

The Blame For My Misery

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Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 15:20-22
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The scripture reading this morning is found in two New Testament epistles, Romans and Corinthians. In Romans 5, we'll read verse 12 and then 17 through 19. Romans 5 beginning at verse 12.

12 Wherefore, 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:

And notice there "one man" brought sin into the world. Then verse 17,

17 For if 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.) 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. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by
the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Then in 1 Corinthians 15, we're not going to read as the bulletin indicates the entirety of the first 22 verses but just verses 20 through 22. 1 Corinthians 15:20,

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of
them that slept. 21 For since by man came death, by man came also the
resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall
all be made alive.

It's on passages like that, that the truth of the Catechism is based in Lord's Day 3. In the back of the psalter on page 4, we have Lord's Day 3 this morning, Questions and Answers 6 and 7. Lord's Day 3, Question 6 and 7. You see on the top of page 4, notice Question 5 of the last Lord's Day. It's been a few weeks now since we looked at that. Lord's Day 2 ended with this question, "Can you keep all these things perfectly?" And the answer is, "In no wise for I am prone by nature to hate God and my neighbor." I am prone by nature to hate God. Now Lord's Day 3 asks what explains that? Question 6,

6 Did God, then, create man so wicked and perverse?

A. By no means; but God created man good, and after His own image, in true righteousness and holiness, that he [man] might rightly know God his Creator, heartily love Him, and live with Him in eternal happiness to glorify and praise Him.

So Question 6 says the fault is not in God. Question 7 asks where then does that proneness to hate God come from?

7. Whence [means from where] from where then proceeds this depravity of human nature?

A. From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise; hence [or therefore] our nature is become so corrupt, that we are all conceived and born in sin.

And then next week, God willing, we'll look at Question and Answer 8.

As in Adam. Adam, that's the point of the sermon this morning, that's the extent of the sermon this morning. In Adam we sinned. In Adam we were. In Adam was the entirety of the human race. You want to know why you are today the way you are, and do I want to explain why there is in me the corruption that is in me, I must understand what the word of God says in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 about that man. That man. When Romans 5 talks about "one man" it means Adam. Then 1 Corinthians 15 makes that very clear when it says "as in Adam." We are, this morning, going to trace the corruption of our nature all the way back to Adam so that now, children, look, please, look here. When someone asks you who is to blame for your sinfulness, you take your finger and don't point it at God, you point it at Adam. Adam. Then when you've understood what that means, you're also going to take that same finger and point it to yourself because you and I were in him when he sinned. What's the explanation for our sinfulness? God? No, God made man good and upright. Adam fell and I was in Adam. So the blame for the corruption of my nature goes to me. To me.

There's an old saying, we're all familiar with it, think about what it means once later that the apple doesn't fall very far from the tree. We're just like Adam, aren't we? We're just like Eve. We're always trying to take that finger of blame and keep it stiff in our arm. "God, it's your fault. Or you, it's your fault." And it only takes grace and it must take grace for us to be able to bend that elbow and that wrist and point the finger this way. And we all know that, we're all so ready to blame other people. When you children are fighting with your siblings in the other room and your parents hear the ruckus and they come in to ask you, "What's going on here?" How quick, aren't you, to point to your brother or your sister and say, "It's their fault"? And then the other one will say, "No, it's their fault." And it always goes that way. It goes that way in families, it goes that way in marriages. If a minister or the consistory works with a marriage that's broken or damaged, then the husband is going to keep his finger pointed at the wife, and the wife is going to point her finger at the husband, and they're always going to say it's someone

else's fault. When children get in trouble with the elders and they're addressed by the elders or get in trouble and the elders address them and the elders ask what's up, then the children are going to point to the parents or to the teachers or someone like that. We all understand how that goes.

And I say by doing that, we prove the point, don't we, that the apple doesn't fall very far from the tree. The tree is Adam. We are apples that fall from that tree and we're just like Adam which brings up the important point of Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, "as in Adam all die." The origin of our sin is in him and so it's not surprising that the nature of our sin is just like him, and so you remember what God said when Adam and Eve sinned and God came to Eve, God came to Adam and said, "Adam, what happened?" Adam had a straight arm right to his wife, "The woman you gave me." And when God came to Eve and asked her the explanation of it, she said, "The serpent." With a straight arm she pointed her finger at the serpent and if God would have asked the serpent, then you may be sure, but God didn't, you may be sure that the serpent would have pointed his finger at God and said, "It's your fault." But not one of them was able to say, "I sinned and I am to blame." That's the business of the sermon this morning: as in Adam all died; by one man and in one man all sinned. We sinned in Adam.

