

# Main Street

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



## **Romans 5:12-21** **“God’s Great Rescue Plan”**

September 18, 2016  
(18<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost)

Pastor Phil Thrailkill  
Main Street UMC  
211 North Main St., Greenwood, SC 29646  
Church Office: 864-229-7551  
Church Website: [www.msumc1.org](http://www.msumc1.org)

**“Following Christ From City Center!”**

ROMANS 5:12-21 "GOD'S AMAZING RESCUE PLAN"

5:12-8:39 Reprise, Repetition With Variation

1) v.12 Old Regime: The Facts Of Sin, Death, Law (Assumes Adam As Historical Figure).

- 12 a Therefore **just as** **sin** came into the world *through* one man *dia* (2x), Havoc Enters! Gen. 3, Adam
- b and **death** *through* sin, *Death = Consequence, Alienation From God Engulfs All, 4 Axes, Gen. 2:17*
- b' and **so** death spread to all men, *Contagion, Sin/Death = Invasive Hostile Powers, Gen. 2:16-17, 3:3, 3:22-24*
- a' wherefore from which it follows that all men **sinned**— *Disputed eph' ho (because), Follow His Footsteps*  
*4 Ezra 54:19 (Each An Adam), Christ's Obedience Counters Adam's Transgression*

2) v.13 Two Ages: 1) Sin Without Law, 2) Sin With Law As Clear Trespass.

- 13 a For **sin** indeed was in the world *Dialog, How Know Sin If As Yet No Law? Conscience Is Not Enough*
- b before the LAW WAS GIVEN, *Chronology, To Moses, Boundaries: What's In, What's Out*
- a' but **sin** is not counted *vv.12-13= Excursus/Footnote, Commercial Term*
- b' where there is no law. *Willful Violation Of A Known Law, No Objective Standard/Boundary*  
*Two Great Solidarities: Adam(Sinners), Christ(Reconciled)*

3) v.14 The Reign Of Death From Adam To Moses, Type Of One To Come.

- 14 But *death reigned* (exercised kingship) from Adam to Moses, *Personified Cosmic Power, Gen. 6:5*
- even over those whose **sins** were not like the **transgression** of Adam, *Against God's Law*
- who was a type of 'the one who was to come.' *Pattern, Jesus As New Adam// OT Counterpart*  
*Rhetoric Of Synkrisis: Praise One/Blame Other*

4) v.15 Contrast 1: The Free Gift Not Like Trespass (No Comparison.)

- 15a a But the free gift is not like **the trespass**. *The Old Regime Not Like The New Regime*  
*Review, Anti-Type, Christ (Success) /Adam (Disaster)*
- b b1 For if many died *Death vs. Life: many-one man, grace// grace-one man-many*
- 2 through **one man's trespass**, *Reason: Gar*
- 3 much more have the *grace* of God *Lesser To Greater*
- 3' and the free gift in the *grace* of
- 2' that **one man** Jesus Christ *Abounded (vv.15, 17, 20 [3x])*
- 1' abounded for many. *Synkrisis: Praise/Blame Comparison, Semitic: Many = All*  
*Three Important Persons: Adam, Moses, Christ*

4') v.16 Contrast 2: The Free Gift Not Like Effects Of Adam's Sin.

- 16a a And the free gift is not like the effect of that one man's **sin**. *Different Action, Different Effects*  
*Direction Of Argument Is Solution To Plight, Cure To Disease*
- b b1 For the judgment (*krima*) following one **trespass** *Reason: Gar*
- 2 brought condemnation (*katakrima*), *2 Outcomes*
- 1' but the free gift following many **trespasses** *charisma/dikaionoma*
- 2' brings justification. *a righteous deed, Right Relation With God*  
*sin → transgression/trespass/disobedience*

3') vv.17-19 The Reign Of Death In Adam's Offspring, Naming One To Come.

- 17 a1 For if, because of one man's trespass, *Rebellion Against A Known Command*
- 2 *death reigned* through that one man, *Lesser To Greater Argument*
- 2' much more will those who receive *No Universalism, Grace Must Be Received*  
*the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life //1 Cor. 6:2*
- 1' through the one man Jesus Christ. *Shift Of Ages, Life Flows To Us, No Real Comparison*  
*Jesus Is The Start Of A New Race, A New Humanity!*
- 18a b1 Therefore, as one man's **trespass** led to condemnation for all men, *Adam/Christ//Adam/Christ*
- b 2 so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. *Obedience, Phil. 2:8*
- 19a 1' For *just as* by one man's **disobedience** many were made **sinner**s, *Many/All Are Equivalents*
- b 2' so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous. *Jesus' Righteousness=Obedience*  
*Is. 53:11 (LXX), He Chose To Die Rather Than Sin = Faithfulness*

2') v.20 Two Ages: 1) Sin With Law, 2) Sin With Grace.

