

Two Representatives

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Unshakeable: Romans / Romans 5:12–21

Have you ever had a boss who made terrible decisions?

Like not just a minor mistake — but a real, significant, costly decisions. Things that affected the whole team.

Or maybe you just had a boss who created a toxic work environment.

It's challenging right, because they make the decision, and you had no say in it.

Nobody asks your opinion. You don't get a vote.

But you lived with the consequences anyway.

That's the reality of being under someone else's leadership. Their decisions have consequences that have reach.

Whether it's a boss, a CEO, a coach, a government — the decisions made at the top have a way of trickling all the way down to the people at the bottom.

And most of the time, we don't even think about it. We just live in the world that someone else's decisions created.

Think about it for a moment. So much of our life — the economy we navigate, the neighbourhood we grew up in, the opportunities that were available or unavailable to you — so much of that is shaped by decisions made by people we never meet, in rooms we're never in, long before we had any say in the matter.

We are always living under someone's representation. Always.

The question is never really *whether* you have a representative.

The question is *what kind* of representation you have.

That's the questions Romans 5 is asking us this morning.

Because here's what Paul wants us to see.

Every single one of us has been represented. From the moment we were born, we entered a story. A story shaped by a decision made long before us, by someone who stood in our place.

And that representation has consequences. Consequences we were born into.

But Paul doesn't leave us there. He wants us to know there is another representative. And what he brings changes everything.

Here's what I want us to see this morning:

We're all represented by someone — the question is, does that lead to life or does it lead to death?

The question isn't do you have a representative, we do, all of us do, the question is do they lead you to life or do they lead you to death?

Look with me at Romans 5.

We left off in Romans chapter 5, and in chapter 5 we said that Paul shifts his attention from explaining why we need the gospel and how we have access to the gospel; to what the gospel produces, what is the result of placing your faith in Jesus...

In other words what does justification produce in the life of someone who has placed their trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We've been celebrating that, Paul tells us that justification brings peace to the life of the believer, peace with God and the peace of God.

Not just peace, but he said this, unlimited access to grace, grace is the air we breathe in Jesus. But because we are at peace with God, because we serve a sovereign God, we can even rejoice in our sufferings.

And last week we celebrated that through it all we have this overwhelming assurance of God's love towards us.

I think if we could sum it all up in a statement, the gospel doesn't just change our status before God, it changes our lives.

Paul wants to press deeper into that this week. He keeps hitting this fruit of faith in Jesus from all kinds of different angles. And today he wants us to celebrate the fact that what Jesus has produced in us, in those who have been justified by their faith in Christ, is life.

You have been given new life. And the question you may be asking yourself, is, life... well I didn't know I was dead.

And the truth that the Bible teaches us is this, that those who are outside of Jesus, those who have not embraced or trusted in Jesus for life, are dead, spiritually dead.

And whether or not you have spiritual life today or spiritual death depends on who it is that is serving as your representative.

The question isn't do you have a representative, we all do, the question is does that representative give you life.

And there are two choices the Bible gives us, it tells us that every person who has ever lived is either in Adam, or in Christ. Your representative is either Adam or Christ.

And we all start off with Adam, like we don't have a choice in that. Every person who has ever lived is born into Adam.

The problem is the only thing Adam has brought the human race is sin and death.

Who is your representative, because in Adam death came to all.

In Adam, death came to all....

IN ADAM

We read Paul's words there in verses 12-14.

Romans 5:12-14 ESV

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— ¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

Here's what Paul is saying to us, that one man made one decision and his decision didn't just effect him; the consequences of that decision had an impact on us all.

Through that one man's decision sin and death entered into the world. He's taking us back all the way to the beginning, to the garden.

And in the garden God gave Adam one command

Genesis 2:16-17 ESV

¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Before we notice the restriction, notice the freedom that God gave Adam, you can eat of every tree of the garden, and we don't know how many trees there were, there could have been 10, 100, 1000, but that's not the one we focus on, we focus on the one tree, don't eat from that tree, because when you do, you shall surely die.

If I gave you a tour of a mansion and I opened up every door and showed you what was in the 100 rooms in that mansion, and said you can have access to every room in this house, but this one room is off limits, what would you

immediately want to do, you would want to know what's in that one room, why can't I have access to that one room...

You have access to every room in the house, great freedom, but I want that room.

We're connected to Adam aren't we... see we know what temptation is like, curiosity that leads to temptation and Adam first allowed his wife to be tempted, he was right there with her chapter 3 tells us, and when she offered him the fruit, he took, and he ate.

