

DEVOTIONAL

WHEN IN ROME V // THEREFORE RIGHTEOUSNESS
OCTOBER 3, 2021

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discussion Starter: Read Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-24 to better understand Adam's sin.

Key Text: *"Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* (Romans 5:18-21)

One raw winter night, a man heard an irregular thumping sound against the kitchen storm door. He went to a window and watched as tiny, shivering sparrows, attracted to the evident warmth inside, beat in vain against the glass. Touched, the farmer bundled up and trudged through fresh snow to open the barn door for the struggling birds. He turned on the lights, tossed some hay in a corner, and sprinkled a trail of saltine crackers to direct them to the barn. But the sparrows, which had scattered in all directions when he emerged from the house, still hid in the darkness, afraid of him. He tried various tactics: circling behind the birds to drive them toward the barn, tossing crumbs in the air toward them, retreating to his house to see if they would flutter into the barn on their own. Nothing worked. He, a huge, alien creature, had terrified them; the birds could not understand that he actually desired to help.

He withdrew to his house and watched the doomed sparrows through a window. As he stared, a thought hit him like lightning from a clear blue sky: if only I could become a bird—one of them—just for a moment. Then I wouldn't frighten them so. I could show them the way to warmth and safety. At the same moment, another thought dawned on him. He had grasped the whole principle of the gospel. That's why Jesus became human—to show and provide the way for us sinners to be rescued forever.

1. Jesus replaced what Adam erased.

"Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ 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" (v.18-19). The Bible indicates that Adam was the first representative of the human race, and when he chose to sin, his guilt was passed on to us—we are considered guilty, too, and we have a sin nature. However, Jesus is the second representative—the "last Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:45-49)—and while the first Adam's disobedience brought condemnation, Jesus's obedience and sacrifice brought salvation for all humans who would trust in Him. What the first Adam erased through his disobedience, the final Adam, Jesus, replaced through His obedience.

Discuss: What similarities do you see between Romans 5:18-19 and 1 Corinthians 15:45-49?

It is essential that we recognize that our own righteousness can never be good enough to earn salvation, no matter how hard we try. This is why Jesus lived a perfect life in full obedience to God and His law in thought, word, and actions. Jesus' mission was not simply to die on the cross for our sins but also to live a life of sinless perfection and righteousness. As we learned earlier in Romans 3:21-22, through our faith in Christ, the righteousness of God is given to us. This is called "imputed" righteousness. To impute something is to ascribe something to someone—to credit something to their account. When we place our faith in Christ, God ascribes—credits to our account—the perfect righteousness of Christ so that we become perfect in His sight. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "*For our sake he made him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*" And not only is Christ's righteousness imputed to us through faith but our sin is imputed to Christ. He had no sin in Himself, but our sin is imputed to Him, so, as He suffers on the cross, He is suffering the just penalty that our sin deserves. We are not righteous in ourselves; rather, we possess Christ's righteousness applied to our account. It is Christ's righteousness that God sees when He brings us into fellowship with Himself.

Discuss: Explain the process of imputation in your own words.

2. Sin abounded, but grace abounded even more.

"Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (v.20). When God gave the law to Moses, we humans moved from being simply sinners by nature to becoming actual lawbreakers. However, as human sin increased, God's grace super-increased! God's grace abounded even more.

Discuss: How would you explain the idea "*where sin increased, grace abounded all the more*" (v.20) to a non-Christian?

3. Sin shows its strength through death, but grace shows greater strength through granting righteousness that leads to eternal life through Christ.

"So that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v.21). Sin brings death—we cannot escape our own sinful nature, or death, no matter how badly we may want to. Sin rules over us and ultimately leads to death. But Paul asserts that sin can never grow beyond God's capacity to give righteousness and eternal life to those who trust in Him. There is no way to escape the reign of sin and death apart from Christ.

Discuss: What are some key words that could describe a non-Christian view of death? What are some key words to describe the biblical view of death for a Christian?

For Further Study:

Making Sense of Salvation by Wayne Grudem

"Why Does Christ's Righteousness Need to Be Imputed to Us?" article at www.gotquestions.org

"Death Defeated" article at www.crosswalk.com

"How is God Fair for Punishing Us for Adam's Sin?" video at www.crossexamined.org