

One Person's Actions Can Affect Many

Last week we looked at the scriptural evidence which showed us that once a person is truly saved by his/her faith in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross to cover their sin, that salvation can never be lost, it is eternal. It is a confirmation of God's love that He will never let us go. No where in Scripture is this concept expressed better than in Romans 8:32-39:

Since God did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't God, who gave us Christ, also give us everything else?
 33 *Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? Will God? No! He is the one who has given us right standing with himself.*
 34 *Who then will condemn us? Will Christ Jesus? No, for **he is the one who died for us and was raised to life for us and is sitting at the place of highest honor next to God, pleading for us.***
 35 *Can **anything** ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or are hungry or cold or in danger or threatened with death?*
 36 *(Even the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.")*
 37 *No, despite all these things, **overwhelming victory** is ours through Christ, who loved us.*

38 *And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels can't, and the demons can't. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away.*
 39 *Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Beginning in Romans 5:6, Paul begins to define the nature of this love that God has for all people. Let's see what he says in verses 6-8:

*When we were utterly **helpless**, Christ came at just the right time and died for us **sinner**s.*
 7 *Now, no one is likely to die for a good person, though someone might be willing to die for a person who is especially good.*
 8 *But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*

In verse 6 Paul says that we were **helpless**. Helpless to do what? Helpless to do anything that pleased God. There was no way that we could overcome sin on our own. Look at what Paul says a little bit later in this letter in Romans 8:7,8:

*For the sinful nature is **always hostile to God**. It never did obey God's*

laws, and it never will.

8 That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

Isn't it amazing that God, who is absolutely pure and holy, could look at people who are repulsive to His holy nature and love them? A theologian by the name of Charles Hodge once said:

*"If God loved us because we love Him, He would love us only so long as we loved Him, and on that condition. Then our salvation would depend on the constancy of our treacherous hearts. But as God loved us as sinners, and as Christ died for us as ungodly, our salvation depends **not** on our loveliness, but on the constancy of God's love."*

Isn't that great? You see God doesn't love us because we're loveable. He didn't look down on us and say, "*Oh they're just so irresistible?*" God's love isn't like human love. **We** basically love because something about someone or something attracts us. But God's love is built into His nature, so that **if you exist, you're loved by God**. You're loved even though there may be nothing about you that attracts Him. That is unconditional love. It's everything that any of us could ever hope for. It's what we want from people, but seldom get. We have God's love no matter how good we try to be or how bad we are. God loves the worst of sinners just as much as He loves the people who think they're goodie good people. He loves all of us and He loves us equally. He doesn't love anybody more than He loves anybody else.

At the proper moment in history, Christ appeared on earth so that He could cover our sin by sacrificing Himself, and the marvel of it all is that He died with the same love for us in His nature because He was and is God. He died loving the unlovely Godless people. Now that's really unusual for anyone to do as Paul goes on to explain in Romans 5:7:

Now, no one is likely to die for a good person, though someone might be willing to die for a person who is especially good.

People would rarely be willing to die for a righteous person. Sometimes a person might give their life to save a really good person. But I don't know of anyone that would be willing to die for a bad person. Nobody that is but God, as we see in Romans 5:8:

*But God **showed** his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*

The word, "*showed*," in verse 8, means that God proved the depth of His love for us because Christ died for us while we were still sinners. If God can love us while we're still sinners, if He can love us enough to have His Son die for us to save us from that sin while we are still sinners, will He not love us enough to keep us secure in our salvation once we're saved? There can be no doubt.

But we can assure you that someone will say, “*Oh, if you sin, you’re out.*” That’s utterly ridiculous because **when we first got in** we were ungodly sinners. When you’re saved, the Holy Spirit comes to live within you, and you begin to become more like Christ. You’ll never be as bad as you were before. If God loved us into salvation when we were not saved, will He not all the more keep us saved? If God will save a sinner, you can take it to the bank that He will hang on to a sometimes sinning saint, that of course being a person who has been saved and still struggles with occasional sin. The confidence of that love which is poured into a believer by the Holy Spirit should allow us not to feel that we’ll be hit by lightning when we do sin. Rather, we only need to cry out, “*Father, by your love, please forgive me.*” People who understand God’s love are able to do this. We have certainty of God’s love and forgiveness as Paul describes in Romans 5:9:

And since we have been made right in God’s sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God’s judgment.

Because we were made right with God by the blood of Jesus, we will be saved from the wrath of God to come. The wrath to come is the Lake of Fire, which you can read about in Revelation chapter 20, the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, and where those who have not received Jesus Christ as their Savior are sent forever. When we put our faith in Jesus the wrath of God is born by Jesus death on the cross and we no longer have to face it as Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 1:10:

And they speak of how you are looking forward to the coming of God’s Son from heaven—Jesus, whom God raised from the dead. He is the one who has rescued us from the terrors of the coming judgment.

