

Sermon 37: Romans 5:18-19: Saved By the Obedience of the Last Adam

OUTLINE

Obedient in temptation
Obedient in life
Obedient in death

INTRODUCTION

Are we saved by faith or works? That might sound like an obvious question to any Protestant. We automatically want to say that we are saved by faith and not by works, and Paul says as much in Romans 3:28, 'For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.' However, it all depends on what you mean by the question. Let me rephrase the question, 'Are we saved by faith in what we do, or in what Christ does?' Here we see that although we are saved by faith, it is a confidence in Christ's work as our substitute. So let me ask the question again then, are we saved by faith or works? The answer should be something like, we are saved by putting in confidence in Christ's work on our behalf, not by putting our confidence in what we can do to pay for our sins or make ourselves righteous in God's eyes.

Let me introduce you to two technical words which help us clarify what we are saying. They are the words, 'instrument' and 'grounds.' The *instrument* of our justification is faith; but the *grounds* of our justification is the obedience of Christ. We are justified by the imputing of Christ's obedience to our account; but we receive that righteousness by faith. Faith in another's works is the instrument of our justification—the way in which we receive it. And, the works of Jesus Christ are the legal basis/reality—the grounds or what we receive by faith. So then technically speaking, we are saved by works. We are not saved by our own works, we are saved by the imputing of Christ's works to us. We receive this gift of Christ's righteousness by faith it is not earned. So technically speaking it is wrong to say that we are saved by faith, for faith is merely the act of receiving the actual thing that justifies us—Christ's righteousness. Our faith does not merit righteousness for us, Christ merits righteousness for us. We receive the gift of that righteousness by faith.

Well, what a way to start a sermon, but it is essential as we prepare ourselves for what Paul is going to be teaching us in Romans 5:18-19. Paul tells us very clearly that it was Adam's works that condemned us, but it is Christ's works that justify us. So today in our message we are going to compare the disobedience of Adam to the obedience of Christ and demonstrate how Christ has saved us where Adam damned us. We will examine Christ's obedience in three parts, His obedience in temptation, in life and in death.

Obedient in temptation

One way to look at the history of Israel is to look at it from the perspective of the obedience or disobedience of God's son. We see Adam is called the son of God in Luke 3:38. Adam,

the son of God was put into the Garden of Eden. He was placed there in a covenant of works where He was given dominion over the earth and was placed in such a position that if he had proven obedient he could have been affirmed in righteousness and Adam's children would not have been subjected to the sin and death that he won for us as our federal head. But the son of God sinned and was kicked out of the Garden. Next we can look at Israel as the son of God (Hosea 11:1). Israel was called to wander in the wilderness, and like Adam they were tested (Deuteronomy 8:2). The Mosaic covenant called for perfect obedience to the law just as Adam was to render, and there would be curses and blessings for those who disobeyed or obeyed. Israel were disobedient as Adam was disobedient, and like Adam they lost their reward and all but 2 entered Canaan. Then think of Israel in Canaan. Once again we see man in sin failing to be holy as God is holy. God chose to dwell in Canaan amongst His people just as He lived with Adam in the Garden, but like Adam Israel too was a disobedient son and was exiled in Babylon just as Adam was exiled from the Garden. God has to throw out the sinner, driving them from His presence or He will have to kill them. What hope do we have if we are ever to live as sinners in the presence of God. We cannot change our natures, we cannot cleanse our own sins, we cannot stop sinning or please God in any way so as to make Him overlook our sins. What hope do we have?

God provided what we could not provide for ourselves. He provided a Second Man, the Last Adam, a champion who would succeed where Adam failed, obey where Adam disobeyed. Jesus Christ is the Second Adam. He had a unique birth that preserved Him from sin just like Adam. He was made to be a federal head, the only other one since Adam. But the second Adam had a double job to fulfil. He not only had to be obedient where Adam failed winning the reward of affirmed righteousness for Himself and those He represents. He also had to undo what Adam did and provide a way for sinners to be made righteous as well. As we begin to appreciate what Paul draws our attention to in Romans 5:19, 'so by one man's obedience many were made righteous.' We will begin by looking at a comparison of the temptation of the first Adam and Christ.

