

Sunday, February 11, 2024

The First Adam And The Last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45)

I have a strong belief that if we don't have a good, experiential understanding of our fallen nature, we can't even begin to understand or experience the grace of God. I don't think we can have a full understanding of these things on this side of heaven, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (1 Corinthians 13:12). But we can know them to some degree. A mere head knowledge of the doctrines of "total depravity" or "original sin," however, is not going to cut it. It has to be experiential to some degree, and it's an experience that you don't have the capacity to manufacture. In other words, I can't make myself feel the depths of my sinful nature; I can't make myself see and rejoice in the grace of God. It has to be a work of God. Of course, experiences and "understandings" and prayers and feelings of guilt or joy are all absolutely worthless if they aren't grounded on the rock-solid foundation of scripture.

So, on that note, there are two types of people in this world – those who are "in Adam" and those who are "in Christ." Of course, we all start off being born solely "in Adam" but some of us are rescued from that – we are born again into Christ. One passage that brings this sharply into focus is Romans 5:12-21:

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: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. 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. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. 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.) 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. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Romans 5:12-21)

Another passage (from which I got the title of this sermon) makes a similar parallel between Adam and Christ:

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive...[Regarding the resurrection of the dead:] It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. (1 Corinthians 15:20-22, 42-49)

Paul is reducing the entire existence of humanity to two men – the first Adam and the last Adam; the first man and the second man. All human existence, past, present and future, is defined and rooted in how we relate to these two men. Which one of these two men you're united to is of utmost importance. Every human being will have to stand before the Judgment Seat of God. At that time, the most important question for you is, who are you? What is your identity? Where do you fit in when it comes to these two men? Are you in Adam, or are you in Christ? Don't look at yourself as some autonomous free agent – you are intimately tied to one of these two men. And whichever one you're tied to will determine your eternal existence. Sometimes it's a good idea to step back and look at the big picture and see where you fit in. Contrary to popular belief, there is actually a reality that exists beyond your pitiful life. People live in such directionless turmoil, spending their lives navel-gazing trying to discover "who they are," when the Bible already tells you who you are – you're either someone who is in Adam, or someone who is in Christ. If you're someone who is in Adam, you desperately need to get into Christ. If you're someone who is in Christ, don't forget your identity.

So, Paul paints a picture of two men. Each stands as the head and representative of a people, a family. Each did something that has profound implications for their offspring. Adam, the father of all humanity. Christ, the "everlasting father" (Isaiah 9:6) of a new humanity, a new creation. For several sermons now, I've been trying to explain what it means to be in union with Christ. For those of you who believe, He didn't merely do something on your behalf – you are also actually joined to Him. You now live in Him, and He lives in you, and because you are joined to Him, you get to share in "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:3).

When He was crucified, we were crucified. When He rose, we rose. And He has “made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:6). But a similar thing is true with Adam, the one who fell and plunged the entire human race into condemnation. When he sinned, we sinned. When he fell, we fell. When he was condemned, we were condemned. I say, you’re either in Christ or you’re in Adam. Spurgeon: *“If you are not in Christ you are still in the old world which must shortly be destroyed.”*

Now, let us look into this a little bit deeper, starting with the fall of Adam (Genesis 3). It’s a commonly known story. We teach it to our kids, and even a little child can understand it. The danger, of course, is that due to its familiarity, we become numb to what happened there. Adam was not acting as an isolated individual; he was there as a representative of all humanity. The Fall has far-reaching consequences across creation (even the ground was and still is cursed!) but I’d like to focus on how our connection to Adam impacts us as human beings, starting with the condition of every human since the time of the Fall:

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. (Psalm 51:5)

The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. (Psalm 58:3)

[We] were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (Ephesians 2:3)

What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (Romans 3:9-19)

Even if the scripture was silent on this topic, don’t we all know this is true just based on our own observation? Anyone who has dealt with a child knows that nobody had to teach them to lie or otherwise be rebellious – it is innate to them. We all know that this is true about ourselves as well. Just observe yourself for a few minutes and you’ll see it’s true. You know there’s something inherently wrong with you, and you know that it comes from within your own heart. This condition of ours needs to be understood. It’s a state of being. We’re born

guilty sinners. We commit sins because we're sinners, and not the other way around. In other words, committing individual sins doesn't turn us into sinners; we started out that way, and that's why we sin.