No believer in Jesus as their personal Savior is ever going to stand in judgment or know the wrath of God. Why? Listen to Romans 5:10:

*For since we were **restored** to friendship with God **by the death of his Son** while we were still his enemies, we will certainly **be delivered** from eternal punishment by **his life**.*

If God saved us while we were His enemies, don’t you think He’ll keep us when we become His friends? If a dead Savior on the cross can save us, certainly a living Savior can keep us. Our living Savior sitting at the right hand of God will keep us in that salvation by the authority that God has given Him to do so. Isn’t this great? All of these blessings come to us because of what Christ has done for us. Before going on let’s just take a quick review of Romans 5:1-10. In verse 1 we see that we have **peace with God** through Jesus:

*Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, **we have peace with God** because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.*

In verse 2, it is because of Jesus that we have access to God:

*2 Because of our faith, **Christ has brought us into this place of highest privilege** where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.*

In verses 3 and 4, we see **we can rejoice** even during difficult times:

*3 **We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us—they help us learn to endure.***

*4 **And endurance develops strength of character in us, and character strengthens our confident expectation of salvation.***

In verse 5, we find that we can be confident of God's love for us:

*5 **And this expectation will not disappoint us. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.***

We see in verses 6-8, that Christ died for us even when we were not worthy:

*6 **When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners.***

*7 **Now, no one is likely to die for a good person, though someone might be willing to die for a person who is especially good.***

*8 **But God showed his great love for us by **sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*****

Verse 9 let's us know that we are not only redeemed of our sins but also saved from God's wrath by Christ's blood:

*9 **And since we have been **made right in God's sight** by the blood of Christ, he will certainly **save us from God's judgment.*****

In verse 10, we are reconciled to God through the death of Christ and our salvation is assured by His life:

*10 **For since we were **restored to friendship** with God by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be delivered from eternal punishment by his life.***

Then in verse 11 we'll see **we will find joy** in God through Jesus Christ. You see everything comes through Christ. God never loved us because we were loveable. We weren't loveable. He saved us in the midst of our sin and did it to show what a glorious, gracious, merciful, loving God He is. He did it so that He might put Himself on display for all eternity and let everyone see that there is no other God comparable to Him. I challenge you to name me a god in any other religion that even approaches Jehovah God

in love, mercy, forgiveness, grace, and blessing. I would also challenge you to name me a god that performed the incredible miracles of Jehovah God, as well as having a perfect record for prophesying what would occur in the future. There is not a single prophecy of God that has been in error. There are no gods in any other religion that can match Jehovah God. And finally I won't even challenge you on this one because I know you won't be able to come up with anything. All gods of all other religions are still in their graves.

Jesus Christ is the only God who ever rose from the grave to eternal life. No one else has ever shown the way to overcome death for his followers. It is only Jesus, and that's why He is the only way to salvation and eternal life, and if you don't come to believe and accept that, you are going to be in for one big shock the moment you die.

We were God's enemies and He offered us the free gift of His friendship. If you haven't reached out and accepted that gift, why don't you do it today? Listen to this marvelous passage from 2 Corinthians 5:20,21:

We are Christ's ambassadors, and God is using us to speak to you. We urge you, as though Christ himself were here pleading with you, "Be reconciled to God!" 21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

We can't move on to Romans 5:11, without first looking at Hebrews 7:25:

Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save everyone who comes to God through him. He (Jesus)¹ lives forever to plead with God on their behalf.

Jesus is our advocate (attorney) in Heaven. He stands before God and says something like this: "Father, those are your children: Ed, AJ, Steve, and Robert down there in Village Church. I've taken away their sin. I've taken away judgment on them, and I've accepted your wrath in their place. They are to be forgiven." Jesus continually intercedes day after day for us before God, and that's why the salvation of anyone who believes is secure for all eternity. Now we can take a look at Romans 5:11:

So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God—all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in making us friends of God.

Here's another reason we know we belong to God. Because He fills our heart with joy. Salvation is not just a future benefit that awaits us, it's also a present and abundant joy. The concept here is to be thrilled over this newly established relationship with God. It's

¹ Parentheses added.

that sense of inner joy produced by the Holy Spirit. That's why in the midst of death or disaster, we do not lose our perspective because we take joy in our God who cares for His own. Thus we don't boast in ourselves. We don't say how wonderful we are because we're **so religious**. We're not the kind of religious people who pat ourselves on the back over how good we are. We take joy in God through Jesus Christ by whom we were given this great gift of reconciliation and salvation. This realization should allow us to endure any situation knowing that whatever happens we have hope for a perfect future in Heaven for eternity. The earth is not our home, but believers can be joyful while we're here if for no other reason than the great hope that awaits us.

