

## ***Romans 5, Pt. II***

Last week, I said that Romans 5 can be split into two sections. Verses one through eleven give us **personal results of the work of Christ**. Verses twelve through twenty-one give us **a brief study of salvation history**. It is to the second section that we primarily turn this morning. Before we jump in, it is important to remember that Paul was a missionary, and his long term goal was to use his gospel-centered relationship with the Roman church to propel him onward in his work, all the way to the edge of the Mediterranean world in Spain. Keep that in your mind this morning as we have to do a little theological heavy-lifting. Paul did not proclaim doctrine from a professor's desk (nothing wrong with that per se) but from cramped and uncomfortable spaces available to a missionary on the move.

Before we tackle the teaching of the text, I would like to remind you of a Bible story. And before we get to the Bible story, I want to remind you of a classic movie which I am sure that many of you are familiar with. In *Rocky IV*, our irrepressible Italian underdog travels to Russia to do battle with Dolf Lundgren's cold and brutal Ivan Drago. Soviet promoters had carted Drago to the US to demonstrate Soviet superiority during the last gasps of the Cold War. Tragically, former champ Apollo Creed is killed by Drago in competition. And so Rocky goes to Russia to stand up for Apollo and for the American people. It is true that this is a personal competition. In fact, Drago at one point throws his manager and proclaims to the Soviet leadership that he only fights for himself. But nonetheless, everyone knows that more is at stake than personal ability and interest. **The two men fight as representatives**. And victory or loss will have consequences not just for the man but for his people. They are the champions of their people.

Now, we are ready to get to the Bible story. We have sometimes lost the most interesting parts of the David and Goliath story in our rush to make it suit personal application. Often in the popular telling, this is considered a story of facing your giants and overcoming your obstacles with God's help. But something is wrong with this picture. Don't forget that two different nations

were at war. This was a showdown between the Israelites and the Philistines. When monstrous Goliath stood forth and called out, he said, “Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us...Today I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man, that we may fight together” (1 Sam. 17:8-10). Goliath was the champion of the Philistines. And David came forth as the unlikely champion of Israel. This was not just a battle between a boy and a giant. **Each represented the interests of his people. Victory or loss would have results for all whom they represented.** When David sunk his stone into the giant’s head and then removed the head itself, David won the battle for Israel.

Keep all this in mind as we look at the study of salvation history in Romans 5. Paul had already given us a history of humankind in the first chapter. He is well aware of the full biblical background of his ministry to the Gentiles. He has been called to “bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of [Christ’s] name” (Rom. 1:5). And there is a reason for this need. All people have sinned. All people will be judged by a righteous God. And so here is the full picture of history. Paul here tells a story of two men. Like Rocky and Ivan, like David and Goliath, these men did not go into battle for personal interest but for the sake of their people. They are representatives and champions. **The first man was Adam.** But Adam was a “type of the one who was to come” (5:14). **The second man was Jesus.** The two men fought their battles. One lost. One won. Let us look at what happened.

**Adam was created by God** and placed in the Garden of Eden. Eve was given to him to be his helper. Both were made in the image of God and given the charge to multiply and take dominion over the earth. Adam was given the job of tending and keeping the garden. He and Eve swam in a sea of blessing, but there was one negative command. Do not eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was Adam’s job to avoid this fruit and then work to cultivate the garden and indeed spread it across the face of God’s world. But **Adam failed in his test as recorded in Genesis 3.** Somehow a more than natural serpent with an anti-God bent found his way into the fields. And somehow the serpent got to Eve. And somehow the serpent tricked Eve into eating the fruit. And somehow Adam failed to stop the whole mess and instead ate the fruit himself. And then, in an unspeakable

tragedy, the world slipped into the madness of bondage to sin, death, and the devil.

**When Adam fell, we all fell with him.** Read again v. 12 - “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned.” That is the NRSV translation - “have sinned.” But the actual words are “...because all sinned.” When did all sin according to the narrative as Paul is telling it? The answer is in the garden with Adam. **Adam was a representative for his people - and his people are all those who descended from him.** And all of them - all of us - were present with Adam in the garden. And when he fell, we fell. He was our Rocky, our David, our champion and representative.

I need to step outside of the text for a moment to point out **two issues that are relevant and often the source of confusion.** First, I believe that **the Christian faith requires that Adam be a historical person.** I am open to the idea that the early chapters of Genesis are poetic recountings of “what really happened.” What I must insist on, however, is that the Bible seems to require us to think that the work of Christ can only be understood against the background of real historical events that in the end are best understood by means of the early chapters of Genesis. I will not bind anyone’s conscience here. There are different ways of conceiving of early human history. But - and this is important - the Bible story only makes sense if humanity departed from God’s will at a particular point in time and if this departure explains why we have also departed from God’s will. Even if the real event is lost to us, the closest we can come to the real event is the Adam story found in Genesis. Second, **I want to put to rest the idea that sin was passed to humanity as part of the biological process of conception.** Sin falls upon all people not because it is passed in conception but because Adam was the covenant representative of all those who descend from him biologically. Adam did not pass something on to us like my mom passed her nearsightedness on to me. Instead, Adam represented me - his descendant - when he lost his battle against the serpent.

So what was the consequence of Adam’s failure? We need not detain ourselves here for we already know the answer from what we have studied elsewhere in Romans - there is **a triumvirate of terrible effects, sin, death,**

**and condemnation.** We know that the law reveals sin but that the conscience can function as a law for those who do not know Moses. We know that God will judge what we do, and not simply what we know in some abstract sense. The fall brings sin. Sin leads to condemnation. God's judgment against sin is death, both in history and eternally. This is the background for the work of Christ and the mission of Paul, as a preacher of the way of mercy in and through faith in Jesus Christ.

**And Jesus won his battle. According to v. 19 of our passage. Jesus offered "obedience" to his Father.** He was obedient in heaven when he agreed to come and be our redeemer. He was obedient in the wilderness when tempted by the devil. He was obedient in the garden, when he fully gave himself to his Father's will. He was obedient on the cross, when he kept himself there until the work had been accomplished. And he represented his people - all those who are united to him through faith. For our sin, he offers his righteousness. For our death, he offers his life. For our condemnation, he offers his justification. And according to v. 1 of this chapter, we now can have peace with God. We can spend the rest of our lives and the rest of eternity learning what it means to be reconciled to our God and Creator.

Because of what Adam did, an action in which we were included and which we ratify with our own disobedience, we lived in the domain of sin and death. But because of what Jesus did, we have now been brought from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of the beloved Son (Col. 1:13). And we can now reign in this life through God's grace reigning in us. This is good news. This is what we believe. This is what we teach.