All this is true even among those of us who have been redeemed. For those who are in Christ, sin is no longer our master, but we still have to grapple with the presence of sin and corruption. We've been adopted into the family of Christ, we've entered into a marriage covenant with Him, but we still carry the "baggage" from our old family. It extends to every area of our lives. It's particularly egregious when it infects things like how we interpret Bible verses. Have you ever twisted a Bible verse to justify some sinful behavior or mindset that you have? You might not want to admit that you have, but you have. When you sit down and read the scripture, have you ever come across a verse that convicted you, and you immediately and instinctively recoiled from it, or even hated what it said? And have you thought "well, it can't mean THAT, because if it means THAT, then that would mean that I'm sinning or I'm holding some false doctrine."

So, I say, if the scripture was silent on this topic, you would already know it's true. But the scripture is not silent on the topic, and it doesn't just tell us that we ARE that way; it tells us how we GOT that way, and the condition is even worse than we think. But the scripture also tells us the only remedy for it. And that brings us back to these two men – the first Adam and the last Adam. Two federal heads. Two representatives. One the father of every human, and the other the father of every redeemed human.

Now, let's look a little bit closer at the catastrophe wrought by Adam, and how it has impacted us. What did Adam do? The words that Paul uses in our Romans 5 passage are sin, transgression, offence, disobedience. It was a single offence by Adam, and it had dire consequences. Sin entered the world, and along with it, death by sin. All men die (even unborn babies) because we have all sinned in Adam – "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." Get that straight – you were conceived as a guilty sinner. You share in the guilt of Adam's sin. When he sinned and fell, we all sinned and fell, because he was standing as our representative. This is a desperate situation for every human. By nature, there you stand, guilty before God. Judgment, condemnation, abounding sin, the reign of sin and death – all these are consequences of Adam's one offence. Add to that, from 1 Corinthians 15, we see words like corruption, dishonor, and weakness describing our current state.

Now, at some point, you're going to think, "this isn't fair." Whatever your reason, whatever your circumstance, it's going to be some variation of "this isn't fair – I wasn't accurately represented – if I had been in the Garden of Eden, I wouldn't have failed." When I was little, for example, I remember being very upset at Adam, because if he hadn't sinned, I wouldn't

have to be sitting there pulling weeds out of the rock bed. That's childish. A more sophisticated complaint would be, "It says over in Ezekiel 18 that the son shall not die for or bear the iniquity of his father (verses 17 and 20). It is therefore unjust for me to be held guilty for Adam's sin!" That's a pretty serious charge, and it may be a charge that some of you have leveled against God in your own mind, or at least are struggling in good faith to try to understand, so let me give a few thoughts:

- First and foremost, let me remind you who you're accusing of being unjust. "There is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me." (Isaiah 45:21).
- Remember that whatever sense of justice and reasoning you have has also been corrupted by the Fall. In your myopic, sinful world, it may seem unjust to you, but that doesn't mean it is. God is omniscient while you, on the other hand, don't have all the information. He is the Creator, and you are the creature. He was under no obligation to consult you or get your permission. So, you can rest assured that if you've reached the point where you're accusing God of being unjust, the problem lies with you, not with Him. "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" (Job 38:2). "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" (Romans 9:20).
- Consider that God created mankind such that we are intimately and mysteriously connected to Adam. This is part of the created order of things. This is how God chose to do things. I don't have to understand how or why He did it that way, and in fact, I have no idea why He did it that way vs. some other way, because to my knowledge, the scripture never tells us why. It just tells us that this is how it is. But I can be confident that He did it for wise and just reasons. Whether I understand it or not, I don't believe for one second that God would abandon His essential nature of being just and then create some situation where He's being unjust to every son and daughter of Adam.
- If you're still unsatisfied, I can tell you how I understand things, for what it's worth. Adam was not just our biological father; he was our federal head and representative. He wasn't acting as an individual; he was acting as a representative, to whom we are united. Whatever he did is therefore imputed, or accounted, to us. This is not the same as holding a son accountable for his father's individual sins. This is a unique relationship – the only other thing like it is the connection between Christ and His Church. If the omniscient God created and chose Adam to be our representative, and placed us "in Adam," you can be sure that Adam represented us accurately. You were properly represented. You can't say, "it's not fair – I would have done differently." I don't understand the mechanics of how we're connected to Adam, any more than I understand the mechanics of how we're connected to Christ, but it sure seems to me that if we are accurately represented, it is perfectly just to hold us accountable. In a similar way, God declares sinners to be righteous in Christ. I don't hear anyone whining

about that gracious, undeserved gift, but one could also claim that that is not fair or just. On the contrary, in doing so, God is shown to be “just and the justifier.” (Rom. 3:26).

So, over the last several pages, I’ve tried to establish that being “in Adam” has impacted every human being in the following ways:

1. His fallen, corrupt, sinful nature is propagated to us so we all start off depraved.
2. His sin is imputed (accounted) to us, and universal death and condemnation is God’s righteous judgment on that sin that we all share in.

This is what we get from Adam. And if I just left it at this and said no more, I’d leave you all in a state of despair. But it’s important that you understand these two things about Adam, because Adam was a type of Christ. I started this sermon off saying that it’s necessary for a person to get an understanding of their own corrupt nature, and only then can you glory in the grace of God. This isn’t just an academic exercise. So, Adam was a type of Christ – “who is the figure of him that was to come.” (Romans 5:14). The word translated “figure” is the Greek word “typos” which is where we get our English word “type.” When we talk about something or someone being a “type of Christ” what we mean is that it’s something that prefigures or foreshadows Christ. The type has some similarities and some differences to Christ, and it can teach us a lot of important things about Him. A simple example would be the OT burnt offerings. Those typified Christ. They were like Christ, for example, in that a sacrifice to God was involved. They were different than Christ, for example, in that they had to be offered on a daily basis, where Christ was only offered once. Both the similarities and the differences are important. The same is true with Adam, as a type of Christ.

Adam was “the figure of him that was to come.” This, incidentally, is yet another verse that shows us that the coming of Christ was not an afterthought on God’s part. God wasn’t taken by surprise when Adam fell and had to scramble to figure out how to fix the problem. The whole thing was planned out and Adam was created to be a type of Christ, “him that was to come.” So, let’s look at this a little bit closer and see how Adam was a type – how are these two men similar, and how are they different? Some of the similarities I see are:

- Both are fathers of their respective offspring – Adam of all mankind, and Christ of His elect people redeemed out of mankind.
- Both are representative heads of their respective offspring. God arranged the human race to be subject to representation – first by Adam, and then by the much better representative, Christ.
- Both have a mysterious, but very real, union with their respective offspring, such that certain qualities and states of being are imputed to their offspring. (Note: some synonyms of “imputed” are: attributed, ascribed, assigned, credited, accounted, counted, considered, reckoned, charged).

So, we see that there are parallels between these two men – very important parallels. Parallels that help us understand Christ and what He did. And it’s within those parallels that we also find very important differences and distinctions between these two men. If Adam is connected to us in such a way that he damned the whole race of humanity and estranged us from God, Christ must be connected to us in a parallel way to justify us and reconcile us to God. If Adam was joined to us in such a way that his sin was imputed to us, Christ must be joined to us in a parallel way such that His righteousness is imputed to us. If Adam was a human standing in as the representative of all humans, Christ must be a human in a parallel way, standing in as the representative of all humans who receive His grace (aka His elect). This is at least one reason, by the way, why God Himself was made human flesh! (As opposed to an animal, or an angel). “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men [human beings], the man [human being] Christ Jesus.” (1 Timothy 2:5).