If you consider yourself to be a believing Christian and you don't have this sense of security and joy in your salvation, it may be that you've lost that internal witness of the Holy Spirit because of some recurrent sin, something that you want to hold on to rather than confess it and turn it over to God. The Holy Spirit hasn't left. You're the one that's shutting Him out by not calling for His help. Perhaps you see it only as a small sin. It may be something that does not appear to be a glaring evil to the whole world. But even a small sin that recurs over and over again can choke out your sense of assurance. If that could be the case in your life. We encourage you to confess that sin to God and ask the Spirit of God to search your heart, help you to overcome it, and give you that full sense of God's love and joy in the Spirit. Let us now transition over to the verses of Romans 5:12-21:

*When Adam sinned, **sin entered the entire human race**. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.*

13 Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. And though there was no law to break, since it had not yet been given,

*14 they all died anyway—even though **they did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did**. What a contrast between Adam and Christ, who was yet to come!*

15 And what a difference between our sin and God's generous gift of forgiveness. For this one man, Adam, brought death to many through his sin. But this other man, Jesus Christ, brought forgiveness to many through God's bountiful gift.

*16 And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For **Adam's sin led to condemnation**, but we have the free gift of being accepted by God, even though we are guilty of many sins.*

*17 **The sin of this one man, Adam, caused death** to rule over us, but all who receive God's wonderful, gracious gift of righteousness **will live in triumph over sin and death** through this one man, Jesus Christ.*

*18 Yes, **Adam's one sin brought condemnation upon everyone**, but **Christ's one act of righteousness makes all people right in God's sight and gives them life**.*

*19 **Because one person disobeyed God, many people became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many people will be made right in God's sight**.*

20 God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were.

But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful kindness became more abundant.

21 So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful kindness rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Many people believe this to be the most difficult passage in the book of Romans, and having just read it you might agree with them. One thing we see clearly in this passage is that because of sin in the world, **death reigns over every human being**; death is king. We're exposed to death at all times. The last time I checked the mortality rate (the proportion of death to population) in the world was still 100%. In fact there's a Washington, D.C. undertaker that signs his correspondence, "*Eventually Yours.*" The painful reality of death touches our lives continually. Thomas Gray wrote:

*"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth ere gave
Await alike the inevitable hour;
The paths of glory lead but to the grave."*

Death is the ultimate king in this world. But why is that so? Why must everyone die? Well the answer lies in verses 12-14 of Romans 5. The main lesson Paul wants to teach in Romans 5:12-21 is that **one person's actions can affect many**. Because of Adam all people were alienated from God and because of Jesus all people **can be** reconciled to God. Adam reigns over the kingdom of sin and death. Christ reigns over the kingdom of righteousness and life. In the process of saying this, Paul answers the question asking where death came from.

Do you want to know why the world is like it is? Well, you're going to find out right now because it's all here in these 10 verses. Here lies the key to understanding all of history. It tells us why people are the way they are. It tells us why death is the dominant monarch. So let's get right into it beginning in Romans 5:12:

*When Adam sinned, **sin entered the entire human race**. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.*

Notice that this verse does not say that Adam and Eve originated sin. Sin had already appeared prior to Adam and Eve, for Satan was the original sinner, and of course he was the one that then tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God. Adam and Eve merely introduced it into the human race as we see confirmed in 1 John 3:8:

*But when people keep on sinning, it shows they belong to the Devil, **who has been sinning since the beginning**. But the Son of God came to destroy these works of the Devil.*

Just as Adam and Eve passed on to their descendants a nose, eyes, ears, arms, and legs, they also passed on the corrupting character of sin. Sin became a part of the human stream. When Adam and Eve sinned they comprised the whole human race, they were all of humanity sinning. Within them now was the seed that would be part of every human life after them. So it is as we read in 1 Corinthians 15:22:

Everyone dies because all of us are related to Adam, the first man. But all who are related to Christ, the other man, will be given new life.

God warned Adam in Genesis 2:15-17:

The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and care for it.

16 But the Lord God gave him this warning: "You may freely eat any fruit in the garden

17 except fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat of its fruit, you will surely die."

You may find it interesting that **God never intended for us to die**. It is not natural for creatures that are created in the image of God to die. Death came as a penalty for disobedience to the command of God. Death is a penalty for sin. Humankind was never made for death, and neither was Hell created for human beings. God created Hell for Satan and his angels, not for us, as Jesus said in Matthew 25:41:²

*"Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, 'Away with you, you cursed ones, into the **eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his demons!**'"*

If Adam had not sinned, people would not have died and the world would have had a much different history. Death comes not because we sin but because we have within us a sin nature. You see corruption entered the human stream and none of us can escape it. **MAY WE REMIND YOU THAT YOU ARE NOT A SINNER BECAUSE YOU SIN. YOU SIN BECAUSE YOU'RE A SINNER.**

Now just what kind of death are we talking about here? First, it's **spiritual death**. When Adam and Eve sinned, did they die on the spot physically? No, but they did die spiritually. Spiritual death is separation from God. Physical death is separation from the living, and eternal death is separation from God forever. Paul does a good job of describing spiritual death in Ephesians 4:18:

*Their closed minds are full of darkness; **they are far away from the life of God** because they have **shut their minds** and hardened their hearts against him.*

The folks Paul is describing here just don't have any spiritual life.

