

# “One Man”

Romans 5:12-19

During this season of Lent, we focus our attention on the sin of the world and the suffering endured by One Man, Jesus Christ, to take that sin away from us and all of creation. Sin entered the world through one man – Adam. Even though God told him, “You must not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die,” Adam disobeyed that one law, that one rule which he and Eve had to keep.

Everything else for Adam and Eve was permissible. Everything else was allowed in the Garden of Eden. There was no other law in effect. Here again, we see the gracious character of God at work.

When God created Adam, He designed him to live forever. God first provided the promise of eternal bliss and provided the means and opportunity to live forever under God’s grace and favor. Adam, in turn, was able to express his thanks to God by yielding himself to God’s will and following God’s one simple command.

The opportunity was there for a beautiful, eternal relationship. But Adam chose to follow his own desires and was no longer content with being God’s son. He wanted to be like God and know good from evil. Up to that time, he had known only good.

So sin enters the world, and the more full revelation of the Law of God comes with it. Adam and Eve look at each other and say, "We need some fig leaves." The Law pointed its finger of guilt and said, "You are naked. Cover yourself up." They were naked before they ate of the tree, but they were not under the full scope of the Law.

When the Law is not in effect, there is no guilt. The drivers in Quincy all look forward to the school year ending because the school zone speed limits will no longer be in effect. We can then drive more than 20 MPH during the day and have no fear of judgment.

What if you say, "I am not going to slow down to 20 MPH because I think that law is stupid?" Even if you think that a law is a stupid law. It is still the law. And there will be consequences for breaking that law. Go to traffic court and tell the judge that you are not going to pay that fine because school zone speed limits, when there are no kids around and you aren't hurting anyone, is a stupid law. See how that works out for you. You don't get to pick and choose which laws you like and then abolish the rest. You are under that law. You are not above it.

Yet, this is exactly what people want to do to God's Law. Remember that Jesus came to fulfill the Law, not to abolish it. God's Law is good. It is His will and desire for your life. The essence of God's Law is love. "Love the Lord your God . . . Love your neighbor as yourself." Sin entered the world through one man, Adam. And this loving relationship between man and God and man and his neighbor was destroyed.

One Man, Christ, came to permanently fix what was broken. And He has kept the Law in the way that Adam would not keep it. And He has made us righteous in the sight of God once again. It is a free gift. We have the abundance of God's grace. But this does not give us the right to sit in judgment of God's Law.

By grace, through faith, we are forgiven all of our sin. But those who turn around and say, "I can do what I want or 'live life on my terms'" are living life very dangerously. To do so would mean that you are sitting in judgment of the Law of God. "I know what God says, but I am going to do what I want to do anyway." This puts you in the place of God and you have declared yourself equal to Him. That is a dangerous way to live.

Christ has come to free us from the guilt of our sin. He fulfilled the Law and as Paul says, "Sin is not counted where there is no law." When there is no Law, that is, when the Law is not applied because it has already been applied to Christ, there is no guilt. Sinful activity may be taking place, but there is no accountability for it because Jesus already made Himself accountable for your sin. And since "the wages of sin is death," as Paul says, "and the power of sin is the law", "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting."

This is why Christ said that He came to "fulfill the Law" for us – to do that which we are unable to do. If the Law has been fulfilled, we cannot be declared guilty – its like driving 30 MPH in a school zone in the summer time. That reality is always good news.

We have been justified and declared righteous by God – even if we have a lead foot. This is God’s most gracious gift to us – freedom from the guilt and consequences of our sin. Like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, God has first provided the promise of eternal bliss and provided the means and opportunity to live forever under His grace and favor. Like Adam, we in turn, are able to express our thanks to God by yielding ourselves to God’s will and demonstrating a willingness to follow God’s commands.

We are still sinners in need of repentance and forgiveness, even though we are no longer accountable under the Law. We show our love for God by expressing a willingness to follow His will and suppress our own sinful desires. We will fail to do this completely. But, as James the brother of our Lord says, “Faith without works is a dead faith.” Our love for God is synonymous with our faith in God. We love God because, through one act of righteousness, He has brought justification, so that in the sight of the Law we are not guilty, and therefore we are declared righteous and we have life. For this we give thanks.

Our sin was placed on Christ. Christ’s righteousness was placed on us. That reality is always Good News. Amen.