

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

*Lesson: Gen. 2: 15-18; 3: 17-20*

*The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." ... And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.*

In Christ Jesus, the second Adam whose obedience completely swallowed up the disobedience of the first Adam, so that there may be everlasting righteousness for all, dear fellow redeemed:

The first Adam, made in the image of God failed miserably. The woman whom God gave him, over whom he was to function as the spiritual head of the home was without his oversight in the time of temptation. Oh, he evidently gave her an additional rule – *"Do not even touch the forbidden fruit."* Good advice, to be sure, but the love of God for us is the power, which alone empowers us against all temptations to evil, even in the perfect state prior to the fall.

Instead of Adam being there to speak as the mouthpiece with the voice of the loving God to his wife, it was her voice that was listened to by him, which directly contradicted the voice and command of God. Adam ate and brought sin and condemnation to all of his descendants. The question is often raised – what if Adam would not have eaten the forbidden fruit. Of course we really do not know. Is it possible that the first woman would have eventually died and God would have made another from another of Adam's ribs? – with the result that Adam's descendants would not have inherited sin. Notice that Adam's wife did not cause the earth to be cursed with her sin, only Adam, since he was formed from the dust of the ground and as a result the ground was cursed.

In a sense it is dangerously foolish to imagine answers to such hypotheticals, but we do know that God squarely places the responsibility of original sin upon Adam. The Apostle, referring in the context to the first Adam, tells us: “by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners”. And “one trespass led to condemnation for all men.” The universality of the condition of being sinful and the universality of the judgment unto condemnation are both traceable to that first Adam.

So as you hear the curse of Adam upon you today receiving the ashes upon your forehead: “you are dust, and to dust you shall return”, you are called to account for your own sinfulness. You might think that it is unfair that just because Adam sinned you have been conceived and born in sin. But fairness has nothing to do with it. It is a fact and you do not have an answer for it in yourself. Its symptoms and its consequences are all your own, period.

If you inherit some genetic malady and then declare to the diagnosing doctor that it is unfair, you cannot escape the fact that you have inherited it. Whatever symptoms it carries cannot be transferred back to your parents. Whatever treatment there may be for it cannot effectively be transferred to your parents. Whatever miserable consequence for it cannot be transferred to your parents to bear alone. The fact remains you have the genetic malady, no amount of whining or screaming about its unfairness will make it disappear.

Adam did eat what he was told not to eat lest he die. Death entered him and he was condemned and all who would descend from him would receive the same. But God said, He would provide the way of escape from that condition. The woman, apart from a man, would have a descendant that would be holy. He would produce the holiness demanded from all the descendants of Adam, but could never be achieved by them. This holy descendant of woman would bring life and immortality to all people. Adam understood that promise very well and therefore called his wife, who had given him the forbidden fruit to eat, “Eve”, which means the mother of all the living!

The holy life of obedience to the Law of God would be lived for all people and sacrificed for the sins of all people. In this holy descendant of the woman, all sinners would be justified. This second Adam would produce that “one act of righteousness” which “leads to justification and life for all men.” It was one continuous act of obedience to the Creator God lived for all people all the way to the point of stepping into the death deserved by all people on account of their sin.

You who are dust and to dust you shall return, a second Adam has arrived for you so that from dust you shall rise again. That second Adam produced a holy life of absolute obedience for you and died the death, even the eternal death for all your sins, so that you are justified before your Creator God. You are declared holy and righteous on account of the second Adam.

Do not waste your time cursing the first Adam. Rather rejoice and praise the second Adam. Our loving God did not abandon us in our accursed state. He became a curse for us, so that we might receive the benefit of His obedience, namely His everlasting righteousness and eternal life.

In great shame and deep humility wear your ashes in recognition of your sinful condition inherited from that one act of disobedience. But in great joy and thankfulness wear your cross in recognition how the one act of obedience in the life and death of the woman's Seed has brought life and immortality to you. The wickedness of the first Adam is no match for the surpassing righteousness of the Second. Yes, even the first Adam shall rise from the dust of the ground and stand before God justified forevermore through faith in the Woman's Seed for the sake of that pure and holy Seed, the second Adam. Amen.