

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Muskego, Wisconsin
August 11, 2019

Grace Wins In the Great Exchange

Romans 5:12-21

¹² Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

¹³ To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where 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 is 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 Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of 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 one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. 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.

²⁰ The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ²¹ so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The message begins by asking the children to come up and play “tag” with me.

I want us to play a game of tag. That's where I'm “it” and when I touch you, you are “it,” and then when you touch someone else, they are “it.” I want you to go around and tag people. When you are tagged, please stand and try to tag as many people around them as they can. At the end, we are all “it.”

That's our picture for what Paul is dealing with in our lesson for today. He is talking about how death spreads. Look at Romans 5:12.

¹² Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

One man, Adam, was “it.” He sinned in the garden of Eden. Death came upon him. He died spiritually. His perfect relationship with God died. His perfect relationship with his wife died. Ultimately, Adam would die. “Dust you are and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19).

So the Apostle Paul says that through Adam’s sin and death, death spread to everyone else. Just like my being “it” spread to everyone here, so Adam’s sin and death spread to everyone else.

Then Paul explains things a little further.

¹³ To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone’s account where 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 is a pattern of the one to come.

God gave Adam one command. Don’t eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Adam broke that one command. He became a sinner. He died.

The ten commandments didn’t come for thousands of years. There were no ten commandments before the flood. There were no ten commandments during the time of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

But death was there. Why? Because what Adam did impacted us all. In verse 18 we hear, “One trespass resulted in condemnation for all people.”

You can see that sin and death spread as you read Genesis. In Genesis 4, that sin and rebellion is passed down to Adam’s son Cain who murders his brother. It isn’t just Adam’s sin that condemns me. It is my sin too. “Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer” (1 John 3:15).

Death spreads in Genesis 5. Adam’s body returns to dust, but so do his descendants. In Genesis 5, we often get hung up on the long lives. Adam lived 930 years. Methuselah lived 969 years. But look at the refrain: “And then he died, and then he died, and then he died.” Death has spread also to me. That’s how my life history will end. “And then Pete died.” Adam’s sin and death spread to me.

But it doesn’t stop there. Death spreads to the entire world. In Genesis 6 we see God’s judgment of the flood because of the wickedness of mankind. So not just my life history ends, “And then he died,” but everyone I meet. Death spreads not just to me, but to you. Your death is there too.

This is what Paul is saying in Romans 5:12.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

Death spreads. A sad but frightening truth displayed in the first chapters of Genesis.

But Paul's goal is not to leave us in this place of despair. He is letting us see that grace does more than death did. Death spread. Grace overflows.

Let's walk through Paul's line of thought with the first chapters of Genesis in mind.

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!

Death spread to all of us because of one man's sin. But God's grace in Jesus overflows to us all. Jesus died for the guilt of Adam's sin. Grace is like a flood that washes over and washes away Adam's sin and guilt.

But not just Adam's sin. Our sin too.

¹⁶ Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.

God's gift of justification is greater than the condemnation Adam brought upon us. Justification is God's announcement that we are not guilty. It is a court term in which God as judge announces that we are free to go.

But that verdict does not come after just Adam's sin. It is not as though God forgives Adam's sin, but now we have to deal with our own sin and guilt. No, God's gracious gift of forgiveness follows all of my sin and brings me the "not guilty" verdict even after all that I have done.

Grace overflows. Like a flood it sweeps over Adam's sin, it sweeps over my sin. Next it sweeps over my death:

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!

How much more! What a great phrase. Death reigned over me because of Adam's sin. But grace gives us so much more than what Adam lost. Grace overflows into my life and gives me the gift of righteousness – that is a right standing with God. And rather than death ruling over me, I rule, I sit as king enjoying a life that will never end.

But it is not for just me or a few others. Grace overflows the death of everyone we meet.

¹⁸ Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. 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.

One trespass spread to all people. Adam's sin brought the judgment of death upon all of us. But one righteous act, Jesus' obedience, even to the point of death on the cross, gives the promise of life for all people. So grace not only overflows Adam's sin that is charged against me, and over my own sin charged against me, and over my death so that I reign as king in an indestructible life, but that grace flows over into everyone I see.

But if that is the case, then why did God give the law in the first place? How does that fit into God's plan? That's how Paul continues:

²⁰ The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ²¹ so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

If we were all condemned even before the giving of the ten commandments, then why add the ten commandments? So that we might become even more sinful.

