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The Reign of Death

Romans 5.12-14

Series: The Pure Gospel

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The Village Church

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I. Introduction

- A. The late D. James Kennedy, the pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church for many years, was once asked to comment on his desire to frequently preach the gospel to his own congregation
 - 1. The implication was that he may have believed that some in his congregation may not be saved
 - 2. He facetiously replied that there were those in his congregation that he didn't want to be hand-cuffed to when they die
- B. Again – he was being facetious
 - 1. He wasn't indicating anything about the physics involved in one's translation from life to death to eternity
 - a. Or about the dangers of being literally physically attached to one who was not saved when they die
 - 2. He was making the point, as another pastor once said, that being in church doesn't make you a Christian any more than being in a garage makes you a car
 - 3. And you wouldn't want to be spiritually attached to someone who would drag you into the netherworld along with them
- C. Paul brings to mind a similar image in his description of the internal conflict between the flesh and the spirit in the Christian life
 - 1. **Romans 7:22–23** (ESV) —
 - a. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,
 - b. 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.
 - 2. And then he says this:
 - 3. **Romans 7:24** (ESV) —
 - a. 24 Wretched man that I am! **Who will deliver me from this body of death?**
 - 4. Of course, what Paul means by this is that, this side of eternity, believers still carry around the remnants of death and sin in our bodies
 - 5. Some commentators see this statement as a metaphorical allusion to the practice of an ancient tyrant who would attach the corpse of a deceased person to the body of a convicted murderer

- a. So that the murderer would be forced to drag the body of death around with him as his punishment
 - 6. I don't know that that's what was in Paul's mind
 - a. But it does bring into bold relief the issue of to whom we are attached, to whom we are united
- D. Our text this morning teaches that we humans are attached, as it were, or united to the man Adam
 - 1. And in that union, we find ourselves saddled with death
- E. **Romans 5:12–14** (ESV) —
 - 1. 12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—
 - 2. 13 for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.
 - 3. 14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.
- F. But let's not get ahead of ourselves

II. **Romans So Far**

- A. In our study of Romans, Paul has laid out the fundamentals of the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ
- B. He established that this book is about **The Gospel**
 - 1. **Romans 1:16–17** (ESV) —
 - a. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
 - b. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”
- C. Then he establishes **The Need for the Gospel**
 - 1. The sinfulness of humanity
 - 2. **Romans 1:18** (ESV) —
 - a. 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.
 - 3. He indicates that the sinfulness of humanity is both universal and pervasive
 - 4. **Romans 3:10–12** (ESV) —
 - a. 10 as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one;
 - b. 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God.
 - c. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”
- D. But then he introduces the gospel proper – the good news
 - 1. **Justification by Faith**
 - 2. He shows that in Jesus Christ, God has provided the righteousness that we so desperately need

- a. And it is a righteousness that God places into our account by faith
- 3. **Romans 3:21–25** (ESV) —
 - a. 21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—
 - b. 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:
 - c. 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
 - d. 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,
 - e. 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith....

E. **Faith Illustrated**

- 1. Justification by faith alone is then illustrated
 - a. Using Abraham and David as examples in **Romans 4**

F. **Gospel Benefits**

- 1. And then in Chapter 5 we were introduced to the benefits of the gospel, the results of justification by faith alone
- 2. In the last message we identified a number of the glorious fruits of justification
 - a. Peace with God
 - b. Access to God
 - c. Standing in grace
 - d. Rejoicing in hope of the glory of God
 - e. Rejoicing in sufferings
 - f. Love of God poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit
 - g. Assurance that God loves us because Christ died for us while we were still sinners

III. **Security and Assurance**

- A. We recognized that Chapter 5 begins a section of the book that runs through Chapter 8
 - 1. All of which relate to the benefits of the gospel
 - 2. And all of which may be summarized as **Security and Assurance**
- B. Paul wants believers, not only to understand the gospel
 - 1. Not only to believe in Jesus
 - 2. But to have confident assurance that we belong to God through Christ
- C. And so this larger section wonderfully captures the essence of that security in Christ and assurance of salvation

IV. **Union with Christ**

- A. But with all of the wonderful elements of assurance we have already seen in the first eleven verses in Chapter 5, another benefit, another element, is yet to be revealed to us

