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The Roman Road: A Deadly Silence

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Romans 5:12-15 (ESV)

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 — for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 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.

But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.

Genesis 3:1-9 (ESV)

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

When we speak about a person's long-lasting impact on the world, we're talking about that person's legacy. We're talking about their mark, their long-term footprint in the world. All of us, in a sense, will leave a legacy. And it's something we should talk about more often in a

world that's so fixated on what's happening in the now and the pleasure in the present. We don't talk enough about how impactful our whole lives are, the legacy of our whole lives.

But when we look back in families and in our heritage, a lot of times the idea of legacy surfaces in our minds. I could tell you a lot about the legacy of my two grandfathers. I have one whose name was Freddie. He was actually not my dad's real father. He died at age 55. But I got to know Freddie, my father's stepfather, and Freddie helped us on the farm a lot. He wore bib overalls, and one of the things I really remember about Freddie was his jovial, happy attitude and his carrying around a pouch of Red Man in his bib overalls, and he would, at different times, suggest that I try a little Red Man, a little piece of chewing tobacco, and he said it would grow hair on my chest, and I can still feel his presence.

And then my mother's father, we called Papa. His name was Thor Allen Abrahamson. He came over from Sweden. He was born there in 1906 and came across when he was 14 years old, and came through Ellis Island in 1920. At that time his name is engraved on the wall out there. He worked his way to Chicago, found a lady named Helen, married her, and they had three daughters. One of them went to Iowa State and met my father, and they got married. And that's how we live in Iowa. Just a legacy that both of them have left their mark on the earth.

And what Paul is describing here in Romans, now chapter five is he zooms back and he describes the legacy of two men, two men that greatly impact the world still today because of their legacy. In Romans five, verse 12, he begins describing the legacy of one of these men when he says, "This sin, this falling short of God's intent for us, this falling short of God's glory, the brokenness of our world entered the world through one man." This is his legacy. Sin. Brokenness entered the world through this man. That's his legacy, death through sin. And in the same way, death now has come to all people. We're all downstream from this man because all have sinned. He's describing the legacy of this man, and now he names him. He says, "For sin indeed was in the world before the law." This was before the time of Moses, when God gave the Ten Commandments there and then all the Old Testament law. Sin indeed was in the world before then and before the law was given. But sin is not counted where there is no law, yet death reigned from here's this man, Adam to Moses over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, but sin entered the world through one man named Adam.

What do we know of this Adam? This is the first one created by God. Some say we evolved. Some say we came from, uh, one little cell somewhere and evolved into crawling creatures,

and then maybe swimming creatures, and then different kinds of creatures and then upright creatures. But the Bible tells a different story. It says that God created the first man. He fashioned him together from the dust of the ground. And then he breathed into his nostrils the very breath of life, and man became a living being. He was made in the image of God. It says he made them in his image, and male and female. But first he made the first man, and he gave him life and the Lord God. Genesis two, eight through ten says, "planted a garden in the east in Eden. And there he put this man that he had formed, the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground, trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. And in the middle of the garden were the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And there was a river watering the garden that flowed from Eden. From there it was separated into four headwaters."

We're getting a picture here of the beginning of all things. This is the source, the genesis of all things. And God creates one man, and from this man would come all of life. This is the head person at the headwaters we're seeing. This is the source. That's what's being described here. And the Lord God took this man, and he put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man. You're free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For when you eat from it, you will surely or certainly die.

What has God done here? He's created someone in his image. He's given him responsibility as the first person to care for part of creation that God has put him in, and he's given him some basic, simple instructions of things to do, things not to do. And he's told him, there's danger here, there's death here. Death is lurking around. It makes me wonder how much truth there is to the old adage, "men are like trucks. They drive better with a load to carry." After God created Adam, he put him in the garden to work it and care for it. He called him to a responsibility, a load to carry, and he gave him some instructions about how to protect the environment he was in. Protect it from the ravages of death, from the evil that was lurking there. Men are like trucks. We drive better when we take on responsibility. We're designed by God to do this.

I don't know if you've watched as men retire. Many of them lose their way. Trucks that don't have a load on them, they're harder to drive. They bounce around the road. They end up in the ditch more often, but when they have a load on them, they drive easier. And men do better. When we have a responsibility on our not overloaded, but not underloaded either, we're designed to take on responsibility.

Author Stu Weber, who wrote "Four Pillars of a Man's Heart," talks about these things that are designed in men. There's a responsible manager in the heart of every man. There's a protector in the heart of every man. Then we see that this man, first of all, created to do this, wasn't created to do it alone. God said, "It's not good for him to be alone." So the Lord God said, "I'll make a helper suitable for him," and created Eve to be a partner with him. And we're to live in community. And there's a friend and a lover, a caretaker, a partner in the heart of every man. And so we see these things about Adam, that here he is, the first man who's created by God, given the responsibility at the head of all civilization, the head of all humanity. It's a heavy load that he's put there on him. Solomon would observe this later in life. Wise man, "I have seen the task that God has given the children of Adam to keep them occupied." We all are given responsibilities this side of heaven to care for and to manage. And Adam was just the same as us.

