great human interest and the newspapers spread the story far and near.

Eventually the day came for the execution. After the prisoner was put to death, his cornea was removed and successfully transplanted into the eye of the man who had been blind. Now he could see.

Dr. Ryrie then poses the following question: Suppose a police officer should pull over the man who received the cornea and attempt to arrest him because he had in his body the cornea of a murderer? Suppose he actually threw the man in jail? What would happen when the case came before a judge? It would be thrown out of court. Why? Because the cornea which once was in the body of a murderer is now in the body of an innocent man. Therefore, that cornea is now as righteous as that man is.

Something like that happens the moment you say “Yes” to Jesus Christ. Though you are born in Adam, and corrupted through Adam, and made a sinner through Adam, the very moment you trust Jesus Christ you are transplanted from Adam into Jesus Christ. Whereas once you were as guilty as Adam, now you are as righteous as Jesus Christ. That is why you can stand before God uncondemned. Whatever is true of Jesus is now true of you.

What you need, what I need, what the world needs, is a spiritual transplant that will move us from Adam to Jesus Christ. That’s how sinners are made righteous in God’s eyes.

### III. One Great Principle

Now, let's look at the final two verses of this passage: "The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Our passage ends with one great principle which sums up everything Paul has been saying. When God gave the Ten Commandments, he wasn't trying to tell us how to go to heaven. No one gets to heaven by keeping the Ten Commandments. You can't do it because no one ever truly "keeps" the commandments perfectly. And God won't accept anything less than perfection. He doesn't grade on a curve. It's all or nothing with him.

No, God gave the Ten Commandments so that we might realize the depth of our own personal sinfulness. Without the law we would go merrily on our way, patting ourselves on the back, congratulating ourselves on how good and clever we are. But let a person just once take a good look at the Ten Commandments, let him consider the words and the depth of their meaning, let him carefully scrutinize his own life, let him be ruthless in his self-examination. When a man does that truly and honestly, the only result can be, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." The more we understand of God's law, the greater our sense of our own sinfulness.

"Where sin increased, grace increased all the more." This translation is a bit misleading because it uses the word "increased" in both sides of the statement. But they aren't the same words in the Greek. They are actually completely different. When he says, "Where sin increased," he uses a word that speaks of addition. But when he says "Grace increased," he uses a word that means multiplication. On the one hand, sin increased one by one by one. On the other hand, God's grace in Christ Jesus was multiplied over and over and over again.

Where sins were added one by one, God's grace was multiplied a thousand times. J. B. Phillips puts it this way: "So where sin is wide and deep, the grace of

God is wider and deeper still.” Or you might say, “Where sin abounded, grace super-abounded.” It reminds me of those famous words of Corrie Ten Boom: “There is no pit so deep that the love of God is not deeper still.”

Here, then, is the principle: In Jesus Christ we have gained much more than we ever lost in Adam!