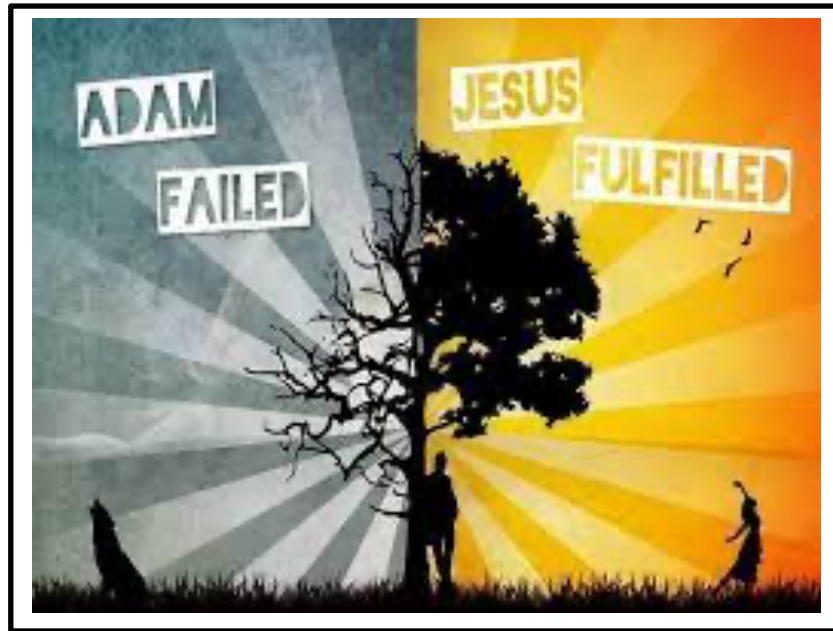


A Second Adam to the Fight and to the Rescue Came

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There are many 'reality shows' on TV that end with a staggering renovation. Imagine if they just showed us the end result and never showed the mess they found in the beginning? The beauty of the work is perceived through the lenses of contrast. Without seeing the before picture it's hard to appreciate what you find as a result of the work.

The Apostle Paul engages in contrast in Romans 5 as he lines up two key men in the history of the world. It's like he runs a magnet over all the people who ever lived, and two emerge above the rest. They are Adam and Jesus.

When he contrasts Adam and Jesus, what does he find? The primary areas of contrast involve what each one did and the results of what they did. *In other words, there are actions and results.* And what we find when we contrast Adam and Jesus is this: there are parallels but there are also contradictions.

The Contrast of What Each Did

When we look at Adam, we see that his actions could be summarized by the word: disobedience. Here we are talking about the act of defiance in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3). In Romans 5, Paul labels it with three words, trespassing (15, 16 (x2), 17, 18), sin (12, 14, 16), and disobedience (19). But in contrast to the first Adam, the last Adam, the Lord Jesus is described in terms of righteousness (18) and obedience (19). In these two words, we find Jesus perfectly obeying God's Law. We know that Jesus never sinned (2 Cor. 5:21). He always did what was pleasing to his Father (John 8:29). When looking at the law, his job was to fulfill it perfectly (Matt. 3:15). In the Garden of Gethsemane, he declared, "not my will but your will be done" (Matt. 26:42). The contrast is stark. Adam disobeyed God's Law and Jesus obeyed it perfectly.

The Contrast of What Each Brought

What is the result of their actions? In a word, Adam brought judgment. We see the result of his action was death (12, 14, 15, 16). When the Bible talks about death it certainly has in mind physical death. All we have to do is read Genesis 5 and see the long obituary of death; person after person died. The cemeteries today testify to the enduring sentence of physical death. But there's also another element to this death, it's spiritual death. Spiritual death has to do with a fractured relationship with God. It's characterized by alienation or separation from God and an inability to be close and intimate with God. Paul says that the condition of all people apart from Christ is spiritual death (Eph. 2:1). There's a third component, eternal death. The Book of Revelation refers to this as the Second Death, or the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14). This is God's final judgment upon humanity. This is why Paul refers to judgment and condemnation (16 & 18).

In short: the result of Adam's sin is death, condemnation, and eternal judgment. This is horrible.

But it's a contrast.

Look at the result of the Last Adam's action. He brings grace or a free gift (15) that is justification or righteousness (16, 17, 18, 19). He also brings life (21). While Adam #1 brings death and judgment, Adam #2 brings life and righteousness—as a gift!

To see this, focus on a couple of important words. I hope they become especially precious to you. The words are the summaries of what Jesus did and the result of what he did. I'm referring to *his obedience and righteousness*.

The Double Obedience of Christ

Are you familiar with the double-obedience of Christ?

Theologians refer to the active and passive obedience of Christ. We are likely more familiar with the passive than the active. Passive refers to the death of Christ. He obeyed unto his death. He obeyed the covenant he made with his Father before the foundation of the world to give his life as a ransom for his sheep. He paid the death penalty that the wages of our sin deserve.

But if this is all Jesus did, do you see how incomplete your salvation would be?

The law makes two demands upon us: first, perfect obedience. Second, death if you don't perfectly obey. We deserve the second and can't do the former. If on the cross Jesus paid for the debt your sin deserved for what you've done in the past, what would you do about the future sins you'd commit after conversion? What would you do about the rest of the Law's demand that you be perfect?

If Christ had only died on the cross he could only take you back to the Garden of Eden to a place of moral neutrality (without standing guilt). But this is not all Jesus did. He also actively obeyed the Law of God, fully discharging the duty that is required of sinners like you and me. He earned righteousness on our behalf. And then when we repent of our sins and trust in Jesus Christ, his perfect and final righteousness is imputed to our account. God credits Jesus's obedience to us (Rom. 3:24–27, 4:5, 5:1, 2 Cor. 5:21). The law-breakers are counted to be law-fulfillers!

When you consider the work and results of these two men, you see a great contrast. On the one hand, by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous (Rom. 5:19).

Are you trusting in Christ, yet weighed down by guilt, shame, and uncertainty? When Satan comes to make accusations, what does Christ say? Your high priest pleads for you (Heb. 7:25ff). What does he plead? He pleads his perfect blood and righteousness.

The accusations of Satan, your conscience, or others are extinguished like matches in the ocean of his merit. *If God is for us, who can be against us?* (Rom. 8:31) *Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies* (Rom. 8:33).

When you consider how you still sin and fall short of the glory of God and burden of guilt weighs upon you. When you get depressed and think, *I'll never make it to heaven. I still fall and stumble*. Remember the double-obedience of Christ! He not only died to take away the penalty for your sin, but he lived to earn your righteousness. You stand in him, not in yourself.

This is a great contrast. There is more grace in Christ than there is sin in you. Just as Jesus towers above Adam, so too his grace towers above our failures. Praise our Lord Christ!