

Transformed!

The First and Second Adam – Part III

Romans 6:1-2

Introduction

A young man called a pastor late at night and asked if he would meet with him the next morning. They made arrangements to have breakfast at a nearby restaurant.

The next morning they settled into a restaurant booth and the young man told his pastor the bad news. A recent business trip he had taken with a female coworker had led to a sinful liaison. He had seen it coming, but had failed to protect himself from what could happen . . . and now, it had happened. The man asked the pastor, “What do I do now?”

Before the pastor spoke, he could not help but think about the young wife and small children whose lives would be so terribly affected by this man’s sin. To lead the young man to think biblically about what he had done, and what he must do, the pastor asked him to listen to a series of questions and then respond. The pastor asked him, “Would you pray and ask for God’s forgiveness? Would you confess your sin to the woman involved and tell her that nothing more will ever happen again? Would you confess your sin to your wife and ask for her forgiveness? Would you be willing to have an HIV test before jeopardizing the health of your wife and the child she is expecting?”

The businessman listened to each of the questions without expression or comment. When the pastor finished, the young man pushed his breakfast plate away, leaned back in his seat, and said, “I didn’t come to be asked all these questions, I came to you for grace. You really disappoint me.”¹

Antinomianism

I am convinced that if you called that businessman an antinomian, he would bristle and say, “What is that?”

When you explained an antinomian is someone who believes sin is not all that bad because the grace of God is so big, he would say, “Well, maybe I am one of those things after all.”

Few of us would ever want to fall into that category. In fact, most of us do not know much about antinomianism, except that it does not sound good. The truth, however, is that the church in every generation, has included in its ranks, more antinomians than it cared to acknowledge.

Antinomianism, or the belief that sin does not matter because the grace of God is available, is perhaps one of the greatest threats facing the Christian today. These are people who join churches, sing in choirs, and help in Sunday schools, but their lives are no different from the world. They dress; they talk; they purchase; they joke; they work, and they play with the same impulse and motive of the unbeliever. The greater their influence in the church, the more like the world the church becomes.

These are people who believe that grace is an excuse for their sin. The mainline churches of America are, as one author noted recently, rampant with antinomianism.

Jude wrote a stern warning about them in his little letter. Look at verse 4.

For certain persons have crept in [to the church] unnoticed, those who were long

beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness [a license to sin] . . .

Have you had the thought, in the past week or month, “I know that what I’m doing is sinful, and if it wasn’t for the grace of God, I’d be in real trouble.”?

In one way, you would be exactly right. We are sinful and if it was not for the grace of God, we would all be in big trouble. In another way, however, you would be dangerously wrong. And, I will tell you why.

God’s Grace – Freedom to Sin or From Sin?

What I want to do today, is ask and answer one question. Then, I am praying that God’s Spirit will ambush your heart with the reality of your answer and, if needed, will remove the mask from your mind and heart and reveal to you who you really are.

The question is,

Is the presence of grace an excuse for the practice of sin?

This happens to be the same question that was asked nearly two thousand years ago. The church in every generation, has had to confront this question.

The question is recorded in Romans, chapter 6, verse 1. Look at that verse.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?

“What shall we say then?” You could paraphrase that to read, “So, what are we ‘gonna’ say about this?”

Obviously, this draws us back to Romans, chapter 5, where Paul made the shocking statement, in verse 20,

. . . but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more

In other words, “. . . where sin piled up, one upon another, grace overwhelmed it still!”

Sin grew higher, but grace mounted higher still. More sin . . . more grace. Great sin . . . greater grace! “So, ‘whaddya gonna’ say about that?”

Paul knew exactly what they were going to say. He puts it in writing, “Oh, I guess we can continue in sin, so that grace may continue to increase.”

That, ladies and gentlemen, is antinomianism. Since God is glorified by the expression of His

attributes, and His attributes include grace, and since His grace is demonstrated when we sin, then let’s sin like maniacs, so that the grace of God will be revealed and God’s attributes will truly be magnified! Let’s give God an opportunity to show how gracious He really is!

You might say, “I don’t think like that!”

