

February 13, 2005  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent  
Romans 5:12-19  
Pastor Ott

## Overflowing Actions

Let's suppose you are finally going to be going away for a week or two. Before you leave the house, you lock it up tight, you make sure all the lights are off, but you didn't happen to go upstairs and notice that the tub was left running just a little bit. What is going to happen in those two weeks that you are gone? The tub is going to fill up, it is going to overflow, it is going to run across the floor, it is going to run down to the next floor, there is going to be some plaster or some sheet rock lying on the floor when you get home—there is going to be all kinds of problems that started just with that one little action of not shutting off the tub, right? It is going to create all kinds of headaches. It is going to lead to stammering and sputtering and moaning and finger pointing and “I didn't do it”, “I didn't do it”, “you did it”, “I didn't do it”. And all kinds of blood pressure is going to increase because of one simple little action, right?

That one little action of not shutting off that faucet isn't going to be fixed by one little action though, is it? You are going to have to get the insurance adjuster, you are going to have to get someone out to repair some of the things that are ruined in the floor and the ceilings and the plaster and the sheet rock and the electrical problems that might have come from that. You are going to be spending a lot of time on the phone to fix that one little problem, aren't you? Just that one little action led to all of that?

Some things overflow into others and create reactions and actions and consequences that have to be dealt with. Things that overflow from one person to another is exactly what Paul is writing about to the Romans in Chapter 5 that we are looking at this morning. He reminds us that these overflowing actions started in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned. What overflowed to each person from that time on is sin and because of sin, death. But then he points us to a greater gift that overflows to us without us doing a thing—without us lifting a finger—what overflows to us is the gift of God's grace and the salvation and the deliverance and the righteousness that reigns through Jesus Christ. So that is what we want to focus on this morning—these overflowing actions. Death reigned through Adam—righteousness reigns through Jesus.

Did you ever think this isn't fair? Adam and Eve sinned and now everyone is born sinful? That doesn't sound fair, does it? If I speed as I am driving some place and they give you the ticket, you aren't going to think that is very fair, are you? You are going to get upset and through it back in their face and spit and stammer, right? That's not fair. It is my ticket--I should be the one to pay for it. But scripture clearly says that when Adam and Eve were created, they were created in the image of God. But when they listened to Satan and believed his lies and deliberately disobeyed what God had said and put their trust and their belief in Satan instead and ate from that tree in the middle of the Garden—that from that time on, everyone who has been born has not been born in

the image of God, but as we are told in Genesis 5, Adam had a son and his son was in his image which was now sinful.

Paul makes this point that sin, original sin that we are born with, is condemning sin. But he points to an obvious truth. You might wonder what in the world he is talking about when he talks about the people in between Adam and Moses. Adam and Even had been given a command, right? Don't eat from the tree in the middle of the Garden. But then we are not told of any commands or laws God had given besides the conscience up until the time of Moses when those laws came down from the mountain. So he says, *"But sin is not taken into account when there is no law"*. You can't say those people broke a specific command of God because they didn't have a command written down from God on the law. If there is no law, how can you break the law? How can you sin against God?

Paul shows us that the results of sin were obvious because they all die. And death is the result of sin, as we heard in the second lesson this morning, *"death came to all men, because all sinned"*--all are guilty of sin, all are born with original sin that condemns us—original sin that leads to physical death and original sin just as certainly leads to spiritual death or separation from God. That overflows to each and every person that ever has lived. We would like to holler and say that's not fair.

But be very careful when you ask God to be fair. Because the reality of it is, you know from your own experience in your own life, you committed sins that damn you to hell. You have God's law. You have where it says don't gossip, don't lie, don't hurt with your words, speak the truth in love. How many times do we speak the truth to hurt someone and then hide behind it saying it's the truth?