Adam was placed in a Garden for testing; Jesus Christ was driven out into a desert. Adam was fully supplied with food and every provision; Christ was starving after a forty day fast in extreme conditions.

Adam had a sinless body unaffected by the ravaging effects of sin for the battle, he had no weakness, nor could he get ill. Christ too was sinless, but was made to have a body that was subject to illness, weakness and suffering.

Adam faced the serpent; Christ faced the same enemy the serpent.

Adam was given priestly responsibilities in the Garden, he was to 'keep it' the same words used to describe priestly functions in the tabernacle, and maintain its holiness for God.

Christ too was a priest. He was thirty years of age when he began his ministry as a priest would do. And he was washed and anointed at His baptism as priests were as well.

Adam faced one temptation; Christ faced at least three.

Lets look then at the temptations.

Adam was tempted in the area of food. He had to deny himself the fruit from one tree while all the other trees were open to him. Christ too was tempted in the area of food, but He had no orchards to gratify His hunger from. The choice was sin or starve, not the easier choice of eat those ones not this one.

Adam was tempted as a man to assume to be like God, lusting after a knowledge like God. Christ the God man who had taken on the form of a servant, was also tempted with being like God, to use God's power to fulfil His needs.

Adam did not believe God's word and did not submit to it; Christ spoke about God's word as being sufficient.

Adam doubted God's character as good and sinned; Christ trusted God's character and tellingly He speaks about the goodness of a father not giving stones in the place of bread. Adam faced the twisting of God's word and buckled; Christ was tested with a Scripture quoted out of context and held fast.

Christ was tempted in superhuman proportions above and beyond anything that Adam ever faced. With the test of throwing Himself off the temple and forcing God to catch Him, the devil was trying to make the Servant force the hand of the Master. To make it so that God's authority was bucked and it was the servant calling the shots. And where Adam refused to continue to trust in God's character despite the devil's spin on things; Christ refused to cash faith in for sight and a demonstration of God's goodness forced.

Adam would not wait for a knowledge of good and evil like God's (Gen. 3:22), a holy knowledge like God's. Instead he wanted to take the short cut to the reward. Christ was tempted by the devil in the same way when He was offered all the kingdoms of men. This would be Christ's reward when He had completed His cross work. The devil was offering a short cut past the suffering of the cross if only Jesus would worship satan and not God. Where with Adam temptation repelled worship and obedience; with Christ worship repelled temptation and satan lost the battle. And where Adam was bound in the Garden and lost his dominion to the devil; Christ bound the devil and went into His ministry looting the strongman's house.

Obedient in life

Our righteousness in Christ is not merely made up of one act of obedience on His part, but rather Christ, the whole Christ, His whole human life is what appears at the right hand of the Father to represent us to God. Now it is true that Paul speaks about one act of righteousness in Romans 5:18, but we should rather see this as the crowning act of His death for us. His death was the climax of a complex life of obedience. It was the pinnacle of His whole life of purity brought to that most important act of Him dying for our sins. Likewise with Adam, when he ate the fruit, he did not merely commit one sin. He sinned when he did not kill the serpent. He sinned when he did not take his responsibilities and let Eve do all the talking. He sinned when he allowed Eve to kill herself with the fruit and sat and watched the consequences. He sinned when he did not trust in God's word but believed the lie of the devil. However, Paul speaks about the eating as the consummate act

of all of those actions. Likewise we should view Christ's death as the climax of a lifelong obedience, while Adam's eating is the climax of many other sins as well.