- 20a a Now LAW CAME IN (intruded), *Law Personified As A Force As Well*
- b1 to increase the **trespass**; *Law Identifies/Increases Transgression, //3:20, 4:15*
- b 2 but where **sin** increased, *Sin/Evil/Death/Law Are Cosmic Actors, Personified Powers*
- c grace abounded all the more; *Great Excess (flood), Grace Abounding To Sinners*  
*5:12-25 = Key Passage For Later Doctrine Of Original Sin*

1') v.21 The New Regime Overwhelms Sin And Death.

- 21a so that, **just as** **sin** reigned *Paul Does Not Speculate On The How, The Mechanism Of Transmission, Just Its Fact*
- in **death**, *reign (vv,14, 21a b),The Real Villains*
- b grace **also** might reign *The Duel Is Won Decisively By God's Amazing Grace*  
*through* righteousness to eternal life **through** Jesus Christ our Lord. *dia* (2x), *New Regime/Kingdom*

**TWO GREAT SOLIDARITIES THAT EFFECT US ALL:  
ADAM AND CHRIST  
TYPE AND ANTI-TYPE: DESCRIBES CHRIST IN CONTRAST (+/-) WITH ADAM**

ADAM	JESUS CHRIST
First human in the first creation.	First human in the new creation: resurrection (1 Cor. 5:45-50).
Sinned: enabled death (a personified power) to enter the earth. Act of one has great consequences for all.	Christ was righteous (faithful to God) and brought the free gift of life into the world through his resurrection (1 Cor.15:21-22). Act of one has greater consequences for all.
Surrendered to temptation; disaster for all	Defeated the tempter; success for all who respond.
Condemnation and death.	Justification and life.
Originally innocent, sinned, died guilty.	Died as an innocent who never sinned for the guilty.
Four levels: alienated from himself, God, creation, others: holistic imperfection	Four levels: wholeness with himself, God, creation, others: holistic perfection
False orientation to the whole of life.	True orientation to the whole of life.
Old family of death	New family of eternal life.
Sin abounds through the law	Grace much more abounds, <i>how much more!</i>
Infects others with distrust of God	Infects us with a new trust of God

**What Is The Awful, Complex Power Of Sin?**

**It is:**

An orientation to life away from God that effects all I am, being and doing, body and soul.  
Therefore, I cannot escape it.

An accumulated web and weight of rebellion and wrong that I inherit; it is historical and cultural.  
Therefore, it is all around me and within.

My own sins and misdeeds add to the long accumulation and pass it on involuntarily and voluntarily.  
Therefore, I am not free not to sin; it is inevitable outside Jesus Christ.

More than hereditary, more than environment, more than a bad example, more than a demonic lure.  
Therefore, this awful power is multi-dimensional mystery that defies full human understanding.

A bondage I inherit, a rebellion I add to, a legacy I pass on.  
Therefore, I am deeply effected, as are all.

It is, in our present world, a fixed element in universal human nature.  
What's wrong with the world? I am! We are!

But, in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ,  
the bondage and the guilt and the penalty and the consequences of sin are broken.  
He is God's comprehensive cure for what ails us, now and in the life to come!

## GOD’S GREAT RESCUE PLAN

*“... grace also might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

God’s big goal is one you can count on!

### R O M A N S 5 : 2 1

**L**ots of folk have commented on my new *Harry Potter* glasses. Rumor is they’ve raised my IQ several points and given me a fake British accent. I’ve even changed the voice on my iPhone to a British female to go with the new look. I’m no longer “a bit odd” but *truly daft*, no longer “off my rocker” but *around the bend*. Apparently, a new set of glasses can change your view of the world. I often wonder, what with our two current Presidential candidates, if we need a return to monarchy, for the Queen to reclaim her colonies.

