

ONE MAN MADE THE DIFFERENCE

READING

Romans 5:12–19 (NIV84)

12 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—

13 for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law.

14 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, who was a pattern of the one to come.

15 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!

16 Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man’s sin: *The judgment followed **one sin** and brought **condemnation***, but the *gift followed **many trespasses** and brought **justification***.

17 For if, by the trespass of the 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.

18 Consequently, *just as the result of **one trespass** was **condemnation** for **all men***, so also *the result of **one act of righteousness** was **justification** that brings **life** for **all men***.

19 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*.

- From this Sunday’s Lectionary, Paul in Romans 5, makes one of the most amazing and compelling summaries about the nature of the work of Jesus through his death on the cross. The need for Jesus is so clearly put.
- Giving rise to the question: **What does the crucifixion of Jesus ultimately mean for humankind and the rest of creation?** In other words – what exactly took place on the Cross - when Jesus hung and died on it?
- To answer this we need to discuss the word **ATONEMENT** and its definition.
- The word **ATONEMENT** is found in both the Old Testament and the New Testaments.
- Atonement literally means "at one-ment" with God. It is the way in which guilt and punishment which is a result of the violation of God's will is dealt with...
 - As well as the outcome...the state of reconciliation that occurs between humans and God because of Christ's work on the cross.
 - Concerning this, Paul says: **“More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation”** (Romans 5:11).
- But some schools of thought would rather view the death of Jesus as him simply providing us with a **Moral example** of how to suffer and die with humility, faith and obedience. This, they believe, would *inspire* others to be obedient to God.

- Others see the death of Jesus as an act of **Moral influence** – meaning that his death was not a moral example to humanity, but a demonstration of God's great love for people. In this way, Jesus' death inspires human beings to begin to live rightly.
- Yet others speak of atonement as **Optional Satisfaction** – an idea that allows for but does not require satisfaction of God's justice for the sinner. Instead, God could have freed man in another way for nothing is impossible with God. However, this is a slippery slope which implies that God must have other ways to bring about salvation.
- We then come to the notion of **Necessary Satisfaction** – which states that it was necessary for God's offended justice and honor to be satisfied by a penalty that only Christ could pay. It should be noted that the word “satisfaction” means “**to make restitution;**” that is, to make an offering the value of which redeems the injury or insult which was inflicted on the offended party.
- But Necessary Satisfaction is not a complete enough picture – and so we arrive at our final view, namely **Penal Substitution**.
- This view builds on the **Necessary Satisfaction** theory, but adds that because God's absolute justice has been violated, a substitution for sins had to be made by the sinless Son of God. Meaning that Jesus does not simply pay a price for God's justice to be addressed. God's justice is not only offended, but it has brought about a separation between him and humankind. Thus Jesus stands in that place as a substitute – to die on our behalf – for the goal of atonement is to reconcile humankind with God.
- Now – this is the oldest and most commonly held view among the mainline and evangelical churches – and is known as **Substitutionary Atonement**. This is because it is a view that is well supported throughout scripture. For example:
 - a) We first discover the idea of the substitute sacrifice in the story of Abraham – whose faith is tested by God, when God asks him to sacrifice his firstborn, Isaac. When they are on the top of the mountain and Abraham is about to do the deed, an angel stops him and...tells him that God sees his faithfulness

It is then that “*Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering **instead of his son.** 14 So Abraham called that place *The LORD Will Provide.* And to this day it is said, ‘On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.’” (Gen 22:13-14)*

- The words “**instead of,**” tell us of the substitutionary nature of the sacrifice...the ram (a male sheep) sacrificed *instead of Isaac*.
- The proverb: On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided” may also be a pointer to the provision of Jesus at a future date, so that John the Baptist would point to Jesus and say in **John 1:29** “*Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*”

