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SERMON LIV.

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**THE IMPUTATION OF ADAM'S SIN AND THE PENALTY, PROV-
ED, AND VINDICATED.**

ROM. 5:12.—*Therefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death
by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*

In treating this subject I shall take occasion to shew,

**I. THAT ALL MANKIND ARE, BY ADAM'S SIN BECOME GUILTY, DEPRAVED
CREATURES.**

**II. SHEW WHAT THAT PUNISHMENT OR DEATH IS, TO WHICH ADAM'S SIN
EXPONETH US.**

**III. VINDICATE THE JUSTICE OF GOD THEREIN, OR SHEW THE REASONABLE-
NESS OF OUR BEING PUNISHED FOR ADAM'S SIN.**

**I. I AM TO SHEW THAT ALL MANKIND ARE, BY ADAM'S SIN, BECOME GUILTY,
DEPRAVED CREATURES.**

If there was nothing but the light of nature, and the common observation of mankind to decide the matter, this melancholy truth would appear too evident for any judicious, unprejudiced person to deny it. The early propensity to sin that is observable in children, evinces the corruption of their natures. But the oracles of truth, which God has given us as the rule of our faith and practice, every where considers and treats us as apostate, guilty creatures. The offers of mercy, the promises of pardon, the necessity of regeneration, of taking away the heart of stone, &c., loudly proclaim that we are polluted creatures, exposed to punishment. But I know of no place in the sacred writings that declares it more expressly than our text and context. The apostle's main design in introducing these words, is to prove the doctrine of justification by grace through the merits of Christ; or rather to remove the prejudices of the Jews against it, by shewing its responsibility. "If (says he, verse 17,) by one man's offence, death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Verse 18: Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." As if he had said, It is granted by all that by the imputation of Adam's sin we are all become guilty before God: can it therefore be thought strange that we should be justified in his sight through the imputation of Christ's righteousness! If God may justly impute the sin of our first parents to us, surely we may more easily suppose, from

* When this sermon was furnished for publication, the author—"the apostle of the West"—was a living minister.

the riches of his grace, that he will impute the merits of Christ's death to believers. If the imputing of Adam's sin be just, certainly the imputation of Christ's righteousness cannot be unjust: "for if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." This being plain by the scope of the apostle's argument, it appears that the words of our text contain a truth or doctrine that was not only received, but also well known and familiar to the people to whom Paul wrote; otherwise it could not be fair arguing. For whatever is brought in as a medium to prove another thing by, is always supposed to be more known, or more generally received than that which it is brought to prove. Therefore it follows that the doctrine of original sin, was well known and generally received by them to whom the apostle wrote. But this well known medium, by which the apostle proves the great doctrine of justification by grace is more particularly stated in the words of our text. The force of the apostle's reasoning runs thus, as if he had said, it is manifest that we are all guilty, or that all have sinned, for death hath passed upon all men, and death was introduced by the sin of one man, viz: Adam. Or, as it is elsewhere expressed, Death is the wages of sin. He goes on to show, verses 13, 14, that it is beyond all dispute, from the death and miseries brought upon all mankind, that we are become guilty through Adam's sin. For until the law, or before the law, sin was in the world; that is, before the law was given to Israel by Moses: But sin, says the apostle, is not imputed, therefore it was for the breach of some law, but it could not be for the breach of the law of Moses, for sin was imputed and punished before the law of Moses existed. Therefore this imputation and punishment must be for the breach of some other law, seeing death, which is the punishment of sin, reigned from Adam to Moses; that is, before the law was given by Moses, sin was punished, therefore it must be for the breach of some other law. He likewise shows that this punishment was for the breach of some law, which all mankind were chargeable with the breach of, whether they had actually in their persons broke it, or not. For, says he, death which is the punishment of sin reigned over, or was inflicted upon them who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression; that is, over infants who died before they had committed actual sin. This must be the meaning of the words: it will not make sense to understand, as some do, that the apostle, by the similitude here mentioned, means that some died whose sins were not similar to Adam's, because they had not, in person, broke a *positive* command in eating the forbidden fruit; for none had sinned in that manner. But the particle (*even*) distinguished those who had sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, from those who had not. Death reigned, *even* over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression; which supposeth that some, even from Adam to Moses, had sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression: therefore it is manifest that the apostle concludes the matter thus; as if he had said, Death is a punishment inflicted for sin, or only on sinners: but we know that many die, or are punished by death, who never committed any actual, or personal sin; therefore it is certain that Adam's sin is imputed to all his posterity. It is beyond dispute that Adam is the one man mentioned in our text, by whom sin is said to have entered into the world, and passed upon all men: for, says the same apostle, 1 Cor. 15:22, "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Nor can the argument for the universal guilt of mankind, be weakened by supposing that the *all* who in the last mentioned text are said to be made alive, must be restricted, seeing all mankind shall not be made alive, or saved by Christ, and that consequently the *all* who in our text are said to have sinned, may likewise be restricted, to signify only some part of mankind. But if it be just with God to impute Adam's sin to any one of Adam's posterity, he may, with equal justice, impute it to every one of them. Moreover, the term *all* must be taken in its universal extent in both these places: for it is evident that the apostle is comparing Adam with Christ, and running the parallel between them, as they were public representatives of their posterity.