If I could flesh this out a little bit, in Adam, we are shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin. In Christ, we are a new creation, having been born again by the Spirit. In Adam, we are made sinners and condemned. In Christ, we are made righteous and justified. And all of that happens apart from any of our works. We were not shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin, and made condemned sinners because of our individual sins – rather, we sin as a result of those things. Similarly, we were not born again, made new creatures in Christ, made righteous and justified because of our good works – rather, our good works are a result of those things. You see, by nature, we have an underlying condition. Our individual, personal sins are the symptoms of the underlying condition. It’s the underlying condition that needs to be treated. (We’ve all heard the “putting a Band-Aid on cancer” analogy). The symptoms have to be addressed, but if we deal **only** with the symptoms, it’s works-righteousness. There’s only one way to treat the underlying ailment, and that is by the gracious, free gift of Christ.

The whole point of all of this is to see that what Christ has wrought in His offspring is so much better than, so much more glorious than, so exceedingly superior to, what Adam has wrought in his offspring. In fact, what we have in Christ is so much better than what we ever could have had in Adam. God ordained the fall of mankind, because without such a fall, His glorious mercy and grace would have never been put on display for us, and we would have never been joined to our God in Christ. God is glorified more in this way than any other way. I know that because if there had been a better way, He would have done that. Let’s finish up by looking at some of these things from Romans 5:12-21.

- By the one offence of Adam, we all start off dead (spiritually) and we will die (physically). But what’s “much more” than that is the grace of God, and the free gift of His righteousness. Much more certain. Much more effectual. Much more abundant life than we ever could have had in Adam, even if he had never sinned. It’s abounding

grace; overflowing grace; never-ending grace; undefeatable grace; unfrustrable [Webster's dictionary, 1828 edition: "that cannot be frustrated"] grace.

- By Adam's singular offence, we have a guilty judgment and a sentence of condemnation. But the free gift of Christ's righteousness covers "many offences." It doesn't just cover Adam's. It covers that, and every sin that you've ever been involved in, for those of you who have received the free gift. Every sinful thought. Every sinful intent. Every sinful word. Every sinful action. Every sinful inaction. Every secret sin. Every open sin. Every ignorant sin. Every presumptuous sin. Who can number them? This gracious gift came upon us "unto justification of life." Where we once stood before God with a guilty verdict hanging over our heads, He has now declared us "not guilty." We now stand righteous before Him, and by that gracious, righteous verdict and decree of God, we have "*a right and title to everlasting life and glory.*" (Gill).
- By that one offence, death exercises its tyrannical reign universally. But "much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." Yes, we go from death reigning over us, to us reigning in eternal life by Christ. It is not just a complete victory over death, but the ones who had been ruled by death are the ones who are now reigning: "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:9-10)
- By that one act of disobedience, we were made sinners. But by the obedience of Christ, we were made righteous. It took one second for Adam to be disobedient. Christ lived a perfect life of unceasing obedience for some 33 years, and that is accounted to us, making us righteous in His eyes.
- The law entered that that offence of Adam might abound. That is, the law came to show us the depths of the evil that was introduced by Adam. That one sin has spawned countless sins in Adam's offspring, and the law shows us what those sins are. The law was never put in place to show us how good we are; it was always there to show us how bad we are. But where sin abounded, grace superabounded. Grace will always be greater than our sins.
- By that one sin of Adam, sin has reigned unto death. This "old and foolish king" (Ecclesiastes 4:13) at one time or another has had dominion over every man, and by nature, we all gladly and willingly serve him. But where sin reigned, now a much more glorious king reigns. Now, grace reigns. It reigns through righteousness, all of God's holy demands being met. And it reigns unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

**For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
(Romans 6:23)**