And then we read Genesis three. "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals in the Old Testament." The serpent was a picture of confusion and deception and chaos. He was more crafty than any of the other wild animals. And he said to the woman, "Did God really say, if you want to create confusion in the world, you question what God has revealed to us to be true." And this is exactly what the serpent was doing, the evil one was doing to Eve. "Did God really say," how many times has this question been asked in human history? God has given his word. He spoke very clearly to Adam, and very quickly after that there was evil in the world questioning what God said. And it's been going on ever since. "Did God really say, you must not eat from any tree in the garden," twisting the words of God just a little bit, just twisting the words a little bit? And the woman said to the serpent, "you may eat fruit, we may from any tree in the garden. But God did say, you must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden. You must not touch it." She adds her own little bit to the scriptures here. She twists them a little. Now see, she's in a conversation, debating there. They're not actually going back to learn what God said. They're just sort of arguing over it. "You must not touch it," she said. "Or you will die," or "you will not certainly die." Now we have an outright lie from the serpent. "You will not certainly die." The serpent said to the woman, "For God knows when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you'll be like God." This was his great temptation. Lucifer, the star of the morning, wanted to be like God and was cast from God to the earth. And of course, in this serpent working here is the evil one, the deceiver, the liar lying to Eve. "Your eyes will be opened. You'll be like God, knowing good and evil." And he had her.

"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it." Adam. Where are you, man? Have you ever wondered about Adam during this time? Adam was the responsible one called by God to care for the garden, instructed by God not to eat from this tree? Certainly. He told Eve about that. But where is he now? "Adam. Come on, man, where are you?" She took some and ate it. "And she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it." We're talking here about Adam's deadly silence. There is an old saying that describes Dietrich Bonhoeffer's philosophy in the time of Nazi Germany. And the saying is this silence in the face of evil is itself evil. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act. God will not hold us guiltless.

You know, in many churches in the world we have a confession time. And in that confession, many churches around the world say this. "We have sinned against you in thought, word and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone." Could the first sin really have been the deadly silence of Adam shirking his responsibilities, given him by God, standing there in the face of evil and doing nothing? Could the first sin be his passivity as Eve was being tempted, wrestling with the devil and this, this man who's created to be a warrior, a defender, a manager of the realm shrinks back and sins by what he leaves undone.

Notable things about Adam just to pay attention to. God had clearly spoken to him. He took the man, put him in the garden, and commanded him, "you're free to eat from any tree, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For when you eat from it, you know the risks." Adam. God told them to, "you will certainly die." So many people question things. God has clearly told us in His Word. Is there a heaven? Is there a hell? Did Jesus come? Is there really only one way to God? God had clearly spoken to Adam. We also see he was right there with Eve when the woman saw the fruit of the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eye, and desirable for gaining wisdom. She took some and ate it, and she gave some to her husband who was with her. "Imhar." The Greek word is "imhar," with her, it denotes physical presence, very close physical presence. God had clearly spoken to Adam about what was right and wrong. He was right there with Eve and he was silent, not like God. He was made in the image of God. And God speaks into confusion. He speaks into chaos. We see it from Genesis chapter one. "Darkness was hovering over the surface of the deep." The Spirit of God was hovering there. It was chaos. It was darkness. And God said, "let there be light," and there was light. And you and I are designed to speak into chaos, to speak into confusion, to speak into corruption and bring light.

And Adam stood there when confusion was reigning and the serpent was questioning exactly what God has said. And Eve was getting deceived, and he stayed silent. And not only did he stay silent and passive, but then he reached out and ate, and the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked. Now they're vulnerable, now they're insecure. Why do we wear clothes, friends? Because of Adam. They were naked. They sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

The man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord among the trees, the still insecure, still nervous, hiding in darkness. Because now there's shame in their lives. They violated the ways of God. But the Lord God called notice to the man. Sin entered the world through one man. He called to the man, where are you? Singular masculine. The Lord God called to the man. Here is Adam's legacy. Sin and death entered the world and has reigned from the transgression, the one transgression of Adam. He only had one law to obey, and because of his trespass, death has reigned through that one man all the way to you and I. Today, we're still experiencing the legacy of Adam.

And as by this one man's disobedience, we've all been made sinners. We all have a rebellious nature against God. Adam's legacy is powerful, friend. It's powerful. But there's a stronger one. There's a better one available. And Paul now moves on to describe another man. And when he says in Romans 5:15, "but the gift is not like the trespass," this violation of Adam. For if many died by the trespass of one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to many? There's a new legacy available for you and I to step into if we want to. Friends, there's a new opportunity for us. We don't have to live in the shadow of Adam, but we can step into the shadow of the second Adam known as Jesus. For God so loved the world that he sent his one and only son. And what did he come to do? Friends. He came to pay the penalty for our sin, to step in and absorb death for us so that we might have life.

Two legacies. Friends whose shadow are you going to stand in? It's our choice, friends. We can stay in the shadow of Adam and be in darkness and trapped in our sin. Or we can step into the shadow of Jesus, be invited into new life, the forgiveness of sins. "But as many as received him, to them he gives the right to become children of the Most High God. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We were declared just innocent before God through the shed blood. The death of Jesus. Have you opened your heart to him?

Friends, legacies are powerful. You want to get caught up in the legacy of Jesus so that you can leave a legacy of light for the people in your wake as well. Let's pray together. Father, thank you for this chance to look into your Word, which teaches us so much about our lives, about our history, about who we are. Thank you for sending Jesus to overtake the shadow of Adam and bring us into your glorious light. It is in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.