

Evening Sermon

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Preacher: David Mayes

[0 : 00] Okay, tonight we're going to be looking at Romans chapter 5, verses, we'll be focusing on verses 18 to 21, but I'm going to read from verse 12.

But first of all, I think it's important when we're looking at Romans to kind of give an overview of the previous chapters. Because in Romans, everything Paul says is like one long, continuous argument from the first chapter to the next to the next.

And it's quite important for this chapter. So for the first two and a half chapters of Romans, Paul kind of describes that the problem we have as humanity, that we've been, no matter who we are, all humans have been separated from God.

We've turned away from Him, and we've done what is evil, and therefore God is bringing judgment upon everyone. Then for the next couple of chapters, Paul reveals that there's been another way that God has chosen to bring us back to Him.

And that's through faith in Jesus Christ. And now in chapter 5, he's stepping back a bit and giving a more in-depth explanation of how did humanity end up in this situation in the first place.

[1 : 20] And why is it out of all the people in the world that Jesus is the only one who can bring salvation? So, from verse 12 in Romans chapter 5, Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.

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. 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 Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

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?

Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin. The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.

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

[2 : 40] Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.

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. 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.

Now, if you went up to someone on the street and you asked them, who are the two most important people in history, the most influential, you might get a few different answers.

So one group of people might mention a great political or military hero who brought massive change to society, someone like Julius Caesar or Napoleon.

[3 : 42] Other people might mention a great religious leader like Buddha or Mohammed, or maybe you'll have a great moral example like Gandhi or Martin Luther King.

But for Paul, really there's only two answers to that question. The two most important people in world history are Adam, the first man, and Jesus Christ.

And so we're going to think about who is Adam? Why is it that Adam's actions had this drastic effect on all the rest of humanity? And then we're going to think, if Jesus Christ is a solution to the actions

of Adam, why does it have to be Jesus?

Why can't it be some other person, some other great leader, some other great hero? So firstly, who is Adam? So when God created the world, he created the world good.

He created Adam in the image of God. When we say Adam is created image of God, what does that mean? Well, an image is a representation or a copy.

[4 : 53] So Adam, if you like, is God's representative on earth. He's almost like God's ambassador to the rest of creation. He's supposed to look after it, to rule over it.

But that's not all Adam is. Because Adam isn't just a regular person. Because he's not just an ambassador from God to creation.

He's also, if you like, the ambassador of humanity to God. He's like the ruler or the king of humanity. So for example, if the ruler of one kingdom or country travels to another one, whatever actions he takes in that country, his conduct, how he carries himself, will reflect back on his own country and every single person in that country.

So when Adam is before God, Adam's actions before God have consequences for all the rest of us, all the rest of humanity who are descended from Adam.

So what exactly did Adam do that caused the situation that humanity is in? So if we recall the passage that Arthur read, there is a chain of events that happen that have this result.

[6 : 16] Firstly, Adam misjudges the situation. Secondly, he uses the wrong method. He takes the wrong set of actions.

And so he ends up with the wrong result. So his misjudgment of the situation came about because he didn't listen to God. So God's plan for the world would be that through Adam, there's a connection.

There's harmony between God and between humanity and between the rest of creation. But the snake said, that's not how it works. God's lying to you. Really, what you need to do is, he's trying to stop you from eating from this tree.

And if you eat from the tree, you'll be like God. You don't have to accept your place in this world. You can rise up higher. And so because of that, Adam takes the wrong action. Instead of living in harmony with God and with the rest of creation, he breaks away from God's plan.

And the end result is that the whole of humanity is cursed because of Adam's actions. And this seems like maybe a bit of an overreaction on God's part.

[7 : 26] Well, I mean, all Adam did was eat some fruit, right? But when we look at how Paul thinks about sin, it's not just that you do one or two bad things.

It's about being in different categories. Either you're living in perfect harmony with God or you're completely separated from him. What Adam did wasn't just he did one bad thing, but he turned himself and with him all of humanity on a course away from God.

No longer was he following God's plan for the world, but he was following his own plan. He was putting himself first and putting himself in the place of God. Therefore, this is consequences.

Because God is life, when Adam turns away and breaks the connection between humanity and God, humanity is cut off from the source of life itself.

So the natural consequence of that is that we will die. But not only that, God is also good. And when God sees that there's this disarray in society, there's this evil, this turning away from his plan, he wants to put things right.

[8 : 39] And so when Paul talks about in the earlier chapters of Romans, God bringing righteousness and justice, he's talking about God's plan to fix the world. In the first few chapters, he says, well, humanity is evil.