Oh, what about that thought, “I know this is sinful, but God will forgive me because God is so forgiving!”?

The most famous antinomian in world history, that everyone should know something about, was probably a man named Rasputin. His real name was Grigory, but the local villagers gave him the nickname Rasputin, which meant, “debauchery, immorality”.

When Rasputin was twenty-two, he made a spiritual pilgrimage to Greece. While there, he came under the influence of an antinomian sect known as the Flagelents. They believed sinning was necessary to salvation – the more you sinned the more secure your salvation.

Two years later, Rasputin reappeared in his Russian village as a mysterious holy man, with a penchant for immorality and an unusual ability to cure the sick. By then, he had developed his own brand of antinomianism. He believed that a person should become physically exhausted by immorality, debauchery, and drunkenness, and that in that state of physical exhaustion, that person would become a recipient of God’s grace.

Eventually, Rasputin traveled to Petersburg and gained an audience with the imperial family, Czar Nicholas and his wife Alexandra. The Czar and his wife were struggling with the incurable condition of their son, who suffered from hemophilia. It seemed that Rasputin’s presence helped their son’s health to improve. He was welcomed into the family circle as a close and trusted friend.

Even after the royal family was confronted with Rasputin’s immoral and financial scandals, it was Alexandra who defended him and strangely refused to do anything about it. It was no surprise that rumors had begun to circulate that they were involved immorally.

When World War I broke out, Czar Nicholas took personal command of the army, leaving Alexandra and Rasputin alone. They were given even greater power than ever before. Key leaders were exiled at Rasputin’s wish; evil men were brought to power under Rasputin; the economy and

public morale reached the bottom. Rioting soon erupted in the capital city. Government officials secretly conspired to assassinate Rasputin and finally did, after poisoning his wine and throwing him into a river where he drowned.

The damage to the Russian nation had already been done, however. The Csar had lost all credibility, along with the Queen, Alexandra. The time was ripe for revolution.

Three months later, Csar Nicholas and his family were brutally murdered by the Russian rebels, called Bolshiveks. The royal vacuum was filled by the leader whose nickname was Lenin, who brought with him new ideas of communism.

One historian wrote that if there had been no Rasputin, there would never have been a Lenin; if there had been no Lenin, there would never have been the propagation of atheistic communism throughout the empire.

Ladies and gentlemen, false theology, which had deceived one man, and then one royal family, and then a society of mystics, ultimately opened the way for nearly one hundred years of atheistic communism to dominate nearly one billion people.

Biblical theology has already been abandoned by the mainline church in America and evil men are in its highest positions of power. My friend, if antinomianism can deceive one man and then, influence a government and deceive so many people, then perhaps it is a danger to you too!

Have you had the thought, “I know I’m sinning, but I’m sure God will forgive me. Isn’t God great?! I know I shouldn’t be seeing this or saying that or doing this or planning that, but, hey, God is a God of grace. Isn’t His grace amazing?!”

I ask you again,

Does the presence of grace excuse the practice of sin? Do you believe that you have freedom from sin or freedom to sin?

Isn’t that what Paul implied – sin grows great but grace grows greater than all our sin? We sing those words! Are we singing hymns of heresy?

“What are you going to say about this?” Paul asks in Romans, chapter 6, verse 1. Are we to continue in sin, or as the meaning of the verb implies, “to practice, to abide, to stay” in sin, that grace might increase; that grace might be seen to be the magnificent attribute of God that it is?!

And, what is Paul’s response? In verse 2a of Romans, chapter 6,

May it never be! . . .

And, in verse 15,

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!

You could render this, “Perish the thought!” It is translated, “God forbid” in the King James Version; “Certainly not” in the Revised English Version; “By no means” in the New International Version, and “What a ghastly thought,” in the John Phillips translation. Another way of saying this is, “Don’t you *even* think about it!” That is the way my mother translated it – and she used it often!

Three questions concerning God’s grace

Paul continues in verse 2 to say,

. . . How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

I believe that Paul is effectively asking three questions in this one phrase. These are three questions that he believed would stop us in our tracks from ever going down the path that destroys the true meaning of grace and perverts a true desire for holy living. They are:

- Have you forgotten what has happened to you?
- Have you forgotten who you are?
- Have you forgotten where you belong?

