

Sermons through

Romans

One Man's Obedience

Romans 5:18-19

With Study Questions

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Therefore, as through one man's offense *judgment* came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act *the free gift* came to all men, resulting in justification of life. ¹⁹ For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous (Romans 5:18, 19).

Introduction

Many years ago our church made a self-conscious effort to form a more structured liturgy. Some people thought it was a good idea, others didn't. After making an effort at explanation as to why we were doing this a member asked the rhetorical question, "So you're doing this out of fear?" I wasn't sure if it was an encouragement or a criticism. The Bible speaks of fear in both positive and negative lights. A healthy fear of God is certainly a desired attribute, yet many times Jesus comforts the faithful with the words "fear not".

In a recent movie (one I didn't see) the ad for the movie coined the phrase, "The danger is real, but fear is a choice." Perhaps in some sense that might be true but it certainly seems that fear can invade a person virus or a strong breeze and, at times, for no obvious reason. There is no rational explanation for why we might fear some things and not fear others. There are psychiatrists who deal exclusively with what might be considered fears or phobias. This list of these types of things usually include: flying, public speaking, heights, the dark, intimacy, death (usually not at the top), failure, rejection, spiders, commitment, etc. I have come to recognize that there are things I fear that are silly, and other things that I should fear that don't bother me at all.

Toward the end of His earthly ministry Jesus foretold a great number of fearful events that would soon befall the community and nation of His time. History indicates that there were those who courageous and faithful during these things and others who were not. But there was one event that was so fearful that even the bravest and most faithful crumbled.

Jesus spoke of a judgment that would soon inflict Jerusalem, centering on the destruction of the Temple (Matthew 24). Although we might think of the Olivet Discourse as a highly attended event, there appears to be an intimacy to it, **“the disciples came to Him privately” (Matthew 24:3)**. In that discourse Jesus taught of the unspeakable tragedies that would attend the destruction of the temple along with parables designed to prepare people for God’s judgment.

After Jesus taught all these things He reminded His disciples that in two days the Passover was coming and that He would be crucified (Matthew 26:2). The true Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7) stood before them. During this brief period some very intimate things took place. A woman with a very expensive flask of ointment poured it on Jesus’ head to prepare Him for burial (Matthew 26:12). We read that Judas plotted to betray Jesus (Matthew 26:14-16), this betrayal reaching its climax during the very affectionate and communal experience of the Lord’s Supper when Judas would dip his hand in the dish with Jesus (Matthew 26:23). This would be like trying to drown somebody in the very blood they shed to save you.

We then read of the institution of the Lord’s Supper; Jesus in the very intimate setting with His disciples breaking bread and taking the cup and proclaiming His body broken and His blood shed for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:26-28). Then they sang a hymn (can you imagine singing a hymn with Jesus! Of course we should realize this is precisely what we do when we gather for worship) and Jesus informed them of something that they didn’t seem prepared for. He told them they were all about to **“fall away” (Matthew 26:31)**; the Shepherd would be struck and the sheep would scatter. It wouldn’t be indefinitely, they would return, but the events that were about to transpire were events for which they could not muster up courage. It might easily be argued a great fear through them for which they had no answer.

Peter, of course, wouldn’t have it. His famous objection **“I will never fall away” (Matthew 26:33)** received what had to be a vexing response by Jesus who prophesied Peter’s threefold denial. This could not have been much of a pep talk on the part of the Captain of their salvation (Hebrews 2:10). It wasn’t as if Jesus was trying to prepare them to succeed as much as He wanted them to recognize the inevitability of their failure. It might be added that Peter stood brave against the soldiers and priests and Pharisee, drawing his sword, cutting off the ear of the high priest’s servant

(John 18:10). He would also eventually die for his faith on a cross of his own (John 21:18).

But when the hour drew near – when the cross of Christ was nigh, we begin to see all of these prophecies (and more that I have not mentioned), of course, come to pass and even the most faithful would scatter. There would be no one to lift the arms of Christ except for those who would lift them to crucify Him. The true Passover would be no group effort – no coalition, no committee, no militia, no team. It was as if God, in His providential oversight of the cross emphasized Jesus in His isolation that we might know that the **“free gift”** resulting in **“justification of life”** came through **“one Man’s righteous act.”**

Therefore, as through one man’s offense *judgment* came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act *the free gift* came to all men, resulting in justification of life (Romans 5:18).

One Man’s Offense

Paul, in this passage, has been comparing Christ to Adam; Adam was a **“type”** of Christ (Romans 5:14). In this comparison Paul has shown similarities and dissimilarities. One of the great similarities we see in these verses is the emphasis on the **“one man”** (in the Greek it is just the **“one”** *enos*). One needn’t work too hard to show how Adam’s offense was done in isolation since there was no one else on the planet except Eve and we’ve already discussed Adam’s culpability in the sin as it relates to Eve.

