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JJ<sup>1</sup>

Well, it's July, so we better talk about Christmas. You could say that the days after Christmas are the exchange season. When you exchange something you usually look for something of equal value. As a kid, I remember often exchanging or trading baseball and basketball cards with friends. You always wanted to make sure you were exchanging for equal value. Sometimes you lucked out when years down the road the card you traded for ends up being far more valuable than what you gave up.

But what about you? What's your value? How valuable are the people in your life? Depends on who they are. The value you place on someone determines how much you'd be willing to give in exchange for them. Consider the difference of value people placed on Gary Powers after he was shot down flying over communist Russia during the Cold War. His father went to great lengths to bring him home, while two different presidents and many in our nation at the time considered him an embarrassment and not worth very much.

Today we consider the radical, outlandish **GREAT EXCHANGE** the eternal God made for his mortal enemies.

When we read through our text, you might have thought, "Well, I've heard all of this before. Yeah, Adam sinned. His sin ruined the world. Jesus came and took care of the sin. Nothing new." Now before you go tuning out, maybe you should stop and ask yourself, "Do I really get it? Can I really wrap my brain around what Paul is saying here?" Be careful that you don't answer too quickly because Paul talks about the two most impactful things in human existence. These two things permeate every moment of our lives, whether we realize it or not. These two things answer the most basic questions of life and our very existence. These two things really truly explain everything.

Paul says, "So then, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, so also death spread to all people because all sinned." Paul brings us to the day that sin invaded the world. The day when Adam listened to the satanic voice of the serpent. But already this seems strange to our fallen and feeble minds. Why did sin spread throughout all the world? It was just Adam and Eve that sinned. Why does all of God's beautiful creation get dragged into their mess?

It's because they were a part of that creation. In fact, they weren't just a part,

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<sup>1</sup> JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

Adam and Eve were the crown jewel of God's creation and God had given them a specific command which they disobeyed. The LORD said to Adam, "...you shall not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, for on the day that you eat from it, you will certainly die." (Gen. 2:17)

Paul tells us that "death [came] through sin." What does Paul mean by "death"? Adam and Eve didn't drop dead right then and there. And what's more, the world has been filled with people who are very much alive ever since they sinned. Sure, Adam died 930 years after The Fall, and almost everyone ever born since then has also died. So what is Paul talking about?

When Paul talks about death, he's not just talking about the end of physical life, he's talking about death as the complete opposite of life in the full sense of the word. The word "death" described Adam and Eve's entire existence after the Fall, and it describes our lives too! Death is king. Death rules over us! It dominates our lives! Not only does physical death loom over us every day of our lives because it could come at any moment, but death is our life spiritually.

From the very beginning, our lives are one of spiritual death. We do not love and trust in God. Instead, we hate him and do not

want to listen to his truth because when we look at him, all we can see is the one who doles out death. We cannot truly love others because we're filled with the death of complete and utter selfishness, trying to get as much for ourselves as we can before we die.

Death rules over each one of us, and each one of us will physically die and should face the eternal death of hell "because all sinned." Sin is a disease. It invades and infects every one of our souls. It is a world-wide pandemic with no cure that can be found on earth or be created by man.



And it is this truth that makes sense of what Paul says next, "For even before the law was given, sin was in the world. Now, sin is not charged to one's account if there is no law..."

When Paul talks about the law here, he is talking about the Law given through Moses to God's people at Mount Sinai. Adam had a direct command: "Do not eat!" But until Moses, there weren't any specific commands given by God. There can be no transgression when there is no line in the sand to cross. There is no crediting to one's account of sin when there is no book.

But to make sure we don't come up with any false conclusions, Paul nails us right between the eyes saying, "...and yet death

reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those whose sin was not like the transgression of Adam..." Even though people didn't have a specific line in the sand drawn by God saying, "Don't you cross that line!", death was still king because people were still sinning and dying. Just read through Genesis chapter 5 and you will hear the death toll ringing: "...and he died...and he died...and he died."

