

Romans 5:12-15

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!

Gracious Gift

I.

She reached out her hand, but he just stood there, not moving a muscle. It was as if his muscles were frozen; his lips were frozen; his will was frozen. He didn't lift a finger to help. He didn't open his mouth to offer advice. He just watched. The woman's hand got closer and closer to the branches. The fruit looked so delicious! She picked a piece and took a bite.

Paul explained to Timothy: "It was not Adam who was deceived, but it was the woman who was deceived and became a transgressor" (1 Timothy 2:14, EHV). Why did he just stand there? God had given him the directive to be the head of the household, so why didn't he fulfill his obligations and take control of the situation? Why didn't *he* take over the conversation with the Devil who was disguised as a snake, since he was not deceived? It makes for a nice academic question, but we can really never figure out the answer. One thing is clear, however; *Adam* gets the blame for the first sin, not Eve. Paul says it clearly in our text: "Sin entered the world through one man and death through sin" (Romans 5:12, EHV). To make sure that everyone understood him correctly, Paul calls that sin: "The transgression of Adam" (Romans 5:14, EHV).

There is a legal term that could be used to describe Adam's inaction: depraved indifference. Depraved indifference can be described as "so wanton, so deficient in a moral sense of concern, so lacking in regard for the life or lives of others, and so blameworthy as to warrant the same criminal liability as that which the law imposes upon a person who intentionally causes a crime" (<https://bit.ly/2YMnEW1>).

God had said not to eat from the fruit of the tree, because that would bring death. Adam watched in depraved indifference before he, himself, took the fruit from Eve and ate, too. All of that made Adam just as blameworthy as Eve. According to *God's* standards, he was so deficient in a moral sense of concern that he ended up with the blame for being first. Lack of action was a sin against God's standard of perfection. Adam—irrationally—*chose* death.

God's one command to Adam and Eve was to not eat from the fruit of that one tree—a command they quickly violated. From Adam to Noah to Abraham to Moses, God's moral law was not written down. What about those people? Paul writes: "For 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" (Romans 5:13, EHV).

What does this mean? Does Paul mean to say that people between the time of Adam and Moses could not or would not be punished by God because there was no written moral

code? No. Paul goes on: "...and yet death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses" (Romans 5:14, EHV). Death was the chief consequence—and the easiest consequence to see—for sin. Each Old Testament figure, after the Bible tells about them, concludes with: "and he died."

II.

"So also death spread to all people because all sinned" (Romans 5:12, EHV). That brings us to you and me. There are consequences for sin. Chief among them is death. Every one of us will die some day. *All* have sinned.

The Psalmist David wrote: "Certainly, I was guilty when I was born. I was sinful when my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5, EHV). From Adam and Eve onward, every human being has inherited sin, and thus has inherited death, as well. But it doesn't just stay there at the sin each of us inherited from our parents. We go on. Depraved indifference or active participant, you are part of the all.

Have you noticed someone caught up in the moment of sin and just stood there and watched? Were you like Adam: muscles frozen, lips frozen, will frozen? Maybe you were too embarrassed to call that person's attention to their sin and how destructive it is. Maybe you thought *your* track record of sin disqualifies you from speaking to someone else about sin. You thought you would look like a hypocrite.

You know that you don't just have depraved indifference as you watch others commit sins around you. Much of the time—*most* of the time—you are an active participant in sin. You know your pet sins. Like a mobster you seek to hide the evidence. Under the bed; in the closet; under cover of darkness. You secret your sins away so that others won't have any opportunity to confront you.

God knows them all. Every single one of us has displayed both depraved indifference and active participation in sin. That is why "Death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses" (Romans 5:14, EHV). Sin has consequences. Adam and Eve lost the image of God—the perfection they had in the beginning; their loss of perfection separated them from God. Sin still separates *you* from God—both your inherited sin and your actual sin. Death is another consequence. Though they lived a much longer lifespan than people today do, Adam and Eve eventually succumbed to death.

III.

"Adam... is a pattern of the one who was to come" (Romans 5:14, EHV). Sin—and death along with it—came through one man, Adam. One man, Christ, would repair what Adam broke. Paul says it this way in another of his letters: "For since death came by a man, the resurrection of the dead also is going to come by a man. ²²For as in Adam they all die, so also in Christ they all will be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:21-22, EHV).

Christ Jesus—the God-man—was born in a special way. Though Jesus was fully human, he was born without the original sin of Adam. The angel explained it to the Virgin Mary: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35, EHV).

Jesus—both truly human and truly God—was able to live completely sin-free. He did not suffer from depraved indifference when those around him were sinning—he pointed out their sin. He did not succumb to the assaults of Satan and slide willingly into sin. He was "tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin" (Hebrews 4:15, EHV).

The mission the Heavenly Father sent Jesus on was to live perfectly, without sin, as no other human being has ever been able to do. Keeping himself perfect and holy and in a right relationship with God, he was then able to be our substitute. Every act of depraved

indifference we ever committed he took on himself. Every secret sin and every attempted cover-up he carried with him to the cross. He paid for them all.

Now that they are paid for, God the Father has something to give in Jesus. “But 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!” (Romans 5:15, EHV).

Salvation is there—full and free—for all people. The grace of God’s gift overflows to the many.

IV.

In Adam we lost real life; we lost the relationship with God. In Christ forgiveness for the sins of Adam through the end of the world have been paid for. The relationship with God has been restored. Live in the gracious gift God has given you. The “gift given by the grace of the one man Jesus Christ, overflowed to the many.” Live a thankful life in that gift.

Yes, you still have a sinful nature. But though you are a sinner you are still a Christian. As a Christian you will not stand by in depraved indifference watching someone continue in a destructive path of sin. James writes: “If anyone among you wanders away from the truth and someone turns him back, ²⁰let it be known that the one who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:19-20, EHV). That is how you live in the gracious gift given by Christ.

Last week we spoke about Medal of Honor recipients and firefighters and rescue workers. They go about their rescue work as the humane thing to do. It is the humane thing to do to save a life.

It is the humane thing to do to show a person the path to heaven in Jesus. It is the humane thing to do to save a person’s soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

Use the gracious gift God has given you, both as you live a joy-filled life in the forgiveness Jesus has given you, and as you share the joy of that gracious gift with others. Amen.