The significance of viewing Christ's whole life as one of obedience is that His life was also one of perpetual temptation. Wayne Grudem has pointed out that Christ has been tempted with sin more than any other person and has had to resist to a degree no other human being has ever encountered. When we are tempted we give in at some point to sin. Christ faced every situation of His human life and never once gave in to sin. As the temptations of a human life increased with age and experience He resisted sin more and more. He also faced temptations that no human being has ever had to face. He had to face the temptation of not abusing God's power to make stones into bread and to have all the kingdoms of men. If you can imagine an Olympian weight lifter lifting one of those huge weights above their heads. You can see the veins, the shaking, the intense concentration. At some point the weight lifter has to drop the weight. Christ lifted the weight above His head and while many different temptations were piled on top He never dropped it, He never sinned, He bore up under the full weight of temptation. Adam gave in at the first temptation.

Christ's righteousness for us have been divided into 2 different types. Theologians speak of Christ's active obedience and His passive obedience. Christ's active obedience pertains to the holy life that Christ lived in fulfilment of the law so that we would have a positive credit of righteousness to put on our accounts. And His passive obedience pertains to all that He suffered in obedience to God as He fulfilled the role of our substitute. Some have wrongly divided the passive as speaking only about the cross, and the active as everything else besides. But in truth, Christ's passive obedience, which literally means his suffering obedience spans the whole human life He lived for us. And His death should also been seen as an act of obedience to the law, fulfilling the law requirements for us.

Is it essential that Jesus be sinless in order to be our saviour? Yes indeed! Jesus needed to be an unblemished sacrifice for our sins, and a sinless High priest that His offering might be accepted by God. The Bible tells us that Jesus was sinless. John 8:46 (ESV) "Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?" 2 Cor. 5:21 (ESV) "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Hebrews 7:26 (ESV) "For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens." Jesus never confessed a sin, showed any guilt, nor prayed for forgiveness, He always claimed to do the will of God. Yet there have been those who claim that Jesus needed to have a sinful fallen nature just like ours in order to be tempted in every way as we are. Hebrews 4:15 (ESV) "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." This view was begun by Edward Irving and was also taught by Barth, Cranfield, and the Torrances. Yet we know that this is wrong because you do not need a sinful nature in order to be tempted, for Adam and Eve were tempted before they were fallen. Our humanity, or Christ's is not determined by the fact that we have a sinful nature, but that we are made in the image of God.

The issue of the temptations of Christ have raised other questions. Like could He be tempted, could He sin, and if God cannot be tempted in what way was Jesus who is the God-man tempted? We do not need to feel the need to answer all of these questions because as with every facet of the doctrine of Christ's person there are parts that are revealed and we can understand, even make educated guesses about, but others that are beyond our ability to know. Lets consider then what we can know.

Firstly, Christ's temptations came to Him not through a sinful nature, but through human weakness. In other words His temptations did not arise in Himself, as ours do, from our own sinful desires. But from outside of Himself. He was tempted by hunger not gluttony in the desert when He was tempted to turn stones into bread. He was tempted by the love of His friend Lazarus to rush to His deathbed instead of waiting that God might be glorified through a miracle (Jn 11). In Gethsemane He experienced the natural fear of pain and death that is not sinful when He asked for the cup to be removed. But in all these things the temptations arose not from sinful desires as they do in us, but from outside Himself and because of human weakness.

Secondly, Christ was tempted through His holy desires. He would have been tempted by the glory that He enjoyed with the Father before hand to forsake this existence for that one. Donald Macleod puts it this way, "Jesus also had holy affections, feelings and longings which, in the course of His work, He had to thwart. Foremost among these was the longing for communion with God. Is it any wonder that in the Garden of Gethsemane the prospect of losing this communion almost overwhelmed Him? He was not being called upon to mortify a lust, He was being called upon to frustrate the holiest aspiration of which man is capable." (p226). Christ knowing fully what becoming our sin entailed knew the cost that would be incurred in body and soul, and in communion with God. It was this that was tempting Christ when Peter was rebuked for telling Jesus that He should never die (Matthew 16:15-23)