We can't appreciate grace until we appreciate God's law. That's why I appreciate that God law condemns me more and more. I appreciate that my conscience gets fine-tuned, and things that I said and did and thought twenty years ago that may not have bothered me, bothers me now. Because where sin increases, where I see my sins more clearly, the more I will appreciate God's forgiving grace.

This is my picture of it. I took pigs to the county fair. The bigger the pile of manure outside the barn, the more I appreciated that some tractor with a loader was going to pick it up and haul it away.

What's your illustration? The reason why I ask is that God wants grace to overflow from you to the people around you. So you need to think about how you are going to talk about sin and grace.

If you have ever had ants in your home, you could use that. The more ants, the more you appreciate Raid gets rid of the ants.

Did you hear that Chase Bank is just forgiving all the credit card debts of its Canadian card holders? No strings attached.

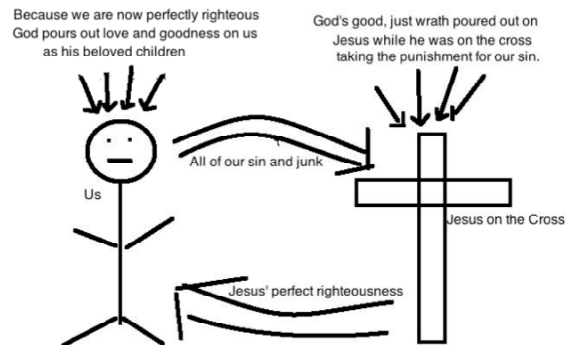
"I was sort of over the moon all last night, with a smile on my face," Douglas Turner of Coe Hill, Ontario, told the Canadian broadcaster. Turner said he still owed more than \$4,500 on his card. "I couldn't believe it." (USA Today).

The bigger the debt, the better the forgiveness!

What's your illustration? Where sin increased, grace increased all the more. The more clearly you see your sin, the more clearly you will appreciate God's grace overflowing into your guilt and your death.

Finally, you may have wondered why I used this stick drawing of the Great Exchange on the back of the worship folder. There are much nicer ones out there online.

But I chose this stick drawing to remind you that you don't need fancy diagrams, you don't need to be an artist. It is easy to draw.



I am guilty. I am guilty because of Adam's sin. I am guilty because of my own sin. Death hangs over me. Death hangs over all of us.

But this is the great exchange. By one man, sin and death came upon all of us. By one man, our Savior Jesus Christ, righteousness came to us, the confidence that God the Father looks at you and says, "You are all right" – even though we don't deserve it— by one man, our Savior Jesus Christ, righteousness and life come to us. Our guilt and death transferred to Jesus. His perfect right standing with God and eternal life transferred to us.

Remember our game of tag? It illustrated how death spread. Now let's tag everyone. But this time, let's see it as an illustration of how grace overflows to everyone we meet. Let's be eager to share this grace that has overflowed to us. Amen.

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My Next Steps to Claim the Great Exchange Victory

- **See how death reigned as king:** Read Genesis 3 – 6 and see how the power of sin and death spread across the ancient world.
- **See how death has reigned as king in your life:** Read James 1:13-14 and see how the power of sin and death spreads across your life.
- **Memorize the Great Exchange Victory:** "Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. 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" (Romans 5:18-19).

GroupWork

1. Share memories of going to a county or state fair when you were a child.
2. Share an “ahha!” or a question that you have after hearing the message this week and discuss.
3. Read James 1:13-14. Compare the progressive power of sin and death that James describes to what happened to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. Share a modern-day illustration of this same progression that you have seen, in yourself or in others.
4. Read Romans 5:18-19. Explain the Great Exchange diagram on the message outline as you might explain it to someone who does not understand the gospel.
5. Read Romans 5:20-21. The law was added so that we might see even more sins. The more of our sin we see, the more we appreciate grace. Pastor Pete used the illustration of his experience at the pig barn at the county fair. What illustration from your life will help people appreciate the greatness of our sin and the surpassing greatness of God’s grace?
6. Break up into groups of two or three. As you are willing, share how you have seen “sin increase” in your understanding of yourself so that you appreciate grace all the more. Close with prayer for each other.