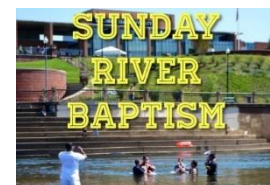


Paradise Lost ... Paradise Regained
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.
February 12, 2023

Text: Romans 5:12-21

Purpose: Through the disobedience of one man, Adam, the entire human race inherited a nature that was fallen and separated from God. Through the obedience of one man, Jesus Christ, the entire human race can be restored if they confess their sin, repent, and accept Jesus Christ as their Lord, Master, and Savior.

A drunk man stumbles into a baptismal service on a Sunday afternoon down by the river. He proceeds to stumble down into the water and stands next to the minister. The minister turns, notices the old drunk and says, "Mister, are you ready to find Jesus?"



The drunk looks back and says, "Yes sir, I am."

The minister then dunks the fellow under the water and pulls him right back up.

"Have you found Jesus?" the minister asked.

"No, I didn't!" said the drunk.

The minister then dunks him under for quite a bit longer, brings him up and says, "Now, brother, have you found Jesus?"

"No, I did not!" said the drunk again.

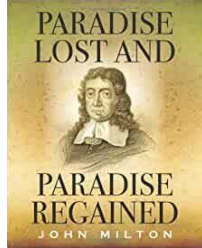
Disgusted the minister holds the man under for at least 30 seconds this time, brings him up and demands.

"For the Grace of God, have you found Jesus yet?"

The old drunk wipes his eyes and pleads, "Are you sure this is where he fell in?"¹

Disobedience and rebellion have been in the heart of men and women since Adam. John Milton in his epic poem pinned these words in his novel, *Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained*.

"Of Man's First disobedience, and the Fruit
Of the Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste
Brought Death into the World, and all our
woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat"²



Thus, begins some say the greatest and most controversial epic non-rhyming poem (which has two parts, some say two poems) in English literature. The first part was published in 1667 and the second part in 1671 by a then blind poet named John Milton (1608 to 1674).



Divided into twelve "books," "Paradise Lost" begins with a war in Heaven instigated by the angel Lucifer who, with the help of many

rebellious cohorts, tries to wrest control of the celestial kingdom from God. Like a school principal putting kids in detention for starting a food fight in the cafeteria, God deals swiftly and severely with the miscreants, hurling them "headlong flaming from the ethereal sky/With hideous ruin and combustion down/To bottomless perdition, there to dwell/In adamant chains and penal fire." That's powerful stuff.³

The rebel angels, now transformed into devils for their treachery, are imprisoned in Hell, a hot, smelly, miserable place, with Lucifer (now named Satan) their lord to dwell in a palace called Pandemonium--the place of all demons. Milton assigns names of heathen gods to the devils and allows three of them to offer advice on the proper course of action for the hell-bound. The bellicose Moloch insists on resuming war with Heaven, the rational Belial believes a peaceful acceptance of their sentence will eventually restore them to God's good graces, and the pragmatic Mammon suggests they should establish and rule Hell as their new dominion rather than return to Heaven as servants. But Satan has another idea--to travel through Chaos (the dark, lifeless void connecting the realms) to Earth to corrupt Man, the new being with whom God plans to replace the expelled angels in Heaven.⁴



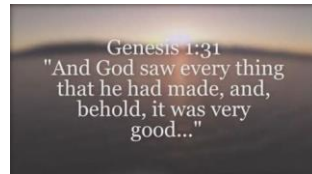
As much as that may sound like science fiction, in many ways it is more real than we want to accept. Paul in the Book of Romans has laid before us, example after example, providing ample proof that man is a sinner. We have examined that theme over the past few weeks. If you were to travel anywhere in the world today, you would find that

to be true in every community around the world. It is within our nature to do wrong instead of doing right.

The doctrine of “Original Sin” teaches that man is a sinner by nature. Man doesn’t become evil by doing wrong, he does wrong because he is evil within himself. Some have described this as “Total Depravity.” This doctrine comes out of Romans 3:10-12 which says, “*There is none righteous, no not one.*”



The sad thing we discover as we read the Bible is that it was not that way in the beginning. That is where John Milton gets his material for his classic book. In Genesis 1:26 we see that man was created by God and when God saw what He had made, He declared it “good.”

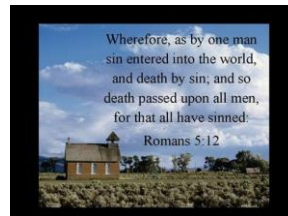


From this perfect paradise, man chose to rebel against God and the perfect world they lived in was now lost. Paradise was Lost – lost for all eternity for all humanity.

PARADISE LOST⁵

I. The Root of Sin

Romans 5:12 says, “*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.*”



Sin entered the human family through the actions of the first man – Adam. He was the one that was created in the image of God. He had been placed in a perfect environment, with

a perfect companion. There was only one restriction placed on the first family. They were not to eat of the fruit of one tree there in the Garden of Eden. God clearly told them that if they were to eat of that tree, then they would surely die. Death had never entered paradise, but the possibility was there if they disobeyed.

