

ROMANS 5-8: Living Your Life God's Way

Two of the Three Biggest Objections to Faith

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Hello men. Welcome to Man in the Mirror Bible Study. I'm Pat Morley, and today we're going to be talking about two of the three biggest objections to faith.

When I was a seeker, my wife and I started attending a small Methodist church here in Maitland, Florida. Two young couples in particular took an interest in us, invited us over to one of their homes one Friday evening for a dinner party. They were doing what Christian witnesses do. They were building relationships and bridges. And I will never forget, Sherry, one of the two women was sitting on the floor next to a coffee table. And I was sitting on the couch and my wife is next to me. And she looked straight into my eyes and she said, "Are you a Borneo Christian?" I said, "Borneo Christian? What in the world are you talking about? What is a Borneo Christian?" She said, "No, no, no, no. I didn't say Borneo. I said, are you a born again Christian?" I said, "What in the world is a born again Christian?" I had no idea. You just don't know what you don't know.

So some of the men that we have in our lives and other family members and people like that, they want to know, "I'm a sinner, so what?" Or, "Why do I need to be born again?" I want us to talk about those things this morning from a passage that Paul gives us, which begins at Romans chapter five, verse 12.

THE FALL AND THE ATONEMENT

First thing we want to talk about today is the fall and the atonement. These are the two objections to Christian faith that I want us to take a look at this morning. Verse 12 says, "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.", And throughout this text verses 12 through 21, there are similar kinds of statements. But down at verse 18, let's go ahead and look there. "Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people." This is known in some circles as the federal view of the fall. It's the idea that the original sin of Adam is imputed to all of humanity. That all of humanity is guilty of sin because of the sin of this first man. And you can see how this is an objection, how this seems patently unfair that, hey, now living 6,000 years later, we'd be held responsible for Adam's sin.

The reality of course is that because he sinned, then we all sin, and have been continuing to sin ever since. Pascal, in his book, which I think I've referenced this a number of times in recent months, in his *Pensees* book, he talks about the fall and he says this, "Nothing is more shocking to our reason than to say that the sin of the first man has implicated by guilt, men so far away from the original sin that they seem incapable of sharing it. This flow of guilt is not merely seemed impossible to us, but indeed, most unjust." It's an objection that we have once we understand the idea that Adam's sin is being imputed to us. Pascal goes on, "Certainly nothing jolts us more rudely than this doctrine, and yet, but for this mystery, the most incomprehensible of all, we remain incomprehensible to ourselves." I would say it this way. The fall is an offense to human reason, but once accepted, it makes perfect sense of the human condition.

So you can rail against it, but once you accept the idea that Adam sin has been imputed to you, then all of a sudden all of the suffering in the world, and by the way, the topic here is two of the three biggest objections to Christian faith. What is the biggest objection to Christian faith? It's all the suffering in the world. Once we accept this idea of the fall that is so offensive, suddenly everything makes sense. We understand why there's so much suffering. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. All this suffering in the world comes from this sin. And so why should we believe in this fall? Because it is the best explanation of the facts on the ground. Of all the other explanations you can have for why is there sin and suffering in the world, the fall gives absolutely the most cogent explanation. And then beyond that, if this view that sin has been imputed to all of humanity because of Adam's sin was not true, what can you expect that out of, what is it, eight billion people that some one person somewhere in the world would not be a sinner? But all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, as what we've been talking about in this series.

So we have been imputed with Adam's sin, but we are actually subject to a double imputation. Not only have we been imputed with Adam's sin, but we've been imputed with the grace of God through the incarnation of Jesus. So in essence, we are double imputies. Pretty clever, huh? So that's the fall. And then I want us to look at the incarnation then of God, in the person of Jesus Christ. And I picked the word the incarnation here, because there's a cluster of ideas around the incarnation that we see in these verses. Let's go ahead, and I'm going to tell you to read 13 and 14 on your own. But the last phrase of verse 14 says, "Adam is a pattern of the one to come." So there's the first Adam, and maybe some of you have heard of the second Adam. Jesus is sometimes referred to as that.