And because of his one act of disobedience, sin and death entered into the whole world.

Like the garden explain so much of the world in which we live. It explains the brokenness we see, like God didn't create the world like this, he created it and said that it was good, the evil, the brokenness, the sin, came after Adam.

Sin and death reigned through Adam do you see that? Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, so death spread to all men...

Adam was our representative, and he failed, and because of his failure we all face the consequences.

It's the reason that you and I struggle with sin, and conflict, and pain, and strife.

It's the reason there's wars, and sickness, and poverty and death. It's the reason for injustice and inequality, and crime and hate.

The human race was represented by Adam and through his disobedience the world was plunged into sin and death.

What does that mean sin and death... well understand that sin there doesn't mean just the act of sin, but the condition of sin.

See we aren't sinful because we sin, you and I sin because we're sinners. It's the human condition, we are born into a sinful condition, wired to sin, wired to love sin, to seek it out.

The best example I can think of is how early we see sin in children... when that little baby starts crawling and they crawl over to that electric outlet and you say, no, no don't touch that and they look at you and you know they understand you and yet they go for it anyways...

I've said this before, I know, but we don't have to teach our kids to lie, or to be selfish, or to hate, those things come natural, why because of our sinful condition.

And that sin, my sin, your sin, doesn't just impact our lives, it impacts the world, because the world is filled with sinners!

But not just sin, death... what does that mean? Because when Adam sinned, he didn't fall over immediately and die, so what does that mean by death?

The death that Adam experienced, the death we face is a spiritual death...

Paul defines spiritual death in Ephesians 2:1-3.

Ephesians 2:1-3 ESV

¹ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Notice he doesn't say you were *sick*. He doesn't say you were *struggling*. He says you were *dead*.

But here's what's interesting — dead people are still moving. Still walking. Still making decisions. Still pursuing things. But notice what they're following. The course of this world. The prince of the power of the air. The passions of the flesh.

Spiritual death doesn't mean you stop living — it means you're living under the wrong representative. Moving in the wrong direction. Following the wrong voice. Chasing the wrong things. And doing it all naturally, without even realizing it.

That's what makes it so dangerous. You can be spiritually dead and feel completely alive.

And notice again that phrase — *by nature*. Not by choice. Not by circumstance. By nature. It's the condition into which we are born. Every single one of us entered this world spiritually separated from God, walking in the wrong direction, under the wrong influence — because of what Adam did.

That's what sin and death spreading to all men actually means.

It's what we're left with in Adam...

And maybe you think, well I would have done better than Adam. Why couldn't I represent myself.

The truth is you and I don't have to wonder what we would have done in that garden. We answer that question every single day. Every time we know the right thing and choose the wrong thing anyway. Every time we put ourselves first. Every time we give in to the thing we know we shouldn't. We are Adam.

Notice Paul says death spread to all men because all sinned. We unite ourselves with Adam every time we fall into sin.

Truth is we would have fallen in that garden. The only difference may be that we wouldn't have lasted as long as Adam did.

And maybe you say well who chose Adam, because I didn't get to choose Adam to be my representative, and you would be right, but do you know what, I didn't vote for Mark Carney, and yet Mark Carney makes decisions that affect me every day.

That's how representation works, how often are we represented by people we didn't choose and are impacted by their decisions. I make decisions everyday that have an impact on my family because I represent them.

Every person in the room was born into this. Born spiritually separated from God. Born under the consequence of a decision they didn't make but would have made themselves. That's the condition. That's what we're all born into.

Paul says death *reigned*. That's a strong word.

That means it had dominion. It had authority.

We feel it don't we — in the relationships that break down, in the bodies that wear out, in the emptiness that sits underneath even the best moments of your life.

That quiet sense that something is wrong, something is missing, something is not the way it's supposed to be. That's death reigning.

By now you're probably asking the question, is there a better option? Is there a better representative, are we all stuck with Adam...

And the good news is the answer is no... we aren't stuck in Adam, there is a better representative, there is a greater option.

Paul hints at it in verse 14 when he says...

Like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come...

Adam leaves us longing for something greater... Adam's failure points us to a hope of someone who claims victory.

And that person is Jesus Christ.

Adam was a type, a shadow, a signpost, pointing to Jesus.

Here's the good news, yes in Adam, death came to all.

but In Christ life, grace comes to all...

IN CHRIST

Look at what Paul says in verses 15-17.

Romans 5:15–16 ESV

¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. ¹⁶ And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.

Notice what Paul starts to do in these verses. He starts comparing the two representatives and what they bring. He introduces us to the new representative...