So God has a way of fixing the world, a way of removing all the evil from the world, and that's to bring judgment and to destroy all evil, including humanity.

So that's the situation that we're in. But then in the next few chapters, Paul again says that, well, there's another way. One man has brought us into this situation, and so one man can bring us out. And that man is Jesus Christ. So if you look in verse 18, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of one man, the many were made sinners, sinners. So also through the obedience of one man, the many will be made righteous. And so a lot of people have, like Paul, seen that there's problems in the world.

[9 : 55] They've seen that there's evil, there's injustice, there's a breaking of the relationship between us and God, there's a breaking of the relationship between us and one another. And this results in death, in evil, in conflict.

And so many people have come to the same conclusion that Paul's come to. They've said, we need someone to come fix our problems. And roughly, you can group these people into two different camps.

One group says, well, the problem is that society is messed up. They're not very concerned about their relationship with God. They think, okay, society's messed up. There's a system in place as humans with God.

But it's not working. And the roots of the evil in society are so deep that we can't just get it out using the system.

There's this oppression of the poor by the rich. One group's privileged over another. And so what we need is we need someone to come along and he needs to break the system, smash it up, and fix everything.

[11 : 02] So you have, those are people looking for some kind of military leader or a political leader who'll bring big change to society. Then your second group of people say, well, we want someone who fixes, who doesn't, I mean, the problem's not just out here in society, but the problem's in here in our hearts and between us and God.

So what we need is someone to come from God to tell us how to live. We need to be showing the right path. And if we all just get together and follow this right path that God gives us, then everything will be sorted out.

Now there's big problems with both of these groups. And so if we compare and contrast both these groups with Jesus, we see that in fact, it's only Jesus that can bring the solution we need.

So the first group who are looking for one man to be their great military or political leader. Now, the Book of Romans is of course written to people living in Rome, in the middle of the Roman Empire. And they were very, they had a very good idea of this sort of notion of one man coming to fix all of society's problems. Because, in fact, the Roman Empire wasn't always an empire.

[12 : 29] So originally, they were a republic. And they thought, okay, we don't like kings. They're, we can't have one guy ruling the place. It's unjust. It's unfair. What's better is if every year we vote in a couple of people and they'll keep society fair and people are voting.

And so if they're bad, we can remove them the next year. But over time, in Roman society, it became apparent that there were still problems with the system.

Because people are evil, the slowly and slowly problems seep in. And people began to realize that even in their system, the people in control were still the rich aristocrats.

And those who were poor didn't really stand much of a chance. For example, if you're an Italian farmer, a poor Italian farmer, it's quite likely that you can outcompete the rich Italian farmers who could use slaves without paying them to grow loads of crops.

So they'd buy your farm. You'd have to go to Rome, try and find a job, not find a job. You'd be out begging on the streets. And so you have this building kind of chaos in Roman society.

[13 : 40] But the Romans had a solution for this. Because they realized that sometimes systems don't really work. So you need one guy with absolute power to come in, fix the problem.

And then once the problem's fixed, he goes, okay, I'll give up my absolute power and we'll go back to normal. And the Romans used to call these guys dictators. Which if you know the modern English meaning of the word, you can probably tell where this is going to go.

So originally dictators, that's how it worked. Everything was fine. They'd take power. They'd give it up. No problems. But then about 50 years before the birth of Jesus, again, you have these problems in Roman society.

And so one man, Julius Caesar, comes along. And he says, you know, he's a very popular general. And he says, okay, I'm going to stand up for the rights of the people. I've got the people, these people are oppressed by the rich.

I'm going to come along and I'm going to fix society. I'm going to bring justice. I'm going to bring equality. But he couldn't do it by using the system because all the rich aristocrats were against him.

[14 : 54] So instead, he brings in an army, takes over Rome by military might, and he says, you know what, you make me dictator for a few years, I'll fix everything. But then he says, well, okay, I've been dictator for a few years.

Maybe you can make me dictator for life. That would be a bit better. And then he says, maybe I could go around wearing a nice purple robe with a crown of leaves on my head. And if you remember Jesus' crucifixion or the trial James was talking about this morning, where they make Jesus wear purple and have a crown of thorns, these sort of things in Roman society represent royalty.

Then Caesar says, oh, maybe I could have a nice big golden chair I can sit into. And then all the Romans are suddenly thinking, hold on a second, this guy doesn't care about helping people at all. He just wants to make himself king. But actually, Caesar went further than that because Caesar then got the Roman society to declare himself a god and to build him a temple.

And eventually, the people had enough and some of his previous followers assassinated him. So, if we compare Caesar with Jesus, if we compare the situation, the methods used, the end result, and then finally, the difference between the two people.