So that's the theme of the sermon this morning, then, to understand why, the theme is "The Blames For My Misery." What is the blame? Who is to blame for my misery? And let's in the first place, find the answer to that question. In the second place, the explanation of that answer and how the joint must be broken so that the blame goes to me. His sin is my sin? That's the second point, and then in the third place, the importance of this teaching for us in the Christian faith. The blame for my misery: the answer, the explanation, and the importance.

It all goes back to creation and the fall, understanding this question, "Why are we such prone by nature to hate God and the neighbor?" That's pretty bad. I say that about myself and you about yourself. The answer to that question, "Why is it so?" goes back to the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of the fall. That's what the Catechism does in Question 6, "Did God create man so wicked?" No, God created man good. There's the doctrine of creation. "Where then does come this depravity of human nature?" From the fall and disobedience of our first parents. Creation in which God made man upright and good and in his image so that when you looked at man, you could recognize him as a son of the Father in heaven, you looked just like dad. Spiritually Adam and Eve looked just like God in righteousness and knowledge and holiness. He made them upright. He made them in honor. Read the Belgic Confession this morning or this afternoon in Article 14 and that's another Confession that describes creation upright, good, in honor, in God's image. Go back to the doctrine of creation, it's not God's fault, and right after creation you almost get the impression that Adam and Eve hadn't spent a day together in a beautiful sinless marriage and they fell. The fall is what we need to maintain, the doctrines of creation and the fall.

When I say the apple didn't fall very far from the tree, that teaches us and that's based on scripture, that the nature of their sin is the nature of our sin, so let's look at that nature of

the sin of the fall for a moment and understand it and recognize in that sin in all of its characteristics, it's just like when I sin. It was disobedience. Of course we know that. The fall in disobedience of our first parents Adam and Eve. That's not two different things. It's the fall, how did they fall? They fell by disobedience and we all know disobedience is the watchword, the keyword here but look at the adjectives that go with that word "disobedience" and you understand and learn something about our sin. It was proud disobedience. They wanted to be like God. Why did the devil fall in the first place? Read the New Testament and see that certain officebearers must have qualifications lest they being lifted up in pride fall into the condemnation of the devil. The devil was proud when he fell and the devil lured Adam and Eve by appealing to pride too, "You'll be just like God." And so Eve wanted to be just like God and know things that she didn't know then, and Adam wanted to be just like God. It was proud disobedience and now I ask about my own disobedience and your own disobedience.

It was unbelieving disobedience. That's the second adjective, very important, unbelieving disobedience. Adam and Eve didn't believe the warning that the day you eat thereof you'll die. They didn't believe that and they didn't believe the goodness of God when God said, "Don't eat of that tree and by not eating of that tree you're going to be blessed." They didn't believe that and so they ate.

They disobeyed in proud disobedience, in unbelieving disobedience and in foolish disobedience. How utterly foolish was their disobedience. They thought they could be like God? God who made the heavens and the earth? Who formed them in the way that he formed them and put them in that beautiful garden that they couldn't even have imagined would be possible by their own works. They would be like God? How utterly foolish and they found out how utterly foolish it was after they fell too, and the only consequence of their trying to be like God is that they became fools and shameful and sad. Foolish disobedience.

Proud, unbelieving, foolish, and then willful is another adjective. They knew what they were doing, they did, and we need to apply that to ourselves too when we sin. Now of course, there was an occasion for their sin. There's always an occasion for their sin. Their occasion was the devil coming to them very subtly saying, "You'll be like God. There's something to this. There's something you don't know that you can know if you eat." There was always an occasion and so the occasion for Eve was the serpent, and the occasion for Adam was Eve. There's always an occasion. There's always an excuse. But there's never a reason. It's willful. Eve knew what she was doing and Adam knew what he was doing and the devil knew what he was doing. It's willful disobedience. Don't ever say about your sin or let me say about mine, "I didn't know what I was doing."

So it's rebellion. Rebellion, open revolution is what it is even though, and here's what's sometimes hard for children to understand, even though all it was was eating a nice piece of fruit. There was nothing wrong with that fruit. It wasn't poison. Even though that's all it was and unbelievers like to use that as an occasion to criticize the Christian faith, "You mean to say," they say to you as a Christian, "you mean to say that the ruin of the entire human race was because they simply ate an apple?" You say, "Yes, that's what we mean

to say because that eating of the apple was open revolution. They knew God said no and they said yes." God said, "Don't eat that." They said, "We will eat that." And we all understand how that goes, don't we? You might say that's a minor thing but it's minor like your child commits a minor offense. When you tell him, "Don't touch that little trinket on the coffee table," and when you go around the corner into the kitchen, he makes sure the way is clear and he goes and touches it and you might describe that foolishly as a minor offense, all he did was touch something, but you understand the nature of the offense. It was open revolution and rebellion against you.