What followed has been described as “The Fall” from paradise. It was at this point “sin entered the world.” Romans says, “*through one man, sin entered the world.*” The sins of the father and mother would be passed on to every generation that followed. Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden – forever.

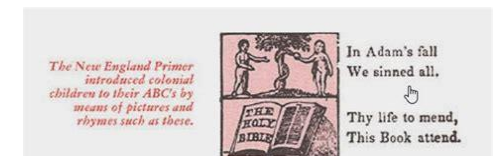


How can you explain the murders you hear about each week? How can you explain the awfulness of war? How can you make sense of drug use, alcohol abuse, child abuse, or corruption? Is there anyone speaking truth today in the halls of our government? Once sin broke through, all Hell broke loose.

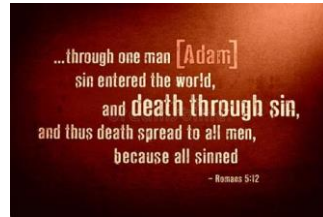
II. The Reality of Sin

The present-day reality of sin is that what happened with Adam still affects us today. Verse 12 re-emphasizes the fact that we **ALL** sinned. Notice it is in the past tense. What Paul is saying is that when Adam fell, we fell too.

Someone once said, “When Adam fell, everyone bruised their knees.” But I believe it is worse than that. When Adam fell, he died spiritually. And likewise, we are dead spiritually.



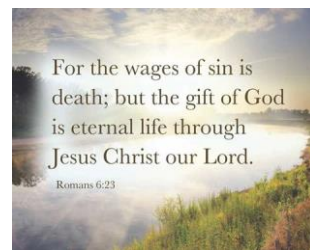
Adam was the representative of all humanity. In the eyes of God, Adam was given the authority to act for the entire human race. Therefore, when he sinned, we were still in his loins and we sinned as well. Adam was driving the bus and when he went off the cliff, we went with him. His sinful condition is passed down to every human that has ever been born. Some people I know do not accept this and say people are basically good. But the scripture describes you and me as sinners by nature. It is as if we are carrying the virus of sin and death. We have a disease and the only cure is Christ.



If you have ever taught children, you know that you have to teach them to do good. You don't have to teach them how to do evil things – they come pre-programmed to do that! Every baby comes wanting to satisfy himself. As they get older, they will fight other kids for a certain toy. Psalm 58:3 says, *“The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.”* That sounds hard, but it is true.

III. The Result of Sin

The results of our sin are summarized in Romans 6:23. *“For the wages of sin is death.”* Romans 5:13 points out that those that caused sin to enter the world were not under the law because the law had not been given. Instead, sin entered the world due to disobedience. That disobedience caused sin to reign from Adam to Moses – even though the law had not been given.

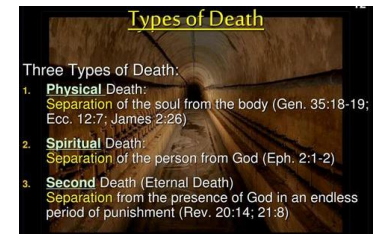


James 1:14-15 says, *“But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”* The tragic result of sin is always death.

Even insurance companies know that death is certain in life. They prepare actuary tables to know how much to charge you for your life insurance policies.

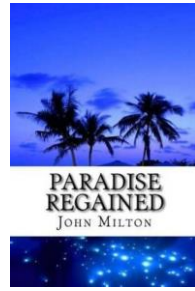
When Adam sinned, it created three different kinds of death.

1. **Spiritual Death.** This is the natural state of all humanity born into this world. Spiritual death is being separated from God. Ephesians 2:1 describes our nature as being dead in trespasses and sin.
2. **Physical Death.** This is the place where we come at the end of our life. Our physical bodies are laid to rest. Hebrews 9:27 says, *“It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.”*
3. **Eternal Death.** This is known as the “second death.” It not only refers to the eternal separation from the presence of God, but it also refers to the eternal torment in the Lake of Fire. This is not meant to scare you, but to inform you that Hell is real and punishment is eternal. 2 Thessalonians 1:8 describes *“flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Revelation 20:14-15 describes hell as a place people go after they are judged. It is described as the second death.



PARADISE REGAINED⁶

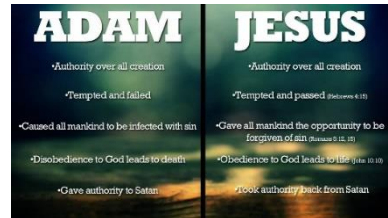
As bad as that may seem, God has provided a way of escape. That way of escape is only found in the person of Jesus Christ. From the foundation of the world, God had a plan for humanity to be restored. Once paradise was lost, but in Christ, Paradise can be regained.



I. Two People Contrasted

In verses 15 to 21, Paul begins to compare two individuals – Adam and Jesus. When God looks down on humanity, he only sees those that are under condemnation related to Adam, or those that are covered under the blood of Jesus Christ. These two men are compared and all of humanity is judged on the basis of these two.

1. Adam the Sinner. Verse 19 tells us that Adam was “*disobedient*” to what God had instructed him to do. Verse 15 describes it as an “offence.” This was the line in the sand placed there by God. When Adam sinned, it affected you and me.