[16:22] Firstly, the situation. The Romans assumed that their main problem was just that there's a few bad eggs in society. There's a few rich people who are causing an issue.

And if that could be sorted out, there'd be peace, there'd be prosperity. But what Paul says in Romans is that, well, actually, no, the problem goes way back. And it's in every single human being. Every single human heart has been corrupted by sin. And therefore, the methods that they use are very different. Because if you think, well, the problem isn't really in here, it's not about us walking right before God, you justify any sort of actions in order to bring about your necessary desired results.

So Caesar, for example, was no better than any of the other politicians. He was perfectly happy to bribe people, to lock people up who disagree with him. I mean, Caesar himself previously committed genocide.

He fought a whole civil war to bring about his desired conclusions. But this isn't the actions of Jesus. Jesus comes and he says, my kingdom's not of this world.

[17:33] He doesn't come with an army. He comes by himself. And this isn't due to, like, a lack of power. Because, you know, Caesar had his legions of Roman soldiers.

But Jesus at any moment in his life could have called down legions of angels. And in fact, Jesus didn't even need his angels. Because as we recall in the Gospels, Jesus meets the man who's possessed by a legion of demons.

And simply by speaking to him, he defeats them and casts them out. Jesus comes with absolute power. But he doesn't use it. Where Caesar comes only to claim power.

He came, Caesar came with these promises that he would serve the people. But instead, he really just wanted to be served as king. But Jesus comes and he says, I've come not to be served, but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many.

And that's the difference is that even in the end results, Caesar didn't even get what he wanted. His life was taken from him.

[18:45] But Jesus did succeed by giving up his own life for the sake of other people. And that's the difference between the two is that really Caesar actually is a lot more like Adam than we thought.

because as Paul says, in order to undo what Adam did, you can't have another evil person come in who's just going to smash things up.

Because what you need is not just another Adam, you need almost like a new Adam, a reversal of who Adam is. Because if the condemnation comes through one trespass, there must be a righteous act to undo what Adam has done.

If Adam was disobedient, the new Adam has to be obedient. But Caesar simply copied Adam.

Adam in the garden said, okay, I'm going to become like God.

And Caesar did the exact same thing. He was a man who wished to become God. But Jesus is a God who became man. He's the perfect one who came down. And he has this connection between him and the father.

[19:59] You see, for Paul, you can't move from being disconnected from God back to being connected by God simply by trying your best or doing enough good things.

You must already have that previous connection. And that's where we come to the second group of people. because the second group of people say, okay, this is our way Caesar or these political leaders are doing things isn't right.

What we need is someone to come from God and to come to us and say, here's the way you need to live. We need a religious leader. And so these people, you know, they might follow Buddha or Mohammed.

and some of these people even claim to follow Jesus. And they think, well, what Jesus has done is he comes from God and he says, you have to do X, Y, Z and then you'll get back into God's good books.

And the way Paul talks about this is he says, describes this as the law, the way you're supposed to live before God. But the problem is these people don't understand the situation either.

[21 : 13] For them, they think that simply by doing enough good things we can move from being separated from God back into relationship with Him.

But if we read what Paul is saying, he's saying, so if you go back to in chapter 3, he says, you know, whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law. Rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. So the reason people make this mistake is that they think that God gave us the law in order that we follow its rules and make our way back to God.

So they would think, well, if we just get together and obey the works of the law, then the most sin in the world will decrease and the world will improve. But when Paul looks at this, he says in verse 20, the law was brought in so that the trespass might increase.

And you might think, well, hold on, Paul. That's the opposite of what's happening. Why would God give us the law to increase the amount of sin in the world? It doesn't make any sense. But what Paul's really saying here is that the law simply reveals how bad our situation is.

[22 : 43] it tells us that there's no way you can do enough to get back into God's good books.

When we see this between, but when we look at the example of the Pharisees, so the Pharisees are this same example and they thought, look, we've got the law of Moses.

If we obey the law, then God, then we'll earn our place before God. And sometimes people make a mistake and they think, well, the problem with the Pharisees is they're too big on law.

Where Jesus is about love and he's not so, like, hardcore about all these specific rules. But actually, for Jesus, the law of Moses is about love.

He sums up the law by saying, you should love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and you should love your neighbor as yourself. And what happens is there's just this natural consequence of how people treat the law.

And what they do is like the Pharisees, they change the law. So the Pharisees would actually make some of the commandments easier. So for example, when it says, honor your father and mother, they'd come up with all these sort of excuses and reasoning where they don't really have to follow that rule.

