

¹²So then, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, so also death spread to all people because all sinned. ¹³For even before the law was given, sin was in the world. Now, sin is not charged to one's account if there is no law, ¹⁴and yet death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those whose sin was not like the transgression of Adam, who is a pattern of the one who was to come.

¹⁵But the gracious gift is not like Adam's trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of this one man, it is even more certain that God's grace, and the gift given by the grace of the one man Jesus Christ, overflowed to the many!

¹⁶And the gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin, for the judgment that followed the one trespass resulted in a verdict of condemnation, but the gracious gift that followed many trespasses resulted in a verdict of justification.

¹⁷Indeed, if by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through the one man, it is even more certain that those who receive the overflowing grace of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ!

¹⁸So then, just as one trespass led to a verdict of condemnation for all people, so also one righteous verdict led to life-giving justification for all people. ¹⁹For just as through the disobedience of one man the many became sinners, so also through the obedience of one man the many will become righteous.

“Why are you the way you are?” This is what one sister said to another as they talked on the phone. The sister being scolded had just thrown a verbal grenade into the family, accusing her parents on Facebook of abuse as a child. She blamed her dad for not working hard enough to provide for the family with lavish vacations and name-brand clothes like her friends' dads had. She blamed her mom for nagging her about all kinds of little things and controlling her life. At sixteen this might have felt understandable or at least expected from a teenager. But she was twenty-six. And instead of talking to her parents about her perceived trauma, she decided to put her parents on blast for the world to see.

Her sister called to get her to apologize. “Just take it down and go talk with Mom and Dad,” she pleaded. But this was a crusade to prove her victimhood and show her parents just how much they had ruined her life. So, the last text the concerned sister sent was, “Why are you the way you are?”

What makes you you? Who are the influences that have had an effect, both for good and bad, in your life? I'm sure you could name parents and teachers and role models. Maybe you could point to people you've never met before, like authors and podcasters and opinion writers.

But spiritually speaking, why are you the way you are? That's the question we want to answer today.

Our three lessons today tie together so tightly. On one end, you have Adam and Eve and the fall into sin. On the other end, you have Jesus being tested in the wilderness by Satan. And here in the middle, Romans five serves as a bridge connecting Adam and Jesus together. And these two accounts explain why we are the way we are, both the good and the bad.

Let's start with Adam. God had created the entire world for Adam and then made him and placed him into that creation. He gave Adam a helper too from his very flesh: Eve. The world was perfect and the man and woman had a complete and right relationship with God.

But Satan disguised himself as a serpent and came to the man and woman. He started his deception slowly, targeting Eve: "Has God really said, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" Eve responded that God had warned them not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil or death would come upon them. Then the Devil stepped up his attack: "You certainly will not die. In fact, God knows that the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." And there was the Devil's version of the story. It was not death on the other side of that door. It was knowledge, a secret God was keeping from them. Eat of it, and life will not get worse. It will get better!

Of course, Eve ate the fruit, and gave it to her husband with her. As the fruit of death touched their lips, the world changed. They felt ashamed of their nakedness, putting on clothes of fig leaves to cover up. They felt disdain for each other, as Adam blamed the woman he was made to cherish. And their relationship with God was ruined. No longer did they welcome him into their home. They were afraid of him. They hated his presence.

Life would be different now. The children born to Eve and all her daughters would not enter into the world in pure joy, but in pain and fear. The perfect relationship between men and women would turn into a power struggle full of misunderstood or ignored responsibilities. And for Adam and his sons? Work would be hard and unpleasant. The things they would do would not always bring them fulfillment and appreciation. And ultimately, because of their sin, Adam and Eve would die. Paul writes to the Romans today, "So then, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, so also death spread to all people because all sinned."

Adam and Eve's sin didn't belong to them alone. They gave it to their kids, and their kids gave it to their kids. Down the family tree sin flowed, down to us. Sin was not foreign to us at birth. It wasn't even foreign to us at conception. No one had to teach us sin. It was in us. It was a part of us.