2. Jesus the Savior. Verse 19 tells us that Jesus acted differently than Adam. While Adam disobeyed, Jesus obeyed the Father and gave His life as a ransom for sin. Philippians 2:5-11 says that Jesus took on the form of man, and made himself of no reputation and was obedient to the will of God – to the point of death, even the death of the

cross. Because of His death on the cross, God has exalted Jesus above every other name in heaven or earth. The death of Jesus on the cross opened the door for “whosoever will” to call upon the name of the Lord and be saved.

This is a significant contrast between Adam and Jesus.

Everything Adam lost Jesus reclaimed.

Everything Adam gave away,

Christ purchased at Calvary.

Adam sinned once and brought death to everyone.

Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross gave mankind the opportunity to inherit eternal life.

When Jesus died on the cross, his blood paid the price for all who had ever lived, all who are now living, and all who will ever live. It only becomes effective when you accept it and appropriate it to your life.



II. Two Programs Contrasted

Secondly, we can compare two programs.

1. The Program of Judgment and Death. Verse 15 tells us that because of Adam’s sin “*many be dead.*” This thought is carried further in verses 16-18 and tells us that all are condemned and doomed to die. We are under the wrath of God’s judgment. God’s perfect plan for mankind was paradise. God’s holiness demands that sin be judged.

The purpose of the Law was to act as a mirror. When we look into that mirror, the Law, we see that we are not perfect. We cannot measure up to a perfect standard. We fail and we need a redeemer. The natural man is already

condemned because of their sinful nature. The only redemption is found in Christ.

Jesus came and provides us a program of justification and life.

2. Program of Justification and Life.

When you contrast the life in Adam, you find death and separation. But when you see what tremendous gift we can receive through Jesus Christ, we find that we are now justified and accepted by God through the finished work of Jesus Christ at the cross. Instead of Death, we now have life.

In Adam we are judged, in Christ we are justified.

In Adam we die. In Jesus we live!

In Adam we face the wrath of God.

In Jesus we enjoy the love of God.

In Adam we are separated from God.

In Christ we reign!

In Adam we are servants of sin and Satan.

In Jesus Christ, we are the Sons of God!

Can you see the contrast between the two?

In verse 20, Paul tells us that we are pressed down under the weight of our sin! He tells us that sin abounds. It is as if we are under a large pile of sin and it is pressed upon us. But there is enough grace to make it abound and overflow. While sins may be added, grace covers it all. While we once were drowning in our sin, now we are liberated by the grace of God. Yes, sin abounds, but grace abounds even more!

No matter the sin, Jesus' grace is sufficient to cover it.

III. Two Possibilities are Contrasted

In our life, there are two possibilities. Paul contrasts them – condemnation verses conversion.

Conviction . . .	Condemnation . . .
is from God	is from Satan
leads to life	leads to despair
ends in joy	ends in sorrow
makes us want to change	makes us believe we can't change
leads to new identity in Christ	leads to old identity in sin
brings specific awareness of a sin	brings vague uncertainty about sin
looks to Jesus	looks to self
is a blessing	is a burden

Chart appears in 'What Do You Think You Are?' page 37

1. The Possibility of Condemnation

Verse 21 points out that we are condemned because of our sin. If a person chooses to reject the free offer of eternal life and forgiveness offered through Jesus Christ, then that person will be condemned by God. Choosing not to accept results in condemnation. To refuse to come to Jesus is to choose to remain in death and the conclusion is a choice of hell.

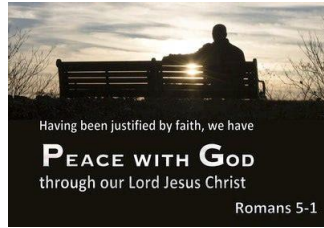
2. The Possibility of Conversion

Verse 21 also tells us of the possibility of salvation. If a lost sinner will simply trust Jesus by faith, he will be saved and justified by the blood of the Lamb. That person will go to Heaven when they leave this world.

Jesus makes the difference possible. In which of these two men (Adam or Jesus) are you placing your eternal destiny? If you are still in Adam, your destination is Hell. If you will turn to Jesus, then you will have a home prepared for you when you die. All of us are under the sentence of death. But those that have trusted Christ will not taste death a second time.

Conclusion

Jesus has given us a far greater gift than Adam ever will. God knew we would not be able to save ourselves. He sent His One and Only Son, Jesus Christ as our sin bearer. On that cross of Calvary, we find peace, forgiveness, and restoration. Jesus is the only way of salvation. If you have never claimed Him as your own, do it today.



LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹ Micky's Funnies – A Classic Funny, Dec. 6, 2022 (forwarded by Julie Scott)

² *Paradise Lost* by John Milton.

³ Book review on Amazon.com by Stephen Pletico of London, Ontario, Canada. Accessed Aug. 13, 2005

⁴ Book review on Amazon.com by A.J. in Maryland. Accessed Aug. 13, 2005

⁵ Sermon Notebook – Romans 5:12-14, *Paradise Lost* – outline

⁶ Sermon Notebook – Romans 5:15-21- How Paradise was regained – outline