You and I can use words to wound and to hurt just as certainly as Cain killed Abel. You and I are guilty of sins that we can't explain away or excuse or rationalize. God says anyone that hates his brother is a murderer, and we struggle with hatred. We struggle with hatred over petty things and over large things. We have sinned and deserve nothing from God. So don't get too wrapped up saying it's not fair that I am born in original sin and that sin condemns me, because we don't want God to be fair. You and I cannot have any confidence in this world if God is fair.

A fair God destroys the world and sends every inhabitant to hell. A fair God turns his back on us and withdraws every blessing from us because mankind has disobeyed Him and turned our backs on Him. A fair God gives us nothing but terror at night because we are confronted in the darkness and the stillness and the silence of the evening with the truth that we have sinned and we can't make up for it and we can't take it away. A fair God terrifies me.

But Paul reminds us this morning that our God is not fair. The sin that overflows to many is overcome and far surpassed by the gift that overflows to many--the gift which is Jesus' perfect life and Jesus' death on the cross to pay for our sins. God tells us the gift is not like the trespass. If the many die by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by that grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many? The judgment followed one sin, brought condemnation, but the

gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. God's gift far surpasses what came to us as a result of Adam's sin because as it says that followed just one sin and that brought condemnation. But think of all the sins that all the people have committed over time--all the sins just that we in this room have committed in our lifetime. It is a vast number of sins. And to fix that problem, you think it would take more than could humanly be conceived. You would be right.

Humans couldn't conceive how to pay for this sin. We would come up with do good and be good and try better and all these things that would maybe take away a little bit of the edge off of our guilt but wouldn't deal with it completely—wouldn't remove it—wouldn't comfort us in the darkness and the terror of our own sinfulness. Instead God comes with His answer—that even after so many sins He fixes it with one man. And that one man is the God-man, Jesus, who is perfect in our place. He gives that perfection to us.

Look at what it says, "*the disobedience of the one man, the many were made sinners...*" The many is everyone—all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. "*So also through the obedience of the one man, Jesus Christ, the many, all people, are made righteous.*" This is our confidence as we go through life. Jesus' gift overflows to everyone. Even those who don't believe that Christ paid for their sins, they just won't receive the blessing of it. But you and I can be confident that each and every day of our lives, we know that our sins have been paid for because it is outside of us. It is not dependent upon how I feel about it. Because one day I feel great about it and I walk close to God and I love my Lord and I want to serve Him with all that I am. But then the next day, I am bitter and I am angry and I am frustrated, and I am not walking real close to God. And I don't feel close to Him because of my own weakness. So if my confidence depends on my feelings, I'm in trouble. But God doesn't point us to our feelings. We had nothing to do with becoming sinners. We were born in sin because of what Adam did. We have nothing to do with becoming righteous because we are declared righteous through what Jesus has done. This is the confidence. I can now face life knowing that my God loves me and has absolutely taken away my sin. I don't have to worry about whether I've done enough because I know that when Jesus said, "*it is finished*", as my substitute, He paid for my sins.

Think of how that frees us. That frees us from guilt that can knock us to the ground. It frees us from guilt that can freeze us—drive us deep into the darkness of depression. It frees us from it and it lifts us up. It leads us to see that our God is a God whose love surpasses any of our sins. Now as I live in the abundance of God's grace, His all surpassing grace, His grace overflows through me. It overflows through you as you seek to serve the Lord—not as a way to pay for your sin, but as a way to thank Him. As you serve Him now because you can. You have been set free, you want to do this. You might not always do it perfectly, but it's what we want for the new self in us. And this grace overflows through us as we point others who are hurting, who are troubled, who are in the depths of darkness as they deal with their guilt—not to ignoring it, not to rationalizing it, not to blame it on their upbringing, not to blame it on genetics, but to instead throw it on the cross of Christ and know that it is completely taken away. In the very body and blood of Christ that we receive in the Sacrament, our sins have been paid for.

Overflowing actions washed away our sins, and now we can be the instrument of God's grace that overflows in our lives through our words and our actions to bring Jesus to people so that they can know their God is not fair. He is forgiving.