

Written Copy: Romans 5:17-19 “Tragedy for All, Restoration for You”

1st Sunday in Lent

Sunday, February 22nd, 2026

Text: Romans 5:17-19

¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ 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.

Exegetical Statement

Paul is drawing a contrast between what Adam and Eve's willful disobedience brought into the world: the sinful nature in mankind that refuses to listen to and obey the Creator's will for His creatures. This disobedience so corrupts the perfect nature God created us to have that we instead live and operate from a heart curved in on ourselves that obeys what we want and desire first and foremost, without a care for the consequences, just like Adam and Eve in the Fall. The consequences are we can no longer live in the presence of the holy Creator God now and forever. But God sent a 2nd Adam, the One who remained perfect, just as the 1st Adam was when He was created. Just as Adam's first act of disobedience condemned the human race, Jesus' act of obedience to the will of the Father to become our atoning sacrifice begins the process of restoring all things, both Creation and humanity, to the perfection of the Garden. His obedient life and death in place of us on the cross becomes by faith the act that declares us to be what we could never be on our own: in right standing with God, divinely pardoned, so that we can once again live in His presence now, even though we continued to disobey, and forever being glorified in the Resurrection. Because of the superabundance of God's grace we are divinely pardoned.

Focus Statement:

Jesus came to restore us to a life lived in faithful obedience by doing what we could never do, restoring us as children declared to be in right standing even when we are not. He obeyed God's will throughout His life. His greatest act of obedience was His atoning sacrifice in our place. By faith we are no longer declared to be worthy of separation now and for eternity, but by faith we are given His perfect obedience. He creates in us a new nature that begins to desire to obey. And He keeps taking from us in Confession and Absolution all those disobedient acts that would condemn us. Jesus is restoring us now in preparation for the restoration of mankind's place in the restored Garden of eternal life, to live in the presence of our loving God forever.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

Like Adam we live our life at times being controlled by a sinful nature that disobeys God's will and desire by not listening to Him in His word and instead doing what we want. We lived curved in on ourselves.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Do our part in this continued restoration by remaining in repentant faith through Confession and Absolution which affirms who we are without Christ, and who we are in faith towards Him.

Subject Sentence: What Adam ruined in the Fall, Christ restores by grace

Introduction: Birthday Party Turns Sour

It's a shame, really. You might even call it a tragedy. The family get together had been going so well. The hosts had spent so much time, energy, and money to decorate the house in honor of Uncle Ed's birthday. Thankfully the house was big enough to accommodate a good number of family and friends. The food brought by the caterer was loved and praised by all. Then Uncle Ron decided to start talking politics with Uncle Ed. That's when it all turned sour. The discussion between them started off innocently enough, centering on the actions of the president and Congress that were in the news at that time. Unfortunately, things didn't stay calm and reasonable. Both Uncles began to raise their voices. They both stopped listening to one another and began to talk over one another, each trying to win points and score a victory against the other. Then the topic of debate changed to religion, and the gloves came off. The loud voices turned to shouts of anger, with various members of the extended family taking sides. Things escalated. There was some pushing and shoving, and the China Cabinet was knocked over breaking everything inside it. At that point the host warned all involved that he was about to call the police. And with that the party broke up.

It's a shame, really. It began so nicely yet turned out to be a disaster in the eyes of the host family. They were sorry they had even organized the party. And they weren't sure if they would ever want to host another one.

The Fall of Adam and Eve

It's a shame, really, when you consider the account of the Fall in our Old Testament Lesson. The LORD God had created a perfect Garden for His creatures to live in. It was beautiful in way that is beyond imagining to our eyes today. Even the most beautiful place on earth today pales in comparison to the Garden of Eden. And God created it for them, for Adam and Eve, and their offspring to live in forever.

They lived in perfect peace: in peace with one another, and with nature and the animals. There were no dangerous storms or wildfires, no hatred for one another, plenty of good nutritious food and clean water. No sickness or disease, no suffering, no death. It was perfection that is beyond our ability to imagine or understand.