[24 : 12] Or they'd invent some new rules that they could follow that other people couldn't. So when Jesus comes to them, he says, he doesn't say, you know, the problem with you guys is you're too hardcore about the rules.

He actually says, you guys aren't being hardcore enough about the rules. Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount, he says, you know, you think you've not killed anyone.

But if you're angry at anyone, you've broken that law. You think, you said, I've not cheated on my wife. And he says, well, if you've looked at anyone with lust, you've committed adultery. And so when Jesus came, he didn't come to say, okay, the law is a bad thing.

We're going to get rid of that. He came to reveal the true purpose of the law, which is why when he speaks to the people and he says, you know, I didn't come for the righteous, but for sinners.

And it's not those who are, well, you need a doctor, but those who are sick. What he's saying is not that there are two categories of people. There's those who've obeyed the law and those who haven't.

[25 : 22] And I've just come for those who haven't. He said, well, actually, there's only people who haven't. There's only people who haven't obeyed the law. And if anyone thinks, oh, they have obeyed the law, really, they've not understood its commandments correctly.

So that's the problem with using the method of obeying the law. But then Paul says that there's another method. in chapter 3, verse 21, But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the law and the prophets testify.

This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. So, this, the method of going by the law doesn't work, but God has, through Jesus Christ, has shown us another way. So, and, and this is the reality is that when we say, okay, we need someone to come and save us, whether that's Buddha or Muhammad or even when we say it's Jesus, and what they're doing is they're giving us a rule book to follow.

We follow these steps and we get to God. We're not really following those people. We're not really saying, oh, they're, oh, Jesus is bringing me to God. Really, we're saying, oh, I'm doing it.

[26 : 57] So, Adam has brought us into, has broken the connection, but I, and I alone can do enough to bring us back over. But, really, if that, if that happens, this only has two consequences and end results.

Either we're going to despair. If we try our hardest, oh, thanks. Yeah, so, the end result of going by the law is that either we'll despair of our sin and realize that we can't make it ourselves or we'll become self-righteous and say, well, I'm not that great, but at least I'm better than that guy over there.

Because, ultimately, all that does is set us back on the treadmill of trying to work our way up to God. world. But, Jesus Christ offers us something different.

He doesn't offer us, sorry, hold a second. But, Jesus Christ offers us something different.

He's not like the political leaders, the Caesars, who come with their false promises and come with their evil actions only to kill and destroy.

[28 : 42] but he came to save and to rescue and to heal. And he's also not like the religious teachers who simply say, here's some rules to follow.

If you try your hardest, maybe you'll make it back. But, instead, Jesus comes and he says, I've done it for you. Jesus is the only one who can obey the law in our place.

And so, if we look at what Paul is saying, through all of chapter five, over and over, he repeats the word gift. It's a gift of God, a gift of righteousness through one man, Jesus Christ.

And what we need to understand is that when we see the reality of our situation, that in Adam we're completely cut off. We're separated from God by our sins.

It's only then that we really realize the true message of the gospel. That, as Paul says, where sin increased, grace increased all the more.

[29 : 42] So that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Because, Jesus Christ has, sorry, God, a chance to try again, to try hard.

It offers us a way back to God. It's not him saying, like Adam, you have to work and try your best. You, as a man, have to work your way up to me as God.

But in Jesus Christ, God came down to us. He came down to fix the problems that we caused. The message that Paul is bringing is not a new set of rules by which us as humans can fix our relationship with God.

Instead, Paul's message is a message of good news. It's saying that Jesus Christ has come and he's already fixed this relationship. He's already done it for us.

There's nothing we can do to change that. And if we think that we need to fix it ourselves, we don't have the gospel. We don't understand who Jesus is.

[31 : 13] And we're trying to replace him with a substitute, something different. But when we realize that there's no other human being who can do what Jesus did, not us, not me, not you, that's when we really realize the unique value of Jesus.

And that's the emphasis of what Paul is saying here. So let's thank God for that.

Lord, you've shown us that we are so far away from you.

Ever since Adam sinned and turned from you and done what was wrong, we've been separated from you and from one another. We've done what is evil and we've turned far from you.

But Lord, we also thank you that you have given us our Lord Jesus Christ. A Savior who is perfect and righteous.

[32 : 24] And that you've given him freely as a gift. There's nothing that we have to do to earn it. There's nothing we can do to win our way back to you. But it's only by grace that you've given him to us.

We thank you. We thank you for this. And may, in Jesus' name, amen. And now I think we're going to sing our final hymn, Yet Not I, But Through Christ in Me.