But there’s another set of lenses you don’t see. They’re not on my face but in my head. Not only do they influence *how* I see but *what* I see, *what it means* and *why it matters*. These lenses are my *world view*. Everyone has a set, even if they don’t know it. So when— in an unguarded moment— you say, “This is how things are!” or, “This is what it’s all about!” you’re cluing everyone to your view of the world, the things you consider most real.

You support your world view; indeed, you cannot do otherwise since it’s all you have on the hard disk. It’s your operating system, and then it— in a sense— supports you as your intellectual and emotional navigation for living. Everyone has a philosophy of life, an enacted set of convictions about what’s true and possible and real, and the various maps are interesting to explore.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 267-74; also Michael W. Goheen, Craig G. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview*

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Say for instance– to use a big picture approach– we admit that the Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, Secular, and Christian world views yield different pictures of what’s real and are, in fact, incompatible with each other in their most basic claims. They are mutually exclusive, and they’ve lasted so long precisely because they offer different renderings of what’s true and real and ultimate. Any two cannot be true in the same way at the same time. So to say, as some do with an air of sophistication, that all religions teach basically the same thing is a sure clue they’ve never studied any of them in depth.<sup>2</sup> There’s often an overlap in ethics– how people ought to behave to animals and one another– but when you dig more deeply into the core DNA, they’re incompatible. Consider for a moment the world’s four largest faith groups– Hindu, Buddhist, Islam, and Christian– on the most basic issue of all: God. “So,” writes Ed Stetzer:

“according to the four largest world religions, God is one with creation and takes on millions of forms (the Hindu option), God may or may not exist (the Buddhist option), God is one and absolute (the Islamic option), and God is one but exists in three persons (the Christian option). If we cannot agree on even the basic definition of God or his character, how can we say all the major religions are on the same path toward the truth about God?”<sup>3</sup> Answer: We can’t.

And if you have a major shift in world view between the options on offer, say from Islam to Christ, or from Christianity to Atheism, scholars call it a *paradigm* shift; you quite literally begin to live in a new world in the midst of

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(Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> For an introduction, see Stephen Prothero, *God Is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Rule The World* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> "Proselytizing in a Multi-Faith World: Why mutual respect and tolerance require us to witness for Christ," *Christianity Today* (April, 2011), [www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2011/april/3042511](http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2011/april/3042511).

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the old, and it takes a while to get used to.<sup>4</sup> Changing world views induces vertigo; it’s dizzying to work through all the implications. So when some apparently secular school girls in England get radicalized over the Internet and go off to join ISIS in Syria as brides, what you are seeing is a rapid shift in world view, a conversion and a different answer to the questions, What is real? And what is worth living for? It’s hard for some adults to admit that some young people want more than an iPad and rock-n-roll hookups, and if their culture or faith looks trivial and undemanding, they may look elsewhere.<sup>5</sup>

For example, having Jesus Christ go from being a respected figure of ancient history to being a living presence with voice and vote in your life is just such a *paradigm shift*. To have a prayer clearly answered for the first time is a *paradigm shift* as you realize Someone was really listening, and listening all along! The first time you read the Bible and find it reading you is a *paradigm shift*. To hear God speak in a way that gets your attention is a *paradigm shift* that disrupts the old world view of either no god or a distant, silent God. To allow for God or prayer or miracles is a statement of a biblical world view; not to allow for any of these is a secular world view. To do life with God as an invisible senior partner is a theistic world view; to do life alone in the cold dark cosmos is a secular or atheist world view. To think to yourself, “I have a reliable senior partner,” and for a coworker to think, “It’s all up to me,” means the two of you live in different worlds while pretty much occupying the same space. And to see yourself for the first time, not as an OK average person but as a rebel with sin in your heart and wickedness in your actions is a world view shift because to see the true nature of Sin for the first time is a rude jolt. All of a sudden you’re under the microscope of a powerful divine being with nowhere to hide. World view analysis is a tool that helps you understand that people act differently because they see and believe differently.

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<sup>4</sup> On conversion, both into and out of Christian faith, see Scot McKnight, Hauna Ondrey, *Finding Faith, Losing Faith* (Waco, TX: Baylor Press, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> See Paul Brandeis Raushenbush, “ISIS and the Crisis of Meaning,” Oct. 28, 2014, [www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-raushenbush/isis-and-the-crisis-of-meaning\\_b\\_5730284.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-raushenbush/isis-and-the-crisis-of-meaning_b_5730284.html).