Now we should not assume that Paul’s emphasis of Adam’s offense in any way alleviates our own sinfulness and our responsibility for our sins. But in the topic under our current consideration we need to know this – our failure is inevitable. We might tell people that redemption is found at the foot of the cross and in a certain sense that might be true. But the bravest apostles (with the exception of John who attended the mother of Jesus [John 19:24]) wouldn’t go to the actual foot of the cross.

The point here is, in order for us to appreciate the magnitude of one Man’s righteous act, we need to grasp the extent of the one man’s offense. The consequence of one man’s offense was judgment, resulting in condemnation. We, as a race, have been judged and condemned. People enjoy quoting Christ saying **“I did not come to judge the world but to**

save the world” (John 12:27). It is true that Jesus did not come to judge the world because the world was already under judgment. Why would He need to save something that wasn't under judgment – in need of saving?

Simply put, Adam created a mess into which we were all born. And the human race adds to that mess daily **“storing up wrath for (our)selves on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed” (Romans 2:5).** Again, we are culpable and volitional (decision making), but the genesis of our problem is found in Genesis. The judgment and condemnation of the human race, its inevitable failure to find redemption or properly govern itself in any positive direction is the fruit of Adam’s offense. And if death reminds us of anything, it reminds us that there is no way out – well almost no way out.

One Man’s Righteous Act

Perhaps by now we are feeling victimized by Adam. Paul emphasizes **“one man’s offense”** and that one man wasn't me – at least not as a volitional, decision-making participant (as if I would have done better than Adam). Nonetheless, feeling victimized by Adam might be a useful tool about now. A true and pure victim is one who finds themselves in a state or condition through no fault of their own (which seldom happens). There was simply nothing they could have done!

As I said, this might be helpful when we think the same way regarding the **“free gift”** resulting in **“justification of life”**. When it comes to “justification of life” (the righteousness requisite to be pardoned before God) there is simply nothing we can do. If we were to turn the feeling of being a victim of Adam on its head, instead of saying something like “how am I guilty and condemned in Adam?” (again, let us not forget that we are sinners worthy of judgment) I might say something like “how is it I am acquitted and accounted righteous in Christ?” I wasn't on the cross with Christ, I didn't bleed for my own sins, I didn't feel the wrath of God, I didn't remain a righteous lamb, I would have most assuredly been among the ones who scattered. I offer to virtue, no humility, no righteous act and yet, I am accounted righteous? Paul now dials in his point.

For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous (Romans 5:19).

Made Sinners

Last week's sermon was entitled *The Devil Made Me Do It* where Chris discuss the work and purpose of God's use of the devil. Years ago a comedian named Flip Wilson used the phrase in a way to excuse his own behavior – an excuse I am quite sure God is not buying. Similarly the above verse could be used by those who might argue that *Adam Made Me Do It* – again, an argument that God is not going to buy. But in the context of the subject before us, it is true that we are made sinners through Adam's single act of disobedience. It was not all of his offenses, for there were surely many after the fall, but the condition of sin, judgment and condemnation in the world was through the **"one offense."** Adam is our federal head. He was head of the human race and represented us all. And because of his disobedience we were made sinners.

No wonder that many used Paul's doctrine to justify their own sin and neglect. Paul has quick works for them:

And why not do evil that good may come? – as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just (Romans 3:8).

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound (Romans 6:1).

What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means (Romans 6:15).

Made Righteous

Paul won't suffer the sophistry of those who seek to justify their own rebellious hearts. We are made sinners in Adam and we are made righteous in Christ and there are attributes which accompany those who are made righteous in Christ which Paul will pursue in the chapters to come.

The point here is that in the same way that it was through one man's disobedience that men were made sinners, it is through one Man's obedience that many will be made righteous. It is through the obedience

of one – the obedience of Christ, the Lamb without blemish (1 Peter 1:19) that men, infected by the sin of Adam and willfully living out that infection by our very thoughts, deeds and actions can find a righteousness before God. Calvin taught:

And then, as he declares that we are made righteous through the obedience of Christ, we hence conclude that Christ, in satisfying the Father, has provided a righteousness for us. It then follows, that righteousness is in Christ, and that it is to be received by us as what peculiarly belongs to him.¹

Paul elsewhere writes:

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith (Philippians 3:8, 9).

Are you still in Adam? Or do you have that faith – that righteousness which is not your own but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith?

¹ Calvin, J. (1998). *Romans* (electronic ed.). Calvin's Commentaries (Ro 5:18). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

Questions for Study

1. Is fear good or bad? Is fear reasonable or unreasonable? Explain your answers (pages 2).
2. What did Jesus teach would happen to His followers as He came closer to the cross? Why do you think He taught them this (pages e, 4)?
3. What happened as a consequence of Adam's offense (pages 4, 5)?
4. Does the fall of man in Adam excuse me from my own personal sins? Why or why not (page 4)?
5. How does my condition in Adam help me better understand my condition in Christ (page 5)?
6. In Adam men were made sinners and in Christ men are made righteous. How does this take place? Are you in Adam or Christ?