That's what was going on in that fall and disobedience of our first parent. Issues are involved. It would have been no different if God had given them a red button to push that would have ignited a bomb to destroy the whole earth and, in fact, that's what it was. The day you eat, you're going to die and the day you eat, there's going to be a curse that blankets the entirety of the creation. So it really wouldn't have made a difference, take an apple or push a button that destroys the earth, that's, in effect, what they did. They sinned. Adam sinned. Don't be pointing your finger at God, put it down to man. God is not at fault. Even though there are very difficult questions to ask and answer, God is not at fault.

One of those questions that's difficult to answer is how could a man who is good and upright and created in honor, in the image of God, fall? How could a perfect man who had a free will choose to do evil? It's a very difficult question. How could a man and a woman who were so good, not an ounce of sin in them, actual sin or original sin, their nature, everything about them was upright and perfect, their mind, their heart, their will, their hand, everything was perfect, how could they sin? And that's very difficult to answer except by saying though they were created in honor, the Belgic Confession 14 says that it wasn't the honor that they have now and we will have in Jesus Christ, and though they were created good, it wasn't the goodness that they were recreated in and that we are recreated in, and though they were created with a will that was free, that's nothing compared to the will that we're going to have in the perfection of heaven because though their will was free to choose the good, fallen man's isn't, though their will was free to choose the good, it was also free to choose the evil. And so even when man had a free will, they abused that free will and so don't ever ask to go back to what Adam and Eve had. Attractive as that might be, that was not God's intent that they stay there.

That's the first hard question: how could a good man and a good woman sin? The second hard question is: how can God not be responsible for it when he decreed it and by his providence governed it and brought it to pass? That inclines you to say, "But you are at fault, God. You decreed it and you in your providence arranged all of the circumstances so that the devil fell and Adam and Eve fell." And it is true, God decreed it because his ultimate purpose was never the first Adam, it was always the second Adam, Christ. God's intention for his creation was never that it remain as it was in paradise, God's intention with that first paradise was always the second paradise, heaven, so that when you children learn the Old Testament, you must always learn that everything in the Old Testament is aiming at paradise the second. It started with creation, paradise the first, Adam and Eve, but that was not what God planned ultimately. God planned ultimately

that you and I and all of the saints made perfect will be with God in that paradise. God decreed that paradise, of course he did, and so he governed by his sovereign providence and power all of the events that led up to the fall and he even governed the fall, and yet, yet without ever being responsible for and guilty of the fall and that's a very very difficult thing to understand. But you must never ever blame God for sin though he decreed it and though he governed it. You must not say, "You are to blame," ever.

That's popular today, though, isn't it? This is the motion people give when they are asked why is it that the human race is so corrupt. And if it's not this motion, "I don't know," then it's this motion, "God did it," or it's this motion, take a book and say, "Evolution did it." But that's not the gospel. The gospel is, the answer to the question: where then does this depravity of human nature proceed from? Not God. He's not to blame. But man, the fall and disobedience of man. That wrecked everything. That was, as it were, pushing the red button to blow it all up. Look at every trouble in creation today, look at all of the sorrows and miseries, death and disease, wars, lies, perversions, they all trace back to the fall.

And when Adam and Eve fell, they lost the image of God. God made them in his image so that just as we can say to many of you children, "I know who your parents are, I know just who your parents are, you look just like them," that's what we could have said about Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Spiritually you look just like the God who made you upright, righteous, consecrated to him, knowing him with perfect knowledge, and when they fell, they lost all of the image of God, every ounce of it, nothing left. They died in the garden spiritually and that was God's punishment of them.

Look here, children, once more: not God but man. And now we must bend that elbow and that wrist so that the finger of blame is not pointed at Adam and Eve but to me, and that's a difficult question too because we see that the source of man's corruption is there but we mustn't say, "Well, Adam, it's your fault, not my fault." Now we must proceed to the next important juncture and say, "It's mine." We do that by understanding two truths that God created man, number 1, Adam, number 1 as a representative of the whole human race. And you Essential students recognize that from your Essential's Catechism book that he was the representative head of the whole human race so that what Adam did, he didn't do it as a private person but he did it as representing everything, everyone who is in him, and the whole human race is in him so that what Adam did, we did. I don't like that truth by nature but it is biblical truth just as much as I don't like the truth and reality that if the President of the United States declares war on another country, then I have declared war on that other country because he represents me. I say I don't like that truth but it's the way the country is made. We are in him in many things.

