

# Contrast 1) of Adam and Christ

Romans 5:12-19 • 2020-03-01 • Lenten Epistle Series: Contrast



Have you ever thought about the impact of the most influential people in history? It seems like some prominent people like Abraham Lincoln were just the right person at just the right time to change the course of history and alter many lives. There are also some lesser known people who are credited with altering the course of history. Men like lieutenant colonel Petrov of the Soviet Air Defense Forces have been mostly unsung heroes. He was a Soviet military personnel who had to decide if he should sound the alarm of a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union. His alarm would be the signal for Moscow's counterattack towards the United States and its allies. In 1983 he obtained false reports of an incoming missile attack. According to his protocol and orders he was supposed to report the attack. Many historians believe his alarm would have triggered a terrible war instigated by a nuclear attack. Such a war would have led to a global scale. Petrov hesitated. He put the fate of all his own people on a whim and disobeyed his orders because he supposed it was a false alarm. He never sounded the alarm. His single level-headed decision probably altered the course of history from what could have been. If the reports are true, then we all owe the last 37 years of existence and lack of a world-wide nuclear war all to that one man. Talk about influencing history! But when it comes to the real and most important people in history we don't need to speculate on their impact. Scripture records it for us. And the impact of their actions is of cosmic proportions. All of life's ups and downs really hinge on these two men. And as we compare them, we see how one should never be left as an unsung hero. They are Adam and Christ.

As incredible as it may seem, Paul points all the blame for all the world's greatest troubles on a single man. He's not presented as the villain of history. But all villains come from him. He didn't cause the biggest war in history. But all wars resulted from his actions. You wouldn't guess it from the way he is often portrayed, but he is the most influential cause of death and destruction in all the pages of history. His name is Adam.

Adam was not set up to stumble or cause harm to all mankind. On the contrary, he had everything that any man could ever ask for. He walked with God in a perfect garden. He had the opportunity to marvel at the wonders of creation. He had the world's only perfect marriage. He had no reason to worry or wonder about God's provision. God gave him charge of all the earth and it was all perfect. Adam had everything.

But that also means he had everything to lose. And he ruined it all. Adam was given one direct command from his Creator; he was not supposed to eat from the tree in the middle of the garden. It wasn't a difficult command by any means. Yet somehow Adam and his wife found themselves standing right before that tree gazing upon it. They swallowed the devil's lies instead of savoring the Lord God's goodness. Adam did not speak up in defense of God's Word. He didn't even support his wife in her initial attempts to combat evil. He merely watched, and then willfully and passively succumbed to temptation and evil. He doesn't say or word or do a thing to defend what is right.

That single moment and single act of disobedience to God would tear a rift across the pages of history. By his single act of disobedience Adam introduced sin into the newly created world. God had not failed him. But he failed God and us all. At that time the pronouncement was given, "Dust you are, and to dust you will return." Adam was reminded of his position in a sudden and harsh realization. Sin brings guilt, ruin, shame, and in the end, it causes death. That's why Paul speaks of the impact of this one man, Adam by writing, "*Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.*"

Now at this point someone might interject, "How is that fair? Why should all people have to die for Adam's sin?" But Adam stood as a representative of all humankind. And he fell into disobedience and ruin on behalf of all humankind. It doesn't matter whether you want it or not: Adam's sin means you face sin and with it you face death. Through that one man the whole world changed for all of time. When Adam sinned, all mankind sinned.

Someone might say, "What about all the people who never had a chance to keep God's law like Adam?" After all, Adam was given a specific command from God and he broke God's command. How many people in history can say that much? And God did give specific instructions and commands to his people through Moses and Mount Sinai. But what about all the rest of the people throughout history and those outside of Israel? They didn't have special commands which they broke. Why should they all face the same fate as Adam who disobeyed the command of God directly?

Paul silences all such objections with an inescapable observation. "*Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam.*" You can try to argue that Adam's sin shouldn't cause death for all. But it does. If Petrov had called for the alarm of nuclear attack his mistake would have resulted in nuclear war killing millions and effecting the lives of billions, so Adam's sin comes upon us all with death. One man brings death for all. As for all those people who didn't sin like Adam, they still died. They still faced the curse of sin. They still bore the sin of Adam and it's curse - even from their conception. All people born of Adam are like him - sinners. And so, all people have lived in a terrible, pain-filled, strife-driven, world that is ruled by death. Isn't that such a succinct and frightening picture of history of all mankind? "Death reigned." Like a terrible tyrant it kills all its subjects.