Christ faced the temptations that came His way, but He faced them as a sinless human. Many temptations that would sink us had no power with Him as He was sinless to begin with. But He bore the full brunt of temptation, never once giving in to it, and suffering temptations that you and I will never ever face. All for us. To succeed where Adam failed. This is no barren abstract exercise as we look into these things, Christ faced temptation as the second Adam and triumphed winning for us what Adam lost for his children. Blazing the trail for our obedience giving fleshly form to obedience in a fallen world. I trust that being more aware of the reality of His humanity your worship is more stimulated. That the mystery of the two natures is not shrouded in some superman image, but the full humility of Christ makes the wonder of His humanity even greater. From the womb to the tomb Christ lived a perfect life, and when you and I believe in Christ for salvation God takes our sin and puts it on Christ, and He takes His life of full obedience and puts it upon us. We must emphasize that Christ was not only sinless but righteous, He loved God with all He was and His neighbour as Himself, He loved His enemy and the outcast. And this perfect life of obedience will be seen as ours, for our lives are hidden in Christ in God.

Obedience in death

A life of obedience is necessary for our salvation so that we can be accounted as righteous. But Jesus had to do more than live a perfect life for our rightstanding, He also had to die a perfect death so that the Law's requirements against us would be fully satisfied. God's justice demands that all sins must be paid for with death, Christ died in order to settle that debt. The sufferings of Christ in Gethsemane have to do with the issue of submitting His will to the Fathers, and the issue of the bloody sweat. After the Lord's Supper, and the prediction of Peter's denial Christ withdrew for prayer. Mark 14:33-34 (ESV) And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. [34] And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." His anguish was so intense He turned to human company and prayers for aid. The same who would soon deny Him were asked to pray with Him. This reveals the intensity of His need, and reminds us that our prayers are heard though we are not perfect. With everything done that needed to be done, and the only thing remaining now was His death for our sins, with the diverting talk of John 14-17 aside, the full weight of what was facing Him dawned upon Him. We see Him having to pray three times, an hour a time, with strong cries and tears, Hebrews 5:7 (ESV) "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence." In His prayers He asks for the cup of God's wrath, if possible to be taken away Matthew 26:39 (ESV) "And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." It was only when He prayed the second time that we find a shift from asking for it to be taken, to talk about if there is no other way, 'Your will be done'. Matthew 26:42 (ESV) Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." These words are very full of meaning, not only are we seeing a gargantuan wrestle, but we are seeing the necessity of the cross emphasized. There is no salvation apart from the sacrifice of Christ, no other way of forgiveness possible. This highlights the seriousness of sin, and the importance of preaching Christ to all nations, for there is no other name under heaven given by which we must be saved.

The issue of Christ wrestling in prayer and asking whether God could remove the cup has caused many discussions and even a few errors in Church history. But in particular the question has come up, If Christ is God, and He agrees with God's will, why do we find Him having to wrestle Himself in submission to God. There is no contradiction here at all. We are not viewing Christ wrestle with a sinful desire of wanting to disobey God. No we are viewing Christ wrestle with the very strongest of our human emotions, fear of death. But more than that He was not merely scared of the pain and torture but all that the cross would mean in terms of spiritual pains as well. The pain of being cut off from the Father. Christ's human response to what lay ahead of Him was not a sinful one. He was about to face what no man can face. He knew better than any how bad it was really going to be, His response of being overwhelmed is a fitting response to the magnitude of what He was about to face. In fact it would be profitable to stop and remind ourselves that it is in this human

response that we should find our cues for how unbelievers should feel about facing God in judgement. If this is how Jesus, the Son of God trembled at the thought of God's judgement, we would be fools to think we don't need forgiveness of sins and can stand before His holiness without fear of punishment. However, Christ, strengthened by God wrestled the strongest of human reactions to the ground, bound Himself hand and foot, and surrendered His wriggling human nature for sacrifice. The strongest feelings of fear, self preservation, and the multitude of accompanying emotions were brought in surrender to God. The lesson of wrestling with ourselves in prayer before God should not be lost on us, the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak, and we are strengthened in prayer.

