

“THE TALE OF TWO ADAMS.”

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Scripture Texts: Romans 5:12-17

Introduction.

Paul has been speaking at great length about our being reconciled to God through faith in Christ whereby we receive His imputed righteousness and are saved by His life.

All this talk of justification, reconciliation, and salvation leads Paul to bring up what makes all that necessary, namely our fall, our sin, death and ruin by Adam. Last week we said the very word reconciliation implies a previous alienation and hostility, we were once enemies.

In vss. 12-14 Paul shows the depths of this alienation and in vss. 15ff beauty of the reconciliation. Paul leads us through a series of comparisons and contrasts between the two great heads of humanity, the first Adam and the Second Adam, and their two actions and the two destinies that follow those actions. By the first man sin entered the world and with it death, and by the second Man righteousness came into the world, and with it eternal life.

There are two ways to be human. Adam and Eve were Humanity 1.0. God downloaded Humanity 1.0 on earth in the Garden of Eden and it was glorious. But that system crashed.

God could have written the whole thing off, but He didn't. In Genesis 3:15 God announced that He had a new version ready to download. Jesus is Humanity 2.0, in the new covenant we are the new creation.

Introduction to how sin and death came into our world.

Why are things the way they are in the world? Why are we the way we are? Why is there sin and death, evil and wickedness, hatred and violence, abuse and despair? Why do we do what we don't want to do or know we shouldn't do, and why don't do what we should do?

My sin and your sin stare us in the face every day. There is no escaping it. Like David, I have to say my sin is ever before me. My slavery to sin is the unrelenting battle of my life. “Lord, have mercy on me a sinner” is the constant prayer of my life. And the consequence of my sin overshadows all of life. I am walking through the valley of the shadow of death.

110 billion people have lived on earth and every single one of them is a sinner. Why? Why is sin universal and why is death universal? We will not understand ourselves until we understand Adam.

5.12, Humanity 1.0, the tale of the first Adam.

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

Why does it say death spread to all men because all sinned? Why do I sin and die because of Adam's sin and death? What does the decision of one guy a long time ago have to do with us?

In order to show righteousness is imputed to us by Christ, Paul must first show sin is imputed to us by Adam, and we all die because we are sinners.

The first man, Adam, was a real, living, breathing historical man. He was the first human being to live on the face of the earth. There was no one before him. This is the affirmation of Scripture all through the OT and the NT. He is the original man, the origin of all men.

That first man, Adam, sinned and when he sinned he brought sin and the enslaving power of sin into the world. The immediate consequence of this sin for Adam was that death entered the world through his sin. God did what He said He would do, "If you eat of that tree, you will surely die." He died spiritually as he was alienated and expelled from the presence of God and in due time he died physically.

But that isn't the end of the fall. There is more going on here than just Adam's disobedience.

God always deals with us in terms of solidarity. God made us in solidarity with Adam, and until we understand that we don't understand ourselves and why we sin.

God is a covenant making and covenant keeping God. God deals with us not just individually but corporately, as seen in Israel in the OT and in the church in the NT. Every covenant in Scripture (Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and the new covenant) has a covenant head, and all those who belong to the head are dealt with according to the terms of the covenant.

This kind of representative headship is not foreign to us. We see it all around us in the three spheres of sovereignty God instituted for life of earth, the state, the church and the home. Each has a head that is responsible and held accountable by God and whose actions affect the rest.

God entered into a covenant with the first man, Adam, the representative man, the covenant head of our race and He named our race man, adam. When he sinned, all mankind inherited the corruption of sin. We are all in Adam, we are all guilty and we all sin. In Romans 5:19 Paul says by Adam's sin we were made sinners.

Sin came upon the entire world through the sin of one man, and the proof that all men are fallen sinners is that all men die. The wages of sin is death.

Some people try to say we sin because we follow Adam's bad example. We sin and that is what makes us sinners, the only reason we die is because we sin, not because there is something inherent in human nature causing us to sin.

But this view doesn't explain why babies in the womb or newborn infants *die* who haven't voluntarily sinned yet. Six times in the end of Romans 5 Paul say one sin is the cause of death. Furthermore, this view destroys the hope of the contrast Paul makes that we died because of the sin of one, so also we live because of the obedience of one. Jesus' righteousness isn't just an example for us to follow, it is imputed to us.

If Adam is only an example then Christ is only an example.

Paul understands that this solidarity or covenantal headship is the normal pattern of God's dealings with the sons of men and more importantly, our entire redemptive history and our redemptive hope is anchored in the principle of representation and imputation.

Covenantal headship explains why the fall didn't happen after Eve's sin, but after Adam's sin. He was the head, he was responsible. Eve sinned against her husband, Adam sinned against God. That's why God went to Adam first in the Garden.

Covenantal headship explains total depravity and why we are not born tabula rosa, a blank slate. We were in Adam and his sin was imputed to us. This text explains me and everything. This is why we should never be shocked or surprised by the sins of our wives, husbands, children, friends. Parents don't need to be embarrassed by their kids sins, everyone already knows.

It explains how we are conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5).

