

First Sunday in Lent – Epistle

Turners of Events

Romans 5:12-19

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Analysis by Marcus Felde

12Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned—13sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. 14Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

15But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. 16And the free gift is not like the effect of one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. 17If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

18Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. 19For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

DIAGNOSIS: As the World Turns

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – *Adam Takes a Wrong Turn*

Adam's transgression, his trespass, introduced sin into the world (v. 12a). Catastrophe! (With the French, that word is used as an ejaculation roughly equivalent to "Damn!") He and Eve did the wrong thing, even before there was law. Paul makes much of the event, although he balances blame between Adam and everybody else ("death spread because all had sinned," v. 12b). The world's first turn went badly; all the dominos fell.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – *Death Turns Up*

Concomitant with the trespass, for Adam and all, is (God's stomach turns) judgment, condemnation, and the sentence of death. Death grabbed us and held us by our sin, "exercising dominion" over all of us (v. 14a). The actual factual stuff we do wrong Paul lays at Adam's feet not in order to offer an explanation of how it comes that we all sin ("Hey, we inherited it!") but in order to assure us that Jesus will be able to get hold of it all by one handle (v. 14b). Main diagnostic point: we all carry Deathland passports, en route to Grave City.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – *Toes Turn Up*

What more can be said? Unrighteous, contagious, having lived our lives under the threat of death, eventually we die (v. 15b). What began as the event of sin concludes with the matching event—dying.

PROGNOSIS: As the World Returns

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – *Jesus Turns Right*

The relentless train of events set in motion by Adam eventually came up against Jesus. The dominos of death came up against one

domino, “Dominus Deus” (the Lord God), that would not stay down but sprang back up. And he commenced raising the others. How? By giving a free gift (v. 15).

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) – Death Turns Over the Keys

With Death dead, dominion passes to us who have been liberated by Jesus. We are freed by his righteous, in fact. Ex-prisoners exercise dominion. (Remember Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia? Nelson Mandela in South Africa?) We exercise dominion because of the abundance of grace and gift and goodness. Of course, we exercise it only “through the one man, Jesus Christ” (v. 17).

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – Everything Turns Out

We exercise dominion in life (v. 17). Jesus’ act leads to justification and life for all (v. 18). Imagine death out of the picture. Unable any longer to control our lives with its threats. Call it “global cooling-off.” Shalom. Yes, Lord! Think of the events that can take place in such a world!