This original sin did not stay benign within us. It showed itself. It did so in the selfishness of our first years. It did so in the way we mistreated siblings and friends. Sinful from birth. Sinful from conception. And sin reigned over us. It wired the way we thought and talked. It controlled

the way we treated others and even ourselves. To say that we are good people who sometimes sin would be dishonest. Sin is a part of us, down to our very nature. We are sinners. We are the children of Adam rotten to the core.

And what does being children of Adam bring us? You may not be wearing fig leaves this morning, but you did wear clothes. All of us would be incensed if someone walked in naked. And the person most affected would be the embarrassed, naked parishioner. We carry shame, even when fully clothed. We do not like what we find in the mirror. We get frustrated at ourselves when we say something or do something stupid. We often wish we were something better than what we are.

Likewise, sin affects our relationships. Even the best ones are often tinged by sin. Spend enough time with someone, and you'll find something they do or say that bothers you. And so, we shouldn't be surprised when marriages end in divorce, when families stop talking, and when friendships fizzle. It's not what we want. It's not good. But it is what stems from sin.

Finally, sin affects our relationship with God. When we sin, we fear his wrath. We fear the consequences that flow from trespass, which are death and hell. It's been said that death is the strongest preaching of sin. The pastor can stand up here and tell you how you've fallen short of his glory and deserve only wrath and punishment, but many are not sobered by that fact until they stand before the casket of a loved one and reflect on those words: "The wages of sin is death."

This is what Paul is describing to the Romans. We were in a bad place with God because sin entered the world through Adam, and death came through sin. Adam, our disobedient father, has had an influence, hasn't he? We are broken and everything around us shattered because he partook of the fruit of rebellion. And because he ate, we eat too.

But Adam and Eve are not the only recipients of God's fierce anger in the garden that day. The Lord God also has some choice words for the serpent, maybe the most important words of all the Old Testament: "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all the livestock, and more than every wild animal. You shall crawl on your belly, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you will crush his heel." Did you hear it? God's promise to Satan is to not allow mankind to stay allied to the deceiver forever. God will send a champion, one who will come away with a bruised heel and a vanquished foe.

This is the very first promise of the Savior, thousands of years before Christ Jesus would enter into the flesh to live among us and for us. But let's fast-forward those few thousand years to the Gospel reading. Jesus had just started his earthly ministry when he was swept off to the wilderness by the Devil. For forty days and forty nights he's tested. "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread," the Devil says. "If you are the Son of God, throw

yourself down. For it is written: He will command his angels concerning you. And they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone,” he again offers, this time with supposed scriptural support. “I will give you all of these things, if you will bow down and worship me,” Satan finally presents. But Jesus is unmoved. No matter how hungry he is, he will cling to God’s word. No matter how powerful he is, he will not test his Father. And no matter how much he’s offered, he will bend the knee to no one besides the Almighty.

But what’s the point? Do you see it? How Jesus steps into the same shoes as Adam? How the Devil comes to tempt with lies and deceptions? How the fruit is hung out there, just close enough to grab ahold of? But there is no eating, no fall, and no ruin. Sin would not be Jesus’ master, this day or any other. The champion had come, the one who would do what Adam could not do, and credit that work to Adam and Eve and all their children. He would go to war with temptation for thirty-three years, winning each and every round. Then our sacrifice for sin would lay his life on the altar of the cross. As Paul writes, “For just as through the disobedience of one man [Adam] the many became sinners, so also through the obedience of one man [Jesus] the many will become righteous.”

You stand today dressed not in the fig leaves of sin, but in the robe of Christ’s righteousness. That’s what he’s done for you. That’s the influence that he has had on you. Yes, you are a sinner. That’s your father Adam that’s in you. But you also are a saint. That’s Christ’s work for you and in you. Dear Christian, you are a sinner-saint, every hour of every day. Why are you the way you are? Because your disobedient father brought death and your obedient Savior brought life. Put to death that Old Adam with repentance and put on that new self in Christ through his forgiveness. Amen.