- b) Next, we find the substitute Passover lamb described in the account of Israel's exodus (Exodus 12:1-13). This is followed closely by the description of the substitute sin offering described in Leviticus 4:1-7.
- c) One of the most astonishing passages pointing to the idea of substitutionary atonement, is that of the substitute “criminal” found in Isaiah 53:4-6, where it describes Jesus as being *“pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.”*
It is very likely that Peter had this in mind when he wrote of Jesus: *“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.”* (1 Peter 2:24)
- d) Apart from this passage in 1 Peter, the New Testament speaks of Jesus being the substitute for sinful humanity numerous times. So, for example, Paul writes: *“He (meaning God, the Father) who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”* (Romans 8:32).
- e) There are so many Biblical passages which demonstrate the unique link between God's mercy and justice as well as his love by means of Jesus’ substitutionary and transformative atonement. By contrast, we would be hard-pressed to find another religion/faith in this world where the deity/god in question grants mercy while maintaining justice in love. In addition, we would be hard-pressed to find another religion/deity which addresses the underlying human condition.
- To summarise: Substitutionary Atonement holds that the most fundamental event of the atonement is that Jesus Christ took the full punishment that we deserved for our sins as a substitute in our place, and that all other benefits or results of the atonement find their anchor in this truth.
 - All people are in need of a substitute since all are guilty of sinning against God who is utterly holy and just. *All* sin deserves punishment because *all* sin is personal rebellion against God himself. While animal sacrifices took on the guilt of God’s people in the OT, these sacrifices could never fully atone for the sins of humanity. For that, Jesus Christ came and died in the place of his people (substitution), taking upon himself the full punishment that they deserved (penal aspect). But for the atonement to be effectual – it requires a faith response on the part of those who understand their condition, and trust that Jesus is God’s only provision for reconciliation to take place.
 - So – as we turn again to our text, we see that the power of Jesus’ obedience to overcome Adam’s act of disobedience stands out. Paul presents both Adam and Christ as ‘**representative figures**’ whose acts determine the destiny of all who belong to them:
 - Just as Adam has been **disobedient**, and through his **disobedience**, brought **sin** and **death** to all who belong to him (12a, 18a, 19a), so also Jesus has **obeyed**, and through his **obedience** brought **righteousness** and **life** to all who belong to him (18b, 19b).

- What Paul wanted to teach the church in Rome (and us) is that Adam’s sin introduced a **reign of death**, a well-known doctrine found elsewhere in Jewish literature. But this is now confronted by the ‘voluntary,’ but absolutely necessary death of Jesus on the cross, which established a different reign – a reign of **life** rather than **death**, of **grace** (see vs 15–17, 21) rather than of **meting out what is really deserved**.

CONCLUSION

- In verses 18–19, Paul finally demonstrates the full comparison between Adam and Christ.
- The verses are paralleled, each of them comparing the way in which Adam’s one act of **trespass/disobedience** has brought **condemnation** and **sinfulness** to the way in which Jesus’ one act of **righteousness/obedience** has brought **justification** and **righteousness**.
- **The only thing that remains is to ask whether the parallel between them extends to the universal effects of these results.** Meaning is salvation given *to all* just as sin is imputed *to all* by birth. Such an idea is called **universalism** or **universal salvation** – rendering everyone saved through the death of Jesus – whether they know it or not. It almost seems like Paul is saying something like this – but this is not the case because in many other places Paul is clear that it is only those who receive by faith God’s abundant provision of grace and the gift of righteousness who will know his salvation. (e.g. Rom. 2:12; 2 Thes. 1:8–9), and v 17
- And so, we must understand the apparent **universalism** of v 18 in terms of the representative significance of each individual: That the effects of Jesus’ death on the cross extend to all who belong to him, just as the effects of Adam’s action extend to all who belong to him. And **all people**, without exception, belong to Adam (12); while **only those who come to faith**, who ‘**receive the gift**’, belong to Christ (see also 1 Cor. 15:22–23).
- In the end, because of what Jesus did, believers can be certain of eternal life, since scripture assures us that we have been transferred into this new realm in which grace and life reign through him (V21). We, who believe have received God’s abundant provision of grace and the gift of righteousness to reign in life through the one man **who made the difference**, Jesus Christ.

Amen

Prayer

Heavenly Father, those who rail against you say “What kind of a father is this God – who kills his own child?” But this is often a red herring given by those who simply will not have a saviour. For the story of the Cross is a story of love; a story of God who loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten Son for it. It was purposed in the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit before we were even born – to rescue a creation that was beyond any other kind of redemption. And so we thank you for the Cross.

We thank you for Jesus – the one man who made the difference.

Amen