Then Paul says another strange thing. He says that Adam "is a pattern of the one who was to come." You might wonder, "How in the world could Adam be a pattern of Jesus?" There is just one way in which Paul is making this comparison which leads us to **THE GREAT EXCHANGE**. "But the gracious gift is not like Adam's trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of this one man, it is even more certain that God's grace, and the gift given by the grace of the one man Jesus Christ, overflowed to the many!"

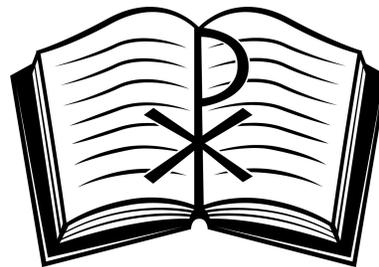
The only way in which Paul is saying that Adam and Jesus are the same is that both changed the history of the world. Both entirely changed everyone's lives. One turned everyone's lives into lives of death. The other reversed all that and through his death offers life to everyone who is dead!

Friends, through Jesus' sacrifice, our lives of death have now become lives where death is destroyed!

It's so shocking and strange! Just one fall, one slip brought death to all people. But not only that, each one of us daily sins much. You would think that with all those sins piling up it would take sacrifice after sacrifice to overcome and conquer all those sins. But that's why Paul says that "the gracious gift is not like Adam's trespass."

Don't get me wrong. Adam's sin, our original sin, and all the sins we commit are huge! But what's even bigger is God's grace. God's love is so big and powerful that his gift in the "one man Jesus Christ"

destroys the complete ruin of Adam's sin and all the sins we heap up throughout our lives! Death was king until the King of kings came and destroyed death!



This is God's **GREAT EXCHANGE!** Adam's life in

choosing sin brought us death. Jesus' life in choosing death brings us life and life in the full sense of the word. Jesus' death and resurrection gives meaning to our lives here on earth. It answers the age-old questions "Who am I?" "What am I doing here?" "What's my purpose in life?"

**GOD'S GREAT EXCHANGE** is what truly gives you value. It isn't how good a person you are, how much money you have made, how nice a house you live in. Your real value is not found in whether or not you're a spouse, parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, child or friend. And do you know why? It's because none of those

things last. Are they good? Yes, most certainly, when viewed as gifts from God. But they are not where we find our value as Christians (even though the world says we should). The only value that really matters is the value that lasts into eternity, and that is the value God has placed on you.

While we value our lives, if we were honest with ourselves and compared ourselves to our perfect God, we wouldn't value ourselves one bit! Do you value at all the terrorists of ISIS or the murdering pedophiles in prison? How much less value to do have from a human point of view when we realize that every sin we commit is a personal vulgar offense to our God! Yet look at the value God has placed on you! He gave his One and Only Son in exchange for you! Jesus, your Savior, took your sin and gives you his righteousness! Jesus, your Savior, suffered your eternal death in hell to give you his eternal life in heaven! This is **GOD'S GREAT EXCHANGE!**

And speaking of death, physical death still looms over us, but Jesus has undone even that! The curse God said would fall on Adam and all those after him if he disobeyed is that one day we each must physically die. But again God shows that his love is bigger than our sin and even its consequences. God has changed death

from the doorway to hell into the portal to heaven for all who believe!

That leads us to the **GREATEST EXCHANGE** of them all. Because Jesus suffered our eternal death in hell on the cross, we now have eternal life waiting for us in heaven! And it is there in heaven where the disease of sin will never be able to touch us again because it doesn't exist there. It can't because God's holiness fills heaven and will fill the new heavens and the new earth he will create on the Last Day.

Many of the exchanges we make in life are things of equal value. Every once in a while we're blessed to come out on the better side of a deal. Consider the **GREAT EXCHANGE** God made for you. From a human point of view, it was a bad deal from the get-go. His enemy for his Son!? Yet, friends, it's there in **THE GREAT EXCHANGE** that you can marvel at the love of your God which puts so much value on you personally, God gave his One and Only Son! God exchanged his Son for you so that your life here would no longer be a life of death deferred, but a real life of death destroyed both now and forever in heaven! Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for "To God Alone Be The Glory". This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn't about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

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