In verse 14 Paul tells us that Adam is a type of the one who was to come, and then in verse 15 he names that one man, **the free gift of grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded to many.**

These are the two choices we have, everyone, every human being is either in Adam or in Christ. But before we make our choice we need to see what this alternative representative brings.

We already know what Adam brings, sin and death.

Notice a phrase that comes up over and over starting in verse 15 ***but the free gift is not like the trespass for if many died through one man's trespass much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abound to many,***

That phrase free gift keeps coming up.

We see it again in verse 16 and ***the free gift is not like the result of one man's sin***; in fact, we see it two more times before the passage ends.

I think it's safe to say that what Jesus brings in his one act, is the free gift.

I'm starting to like this deal already... Adam has nothing to offer but sin and death, but Jesus is offering us this free gift... okay, well what is this free gift?

We already know what that free gift is, it's what Paul has been establishing since chapter 3.

Notice verse 16...

Romans 5:16 ESV

¹⁶ And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.

Justification, and if I've done my job right, you should know what justification is.

It's the gift of being declared righteous before God by faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus, declared righteous even though we're guilty.

This is the whole point. This is what it means to have Christ as your representative — his righteousness credited to your account. His perfect record becoming ours. Not because we earned it. Not because we deserve it. But because he offered it and we received it by faith.

That's the free gift.

But there something else tied to the free gift and it is in the phrase the free gift of grace... look again at verse 15 again he says ***much more have the grace of God and the free gift of grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded to many.***

Part of this free gift is grace. It's Paul reminding us again and again that this free gift of justification and righteousness is not something we can earn, not something we can pay for or work for, not something we deserve. The free gift is given to us even though we don't deserve it.

But free gift also tells us something else, that what Christ offers is not something we are born into, it's something we receive.

Just like any gift, it's not something that is gained automatically, it's something that is given, and something that has to be received.

Like you're probably asking that question, how then can I have Christ as my representative,

You receive Christ as your representative the same way you receive any gift — by faith. You trust in what he has done. You stop trying to earn what he is offering freely. You open your hands and you receive it. That's it. That's how you move from Adam to Christ.

It's just like on Christmas morning, there might be gifts under the tree, but until you take it open it and use it, the gift isn't yours, you still need to receive it.

well notice,

Again verse 15

for if many died through one mans trespass... we would think it says all, if all have died through one man's trespass, but not everyone is in Adam are they, the many who are in Adam die, but the opposite is also true.

Much more have the grace of God and the free gift by that grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many... not all... but many.

It tells us that the human race is divided between those who are in Adam and those who are in Christ.

There are many of humanity that are in Adam, and there are many of humanity that are in Christ.

Understand all of us were born into Adam, but we don't have to stay that way.

Like think about this right now, everyone in this room, you are either in Adam, or you're in Christ.

And the difference is simply the question have you received the free gift of grace that comes through faith in Jesus Christ?

Think about that for a minute.

Because if the answer is no — if you're still in Adam, still carrying the weight of sin and death, still living under the wrong representative, the one who brings judgement and condemnation.

But the good news is you don't have to stay there; the gift is still being offered. Right now. Today.

And if the answer is yes — if you have received it — then this is your reminder of what you actually have. Not just forgiveness. Not just a clean slate. But the righteousness of Christ credited to your account. Grace abounding. A new representative who has never failed.

That's what it means to be in Christ.

But here's what Paul wants us to know, that what Christ has accomplished isn't just different from Adam, it isn't as though we have two choices of equal power and validity, no.

What we need to know is that what Christ has accomplished is infinitely greater.

What Christ brings is infinitely greater!

INFINITELY GREATER

Paul wants us to see that this morning. And he starts by using this phrase *much more* twice in these verses as he sets up this comparison. He wants us to compare Adam and Jesus and what they bring, and he wants us to see that Christ is infinitely greater.

Romans 5:15 ESV

But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.

We see something similar in verse 17...

Romans 5:17 ESV

For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

Do you see what he's saying? Adam and Jesus as far as the impact and overflow aren't even in the same category. Grace doesn't just undo what sin has done — it overflows beyond it.

You know whenever I have a difficult decision to make, I try to compare my options. Have you ever done that. Like I know some people sit down and they write out the pros and cons. They sit down and they weigh what they gain and what they give up.

I think that's what Paul is doing in this passage, right... he's comparing the two options, the two representatives and we can follow his pros and cons' list.

Imagine for a moment if we could make a chart and compare Adam and Jesus. On one side everything that came through Adam, and on the other side everything that Jesus brings.

We can just walk through this together.