It shows that all Adam's natural seed without exception whom he represented, became guilty through his sin. So likewise all Christ's spiritual seed whom he represented, are, without exception, justified by his righteousness. Adam is said to be the figure of him that was to come, verse 14. But I cannot see how, or in what sense, Adam can be said to be a type or figure of Christ, or what likeness there is between them, except in their conveying their different effects to their respective seeds, whom they publicly represented, and were to stand or fall with them. Hence it is evident that all Adam's seed, that is, all that descended from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, or by his fall became guilty, obnoxious creatures. Which brings me,

II. TO SHEW WHAT THAT PUNISHMENT OR DEATH IS, TO WHICH ADAM'S SIN EXPOSETH US.

By that death, which the apostle in our text says passed upon all men, we are to understand all that misery to which Adam himself was exposed by his sin, all that misery which was contained in the penalty of the covenant of works. It is evident that not only natural, but also spiritual and eternal death is included in that threatening Gen. 2:17. In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. It is manifest from the apostle's reasoning that death is not to be confined to bodily pains, or the separation of the soul from the body, which is what we call natural. Sad experience early taught Adam that by his fall he lost the image of God that was stamped upon his soul, and so lost that intimate friendship and communion which he enjoyed while he continued in a state of innocence. He was immediately struck with horror of conscience at the approach of God, he felt himself in a state of alienation from God; whereas before he enjoyed the most friendly and familiar intercourse with him. God was the object of his supreme delight; he could go to him with an holy boldness and humble confidence, as his God, his Father, and his friend. But as soon as he had tasted of the fatal tree, he hid himself from the presence of the Lord, his heart was at once alienated from him. Hence he, with his progeny, became perverse and rebellious, altogether disordered, and filled with vicious principles, and insatiable appetites, which, by sad experience, we may know, arrests us, as it were, by some invisible hand, or as an irresistible torrent, carries us away from God and divine things, to the service of satan and our own lusts. And as the death of the body by no means infers the extinction of the soul, and the scriptures assure us that the soul survives the body, or shall have a future existence; and that by its defilement, it is not only become incapable of delighting in and enjoying God, but by the institution of heaven no unclean thing shall enter there. And as the scriptures of truth know or teach no medium between heaven and hell, eternal life and eternal death, therefore it is evident from these considerations that there is more than a natural death included in the penalty annexed to the law. Moreover, death is here considered as all that evil or misery which was threatened in the first covenant, and consequently there was no other punishment justly due to Adam for his sin than the death here intended. It was to save us from this death that Christ laid down his life—that death from which Christ redeemed his people, is the death to which all mankind are by nature exposed. Whatever Christ procured for believers was forfeited in Adam. The apostle tells us, in the 18th verse of this chapter, that by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; and by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. Experience teaches us that Christ did not, by his death, purchase natural life for his seed, or an exemption from natural death. He restored them, by the merits of his death, to spiritual life, by which their affections are placed upon God and divine things, so that they love and delight in him, and are thereby fitted for the enjoyment of him. And having a well-grounded hope of being delivered from death at the last day, and of dwelling for ever with the Lord, this takes away the sting of natural death. It is evident that the life which was purchased by Christ for his spiritual seed, is opposed to that death to which all Adam's posterity were exposed by his sin. Therefore it follows, that if Adam's seed were not

exposed to eternal death by his sin, none have ground to hope for eternal life through the merits of Christ; and, consequently, that Christ died in vain, seeing he did not free mankind from natural death. And if mankind were not by their apostacy disqualified for eternal life, or the enjoyment of God, they were not spiritually dead; and if they were not spiritually dead, Christ did not purchase spiritual life for them. But these absurdities are too groes to be admitted by any thinking person. Therefore it follows that by Adam's sin in eating the forbidden fruit, all mankind lost their original rectitude, became alienated from God, and were every moment exposed to both natural and eternal death and misery. Which brings me,

