

Romans 5:12-15
REVERSAL

Adam received a direct command from God in the Garden of Eden. He was told not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The God who created a paradise strictly for the pleasure of the crown of his creation gave that crown one rule—and then he broke it. And, because of that sin, because he broke the only Law that God had given to him, he was cursed with the consequence of death.

But Cain didn't receive a direct command not to kill his brother. Noah was not given a stone tablet that laid out limits on how much wine he could imbibe. Lying wasn't written down on a list of five don'ts for Abraham or his heel-grabbing grandson, Jacob. And yet, Cain, Noah, Abraham, and Jacob all died.

Why? It doesn't seem all that fair does it? Why would God hold the whole world accountable for the trespass of one man? Why should one mistake, one misstep, one lapse in judgment condemn all of humanity?

In the Apostle Paul's written Bible Information Class on the Basics of faith, he begins to answer that question in chapter 5. Listen again:

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when 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 did Adam.

That's the beginning of Paul's answer to why this hereditary handing over of the effects of sin has to happen. However, in that section, he is simply laying the groundwork for the overarching answer. It is essential, not only for the sake of a logical argument, but for your spiritual knowledge as well, to know that this consequence of death came to all men because of Adam's sin. He doesn't yet answer why it is true. Rather, as if he were in a courtroom, he displays evidence of the fact that it is true.

Exhibit A – *sin is not taken into account when there is no law.* You don't get a ticket if you park on the side of the

street where there isn't a "no parking" sign. It may not look quite right to wear socks and sandals, but no one can arrest you for it because there is no law against it.

Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden for eating that forbidden fruit. The effects of sin on their daily lives and its final consequence of death was pronounced upon them.

Yet, you can search, seek, and scour the Scriptures all you want, but one thing you will not find is God declaring, as clearly as he did for Adam and Eve, how anyone after Adam and Eve died because they broke his commandments. That is, of course, until the Commandments were given at the time of Moses. Which brings us to:

Exhibit B – *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.* No one in Rome would be able to argue that Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, Seth, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were no longer alive. Benjamin Franklin once said that the only two things you can be certain of in life are death and taxes. The book of Genesis, in sections like the first five verses about Adam that you heard in the First Lesson for today, is a laundry list of humans who fit into that first category.

Sometime, if you get a chance, turn your Scriptures to take in all that the rest of Genesis, chapter 5 says. Adam died. Seth died. Enosh, Kenan, and Mahalalel all died. Jared and Methuselah lived for almost ten centuries, but, guess what? They died, too. Which brings us to:

Exhibit C – *before the law was given, sin was in the world.* This fact becomes evidence because of Exhibits A and B. If Adam and Eve's descendants didn't break any of God's commands, and, yet, they still suffered the consequence of breaking God's commands, there must be another kind of sin that exists in mankind. And, friends, unfortunately, that's where this Bible Information Class begins to hit hard on its hearers.

Even if, by some great miracle, you had a pretty great week—you didn't curse, swear, lie, or deceive; you showed love when others confronted you with hate; you read your bible on a daily basis and kept your adulterous thoughts, words, and actions at bay—you still deserve death as a consequence for sin.

That's because, even if you discounted any of God's commands that you have broken, or will break, at any time in your life, you are still sinful. In fact, the truth of the matter is not that you are declared a sinner because you sin. Rather, you break God's commands—you misuse the name of the LORD, your God, you hate and harm your neighbors, you fear, love, and trust in things or people other than your God, or keep pleasures of the flesh on your heart and mind because you are a sinner.

Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. Why is the rest of the world held accountable for the trespass of one man? You aren't. You can be certain of your own death because you, too, are a sinner.

But, brothers and sisters, that is only half of the logical argument and the lesson of this week's class. Listen again to the conclusion:

Adam...was 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!

Adam's trespass not only introduced sin into the world, but it caused you to earn the consequence of sin; it caused you to deserve death all on your own. But the gift is not like the trespass.

The gift God gave you takes you completely out of the reason for your reckoning. The only thing you would ever be able to do is earn more death, so God gave you a gift; something that you could never do anything to earn on your own.

God gave you Jesus. God gave you someone who was born as a human being so that he would be under the same commandments as you, yet had a pretty great week every week, never breaking any of them. And, so that he would not be born with the same sinful nature that causes you to deserve death, he gave you a human being who was, at the same time, truly God; someone who was and is by nature perfect and holy.

But, in order to make Jesus a gift for you, he placed Jesus' perfection over your record of sin. Rather than giving you the consequence of sin that you have earned, he reversed the effects of sin and has made it so that when you die, it is not an entrance into eternal

punishment, but, instead, your arrival into the eternal reward of heaven.

The gift is not like the trespass because you did nothing to earn it on your own. But that isn't where Paul's contrast of the gift and the trespass ends.

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!

For as sure as you can be that we live in a world saturated with sin and that you will die, you can be even more confident that God's grace has been given as a gift to you. The gift is not like the trespass because it is more trustworthy than the certainty of death, itself!

In his salvation work earned for you, Jesus reversed the pattern of humanity, both in quality and in certainty. Your God is unfair—for your benefit. Amen.