

The Serpents Head is Crushed

(Note: Several months ago, Roger preached on Romans 5, which deals with sin entering the world through Adam and sin being overcome by the love and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This is my take on that passage.)

Romans 5:12-21 (*in part*)

Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin. . . .

Just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

Adam's world.

Kicked out.

From paradise to thorns.

From unity to separation. Separation from God. From his home. From his wife.

A great flaming sword stood between him and the garden. Between him and communion with God. Between him and the Tree of Life.

In an instant, innocence lost.

Forever.

Adam exchanged communion for the fruit of sin: Death. The Tree of Life for a lie. A life of fulfillment for sweat, toil, and thorns.

The taste of rotten fruit was still on his lips.

It left a bitter taste in his mouth.

Sin always does. Bitterness at the deception. Bitterness at the snake. Bitterness

towards his wife.

Instead of the sweet taste of fruit of the Tree of Life he now tasted sweat as it dripped into his mouth. It stung his eyes. It drenched his cloths and made him stench.

In the Garden he had been a Prince. A son of God. The Steward of Creation.

Now he was a failure. At least he thought so. He still felt the sting of judgment. The pain of rebuke. The guilt. The despair.

He had failed God. Failed to attack the snake. Failed to protect his wife. Failed.

And, on those first fateful days outside the Garden, he was confronted with a new enemy: Fear. He had never known it before. The Fear of not being able to provide for his family in a hostile, dangerous world. A world changed by him -- for the worse. A world where he was separated from God's Grace by a thick curtain of Sin.

His Sin. His Failure. His Fall.

At night he wrestled with his Fears. The Fear of death plagued him. How soon would the curse come. Tomorrow? The day after?

Remembering the failure. Over and over again.

So Adam found himself crying in his makeshift pillow. Holding his wife. Paralyzed with Fear. But through his tears, in the darkness of his failure, Adam reached out to grasp God's promise. For while Adam was judged, the Serpent was cursed. The Promise was made -- by God -- that the Serpent's head would be crushed by The Child of Eve.

Adam didn't know how. But he knew his God. And he knew his God would fulfill His promise.

Someday. Sometime. Somehow.

And with that assurance, Adam drifted off to sleep. To face another day of sweat, thorns, the wages of sin. And the Grace of God.

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Jesus' world.

The seed sown by Adam has grown into a grotesque Briar of Hate. The branches on the Briars of Hate are as large as any limb climbed by Jack. Its leaves so thick that they cover the world. They almost blot out the light. Blossoms as black as coal. Fruit of poison. More deadly than any viper. For Sin kills the soul. Forever.

Jesus hangs upon those branches. The branches of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The Tree of Sin. The Tree of Death.

He hangs Judged.

Condemned.

To die.

For all men.

For all sin.

Rejected.

By men.

By his friends.

By the leaders.

Feeling abandoned by God.

But the promise to Adam is about to be fulfilled.

For Jesus is greater than the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

For **He Is** the Tree of Life. Light shined out of Him with such brilliance that it dwarfed the darkness of that horrid, poisonous plant that has engulfed our world.

The pain, fear, and rejection of Adam fell on him. He was nailed to the Tree of

Death. Pierced by the Briars of Hate.

The thorns of Sin tore at His temple. The sweat of Sin dripped into His eyes and mouth. The stench of death enveloped Him.

The sound of rejection reverberated around him. Taunts. Jeers. Blasphemy.

Hell's power in triumph. Hell's disciples jeering. Hell's gates awaiting.

Death awaiting. But Death was in for a surprise.

For a few short hours on Passover Friday the blackness of Sin eclipsed the light of God's love. All creation stood still and watched the spectacle. But, like the eclipse, the light shined out from around the blackness.

Forgiveness and mercy poured out with his blood.

The Tree of Life is greater than the Tree of Death. The Son of Man greater than then Serpent.

Earthquakes. At the cross. In the tombs. At the gates of hell.

In our hearts. As we contemplate the spectacle and the sacrifice.

Jesus is The Way, The Truth, and The Life. His Way is greater than the path of Death. His Truth is greater than The Lie. His Life is greater than Death.

The gates of Hades quiver.

Until the cross, man stood condemned by Adam's sin. Between man and God stood a flaming sword of Judgment. The Judgment on Sin.

The flaming sword of Judgment kept all at bay. None approached.

Until Jesus.

The sword of Judgment fell. Upon Him. He took the blow. For me. For you.

The Serpent's head was crushed by the Rock of Ages. And out of the Rock came living water of love that extinguished the Flaming Sword of Judgment.

As the Sword of Judgment fell, the veil in the temple -- which symbolized our separation from God -- was torn in two. From the top down. God tore it like a kid opening a Christmas present. Like he couldn't wait to get at the new order -- where He could walk beside you and me again.

The curtain of Sin separating God from man was destroyed. By the power of love.

In an instant . . . innocence is restored.

In an instant . . . the curse of Adam is destroyed.

In an instance . . . separation was replaced by communion.

Once again, Man walks with God in the cool of the morning.

Adopted. Chosen. Redeemed. The debt paid in full.

Communion restored.

Too often we treat our opportunity at communion with the same indifference that Adam had to paradise. We are given the opportunity to walk and talk with God, but how often do we partake of that opportunity?

We stand naked before God every time He sees us. Because He can see right through our self-righteousness, good intentions, and proud pronouncements.

At the first Lord's Supper, Peter had Communion with Jesus. Jesus confronted Peter with his sin. For Jesus wants to confront every sinner before they fall. Before they do something that will haunt them for a lifetime.

Jesus told Peter what to do: "Pray that you don't fall into temptation." Peter slept instead. Are you? Are you listening for God's rebuke this morning?

Listen to the still small voice of God at communion. As you examine yourself.

As you remember your failures, fears, and rejection. As you cry into the pillow of your broken dreams.

If you have tasted from the bitter fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil -- the Tree of Sin -- partake now in the Living Water that can wash that bitter taste away.

Partake of the Way the Truth and The Life.

Partake of the Way that overcame the curse of Adam's world.

Partake of the Truth that overcame the Serpent's Lie.

Partake from the Tree of Life that overcame Death.

Jewish legend says that the garments made by God for Adam and Eve were shining white. That sounds right. Because while I come to Him in nakedness, dressed in the fig leaves of my good works, self-righteousness, and good intentions, he desires to cover me with shining garments of white -- his love, mercy and forgiveness.

The thick curtain of sin is destroyed. The promise to Adam is kept. The Serpent head crushed. Communion restored.

Reach out and taste it. The Fruit of Communion. Of God's sacrifice. Of God's love.

Spend some time walking in the Garden with Jesus. The real Tree of Life.