III. TO SHOW THE REASONABLENESS OF OUR BEING PUNISHED FOR ADAM'S SIN, OR VINDICATE THE JUSTICE OF GOD THEREIN.

That we may have a clear view of this matter, it is necessary to consider, that God entered into a covenant with Adam, as head and representative of all mankind, in which he promised life to him and his posterity, if he did not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and threatened to inflict death upon both him and them, if he did eat of the forbidden fruit; as we may see in Genesis 2:17, where the Lord says to Adam, "But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This covenant is indeed represented in very brief and general terms, as is common in the Mosaic history. It is not said that Adam should be confirmed in life and perfect rectitude if he did not eat of the forbidden fruit: nor is it said Adam was considered as the representative of his posterity in this transaction. Yet it is evident that both these are implied in this short account of the covenant.

1st. *A promise of life was implied* in the covenant, upon condition of Adam's obedience: for God's threatening death upon this condition, supposes that it was only upon this condition, viz. eating the forbidden fruit, that death was to be feared. Otherwise God must be looked upon as dealing insincerely with Adam, when he threatens him with death in case of disobedience, if his perfect obedience would not have preserved him from it, and have entitled him to life. The threatening of death was a motive to obedience, but it could not be a motive of obedience, if there was not an expectation of some good to be attained, or evil to be avoided by obeying: and it would certainly be unworthy of God to raise Adam's expectation of a benefit, which he should never partake of, even though he perfectly complied with the condition upon which he expected it. Death was threatened to Adam only in case of disobedience; therefore it certainly implies that it would not have been inflicted, if he had not disobeyed. Death was by the covenant made the wages of sin; and it is inconsistent with the justice and goodness of God to suffer the righteous to receive the wages of the wicked. Hence it appears that there was a conditional promise of life contained or implied in the threatening of death.

2ndly. It appears that *Adam represented his posterity* in this covenant transaction; though the Mosaic account of this matter does not expressly mention them, or say that they were concerned in the covenant. It is too manifest to be denied that Adam's posterity do partake of the bitter fruits of his apostacy. We see that sin and death with all its terrors has invaded the whole human race. We see that all the calamities of life, and even death, reign over those who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. But if Adam's posterity had not been included in the covenant made with him, the curse annexed to that covenant could not in justice be inflicted upon them. The miseries which are inflicted upon infants, although innocent creatures, must be the effects of Adam's sin; for death and all that is included in that dreadful word, is the wages of sin; and it is far from God that the righteous should be as the wicked. If Adam did not represent his posterity, so that they sinned in him, how can the Judge of all the earth be said to do right, in inflicting the penalty which was threatened to him, upon them who are not guilty of actual sin. The sentence passed upon Adam af-

ter his fall, is executed upon his posterity, as fully as upon himself. Therefore we must charge God with injustice, or acknowledge that they are guilty or have sinned in proportion to the punishment inflicted upon them. And if they are guilty, or have become sinners, sin and guilt must have descended from Adam to them merely by natural generation, or we must have fallen in him as our legal representative. It cannot be the former, otherwise we derive death and the corruption of our natures from our immediate parents, and we no more died in Adam than in them. Nay, it would follow that more sinful and guilty the parents were, the more sinful the children would be; and the more sanctified the parents, the more holy would be the children. Nay, farther, I cannot see but it would follow that the parents had through the grace of God, got the victory over their sins, and were justified through the righteousness of Christ; but their children would come into the world with as little propensity to sin, and with as supreme a love to God as Adam had when he was first created. But sad experience teaches us that the children, as well of the godly as ungodly, come into the world with strong propensities to sin, and aversion to God and godliness. Hence it appears that the effects of Adam's apostasy is not conveyed to us merely by natural generation. Therefore it follows that Adam, by the appointment of God, was our legal representative in that covenant transaction.

Now, if it appears upon examination, that it was most likely to promote the interest of mankind, for Adam to represent his posterity, than for each one of them to stand or fall according to their own conduct, then God will be free from all injustice in punishing Adam's posterity, according to his demerit.