1. And it is an element that will carry us through this entire section of Romans
 2. It is, in fact, the critical feature of what it means to be a Christian
 3. It is our union with Christ
- B. Union with Christ!
1. I wonder, how many sermons have you heard on our union with Christ?
 - a. Probably not many
 - b. It is one of the most mysterious dimensions of the Christian life
 - c. One of the most difficult to understand, let alone to explain
 - d. And yet, arguably, the most important
 2. Scottish theologian James S. Stewart: [union with Christ is] the heart of Paul's religion... this more than any other conception – more than justification, more than sanctification, more even than reconciliation – is the key which unlocks the secrets of the soul.
 3. John Murray: Union with Christ is the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation.
 4. Arthur Pink: The subject of spiritual union is the most important, the most profound, and yet the most blessed of any that is set forth in the sacred Scriptures; and yet, sad to say, there is hardly any which is now more generally neglected. The very expression “spiritual union” is unknown in most professing Christian circles, and even where it is employed it is given such a protracted meaning as to take in only a fragment of this precious truth. Probably its very profundity is the reason why it is so largely ignored...
- C. In our study of Romans 5.1-11 we have already had a hint of this critical doctrine
1. **Romans 5:10** (ESV) —
 - a. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.
 2. This translation says we shall be saved “by” his life
 - a. The NIV says we shall be saved “through” his life
 3. But the literal translation is, **“shall we be saved *in* his life”**
 4. The point of the verse is, if God has saved us by the death of his Son, much more shall we be saved *in* his life
 5. Now Paul doesn't explain what that means at this point – that will be the subject of the remainder of Chapter 5
 - a. But he drops the hint in this verse
 - b. And begins to unpack what that means, and what is its significance, in the verses that follow
- D. Boice: This union with Jesus makes possible the sequence of deliverances from sin, death, and the law, and the resulting spiritual victories that Paul will unfold in the next three chapters of Romans.
1. In other word, union with Christ will carry us through this entire section
- E. Union with Christ – not a new invention by Paul
1. First taught by Jesus

2. **John 15 – The Vine and the Branches**
 - a. **John 15:1** (ESV) — 1 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.”
 - b. **John 15:4–5** (ESV) — 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.
3. **The Lord’s Supper**
 - a. **Matthew 26:26** (ESV) — 26 Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.”
 - b. **Matthew 26:28** (ESV) — 28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.
 - c. The supper symbolizes our participation in the life of Christ
 - d. **John 6:35** (ESV) — 35 Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”
 - e. **John 4:13–14** (ESV) — 13 Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”
 - f. **John 6:54–56** (ESV) — 54 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. 56 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.

- F. Indeed, every aspect of our Christian life is rooted in our union with Christ
1. John Murray summarizes
 2. **Election**: “The fountain of salvation itself in the eternal election of the Father is ‘in Christ.’ Paul says, ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world (**Ephesians 1.3,4**)”
 3. **Redemption**: “It is also because the people of God were in Christ when he gave his life a ransom and redeemed them by his blood that salvation has been secured for them; they are represented as united to Christ in his death, resurrection, and exaltation to heaven... (**Romans 6.2-11; Ephesians 2.4-6; Colossians 3.3,4**)”
 4. **Regeneration**: “It is in Christ that the people of God are created anew. ‘We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.’ (**Ephesians 2.10**)”
 5. **Glorification**: “... it is in Christ that the people of God will be resurrected and glorified. It is in Christ that they will be made alive when the last

trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible (1 Corinthians 15.22).”

G. So union with Christ is the great theme of our security and assurance

V. **Union with Adam**

A. However...

1. Before we can begin to grasp our union with Christ, we must come to grips with our union with death
2. This body of death that we drag around with us

B. In this life we often feel more attached to death than to life in Christ

1. We experience it in our community in the loss of our loved ones
2. We sense it in our own growing list of maladies
 - a. In the “organ recitals” that we rehearse
 - b. In the loss and diminishment of our faculties
3. All of which appear to relentlessly press on toward the reign of death

C. How did this experience of death take place?

1. It took place because of our union, not with Christ, but with Adam

D. **Romans 5:12** (ESV) —

1. **12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—**
2. That one man was Adam

E. Now if you follow along in the text you’ll note a rather peculiar element in the text

1. The text breaks off at the end of verse 12 – the ESV has an extended hyphen
2. Which introduces a lengthy parenthesis
 - a. A parenthesis which explains much of what is expressed in verse 12
 - b. And which is not concluded until verse 18

F. So, to get a sense of the text we might put verse 12 together with the first part of verse 18

1. **Romans 5:12** (ESV) — **12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—**
2. **Romans 5:18** (ESV) — **18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men...**
3. I’ll come back to the rest of verse 18 in a few moments

G. But we experience death because of sin

1. And sin came into the world through one man
 - a. And that man was Adam
2. And through Adam death spread to all men
 - a. Because all have sinned