So we have this terrible objection, this terrible problem. We have this imputation of sin this wasn't even ours, even though we are now sinners. And because of it, death. Death came to all people. Then in verse 15, "But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man," that's the imputation, "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?" And so there's the imputation of the grace of God through Jesus Christ. Again, down at verse 18, the second part of that, let's read the whole thing. "Consequently," I said with regard to Adam, "Just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, or just as one trespass was imputed as condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people." So there is this imputation that takes place of something that Jesus has done.

Let's read on. Verse 16. Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin. So the gift of God, the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us through his atoning sacrifice on the cross, is so far superior when compared to the result of one man's sin, the righteousness of Christ is so much more great and powerful than our sin. So we see the first objection we talked about is this idea of the fall, but mean also have an extreme reaction, even often a violent reaction, to the idea that Christ died for our sins. Why do I need to have someone die for my sins?

It's interesting. Jesus is on every list of the greatest people who have ever lived, the greatest men that have ever lived, he's on everybody's list. Nobody doubts it. There is zero disputation of the person of the historical Jesus. No thoughtful scholar has any doubt whatsoever about the existence of Jesus. Where the objection begins to come in is this idea that Jesus died for my sins, and I need to accept that atoning sacrifice in order for me to experience reconciliation with God.

Reading on to verse 16, "The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation." There's Adam's sin. "But the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification." This is the gospel and this is the way we overcome the objection by showing that receiving the gift results in the forgiveness of many trespasses and brings justification. Verse 17, and now we're saying the same thing in different ways, "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 the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ." In other words, we have the opportunity, every man who hears about Jesus, has

the opportunity to have his righteousness reign in their lives. Verse 18 we've already read. "One trespass leads to condemnation. One righteous act leads to justification and life." And then finally, wrap it up here in verse 19 and 21. "For just as through the disobedience of the one man, the many were made sinners. So also through the obedience of the one, man, many will be made righteous." What kind of obedience is that? It's Jesus's obedience unto death as the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

The idea is a huge objection, until you begin to understand, until a man begins to understand that he actually needs to have someone to impute a righteousness that will overcome the sin that has also been imputed through that one man, Adam. The law verse 20, "The law was brought in so the trespass might be increased, but where sin increased, grace increased all the more. So that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." So we have these two objections. One has to do with the fall, the imputation of sin that really we weren't originally responsible for. And the second is, is that I would need to accept a sacrificial death for my sins, and atonement if you will, for my sins, from a man who lived 2000 years ago and claimed to be God in the flesh.

Now, what I want to do is I want to ... Now that I've explained the passage, I want to do a pivot here and I want to talk about the so what, and the now what. The implication and the application of this information. First, the Big Idea. The Big Idea today is **God has called us to show men Christ, not fix the behavior.** God has called us to show men Christ, not to fix their behavior. So the idea that we would get down into the deep weeds to explain men's sin and help them understand how they sin, and develop sin management strategies to overcome that, this is not what God's calling us, to us. He's called us to show men Christ.

THE IMPLICATION: SO WHAT?

Now I want to go ahead and talk about the implication, the so what. And here's the principle implication. How much of what we've just discussed do men need to know? How much of this do they need to know? And the answer is, as much as they want know. There is one group of men who have the ability to accept the fact that they are sinners and they need a savior. They come to that point where it's obvious to them. There's another group though, who are more resistant. And the question is, how can men believe if they don't despair of being able to conquer their sins on their own? How will men be able to believe if they don't despair being able to conquer sins on their own? Explaining to these men, how through the sin of Adam, all have sin and death has come to all men because all have sinned, this imputation and the fall, it gives men the ability to have an understandable, logical, and believable pathway to humble themselves and beat their chests.

Do you remember the Pharisee and the publican who went to the temple, and the Pharisee was very proud and, "I give a 10th of everything and look at how great I am." And the tax collector couldn't even look up. He was so overwhelmed with the despair of his sins. And he beat his breast and he cried out in a loud voice, "Lord have mercy on me, a sinner." So some men, the so what here, the implication is some men don't need a lot in order to overcome this objection. But for those men who do need a lot to overcome this objection, understanding this passage and how sin is imputed to all men, including them is one very strong way to address that objection.