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When I sit down with a new person for a pastoral interview, in addition to getting a general picture of their history and faith connections– or the lack thereof– I begin to piece together the components of their world view as a big puzzle. And the method is– since most are not philosophers with written world view statements– for them to tell a series of stories, and then for me to ask myself, “What’s the common thread between them, and what does it tell me about their most basic convictions?” And if after a chain of four or five stories I say to them, “So what you’re telling me is...” and if I get it right– or even close- they think I’m brilliant to have such pithy insight, to sum up twenty minutes of listening in a sentence or two. “Did God tell you that?”

No,” I reply, “you did, but I think he helped us both!”

At a minimum they know you’ve listened; it feels a lot like being loved– especially for folk no one much listens to, but it’s a skill anyone can learn. And if I had a long enough, I could write their personal creed, the things they believe in mind and heart that provide a map for living, and then we’ve got something to compare with what the church believes. James Sire writes, “A worldview is a set of presuppositions... which we hold– consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently– about the basic make up of our world.”<sup>6</sup> Author Darrell Johnson says every world view tries to answer nine big questions:

1. What is prime reality? What is the "really real"?
2. Who or what are we? What does it mean to be a human being?
3. Is there such a thing as "morality," right and wrong? If so, what is its basis? How does one know the good and the bad?
4. What is the meaning of history? Or, is there any meaning?
5. What is wrong with us? Something is off; what is it?
6. Is there a solution; can things be fixed? By whom? How? How quickly?
7. Is there a God? If so, can this God be known? And is this God involved in the world, especially relative to human suffering?
8. What happens to a human being at death?

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<sup>6</sup> *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 3rd ed., (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 16. This is the place to start.

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9. What time is it? Where are we in the flow of history?”<sup>7</sup>

Among all that Jesus has come to do for us and in us, one of them—surely— is to change our world view, the way we see God and everything else in the light of God. This may be why he said in John 3, “I tell you the truth: unless you are born again (i.e. into a new world), you cannot *see* the kingdom of God.” He gives us a new birth in the midst of an old world so we can see and perceive where God is at work. When someone places their trust in Jesus Christ, he slips a new pair of spectacles on their nose “There,” he says, “Life looks different now, doesn’t it? Let me show you my world; it’s here for those with eyes to see and ears to here, and it’s a preview of the world to come.” One of the best prayers, especially when sitting with someone who baffles me, is, “Lord, open my eyes. Let me see them as you do.” I love what Russell Moore has written:

“For too long, we've called unbelievers to ‘invite Jesus into your life.’ Jesus doesn't want to be in your life. Your life's a wreck. Jesus calls you into his life. And his life isn't boring or purposeless or static. It's wild and exhilarating and unpredictable.”<sup>8</sup>

**TURNING TO THE TEXT**

I said earlier that everyone has a dynamic world view, and that it’s a function of a series of filters or lenses in your control center, whether you think of that as the mind or the heart. How you live is a reflection of your world view, and you cannot do otherwise without a change at this fundamental level, and the deepest changes come through a trusting relationship with Jesus Christ when new power and new truth invade and rearrange the deepest part of who you are. And with a new map and new friend, life changes.

Jesus also had a world view built up over time through Jewish tradition

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<sup>7</sup> *The Glory of Preaching* (Downer’s Grove, ILL: InterVarsity, 2009), 67-68.

<sup>8</sup> "A Purpose Driven Cosmos," *Christianity Today* (February 2012).

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and personal religious experience,<sup>9</sup> and his was the only fully accurate one that ever existed in a human being. He saw clearly and understood deeply on the vertical axis with his Father and on the horizontal axis with people and on the invisible axis with good and fallen angels, including Satan. Philosopher David Nagle says Jesus was “unmatched as a thinker and supreme in his intellectual abilities,” as seen in his teaching and insight, especially his debates.<sup>10</sup> He was just plain smart, and if you don’t agree, you won’t ever be able to respect him, and how can you follow someone you don’t respect? And when you add to his smarts the fact he had access to the mind of the God Father through the immediate illuminations of the Holy Spirit, what we call *spiritual gifts* or *divine revelation*, you see what capacity he had.<sup>11</sup> The best and most loving, noble soul who every lived was also the brightest. He knows more than we do!