Have you forgotten what has happened to you?

1. Paul asks, “Have you forgotten what has happened to you?”

Notice verse 2b again.

. . . How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

In other words, “Have you forgotten you’ve died to sin?! You don’t want to go around sinning every chance you get – you’ve died to sin!”

Paul uses that expression over and over again in this chapter of Romans. He says in:

- verse 3, “. . . all of us . . . have been baptized into His death”;
- verse 4, “. . . we have been buried with Him through baptism into death . . .”;
- verse 5, “. . . we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death . . .”;

- verse 7, “for he who has died is freed from sin”;
- verse 8, “. . . we have died with Christ . . .”;
- verse 11, “. . . consider yourselves to be dead to sin . . .”.

Over and over again, Paul says that we have died to sin. And, we cannot get much “deader” than this.

Five interpretations of being dead to sin

So, what does Paul mean in saying that we have died to sin? We still struggle with sin, so how can we struggle with something that is not alive?!

Let me give five interpretations. Four are interpretive errors that are common today. We have been affected by some of these errors, if not all of them.

Believers died to the allurement of sin

1. The first interpretive error is that we, as believers, died to the allurement of sin.

This interpretation can be easily proven wrong by simply reading Paul’s letters to believers who were converted to Christ and yet, were tempted to sin.

Paul himself will say in the next chapter, chapter 7, of Romans, in verses 19 through 20, and verse 24,

. . . the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice . . . that [which] I do not want. . . Who will set me free from the body of this death?

Oh, we are dead to sin, but that dead body still gives us trouble. We have not died to the allurement of sin.

Believers die to sin on a daily basis

2. The second interpretive error is that we, as believers, are supposed to die to sin on a daily basis.

Someone could find room for this argument, and indeed, the holiness movement has, as one of its distinctives, the idea of crucifying their old selves as the secret to a victorious Christian life. The problem is that the starting point is wrong. This interpretation begins with man’s effort rather than with God. In addition, the image is wrong. The one thing someone cannot do is crucify themselves. Finally, the tense of Paul’s verb is wrong for this view to be correct. Paul is not saying that we should die every day, but rather that we have already died to sin.

Just as we all sinned in Adam (past tense), so also we have died in Christ (past tense). When Adam sinned, as the head of our race, we sinned in him; when Christ died on the cross, as the head of our new race, we died in Him.

The believer’s sin nature has been eradicated

3. A third interpretive error is that the believer’s sin nature has been eradicated.

This view teaches that a person becomes perfected in righteousness. The tragedy of this view is that it confuses the perfection of Christ with our perfection. It also ignores the many promises that, “If we [Christians] confess our sins, He [God] is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” That verse, which is in 1 John, chapter 1, verse 9, was not written to unbelievers, but to believers.

Believers die to sin by renouncing it

4. A fourth interpretive error is that we, as Christians, die to sin by renouncing it.

In other words, a Christian simply reaches a special point in his spiritual journey where he renounces sin. While it is true that a believer renounces his involvement with sin and seeks to flee every temptation, this view, again, starts with something man does, rather than something that God has done.

Every believer has died in Christ – God put us there. Every Christian sinned in Adam – God also put us there! God put us in Christ as He arose from the grave too. He joined us to Christ and He baptized us by His Spirit into the Body of Christ. We could do none of these things, they are all part of God’s work on our behalf. We discovered them to be His gifts to us when we received the gift of everlasting life.

Believers died to the reign of sin

5. The interpretation that I believe to be consistent with Paul’s letter is that the believer died to the reign of sin.

Look back at verse 21 of Romans, chapter 5.

. . . that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In other words, we died to the reign of sin, in Christ, the head of our new race.ⁱⁱ

The word “reign” means, “power, control”. The reign of sin is what controls every person before they come to Christ. The reign of grace is what takes over in their lives, when they believe in Christ.