² Also see 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6.

The second kind of death is **physical death**. Physical death is that great enemy that everyone will be introduced to personally at some point in their lives. Most people fear physical death when they really should fear spiritual death a whole lot more. Jesus said in Matthew 10:28:

*Don't be afraid of those who want to kill you. They can only kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, **who can destroy both soul and body in hell.***

Those who know Jesus Christ don't fear physical death. Once we have taken care of reconciling ourselves to God through faith in Jesus work on the cross on our behalf, then physical death becomes a promotion. That's why Paul can say in Philippians 1:21:

*For to me, living is for Christ, and **dying is even better.***

Then there's the third kind of death, **eternal death**, which is simply first your physical death and then your spiritual death, being separated from God forever in the place the Bible calls Hell.

Now I know a lot of people who simply discard this truth because they want to believe that human beings are naturally good and come into the world sinless. Well, let me ask you a question. When a baby comes into this world, do his/her parents have to teach him/her to **disobey**? No, you use discipline to teach the child to obey. If you were to just let toddlers and young children go it on their own according to their natural design, they'd be in prison by the time they were eight. Psalm 51:5 speaks to this truth:

For I was born a sinner— yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.

Would you like to know why Jesus had to be born of a virgin and bypass a human father? Because if Jesus had a natural father, He would have been born a sinner and could not have been the perfect sinless sacrifice God required for the forgiveness of sin.

We were in Adam when he first sinned and believers are now in Christ. Somehow we were in Adam when he did what he did. Somehow believers were in Christ when He did what He did. If we can't understand that, it simply means that God has a mind beyond and above our minds, not that it cannot be understood or that it's in error. It simply means that our minds are unable to comprehend things at that level. And that fact should not be difficult to accept. After all God created all things out of nothing and has provided for the daily needs of humanity throughout history (Isaiah 42:5; 45:8,12; Ephesians 3:9; Revelation 10:6). There are any number of passages in Scripture that speak of this. Isaiah 45:6-12 is just one example:

*so all the world from east to west will know there is no other God. I am the Lord, and there is no other.
7 I am the one who **creates the light and makes the darkness. I am the***

one who sends good times and bad times. I, the Lord, am the one who does these things.

*8 Open up, O heavens, and pour out your righteousness. Let the earth open wide so salvation and righteousness can sprout up together. **I, the Lord, created them.***

*9 “**Destruction is certain for those who argue with their Creator.** Does a clay pot ever argue with its maker? Does the clay dispute with the one who shapes it, saying, ‘Stop, you are doing it wrong!’ Does the pot exclaim, ‘How clumsy can you be!’*

10 How terrible it would be if a newborn baby said to its father and mother, ‘Why was I born? Why did you make me this way?’ ”

*11 This is what the Lord, the Creator and Holy One of Israel, says: “**Do you question what I do?** Do you give me orders about the work of my hands?*

*12 **I am the one who made the earth and created people to live on it.** With my hands I stretched out the heavens. **All the millions of stars are at my command.***

Would you expect the God who did these things to be on an equal level with you and your friends? Would you want God to be on an equal level with you or your friends? Would you want God, who determines where you will spend eternity, to base His judgments on the same mood swings and prejudices of you and your friends? I know I certainly wouldn't. I want my God to be perfect. I want my God to be unconditionally loving and just, and I think you do as well. We simply do not have anywhere near the capability of understanding God completely. In the Bible He gives all that we need to know and some of it we just need to accept by faith because we'll never fully understand it until we're with Him in Heaven. No human mind, on its own, could have written the Bible. No human mind, on its own, is capable of conceiving such things. No other religious writing can compare to the splendor and perfect continuity of the Bible. Some may make you feel all warm and fuzzy and others may seem to make some sense to the human mind. But only the Bible of the one and only God can transcend the ability of the human mind to comprehend such magnificent perfection. If you don't believe us, you might want to take the next five years or so to study the literary works of the major religions and compare them with the Bible and then come back and give us a report.

Next week we'll first look at some Scripture from the Old Testament that sheds quite a bit of additional light on how and why we cannot even approach understanding the mind of God, and then we'll continue with chapter 5 of the book of Romans. I would encourage you to read through the chapter on your own this week and come back with some good questions and comments. Until we see you again next week, Betty and I will continue to pray for each of you individually. May you walk the path until then and reap all the benefits.