We now have smartphones that suck down information invisibly from *the cloud*, and that gives us a new analogy. Jesus, whose senses and perception were not debilitated by sin and evil as ours are, had all he knew plus access to the ultimate cloud. So if you want to study with the most capable intellect ever, meditate your way through the four gospels and pray, “Lord Jesus, show yourself to me. Be my teacher, and I will be your student.” Traveling with Jesus 24/7 for three years, as the twelve did, was simply the most transforming educational experience ever offered with ringside seats on the daily unfolding of the riches of the kingdom of God at ground level. And then for the rest of their natural lives they lived with the memory of him and with his risen presence, first in a series of embodied resurrection appearances, then through the indwelling Holy Spirit as a communications link with their friend and leader and Lord. Same man, but a new form of invisible relationship.

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<sup>9</sup> Luke 2:40, 52.

<sup>10</sup> David Nagle, “Introduction to the Christian Worldview,” *Breakpoint*, Feb. 1, 2010, [www.colsoncenter.org/the-center/columns/indepth/14281-introduction-to-the-christian-worldview](http://www.colsoncenter.org/the-center/columns/indepth/14281-introduction-to-the-christian-worldview); also Dallas Willard, “Jesus the Logician,” *The Christian Scholars Review* 28 (Summer 1999), 605-14, [www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=39](http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=39),

<sup>11</sup> John 5:10, 30.

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Now if you review the gospels from this perspective, some of the things Jesus believed and that were part of his world view were, first, that the world is God’s creation, and God providentially rules what was made.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, Jesus viewed human beings as uniquely valuable; they were created to love God and one another, and their ultimate fulfillment is found in a relationship with Him.<sup>13</sup> Less popular in our day is that Jesus held that all people are sinful, lost, and in need of salvation.<sup>14</sup> Another idea many have trouble with is that Jesus believed in the existence of Satan and the demons and knew their goal was to oppose the works of God.<sup>15</sup> Jesus understood his mission was to fulfill the Scriptures, proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God, and bring the possibility of salvation for all through His death, resurrection, and ascension.<sup>16</sup> Big man, big mission, big beliefs, a comprehensive world view, and it’s why he said what he said and did what he did and committed the communal memory of it to the twelve and their successors. And over time, his followers went through a paradigm shift, an intellectual and spiritual revolution; in his presence they absorbed his vision and distinctive practices so as to become his living extensions. And as his follower, and as one set apart to serve his people, I’m conscience bound to prefer his convictions to my own.

So if everyone has a world view, a set of expectations and rules for how the world works, and if Jesus had the only perfectly accurate world view because of who he was, God the Son at ground level, and because of who he wasn’t, a sinner like the rest of us, and if he passed it on deliberately to his followers, then the New Testament is a vault of accumulated insights. And so

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<sup>12</sup> Matt. 5:45; 19: 4; Mark 13:19; Luke 12:6-7, 22-31.

<sup>13</sup> Matt. 6:26-30; 10: 31; Mark 12:29-31; Luke 9:23-25; 12: 13-21.

<sup>14</sup> Matt. 7:11; 10: 6;15: 24; Mark 2:17; 7:20-23; Luke 15;19: 10.

<sup>15</sup> Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:32-34; 3: 23-26; Luke 8:12, 26-39. For a fresh look, see Richard Beck, *Reviving Old Scratch: Demons And The Devil For Doubters And The Disenchanted* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016).

<sup>16</sup> Matt. 5:17-18; 12:28-29; 16:21-23; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; 10:45; Luke 17:20-21; 24:44.

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when we spend time with a single dense paragraph from Romans, we're not looking primarily for inspiration understood in the shallow sense of elevated happy feelings— though I am not opposed to such when they come as a gift— but for insight, for deep truth, for a reliable map which can then be tested and proved in experience. A true map describes real terrain; it can be tested. How frustrating to navigate Greenwood with a map of Newberry, but what if you have a current map of Greenwood and a reliable guide? How much easier!

So if you'd asked Paul questions five and six of the list of nine world view questions, No. 5: "What's wrong with us?" and No. 6: "Is there a solution; can things be fixed?" he may have taken a papyrus scroll from the shelf and unrolled it to the paragraph that's before us, but without the chapter and verse divisions since they were added to aid location only much later.

"This is perhaps my most thoughtful treatment," he might have said, "so let's read and discuss it together." Imagine that, a personal tutorial with the Apostle Paul, with him doing his own translation from Greek into English. "It may surprise you I dictated such a careful argument, but I assure you'd I'd thought it through a hundred times."

"So Paul," you might ask, "What's wrong with our world?"