Verse 15 tells us that what came through Adam was a trespass that led to sin and death. But what Jesus brings is the grace of God — a free gift of grace that abounds, that overflows to many.

Verse 16 tells us that Adam brought judgment and condemnation. But what Christ brings completely undoes that, he brings justification and grace.

Through Adam one sin, one violation triggered judgment and the verdict of condemnation. But Christ doesn't just cancel the condemnation — he reverses the verdict entirely. Not just not guilty. Righteous. Completely, fully righteous before God.

Look again at verse 17.

Romans 5:17 ESV

For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

Adam brings death. And death reigns. Death rules. But for those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness through Jesus Christ — we reign in life.

Life doesn't just reign. We reign in life.

We who were dead in our trespasses and sins — God has made alive together with Christ. That's what we were celebrating last week. That's what we celebrate again this morning in those baptisms. It's what these people are proclaiming — I once was dead, but now I'm alive in Christ.

I once lived for myself. Struggled in sin, doubt, and guilt. I was defined by my mental health struggles, my fear, my anxiety. Death reigned.

But now in Christ — I reign in life. I am a new creation. I have a newness of life, a new heart, a new mind. The old has passed away, the new has come.

Can you say that this morning? Is that your testimony? That you were once dead, but have now been made alive?

What Christ brings is infinitely greater.

Look at this final comparison in verses 18 and 19.

Romans 5:18–19 ESV

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. 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.

Understand that when Paul says justification and life for *all men* — he's not saying everyone is automatically saved. He's going back to the many... all of the many who are in Adam are made sinners and all of the many who are in Christ are given life...

But one trespass, one violation, one act of disobedience — condemnation and sin for all men. But in one act of righteousness, one act of obedience — justification and righteousness for all who are in Christ.

But keeps talking about this one act, what is this one act?

It's what he did on the cross. As Jesus went to the cross he was fulfilling an act of righteousness — laying his life down for many to be saved. And when he went to the cross it was an act of obedience — he obeyed the will of the Father who planned redemption before the world began.

Do you see the comparison, what Christ accomplished is infinitely greater, the free gift is infinitely more powerful than the consequences.

Where Adam failed, Jesus succeeded. Where Adam was defeated, Christ was victorious.

What Christ has accomplished is infinitely greater!

In one act of perfect obedience he completely obliterated the curse, the penalty, the judgment, the condemnation that came through Adam's disobedience.

Adam's failure was catastrophic. It was one sin — and it broke everything. It broke the world. It broke humanity. It broke the relationship between God and man. One sin. And death reigned.

And yet — grace is greater than that.

In Christ grace reigns, Grace abounds. Grace overflows. Grace is more powerful than every sin committed by every person who has ever drawn breath on this earth.

That's what Paul is celebrating in those last two verses.

Romans 5:20–21 ESV

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.

Where sin increased grace abounded all the more, where sin once reigned in death, now in Christ grace reigns and lead to eternal life.

Infinitely greater... how's that comparison chart going for you?

Here's what that means practically for you and me...

It means there is no sin in your past that is too great for what Christ accomplished on that cross. None. Not the thing you've never told anyone. Not the thing you've carried for twenty years. Not the pattern you keep falling back into. Not the version of yourself you're most ashamed of.

Grace is greater.

It means you are not defined by what you've done. You are defined by what he did. One act of perfect obedience. And his righteousness — credited to your account.

He means sin and death no longer have a hold on you; you will live forever in Christ.

I want to end this morning with the question we started with...

Does your representative bring you life or do they bring you death.

Here's what we've seen this morning, that the question isn't do I have a representative, we all do. Everyone who has ever lived, everyone in this room is either in Adam or in Christ.

And if you are here and you have not received the free gift of grace by faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, it means you are still represented by Adam.

And that's a problem because in Adam sin reigns, in Adam death reigns and maybe you wouldn't put it like that, but you can feel it. Maybe you feel like something is missing, maybe you wonder why you continue to fall into habits and traps you want to avoid, you might even be living successful, but feel hollow on the inside... that's Adam...

The good news is that God has provided another option, a second Adam, Jesus Christ.

Who through one righteous act, one act of obedience has made grace, and forgiveness, and restoration and new life available to all who receive his free gift.

See the danger I think is once again there are some of us who are in Christ, who still live like we're in Adam. We know we're in Christ, but the old habits of Adam are still kicking around.

Oh man, walk in that new life this morning, embrace that free gift, turn to Jesus this morning.

Celebrate what he has accomplished.

Does your representative bring you life or death? Are you walking in that new life?