H. Now, how do we know that this is true?

1. Other than that the Bible tells us

- a. Paul continues with the first part of this parenthesis in order to explain
- I. Romans 5:13–14 (ESV) — 13 for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam...
- J. So, how do we know that death and sin came through Adam
- K. First, sin is not counted where there is no law
 - 1. Now Adam broke the law
 - a. It was a simple law – but it was a law nonetheless
 - b. “Don’t eat of this tree!”
 - c. And he did
 - d. He broke the law of God
 - 2. Now there really wasn’t another law given by God until Moses
 - a. Moses came along; God gave him the Ten Commandments
 - b. Which Moses gave to the people of Israel
 - c. Commandments which they broke pretty quickly
- L. So how do we know that sin came through Adam to the entire human race
 - 1. Since there was no law to break between Adam and Moses?
- M. We know it because everybody between Adam and Moses died
 - 1. They all died
 - 2. Genesis 5 – genealogy of the godly line of Seth
 - 3. “All the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died”
 - 4. “All the days of Seth were 912 years, and he died”
 - 5. “All the days of Enosh were 905 years, and he died”
 - 6. “All the days of Kenan were 910 years, and he died”
 - 7. “All the days of Mahalalel were 895 years, and he died”
 - 8. “All the days of Jared were 962 years, and he died”
 - 9. “All the days of Methuselah were 969 years, and he died”
 - 10. “All the days of Lamech were 777 years, and he died”
 - 11. They all died
 - a. Only exception – Enoch because God took him
 - b. Don’t know whether he ever experienced death
 - c. But he’s the exception that proves the rule
 - 12. They all died
 - 13. But none of them broke the law that Adam broke
 - a. None of them broke the law
 - b. But they all died
- N. That’s how we know that sin was in the world before the law of Moses was given
 - 1. Because death reigned from Adam to Moses
 - 2. Even though those who died did not sin like Adam sinned
- O. Romans 5:13–14 (ESV) —
 - 1. 13 for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.

2. 14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam...
- P. An even better example – death of the innocents
1. Death of babies
 - a. Or even the death of the unborn
 - b. Death due to miscarriage or due to abortion
 2. Babies haven't broken the law
 - a. The unborn haven't broken the law
 3. And yet, they die
- Q. Why?

VI. Adam – Our Representative

- A. Why did they all die – even though they broke no law?
1. Because of Adam
 2. Because every human being is united to Adam
 - a. Every human being dies
 - b. Every human being sins
- B. Adam is our representative
1. Whatever Adam did, he did it on our behalf
 2. So he died; and we die
 - a. Humans have been dying ever since Adam
- C. Romans 5:12 (ESV) —
1. 12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—
- D. You say, “No!”
1. “Stop!”
 - a. “That can't be right!”
 - b. “Adam can't be my representative!”
 - c. “I never voted for Adam”
 - d. “I wasn't there when he sinned”
 - e. “Why should I die because of Adam's sin?”
 2. Only Americans would talk like that, I think
 - a. Washington, D.C. license plates: No taxation without representation
 - b. Your license plate might say, No death without representation
 3. But you still die, don't you?
- E. “That's not fair”, you say
1. I wouldn't have voted for Adam
 2. Why not?
 - a. When he sinned, he wasn't yet a sinner
 - b. He lived in a perfect place
 - c. He had everything that he needed
 - d. He had a perfect wife – who at that time was not a sinner
 - e. He had a perfect Father
 - f. He had everything going for him

3. Do you think you would have done better?
 - a. Knowing yourself, are you without sin?
 - b. Would you have made perfect choices?
4. What makes you think Adam shouldn't have been your representative?

VII. **The Reign of Death and Death Defeated**

- A. Be careful
 1. If Adam is not your representative, you're on your own
 2. And there is the law
 - a. And have you fulfilled all of the law?
- B. But here's where we need to finish some verses
- C. **Romans 5:14** (ESV) —
 1. 14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam,
 2. **who was a type of the one who was to come.**
- D. Adam – a type of the one who was to come
 1. Who was that?
 2. Jesus!
- E. **Romans 5:17** (ESV) —
 1. **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.**
- F. **Romans 5:18** (ESV) —
 1. **18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.**
- G. Adam – the first man
 1. The representative human
 2. Christ – the second man
- H. Current event
 1. The US House of Representatives recently moved to vacate the speaker
 - a. And today they can't seem to elect another one
 2. Today, you can also move to vacate your representative, Adam
 - a. But in order to do that, you actually do get to vote for his replacement
 - b. You can, by faith, vote for Jesus to be your new representative
- I. And instead of being united to Adam
 1. You will be united to Christ
- J. If you weren't united to Adam
 1. You can't then be united to Christ
 2. **Romans 5:21** (ESV) —
 - a. 21 so that, as sin reigned in death,
 - b. grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- K. Don't carry that body of death around with you any longer
 1. Cast yourself on His mercy

- a. Trust in Jesus
- b. Make Him your new representative
- c. Throw off the old man, Adam
- d. Be united to Jesus Christ