God made Adam the representative head of the whole human race, he also made Adam the first father of all of us. The first father. The first father. Every single human being came from that man and that woman. Not from many different men and many different women who had evolved from apes in different parts of the earth so that you have one nature and you have a different nature and you have an altogether different nature, but from one man God made of one blood, Paul said to the listeners on Mars Hill in Acts 17,

one blood and the blood was Adam's and Eve's. And when they fell and their nature became corrupt, their children's nature is corrupt and that's the explanation for original sin. That's the biblical logic that we'll look at in a moment that it's biblical, that enables us to take that finger and bend the arm and the wrist so that the blame now is mine. Mine. I was there. That's my nature and so I am at fault.

If you look with again at 1 Corinthians 15 that we read, that's the point Paul is making. Now for a very beautiful different purpose, that is, that the resurrection of the body is reality because we're in Christ Jesus, and if Christ Jesus arose, we're going to arise, but he starts there by saying what he does in verse 21, "by man came death." By man came death, and then he says man was in Adam. Verse 21, "by man came death," verse 22, "For as in Adam all die." Now don't forget the parallel. By Christ comes life and life is for all those who are in Christ. Are you in him? Are you connected to him? That's theology too. That's very important theology but it's a theology that even the children can understand. It's the bond of faith that unites me to Christ. That's the connection I have to him so that I'm in him, I'm really in him, and I'm in him in my body too so that when I die and put my body in the grave, I die in the hope that my body is going to be united again, raised again and to be with Christ. But I'm also in him in my spirit. I'm in him spiritually. I'm in him legally. Christ represents me. What Christ does, it's as though I did it. What Christ says, it's though I had said it. And the obedience of Christ, all of it, perfect obedience, it's as though I did it. I'm in him. Think of Christ and then you'll understand how we're in Adam, and if you reject the reality that you're in Adam both physically and legally, you can't embrace the truth that we are in the Lord Jesus Christ spiritually and physically. But we are both. In Adam, we all sinned. By one man many were made sinners. One man. He's the father of us all.

Imagine for a moment that there were no oak trees in the world and God gave you one acorn and you were able to live the length of many generations of oak trees. You plant that acorn and watch that oak tree grow and after many years it produces its own acorns and all of those acorns are used to plant other oak trees, and all of those oak trees then produce more acorns and that's the reality. You'd be able to say hundreds of years later about that oak tree, you were in that one little acorn. You were there. And some would say, "How can that be?" But we all understand that oak tree was there in that acorn and so you and I were in Adam. He's our father. We came from him. His nature becomes our nature. Whence then proceeds this depravity of the human race and nature? From Adam who gave it to me but it was me, it was I who was there. He represented me. I sinned in Adam.

Now that's ridiculed today and you understand why it's ridiculed today because it's even difficult for us sometimes to comprehend. We're so individualistic, we're so personal about things. We want to make our own decisions and do our own thing and be responsible for nothing but what in our own little lifetime have done good or bad and we forget the reality that God made the human race a corporation and put one at the head of that corporation, Adam, so that God now could also make another corporation, the church of Christ, and put one at the head of that corporation, Jesus Christ. And just as you and I are in Adam, don't deny that, so also we are in Christ by faith. In him. And that's Romans

5 as well, isn't it. One man. One man. The offense of one. One man's disobedience. One man. And then back up into verse 15 and see it's by one man, Jesus, that life and gifts and grace abound unto many. One man.

One man. Not God. Adam and me. Say that. The importance of that underscores the importance of maintaining the doctrines, people of God, of the creation and the fall. Let me point that out, first of all, as to the importance of this. The importance of this in itself comes at the end of this third point but the importance of this underlines the importance of something else too and that is maintaining the doctrine of creation as the word of God teaches it, and the doctrine of the fall as the word of God teaches it. I remind you this morning of the connection between Lord's Day 3 and Lord's Day 2 and the connection between Lord's Day 3 and 2 and Lord's Day 1, Lord's Day 1 says, "What's your only comfort in life and death?" And you and I confess marvelously that, "I belong to my faithful Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm not my own." Then we went on to confess this, how many things do you need to know that enjoying that comfort you may live and die happily? How many things do you need to know really to have that joy and comfort and happiness? And we together confess three things. 1. How great is my sin and misery, and I cannot understand the reality or the nature or the depths of my sin and misery unless I understand creation and the fall. Creation in the image of God so that I am righteous like God is righteous, not naturally but by grace. Adam and Eve were, they were upright in their hands and everything they did and how they thought. They were upright in their heart, consecrated to God, perfectly devoted to him in everything, no selfishness or pride in them at all by nature. And they knew him, knew him like you and I will know him when we get to heaven. And then they fell. You can't understand depravity except if you understand creation and the fall.