It must be granted that the creature is bound by the law of nature, or by the reason and fitness of things, to perfect and perpetual obedience to the Creator. The condition upon which Adam and his posterity were to be established in life and happiness, was simple and easy—it was only to abstain from one particular tree in the garden where he had such a variety of whatever could contribute either to his support or delight. It is true, Adam could not violate the precept without violating the whole moral law, the sum of which is, to love God supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves. While Adam continued to do this, he could not possibly break this positive precept—while love to God and man reigned in his heart, he could feel no disposition to do that which would dishonor God, and bring everlasting ruin upon all his posterity. Yet it was doubtless great condescension and goodness in God, to make man's life, and his confirmation therein, to depend upon so simple and easy a condition, as the abstinence from the fruit of the tree was.

And if we consider the case as it respected his posterity, it will appear to be every way their interest to have their safety put upon this issue. For it must be granted, unless we deny all natural as well as revealed religion, that if Adam's posterity had not been included in that covenant, they would have been under the strictest obligations to render perfect and perpetual obedience to the whole law, and so would have been in perpetual danger of transgressing it in some instance or other; so that their state would never have been safe: though they should have kept the whole law perfectly for millions of ages, still they would have been liable to the wrath of God upon the least failure. Was it not then much better for mankind, that their confirmation in life and happiness should depend upon obedience to one easy command, than that it should depend upon their keeping the whole law? And was it not better for them to have it depend upon the obedience of one man, who was able and willing, and had stronger excitements to obedience than any other of the human race could have had, than that each individual of them should be left to act for himself, and so be always liable to lose the favor of God upon the violation of any part of the law of God, and so be always uncertain of their future happiness? For if Adam represented his posterity in the covenant of works, he was under stronger ties to obey and obtain the blessings of obedience than any of his posterity could have been, if

each one had been to stand or fall according to his own conduct. Adam had all the excitements that could arise from the desire of his own happiness and fear of misery, that any of his offspring could have had. But besides this, he had all the excitements that could arise from paternal affection; the eternal weal or wo of his whole progeny depending upon his conduct. But if each one had stood for himself, his falling a victim to divine justice would have been no loss to any but himself, and so he would have been destitute of one powerful motive to obedience which Adam had. Therefore it was evidently more likely that all Adam's posterity would have been everlastingly happy by his representing them in that covenant transaction, than that any one of them should have been happy if each one had stood for himself. But supposing that each one had for himself persevered in obedience for ever, yet they would have been less happy than if they had been, by Adam's obedience, confirmed in that happy state. The stinging reflection that they were always liable to forfeit and lose their happiness, through the manifold temptations to which they would for ever have been exposed, must have greatly lessened their comforts and delights even in Paradise.

It may be farther observed that the *good promised in this covenant was greater than the evil threatened*. The obedience which God demanded of Adam was no more than what he justly owed; and the punishment annexed to his disobedience was no more than he was justly liable to for the least violation of the law. If God had not entered into such a covenant with man, he could not have had the least claim to eternal life, even if he had not only observed this one precept, but had also perfectly kept the whole law. For though an innocent creature might reasonably expect a happy life, so long as it pleased the Creator to continue him in existence, yet God could not be under any obligations to his creature, unless he bind himself by compact or covenant. As God could not owe us our being before we had it, neither can we, by any thing that we can do, bring God under any obligation to continue us in being. If we be righteous, what give we him! or what receiveth he at our hands! When we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants. Hence then we see that the penalty annexed to the covenant made with Adam, and in him with all his posterity, was no more than, according to the strictest rules of justice, was due for the least violation of the law. Therefore it must have been just with God to have demanded perfect and perpetual obedience, not only from Adam, but also from all his posterity; and to have punished them for ever for their disobedience, though he had not promised them eternal life upon their obedience; but only a happy life during his pleasure and their obedience. The promise of eternal life is therefore of mere grace, and what Adam nor any of his posterity could have had any just claim to, if God had not made such a covenant with man. *If God had not made such a covenant with Adam, but left every one to stand for himself, there is no reason to think that any one of his offspring would have attained to eternal life; seeing Adam had as great abilities and stronger excitements to keep it than any of his posterity could have had, yet he fell.* But by his fall, he fell under no greater condemnation than the just demerit of his crime, had there been no covenant made with him. But the covenant secured to him infinitely more than his due upon condition of his obedience. How then can we complain of the inequality of that dispensation of God in which there is such a manifestation of his condescending grace and goodness, as deserves our particular admiration and praise! Upon the whole then it appears that some terms of confirmation in our original state of happiness were necessary for us, and that the terrors proposed in the covenant, wherein Adam represented his posterity, were the most suitable, and the most likely to promote our interest; and without doubt, if we had then existed, we should have chosen that Adam should have represented us, and stood or fallen for us,