You could imagine these two reigns in the following illustration:

Suppose you are on a pirate ship and the captain is a wicked man who captured you and others during one of his raids. He orders you about as if you are an animal. But then, your government comes against that pirate ship in battle and takes control. They liberate you and the other captives. The commanding officer chains the evil captain below deck and sails for home. On the way, the captain is shouting orders to you from below. He is barking out commands, threatening you, and telling you what to do. You can obey him if you want to, but you do not have to because he is not your captain anymore. You do not have to follow his orders any longer.

Paul wrote in Colossians, chapter 1, verse 13,
. . . He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son

Something permanent happened to you in the past. Just as you sinned, in Adam, the head of your race, so you died to sin in Christ, on the cross, as the head of the new race that you have joined by faith through grace. So,

- to say that you must sin denies the truth of grace;
- to say that you will never sin denies the need for grace;
- to say that you do not have to sin is to understand the power of grace.

Do not forget what has happened to you, Paul tells us. Sin once reigned, but now you have died to sin’s power and you are now under the reign of grace.

Have you forgotten what has happened to you?

Have you forgotten who you are?

2. Paul asks a second question concerning God’s grace of, “Have you forgotten who you are?”

Look at verse 2b of Romans, chapter 6, again.

. . . How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

The English reader misses the emphasis that Paul intends of, “How shall we, being who we are, still live in sin?”

Paul is saying, “You belong to the King, so why see how much of the gutter you can grovel in!”

In other words, the true believer can no longer live in sin because he no longer feels at home therein. The growing believer understands the vileness of sin and hates the very taste and smell and touch of sin.

In a minister’s journal that I read, a pastor sent in a rather interesting article on a problem they were having in a middle school in Oregon. A number of girls were beginning to use lipstick and would put it on in the girl’s bathroom. After they put on their lipstick, they had started the tradition of pressing their lips to the mirrors, leaving dozens of messy lip prints all over the glass.

Finally, the principal decided that something had to be done. She came up with a rather ingenious plan and told her custodian exactly what to do. She called the girls to the bathroom and met them there, along with the school custodian. She then explained that all these lip prints were causing a major problem for the custodian, who had to clean the mirrors every day. It took a lot of his time and it was unnecessarily wasted time. She demanded that they stop.

Of course, the girls remained unconcerned. In fact, their faces barely hid their irritation at this forced meeting. At that time, the principle told the girls that she wanted them to know just how much time it took to clean the mirrors. She then asked the custodian to show the girls how he had been cleaning them. He took out a long-handled brush, dipped it into one of the nearby commodes and then, scrubbed the mirrors. Since then, the lip prints have disappeared.

It is easy to forget what we press to our lips and our hearts.

Have you ever said to your kids, like I have, “Don’t let that dog lick you on your face – you have no idea where it has been.”

Kids do not seem to “connect the dots”.

Our dog loves filthy, yucky stuff! She got loose in the pasture beyond our back yard fence, where horses graze throughout the day. Of course she found the first pile of horse manure and thoroughly rolled in it. She was having a great time! My dog has a serious problem! Someone asked me a few weeks ago, whether our pets are going to heaven. I said, “I sure hope mine isn’t, she’ll stink the whole place up. I don’t believe my dog is a Christian.”

She is a dog! Dogs love to do stuff like that!

The antinomian lives in sin, not because he wants to display God's grace as a son of God, but because he truly loves the filth of sin. He reveals, in his love and defense of sin, that he is not a believer.

Have you forgotten what happened to you?

Have you forgotten who you are?

Have you forgotten where you belong?

3. The third question that is bound up in verse 2b is, "Have you forgotten where you belong?"

Verse 2b, again, says,

. . . How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Eugene Peterson paraphrased this verse in *The Message*, by writing, "If we've left the country where sin is sovereign, how can we still live in our old house there? Or did you not realize we packed up and left there for good?"

You are redeemed by the Lamb of God who suffered to pay the penalty of your sin.

We so often think that we will keep from sinning as long as we remember what it will do to us. How about keeping from sin because of what it did to Christ? It is not just a matter of what sin will cost you; it is a matter of what sin cost our Savior.

The true believer will not ask, "How much sin can I get by with?" but will say, "Oh, what my sin cost the Savior."