Who can claim a higher position as a man who negatively impacted the course of history? Who can we point to with greater importance than this man, Adam? He's the reason for all the inescapable pain, the insufferable fighting, the lies, bloodshed, diseases, injustices, and the dreadful reign of death over us.



But Paul is making a contrast here. Adam is not the single most influential man in all of history. There are two men who were the most influential in all human history. Thank God we have one other man who stands in strong contrast to Adam in every way. Adam may have had a great and terrible impact on history as he acted on behalf of all people. But he was a pattern, or type of the one to come after him. Someone was promised to enter history and reverse all the impact of Adam. He is the one who stand with greater importance than the first man. And his actions also impact everyone in the world.

Jesus comes with a far different cause for changing history. Adam changed history by his sin. But Jesus changed it with grace, his undeserved love for sinners. "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."

Paul says the impact of Jesus is so much greater than Adam you can't even compare them properly. The judgment that followed a single sin of Adam brought condemnation. But the gift of God in Jesus follows many sins and brings justification. Picture it this way. A judge sees someone who breaks the law and is deserving of death. So, he makes death the sentence. Then the judge sees someone who has broken many laws deserving of death. He sees multiple infractions and ought to say it is a life-sentence or the death sentence multiple times over. And he sees this for many people in his courtroom. But instead the death sentence, all the crimes worthy of death are met with the declaration, "You're innocent and free to go. All of you for all your crimes." That's the difference between the sin of Adam and the gift of Christ. Jesus gives us as a gift something far greater in scale than what Adam earned for us.

Paul then contrasts the reign of death brought by Adam with the gift of the righteous reign of life in Jesus. Remember the terrible picture of the reign of death over a sin-filled world? The gift of Christ brings us a "Reign of life." Isn't that a succinct and comforting picture for the future history of God's people? This gift of life is for *"Those who receive God's abundant provision of grace."* Instead of looking forward to death, we get to look forward to life. And it isn't by our working. It is a gift received through faith in Jesus.

How did Jesus do this? It came down to a single action by the one man, Jesus. Paul's contrast between Adam and Christ comes down to the one act of disobedience verses one act of obedience. Adam, being found in appearance as a man, sought to be like God. But Jesus, who is God forever praised, became truly human. Being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself. Though being in very nature God, Jesus did not consider equality with God something to be used for his own advantage. But he became obedient -even obedient to death on a cross. Adam could not for all the joys of the garden of Eden obey the commands of God. But the Son of God for all the agony of the garden of Gethsemane could say in perfect obedience to God the Father, "Father if not possible that this cup of suffering should be taken away unless I drink it, your will be done." All of history was hinging on that single moment. If he had called upon the legions of angles to serve him and chase the soldiers away, he would have made no impact on our lives. If he had exercised his divine power, he would have made no impact on history other than appearing to destroy a few sinners. But he came to be the obedient Son of Adam and Son of God that no one else ever could. He obeyed the Father's will. He faced death and condemnation for all people of all time. That single act of giving his perfect and innocent life over to death brings forgiveness and new life to all. *"Just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous."*

We're so used to the result of Adam's act of disobedience that such an act of obedience seems too good to be true. We're familiar with sin and death. But on the pages of Scripture we see another man with a far greater impact on our lives. His obedience has a far greater reach than even Adam's disobedience. His gift is far greater than Adam's sin. One brought death to reign over all people. The other brought the gift of a righteous reign of life. And he rose to life to prove it!

Don't let this most influential man be an unknown and unsung hero. We owe our eternity to him. It says this abundant provision of life is "for those who receive." The Greek expresses a present thought here. Jesus has won life and gives the gift of life. People *are receiving* that gift today through his gospel. It is a gospel message that can only be found by pointing people to the one who surpasses Adam in every way. Without that gospel they can only receive the results of Adam's sin and death reigns. But with the gospel they receive a strong contrast -the gift of a righteous reign of life.

As incredible as it may seem we point to all the world's troubles, pain, and death stemming from one man, and all the world's hope and future joy from another single man. It's a strong contrast, isn't it? Adam and Christ. Death and life. Sin and grace. We see it all so clearly. The contrast is real, and the gospel shines brightest out of the darkest of backgrounds. And we will be forever shining in light with the living Jesus Christ.