He then looks you in the eye, "What's wrong is that there's been an invasion of alien powers, ones that mean us and our world no good at all; its name is *Sin*; its executioner is *Death*, and its shadow is *Evil*. One man opened the door to a contagion that quickly spread; it was *Vector 1*, the first case of a world epidemic. His name was Adam, *Dusty* in Hebrew, the very first fully human being, and his story is told in the first of our Hebrew Bible.

I understand that your geneticists have discovered a genetic Adam and Eve from which all modern humans are descended.<sup>17</sup> How clever is that, but that is not what I'm speaking of, because wherever it was that the Creator turned

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<sup>17</sup> Ewen Callaway, "Genetic Adam and Eve did not live too far apart in time," Aug. 6, 2013, [www.nature.com/news/genetic-adam-and-eve-did-not-live-too-far-apart-in-time-1.13478](http://www.nature.com/news/genetic-adam-and-eve-did-not-live-too-far-apart-in-time-1.13478).

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on the switch of self-consciousness and released the full divine image into the evolutionary development of the human person, that is where the breach occurred, and that is the purpose of the wonderful old stories of Genesis. They're not a video, nor a scientific lab report; they are true stories of what it means to have and then reject the fullness of God's image in us, which is to love and obey God as our highest purpose. And that rejection occurs every day. In fact, Adam is not just long ago. You are Adam, and so a I. Not just physically mortal, but alienated from the One who gives life. *Zombies* I think you call them these days in your movies, the walking dead, every human being. Could it be that such films are so popular because that is how so many feel?

You may have noticed in my summary that I leave out the snake and Eve. It's because Adam was the one the Lord warned, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, *for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die.*"<sup>18</sup> The serpent's lie and susceptibility of Eve were factors, but Adam was accountable. And die he did, but not immediately and not biologically till long after.

What was killed and what died was their naive, childlike, bond of trust with the Creator who went for walks with them each evening to review the day, and when that was severed, death began to work its way into every part of who they were and through them to their children, even to the whole of what was entrusted to them like some plague. Distrust and disobedience cuts the primary umbilical chord, our attachment to the God of life, and so the effects are truly awful, like a baby severed from its tether in the womb. So wherever you find the powers of Death at work, be sure of this: it was initiated by the breach of trust we call *Sin* with a capital S, and so it's been. We are now born allergic to God, and soon enough the symptoms and particulars appear, but underneath the behaviors and attitudes something more sinister is at work. A third party, *Evil*, is also afoot. The *Evil* behind temptation leads to the distrust of *Sin*, and into the breach rush all the powers of *Death*. This is the meaning of my terse summary in verse 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 men sinned."

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<sup>18</sup> Genesis 2:17.

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You live in a world of large, hostile cosmic powers, so large as to defy precise description, and though you try, you cannot defeat them. You do not educate people out of their Sin; you cannot live in your weakened bodies forever, and you are no match for the Evil One. It's why you brag and bluff so much; you are frightened for good reason. Things you do not comprehend are stalking you.

Now I know your modern evolutionary biologists have evidence that there was death in creation before ever man and woman appeared on the scene only recently, and that is true. But to say that Death must have led to Sin and not the reverse is to misunderstand Death. What Genesis is teaching is something more than simply cutting out the lights on life. The animals have always experienced that, and not because of fault. What is most basic is the relationship of the image bearer with the image maker, humans with God, and when that bond is ruptured, life does not flourish. It withers and wilts like a cut flower. And though you gild it, it remains golden and dead.

In every generation the pattern continues. Only death ends people's habit of distrusting God and damaging each other in wars and adulteries and betrayals and all the ugly mess is history. And since this was true long before God gave the law to Moses, the destructive powers remained at work, as I wrote, "...but death reigned from Adam to Moses." The triple powers of Evil and Sin and Death were always and everywhere active in the long stretch of history, but it was not till Moses came down Sinai with the tablets that God dropped an official plumb line into the midst so all could see how out of line they were.

So from Adam came generation upon generation just like him, and in that sense he was, even in his failure, a sign of hope, because what if a new man was to appear, one who remained faithful where Adam failed, one who defeated Evil not in a garden but in a desert, one who'd rather die than Sin, one through whom God could overcome death with a superior display of life, and what if from his healing work a new kind of human being could be formed, one who learns to trust again? What if Adam and his lineage of death gives us the pattern of its opposite? Perhaps a mirror image? One who works in the other direction?