John Piper addressed this perspective when he wrote,

We must not give selfish, lustful, or any other sinful images or impulses more than five seconds before we mount a violent counterattack with the mind. I mean that! Five seconds! In the first two seconds we shout, "No! Get out of my head!"

Then the real battle begins. This is a mind war. The absolute necessity is to get the image and the impulse out of our mind.

How? Get a counter image into your mind. It must be an image that is so powerful that the other image cannot survive.

For example, have you ever in the first five seconds of temptation, focused on the scene of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ? Picture this. Men, you have just seen a woman dressed in a way that invites

further looking . . . and fantasy. You have five seconds. "No! Get out of my mind!"

Now, immediately, demand of your mind that you fix its gaze on Christ, dying for you on the cross. Use all your mental power to see His lacerated back. Thirty-nine lashes left little flesh intact. He heaves with His breath up and down against the rough vertical beam of the cross. Each breath puts splinters into the lacerated flesh. The Lord gasps. From time to time He screams out with intolerable pain. He tries to pull away from the wood and the massive spikes through His wrist rip into the nerve endings and He screams again with agony and pushes up with His feet to give some relief to His wrists. But the bones and nerves in His pierced feet crush against each other with anguish and He cries out again. There is no relief. His throat is raw from screaming in pain and with His deep thirst. He loses His breath and thinks He is suffocating, and suddenly His body involuntarily gasps for air and all the injuries unite in pain. In torment, He throws His head back in desperation, only to hit one of the thorns perpendicular against the cross beam and drive it half an inch into His skull. His voice reaches a soprano pitch of pain and sobs break over His pain-wracked body as every cry brings more and more pain.

Now, I am not thinking that sinful thought any more . . . I am at Calvary.ⁱⁱⁱ

Conclusion

Understanding grace does not mean that you go out and sin all you want; understanding grace means that you never want to sin again.

It is the goodness of God that motivates us to repentance and holy living. His grace is marvelous.

Recently I read of an unusual accountability partnership that demonstrated the effect of understanding grace on a sinning believer. In an effort to break his habit of using profanity, Paul began meeting with another man from his church and, with him, set up an aggressive plan for holy speech.

The plan was that each Sunday, Paul would report to Bill the number of times he had used profanity during the week and would also put five dollars in the offering plate for each incident. The first week cost Paul one hundred dollars. Although the following weeks improved somewhat, he was not having the success that he wanted and was giving more than he could afford to the offering.

After the fourth week, Bill told Paul that he was changing the deal for the coming week, but he would not tell Paul how. Paul wanted to know, but all Bill would say was, “Trust me. It will cost you less and challenge you more.”

The following Sunday before worship, Paul looked a bit down, obviously having failed again. Bill put a hand on his shoulder and said, “Paul, this will cost you less and more . . . it’s called grace.”

At that moment, Bill took out his checkbook, made out a check to the church, dated it, and signed it – only the amount was blank. Then, he handed it to Paul and said, “Your sin still costs something, but you can go free on my account – just fill in the numbers. Oh, and by the way, next week, there will be more grace.”

That first week of grace cost Bill fifty-five dollars, but the second week cost him only twenty

dollars. There was no third week. Paul was so overwhelmed by the grace of Bill, that his heart broke to think that he would have to use another check. It was only then that Paul was able to stop a life-long, sinful habit of swearing.^{iv}

There is nothing more powerful in holy living, than the amazing power of grace.

As Romans, chapter 6, verses 1 and 2, say,

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it.

Do not forget what happened to you, in Christ.

Do not forget who you are, in Christ.

Do not forget where you belong, in Christ.

Christ, the second Adam, the Sovereign Lord of the redeemed race.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 3/30/2003 by Stephen Davey.

© Copyright 2003 Stephen Davey

All rights reserved.

ⁱ Bryan Chapell, Holiness By Grace (Crossway Books, 2001).

ⁱⁱ James Montgomery Boice, Romans Vol. 2, p. 651.

ⁱⁱⁱ John Piper, A Passion for Purity, <http://www.preachingtoday.com>, 2003.

^{iv} Bill White, <http://preachingtoday.com>, 2003, Paramount, California.