The second implication here is how can men believe if they don't ache for Jesus? How can men believe if they don't ache for Jesus? The incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, and what is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, the incarnation is this. God reduced himself to human flesh for a season so that we might be able to comprehend him. I said it in the previous talk, I think it was, he is the image of the invisible God. The exact representation of his being all of God, all of God in a human body. And Jesus said, "He who's seen me has seen the father." So how can men believe if they don't ache for Jesus? We help them see Jesus. And one of the ways we can help them see Jesus is to see the comparison of the sin of Adam, to the grace and the gift of grace that comes through Jesus Christ. Again at verse 18, "Just as one

trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification for all people." So we are, as Christians, we're double imputies. Again, the Big Idea here that I want to get across though, is that **God calls us to show men Christ, not fix their behavior.**

THE APPLICATION: NOW WHAT?

That then leads into the application, all right, now what? How do we go about this idea of showing men Christ and not fixing their behavior? A number of years ago we had a man coming to our Bible study every Friday morning. Did this for quite a few months. His table leader though, learned that he was spending his entire weekend partying and going to topless bars. So one of our leader meetings ... Excuse me. In one of our leader meetings, the table leader wanted to get together a group of men who would go and sit down with this man and confront him about his sinful behavior. And as they were talking about this, and our leaders were sort of getting up a head of steam about this, I was just sitting there, knowing that that wasn't the right approach, but praying that God would give me the words. And I found myself saying this. Men, we're not going to be confronting this man on his behavior." And that's when I said to them what our Big Idea is, is that **God calls us to show men Christ, not fix their behavior.**

And suddenly it clicked with the table leaders and they all got it instantly. And so what we did is we didn't try to fix his behavior, his sinful behavior. He was becoming more and more aware of his sins, but why was he becoming more and more aware of his sins and less resistant to doing something about it? It's because he was seeing these men who were showing them Christ. But if we would have sat down and tried to create some sort of a set of rules or behaviors, some litmus test that he had to pass in order for him to be acceptable, some sort of standard of conduct that he had to live up to in order to be good enough to be part of the Bible study, we would have driven him off. So we didn't. We did what the Big Idea says. We just continue to show him Christ to fix, not to try to fix his behavior.

And then the most amazing thing happened. It was only a few months later that one day he came in and told his table that his daughter had been tragically murdered. The details are not clear, but her boyfriend had been playing around with a gun and had stuck it in her mouth. And whether he did it intentionally or accidentally, anyway, the gun went off and killed his daughter. He was so unchurched and unreligious that he didn't even know who to talk to about doing the funeral. So he asked me if I would do the funeral, which I did. At the funeral, his son came in, he was on military leave for the funeral. His son attended the funeral and many prominent people from around Orlando. And I presented the gospel. I presented the gospel in simple terms that everyone could understand. I talked about sin. I didn't need to talk about the federal view of sin and the imputation of sin. I just talked about how we all are sinners, and then I talked about the need to receive Jesus Christ as savior and Lord.

And because of the sin that had surrounded his daughter's death and because of his despair of that sin, and because of his having seen men showing him Christ, and aching for what they had, aching for Jesus Christ, Michael put his faith in Jesus Christ and surrendered his life. I've wondered many times since that day, what would have happened if we would have driven Michael away by trying to fix this behavior. Men, the Big Idea today, and it's a great idea to help overcome these two of the three biggest objections to faith. The Big Idea today, **God has called us to show men Christ, not fix their behavior.** Let's pray.

My dearest Father, thank you that Paul has given us these deep, rich, theological, complex, intricate understandings of what's behind the curtain of, in this case, sin or the fall, and the reason for the incarnation and what it brings about. Lord, help us to understand these things, and help men know as much about them as they want. But at the end of the day, let us also Lord, remember that you have called us to show men Christ, not fix their behavior. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you, men.