The efforts of His praying were immense, the effects of His looking upon the hell He was to suffer immeasurable. Luke's account is particularly revealing. Luke's account does not reveal that He prayed three times, but instead focuses with a doctor's eye upon particular details that have to do with Jesus state of health. Jesus was so overwrought in prayer possibly after the first or second time that God needed to send angels to strengthen Him, Luke 22:43 (ESV) "And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him." But His praying did not end here with a great sense of peace washing over Him, now with this new energy Luke tells us, Luke 22:44 (ESV) "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground." That word 'agony' is a very intense one indicating a state of intense mental focus and distress. This intense focus was no doubt brought about because of Christ's particularly sensitive nature being sinless drawn out at the thought of suffering the full weight of God's wrath. We are standing on holy ground here, looking into a profound mystery, not able to penetrate the depths of His anguish. Then there is the sweat. The language of the text can be interpreted either way, so that it could read as being like great drops of blood, or became great drops of blood. "Although this is a very rare phenomenon, bloody sweat (hematidrosis or hemohidrosis) may occur in highly emotional states or in persons with bleeding disorders. (18, 20) As a result of haemorrhage into the sweat glands, the skin becomes fragile and tender." (http://www.munichurch.de/sermons/2010-03-28_On%20The%20Physical%20Death%20of%20Jesus%20Christ.pdf). Whether He sweat blood or not heaven will reveal, but what we do know is that the disorder Christ was under was so extreme that angels had to minister to Him. I am very happy to accept the view that He sweat blood because it fits with the extreme circumstances He was facing and His response to them. Let it be noted that this horror is the very thing He suffered so that we would never have to. When the unbeliever has to stand before God on judgement day, then they will know what this feels like. Although might I suggest that Christ's experience was worse since being perfect and sinless, and the divine Son who had enjoyed eternal fellowship with the Father, there are dimensions to the suffering that we cannot share. When you and I face God one day it will be with confidence, not self confidence but confidence in what Christ has done.

One other dimension of His suffering in the garden that we have to guess at is the demonic and satanic temptations and oppressions that He faced. The garden of Gethsemane and Eden have been compared by A. W. Pink, "The entrance of Christ into the Garden at once

reminds us of Eden. The contrasts between them are indeed most striking. In Eden, all was delightful; in Gethsemane, all was terrible. In Eden, Adam and Eve parleyed with Satan; in Gethsemane, the last Adam sought the face of His Father. In Eden, Adam sinned; in Gethsemane, the Savior suffered. In Eden, Adam fell; in Gethsemane, the Redeemer conquered. The conflict in Eden took place by day; the conflict in Gethsemane was waged at night. In the one, Adam fell before Satan; in the other, the soldiers fell before Christ. In Eden the race was lost; in Gethsemane Christ announced, "Of them whom thou givest me have I lost none" (John 18:9). In Eden, Adam took the fruit from Eve's hand; in Gethsemane, Christ received the cup from His Father's hand. In Eden, Adam hid himself; in Gethsemane, Christ boldly showed Himself. In Eden, God sought Adam; in Gethsemane, the last Adam sought God! From Eden Adam was "driven;" from Gethsemane Christ was "led." In Eden the "sword" was drawn (Gen. 3:24); in Gethsemane the "sword" was sheathed (John 18:11)." (commentary on John). If this comparison holds, then it can be inferred that Satan was present as in the garden of Eden seeking to turn Christ away from His work of dying on the cross for us. Trying to tempt Him one last time before He goes to the cross, one last frantic attempt to deter Christ from the very work He had been sent to do.

In obedience He went to the cross to offer His perfect life for us, where Adam claimed rights that were not His; Christ laid down what was rightfully His. And so it is by His life and death that we are saved. By His works, that we receive by faith.