Adam and Eve themselves were created perfect. They were without sin. They knew exactly what God's will and plan was for them and they were doing it, joyfully and gladly, until that one day when everything went sour. It was the day when the tempter, Satan, disguised as a serpent, convinced them that everything was not perfect, that God was withholding knowledge from them. He was withholding because of His one command, the only command they had to follow: do not eat from the tree in the center of the Garden.

What happened? They stopped listening to God's voice and command, and instead listened to the father of lies, Satan, who directed them to listen and obey the desires of their hearts over God. Satan told them God was withholding from them the knowledge of good and evil. The truth was that God had not withheld the knowledge of good. They were created with that inherent knowledge of what is good, because what is good is what is in keeping with God's will. What God had kept from them is what they did not need to know which is what evil is, to know what disobedience is. By listening to the devil instead of God, they gave up the inherent knowledge of what is good and gained the knowledge of evil. By disobeying God's one command their once perfect nature turned in on itself. From then on, their natural focus would be on listening to and pleasing that sinful selfish heart at the expense of listening to and obeying God.

It's the greatest tragedy in the history of the human race, that which caused Paradise Lost. After they disobeyed, after they sinned, they changed, and the world around them changed, all for the worse. Their relationship with their loving Creator God changed from gladly spending time with Him to running in fear and shame from Him.

The Tragedy We Were Born Into

This is the fallen world you and I were born into. We were born with the same fallen nature and sinful selfish heart that Adam and Eve created for themselves by their sin. We are all curved in on ourselves. Left to ourselves we will always choose to do, think, and say what pleases us, even when we know it stands against what God commands of us. He tells us to put Him first and others second and we refuse, judging that to be unfair. He tells us to be generous and giving and we refuse, wanting to keep His gracious gifts to ourselves, making them more important than the One who graciously gave them to us. He tells us to be loving and forgiving with one another and we refuse, because we keep that scorecard of all the things that have been done wrong to us, while conveniently throwing out the wrong things we have done toward others, all of which are first and foremost against our God.

All this and more is a manifestation of that sinful fallen nature we inherited. And by listening to it and following it we sin, just like Adam and Eve did. Sometimes we do desire to stop listening to it. We try to be more loving, more forgiving, more generous, more eager to follow God's laws and commands but something always comes up and we fail. We indulge that sinful fallen nature once again at the expense of listening to and obeying the Creator God who has given us the precious gift of life.

We know inherently that this world, the way it is, and the way we are, the way our life is, is not how things were meant to be. We know that because the image of God that all men were created in yet still exists in us, except its soiled and tarnished by sin. We want to change things. We want to be better and make our world a better place. But we don't have what it takes to do that. Left to ourselves we would live out our life apart from God's presence now and for an eternity of suffering in everlasting damnation.

Jesus is Different

Jesus is different. He was born into this fallen world yet never let Himself be soiled and stained by it. He was born with the pure and true image of God in His humanity, the desire to love and obey God 24/7. He is God, with God's divine nature, yet at the same time true man, with a complete human nature. Yet His human nature is just like Adam's was at Creation: untainted, unsoiled, uncorrupted by sin.

He clearly demonstrated this in our Gospel Lesson. In the weakness of hunger, not eating for 40 days, He was tempted by that same Tempter from the Garden who tried to get Him to turn away from listening to and obeying the Heavenly Father. But even in His physically weakened state He refused to do so. He stood obedient to the Word of God and even quoted it in defense of Satan's lies and tempting words. Jesus did what you and I would never be able to do, and He did that for you and for me.

The Father Sent the Son to Begin the Work of Restoration

God the Father sent God the Son to begin the work of restoring all that had been lost in the Fall, and He was and is doing it through Jesus Christ. Jesus did what you and I could never do. He lived in perfect love and obedience to the Father and His will, which He knew perfectly and obeyed out of love for the Father every day of His life.

Adam's one act of disobedience, his refusal to listen to and obey God caused the Fall, and we fall in line right behind him, and the result would be a life apart from God now and forever. But Jesus' one act of obedient submission to the Father's will and plan for Him, by becoming the atoning sacrifice for you, for me, and for all men, that act of obedience brings about the opposite of the condemnation we received from Adam and earn by our constant sin-filled selfish lives. Jesus not only took our place in being tempted to sin, but He did also what He should never have had to do, becoming our sin on the cross. He became the sacrifice that atones for the sins of the whole world by taking the place of every single human being that ever lived and suffering in full the wrath of God for their sins. And God declared that sacrifice to be sufficient in the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Jesus did that all in the name of love: love for the Father, and love for the whole world, including you and me.

