

Small Group Leader's Guide - Oct 9/22 - Read Romans 5:12-21

1. In the sermon, Orvin said that what we believe about the origin of our humanity will impact where we believe our destiny lies. In other words, how we start out will determine where we will end up. What does this mean philosophically? What are some of the different worldviews about the origin and ending of our humanity?

However we answer the questions of "who are we?" and "how did we get here as humans?" will impact how we will answer the question "where are we going?" If we evolved by chance, our destiny is heat death. If we are made by gods and spirits, there may be an afterlife but life today can be an experience of fear because of these gods and spirits. If we are made by a good and loving God, there may be an afterlife that is also good and loving, and God is fixing the world even today.

2. In vs. 12-14, St. Paul describes how everyone is implicated in guilt by the sin of Adam, which brought death into the world. This describes the doctrine of original sin. How do we feel or think about the many suffering the consequences for the failure or mistake of the one or the few? Is it fair?

At first glance, we think vicarious punishment is unfair. But it is the way we operate as a society. Sin does have corporate and cosmic effects. It is fair and not fair at the same time. It is fair because of the nature of morality. But it is also not fair because someone else suffers for another's mistake. Regardless, we suffer death ourselves, not just because of Adam's sin, but because we ourselves sin.

3. In vs. 15-19, St. Paul differentiates between the representative actions and effects that Jesus and Adam brought to the world. What are the differences?

Adam was selfish; Jesus was self-giving. Adam's sin led to death; Jesus' obedience led to life. Those in Adam are condemned by guilt; those in Jesus are justified by faith. Adam's sin was a trespass that brought enmity between God and people; Jesus' obedience was a free gift that reconciles people to God.

4. What are the implications of there being only two kinds of humans in the world (i.e. people in Adam or people in Jesus)? How do we live according to the biblical truth of whether we are in Adam or in Jesus?

It is difficult to believe or to see the world in this way in our modern age. There is a plurality and diversity of views. And we should aim to listen and respect people's views. But so far as Christians take seriously the view that those in Adam die and those in Jesus live, Christians must then share this saving good news to others. As we share, we do so in humility and love, acknowledging that we ourselves are sinners in the same need of grace as everyone else.