In the autumn of 2002 in New York City, something odd and unexpected

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happened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. A priceless 15<sup>th</sup> century marble statue of Adam toppled and shattered while no one was in the room. Vandalism was initially suspected. Curators then determined that the life-sized Venetian sculpture of our first parent "buckled of its own accord."

"It will take a great deal of time and skill, but the piece can be restored," the museum's director said.<sup>19</sup>

Now isn't that a convenient parable? So now that we've let Paul give his answer to question No. 5, "What's wrong with us? why not question No. 6 as well, "Is there a solution? Can things be fixed?"

At the end of verse 14 our friend Paul gave us a hint of an answer in the form of a Jewish Messianic title— *the one who was to come*. But then, before he names him, he tells us that his deed was more than a match for Adam's misdeed. Into our midst came *the one who was to come*, and the gift he is and the gift of life that flows through him are not a thing like Adam's legacy, in fact the very reverse. Adam gives us a disease with many symptoms that end in death; Jesus, in contrast, has a whole different set of good effects. From Adam comes a legacy of guilt and deserved condemnation, but to those children of Adam who place their trust in Jesus, that trust is counted as a right relationship. They find themselves restored to God's favor apart from anything they've done. Yes, a gift must be received, but were it not first offered, there would be no receiving, so they are not symmetrical. So take it! Reach for it! It's that close!

Jesus is God's living gift to all the dying children of Adam. A great new alternative race of humans is in formation. The kingship of death has been displaced; the risen Jesus is our champion, our vanguard, our trail-blazer, the first prototype of what's promised. The momentum of death has been stopped and the tide reversed at an empty Jerusalem tomb. Even now we reign in life because we know the outcome of the entire human drama, and since we know the end, we can endure the interim in hope. What Jesus did in his utter

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<sup>19</sup> "Museum to mend shattered statue," *BBC News* (10-10-02), news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/2316217.

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faithfulness from start to finish was to enact a new regime whereby those who trust and follow him are set right with God, and that is what the word *righteousness* means, not that something is infused or imparted or imputed to us, but that we are restored to an open, free, grace-filled, forgiveness-enacted relationship with the God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and that within that Trinitarian circle of love new life is found. And it can be experientially and empirically verified by all kinds of people. Jesus gives new life to all who come to him in trust. I have no life for you; I'm nothing but a road sign in the desert pointed the springs of life, but he does have life for you, and though he is now invisible to the naked eye, he is everywhere at work!

Now because Paul's writing strategy is to build towards and then away from the center in a series of frames, we return briefly to the topic of the law near the end in verse 20. God sends the law through Moses— good and holy as it is— as an awareness tool of how much is wrong, as a public accounting system.

And so when we used The Big Ten at the first of today's service, and if you were paying attention, perhaps the Holy Spirit highlighted an item or two to prick your conscience. Maybe not adultery yet, but a warning about a relationship at work. Maybe not yet theft, but a reminder not to fudge on taxes as you did this year. Listen when the commandments are read, because God is speaking. And with the law now in place, the awareness of transgressions multiplied among God's people. No longer were they naive but informed of each infraction, "but where sin increased," said Paul, "grace abounded all the more." It was never God's intent to crush people with guilt and fear; it was to reveal the abundance of our faults that we might the more easily run to Jesus for his over-abundance of grace. God is forming a new race and building a new kind of human being through trust in Jesus Christ our Lord. You don't have to stay sin sick and broken and foolish. A new way is now open.

### CONCLUSION

Recently in upstate New York, a 62 year old man found himself stuck in waist-deep mud. He was playing *Pokeman Go* at night in the woods, chasing monsters on a cell phone when he slipped into a mud pit. Unable to free himself, he

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called 911. So engrossed was he in playing a silly game, he made a blunder which nearly cost him his life. When the Police rescued him, they asked– with a smile perhaps– if he’d caught any of the characters.

His reply? “I really don’t want to talk about it.”<sup>20</sup>

It’s Adam and the garden all over again!

What will the cosmic powers of Evil and Sin and Death do? They will lure you and trap you and make you silly and foolish and stupid and embarrassed and ashamed in the end dead to God.

Why would you want to cooperate with it any longer? Isn’t it time to change loyalties and to seek a new way of being human in Jesus Christ?

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<sup>20</sup> John Ed Matheson, “The Confessing Movement August 2016 fundraising letter.”

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