God came He Couldn't Stand the Thought of Losing Adam & Eve

The LORD came into the Garden after the Fall and actively sought out Adam and Eve. He did this not to punish them, to yell at them, to banish them forever from His presence, although that is what they deserved. He came to call them back into a relationship with Him, a repentant relationship with Him. He did that by leading them to confess what they had done. And even though their Confession was far from perfect, He still forgave them.

He came to them to work on them and their confession of exactly who was at fault in their falling from perfection. He did that through the disciplinary punishment involving the toil and sweat it would take Adam to make a living in a world where, before the Fall, toil and sweat did not exist. God said, ***“Because you disobeyed Adam, this is your life now, so you remember you are responsible for Paradise lost”***. He came to Eve and told her because of her part in the Fall childbirth would be painful, the relationship with her husband would be fraught with disagreements and arguments over who is in charge. ***“All this will happen because you disobeyed, Eve”***. And this would be both their lives going forward, as it is for us, lest we forget who is responsible for the brokenness of our lives.

Yet He also came with the promise of restoration for both of them, through the son of Eve who would crush the tempter’s head and his power to claim them because of their disobedience.

God Comes To You So He Might Not Lose You

The LORD could not stand the thought of losing Adam and Eve forever to eternal condemnation. He comes to us for the same reason. He sends His Spirit into your life and my life to speak to us. He comes and speaks through the brokenness of the world we live in. He reminds us that the troubles, afflictions, pain, and heartbreak that make up our lives were not part of His perfect design at the beginning, but the result of the fallenness of Creation that we add to. He comes to us through His Word and points out those ways we don’t listen to Him, don’t obey Him, and disregard His call to love Him first place and others second.

He comes to break our prideful selfish hearts and then remake them through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that through faith in Him all our sinful disobedience has been forgiven. Even as abundantly as we may sin, every day, every hour at times, the superabundance of God’s grace and love overcomes our sinfulness. He comes to us, calls us to repent, and tells us that all the sins we are aware of, and those we are not, have been taken care of through the gift of grace we receive by faith in Jesus Christ.

Through this gift of grace, the Spirit is at work restoring us to what God created us to be. He is at work through the means of grace to move us to live a different life. He empowers us to listen to His voice and His commands in Scripture. He is at work to change us from listening to and obeying our sinful heart and instead follow the new nature installed and equipped by the Holy Spirit. He moves us to continue to examine our lives and confess our sin, not to earn right standing with Him, but because by faith we have the most wonderful gift: we are declared to be what we could never be on our own. We are declared to be in right standing with Him through faith in Christ, declared innocent of all sinful charges, to be just as if we never sinned, even though we still do.

Conclusion

The hosts of that birthday party realized they couldn't change the past, what already happened. But they could do something about the future. And that something was to share with each other their faith in Jesus Christ. They shared that although we all may struggle to get along, we have a God who loves each of them equally, loves them very much. And just as He forgives each one of them, He wants them to forgive each other. And the ability and power to do that comes from faith in Jesus Christ.

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¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ 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.

What do these verses mean? Our Creator and Redeemer God is coming to us through these words from our Epistle Lesson. Adam and Eve's disobedience brought to a tragic end the Paradise that God had created for all men and turned all who have been born since into sinners who at times would rather obey their sinful selfish desires than our Creator and Redeemer.

But through the One Man He sent, the One who perfectly obeyed His Heavenly Father at all times, through His greatest act of obedience, through the faith by which we have and hold in His suffering, death, and resurrection as being "for me", through that we are declared to be righteous: in right standing with God despite our sin. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit working in us by that faith, we are being restored as obedient children, one day at a time.

Through the means of grace, He is working on us, changing us, restoring us, moving us to love Him and love and forgive one another. He is preparing us for the greatest restoration to come: the Restoration of the perfect Garden, that is Eternal Life, where all will be perfect once again, even you and me. Amen.