I've reminded you already of the parallel in 1 Corinthians 15 between the head of this corporation, Christ and the church, and the head of this corporation, Adam and the whole human race. You deny Adam, creation, you cannot embrace Christ. You say there was no such man as a man called Adam who had a wife who ate fruit, and the consequences of that fruit that they ate at the instigation of a serpent brought the whole human race into demise and corruption, you deny that man, one man, one woman, everyone coming from him, you will very very quickly deny the reality of this man and the headship of this man and the unity of those who believe in this man unto their salvation.

The importance, people of God, of maintaining the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of the fall, do you see what's happening in the world today when evolutionism has its way? Evolutionism has no explanation for sin and corruption and war and perversion and liars and pornographers and thieves and murderers and idol worshipers. What's the explanation says the evolutionist? Well, that goes way back, so far back we can't even find the source, we don't understand the origin but somehow in the process of evolution, there were some evolutionary quirks, as it were, or glitches in genes so that we became the way we are, and this nation is selfish and fights against that nation, and this man is unfaithful to his wife and these children steal from their neighbors. That's what's the explanation, evolution, and then, you see, you don't need a redeemer, you don't need someone to pay for your sin in your place, becoming like you as Jesus did and was, you

need a psychiatrist, you need a counselor, you need a teacher, you need people who study the economy and how nations get along but you don't need Jesus. Do you see the importance of this truth and how this truth in reality are undermined by the doctrine of evolutionism, and how we may be so thankful that in our homes we have parents who want nothing to do with evolutionism, nothing to do with theistic evolutionism so that when those parents band together and create Covenant and Hope and the other good Christian schools, they hire teachers who, though they may have been trained in this institutions that believe evolutionism, have been vetted by the school board and assured the school boards that they're not going to teach it, they're going to teach creationism and the fall and the depravity of man by that fall so that those teachers in our stead as parents and grandparents, teach the children not to blame God, not to blame man, not to explain troubles by evolutionism but to say, "I'm the man."

And when they do, this is the whole point of the sermon, that's the point of Romans and Corinthians, when they do we may find mercy in Christ. As I said, you don't need a Savior if the explanation for your trouble is in something other than in you. If the trouble is your parents, send your parents to someone for help. If the trouble is in your elders, send the elders for help. If the trouble is in your brother or your sister, send them to get help. If the trouble is in your children, send them to get help. Your teacher, your employer, anyone, send them to get help. The problem is not in you and then you go to bed without Christ, you don't need him because the problem is everyone else's and probably in the end it's Christ, it's God's. But when I'm able to turn that finger and point it at me, then I cry for mercy and say, "God, I'm to blame. I sinned. It's my nature. Mine. I sin willfully. I sin unbelievably. I sin foolishly." And all of the other adjectives that we used to talk about that disobedience, "I sinned. God, have mercy on me." And when we do that, when God brings us to Christ, the only one without any blame and he shows us that that man lay down his life for us, and now God says to us, "There's no blame in you. I see no fault in you. There's no unrighteousness at all. The only thing I see in you is the righteousness of my own Son." And when we see that, then we leave church saying, "God, how can we thank thee? God, how can we live in a way that shows that we are grateful, grateful, so grateful for your mercies to us in the Lord Jesus Christ?"

If you don't see your own sin and cry for mercy in Jesus Christ, you are not going to be a grateful person. But you watch that person who walks in gratitude. If God would permit you could trace that gratitude back to his humility in crying for mercy because of his own sins, and you would not see that man or that woman pointing to his parents, to his children, to his brothers and sisters, to the elders or the employer or anyone else. You'd see that man saying, "God, be merciful to me the sinner. I am evil, born in sin. Thou desirest truth within." Comfort, comfort, happiness is in that confession and that truth. Amen.

Let's pray.

Almighty God in heaven, we thank thee for Jesus and pray that our hard hearts might be broken and that we might not resist the teaching of thy word so that we may be able to say in deepest humility to our spouse, to our parents, to all of those with whom we live, "I

am sorry. I have done what I have done and I need forgiveness in the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and from you." Teach us to say that, Father, and to live not in pride but in meekness. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.