It explains why infants die before ever sinning themselves.

It explains how Adam is a type of Christ, a pattern, a foreshadowing.

It explains how Jesus can die for us in our place and impute His righteousness to us as the Second Adam, as the covenantal head of the new covenant in His blood, as the covenantal head of all who are saved.

I Corinthians 15:21-22 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

Romans 5:19 For 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.

We became sinners because Adam sinned, and we become righteous because of Christ's obedience, not because we personally obeyed, but because our covenant head, Jesus, obeyed.

If we reject the headship of Adam, then we reject the headship of Christ. Paul holds these two ideas very closely together throughout this passage.

Furthermore, the imputation of Adam's sin explains why Paul goes off on a tangent in vss. 13-14.

Vss. 13-14

Romans 5:12-14 *Therefore, just as* sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— 13 for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

Em dash signals an interruption in Paul's thought. Instead of finishing his thought that started "Therefore, just as," after which we expect a "so then." But that doesn't come until vs. 18.

Romans 5:18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

This is a glimpse into the human side of Paul, and how his mind works. Something comes to his mind so he interrupts himself to address it.

Paul realizes Adam's sin was a transgression against an explicitly stated specific commandment of God. He had one law to obey and he disobeyed it.

But after Adam there was no Law to transgress so was there sin? There is a theological issue going on here regarding the difference between sin and transgression.

Transgressions are sins against the Law, and since there is no Law, did sin exist before the Law?

Clearly there was sin because there was death. They died because of their inherited sin and guilt. There was an implicit moral law in our consciences and all of creation testifies to it. They and we are without excuse even if we don't know the Law.

Before the Law God could be known and worshipped, and we are culpable for what we know of Him and ourselves. We all have a conscience that convicts us.

5:15-17, Humanity 2.0, the tale of the Second Adam.

The damage Adam did to the human race is fatal, and it affects every single human being in every place on this planet, for all of time.

Is there any hope? Is there a remedy? Can the damage be undone? Another historical person, the second Adam, the God-man Jesus Christ came to earth to undo what Adam did. Adam plunged the entire race into universal sin and the only hope for mankind is a universal Savior from sin.

Here is the good news. God caused the terrible rebellion of Adam to lead to the most glorious revelation in the world, Christ on a cross.

Understand how big this is. Jesus is not just a tribal deity. Jesus is not just God of Christians, and Muslims have their god and Hindus have their god. Adam is the father of all mankind, of the entire human race. In Adam all mankind sins, in Christ all mankind is saved from sin.

Now Paul shows us how Jesus is much more superior to Adam in three ways.

First, verse 15 shows Christ's grace is more powerful than Adam's sin.

Notice the contrast is between the death of many and the free gift of grace to many. And of the two, how much more is grace. Jesus is the source of all grace, and His grace is greater than death.

Death is the earned natural consequence of sin. Grace is a free, undeserved gift. The gift is nothing like Adam's sin. Jesus is much more powerful to save than Adam is to destroy.

This means we can have victory over all our sins. Christ's grace is sovereign grace, conquering grace, it conquers everything in its path.

Second, verse 16 shows a difference of magnitude.

Paul shows us the magnitude of Christ's obedience contrasted with the magnitude of Adam's disobedience. One man's sin led to judgment and condemnation. But glory to God, one man's obedience leads to justification and righteousness.

If you diminish sin, you diminish salvation. If you make sin less of a problem, you make grace less of a big deal.

One sin did massive damage, one gift of grace from Jesus undoes all the damage. Adam committed one sin. Christ died not just for Adam's sin, but for all subsequent sin.

Guilt by one sin brought universal condemnation, grace by one man's obedience justifies us from countless offenses.

Millions of people are counted righteous as Christ's imputed success and obedience delivers us from Adam's imputed failure.

Third, verse 17 shows us a contrast of outcomes.

Adam ushered in the reign of death, Christ ushered in the reign of life. We are restored to Adam's position before the fall, but also to much more, we reign with Christ.

This is the great climax, the triumph of life over sin and death and Satan. Life shallows up death. Death where is your sting, where is your power, where is your victory? The rule and reign of death is overthrown. Christ is greater than Adam. The righteousness of Christ overcomes the sin of Adam.

We might ask how can what one man did six thousand years ago affect me today. But the hope and assurance is that what one man did two thousand years ago can affect me today even far more.

Implications and application.

Identity is a big deal these days. Who am I? Who do I want to be? Who do I want to identify with? Who are you?

We are all of Adam, Humanity 1.0. That is the old man, the old way, the old mankind. Have we transferred from Adam to Christ, Humanity 2.0?

What reigns in our hearts, sin and death, or grace and Christ's righteousness? Christ's one righteousness covers every single sin, failure and condemnation. Every sin of every child wipe out most wicked sin, over many transgression

Do you believe the righteousness of Jesus is enough for everyone of your sins? Jesus says come to me all you weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.

Glory to God, we who were dead by another man's sin and disobedience, have been saved by another man's righteousness and obedience. Thanks be to God for the victory that is ours in Christ. Salvation belongs to the Lord, and it is His free gift.