

Terminal!

The First and Second Adam – Part I

Romans 5:12-17

Introduction

The first epidemic recorded in human history was called “The Black Death,” and was later known as “The Bubonic Plague”. It started in China around the year 1334, and quickly spread to India, Persia, Russia, and then, into Europe. Before it was over, some sixty million people became infected. The disease would cause their throats to swell and their bodies to break out in black splotches. Then, after a few days of high fever and pain, they would die. Sixty million people died, if you can imagine the panic. One out of every four Europeans would die before it was over.

Well, according to the Bible, that was not the first epidemic to affect mankind . . . and it would not be the worst. There is a plague of a different kind; a far more deadly epidemic that has spread throughout the world. It has infected now, some five billion people. It a plague called sin . . . and it is fatal. The statistics have been consistent – one out of one dies!

Do we really have to talk about it?! There are few people who stare death in the face and want to talk about it.

Christianity Today recently carried excerpts of interviews with very old people. For example:

- One interview was with Jeanne Calment, who is the oldest living human at a verified age of one hundred twenty. She was asked to describe her vision for the future. She answered, “Very brief.”
- Another woman was asked the benefits of living to the age of one hundred two. After

thinking, she answered, “There’s no peer pressure.”

- I really liked one lady’s spunk. She had never married and had requested that her pastor, John Fetterman, make sure there were no pallbearers at her funeral. She explained, “They wouldn’t take me out while I was alive; I’m not gonna let them take me out when I’m dead.”

Once, when I was in middle school, I was traveling with my family. I do not remember where we were traveling or any of the details about the trip. However, according to my parents, something alarming happened one night while we were sleeping in a hotel room. I was sharing a bed with one of my brothers and suddenly, without any reason or provocation, I sat up in bed, looked straight ahead at the wall, and called out one word, “Death!” I then, laid back down and went back to sleep. My poor mother, of course, was ruined for the night, thinking, “Was this some sort of sign; some mystical omen?!”

I am sure it would be a little scary for any parent to hear their sleeping child suddenly call out, “Death!” We would rather not think about that!

Death!

Frankly, the world does not really want to think about death either. So, it has come up with several ways to try to skirt the issue.

Philosophies – the attempt to deny death

A number of philosophies on death have been promoted through the centuries. Let me discuss a few of them.

Fatalism

1. One philosophy is Fatalism. This could be called, “the doctrine of despair”.

Fatalism promotes the belief that events are fixed in advance. As a result, man has no responsibility; people are like leaves in the wind, blown about without any true purpose or direction. There is nothing a person can do but wait to see what fate brings along their way.

Skepticism

2. Another philosophy is Skepticism.

Skepticism endorses the view that nothing can be known for certain. If nothing can be known, then we cannot know God personally and there is no absolute answer regarding the meaning of life or what happens after death. To those who adhere to this philosophy, any view that seems dogmatic regarding life and death is presumptuous.

Epicureanism or Hedonism

3. A third philosophy is Epicureanism or Hedonism.

Epicureanism or Hedonism says that life is all you have got, so live it up; this is all there is, so get all you can get out of life! In other words, enjoy everything and anything you want and there are no moral restraints because your desires are sovereign. So, do not listen to your conscience; forget about tomorrow; do not think about consequences, certainly not eternal consequences. Today is all you have to get all you can.

Jerry De Luca told the story about a man who lived this way. The man’s chief end in life was to get as much money as he could. He loved money more than anything and hoarded it. He would hardly let his wife spend any of it. In fact, he selfishly told her that, when he died, he wanted her to put all of his money in the casket with him. He wanted to keep all of his money for himself. His wife promised that she would. He made her repeat the promise many times during his declining years, and every time, she would promise.

Eventually the man died and he was enormously wealthy. At his funeral, just before the casket was

closed, his wife put a box in the casket with him. The wife’s close friend said, “I know you aren’t foolish enough to put all that money in there with him.”

She said, “But, I promised him I would put that money in the casket with him.”

Her friend protested, “Oh, no, you mean to tell me that you kept that selfish demand of his and actually put all that money in the casket with him?”

“I sure did,” said the wife, “I wrote him a check.”

I guess he knows now that, in a way, all he got was all he had while he was alive.ⁱ

Evolutionism

4. Another philosophy is Evolutionism.

Evolutionism is the logical philosophy of a generation trained to consider themselves as merely passing along some process; as no different than animals in our living and our dying. Why worry about death when we will be neither better off nor worse off than a dog. When death comes, we will simply be a part of the circle of life – our bones will nourish some plant, which will feed some animal, which will evolve, perhaps into something better.

Universalism

5. Then, there is the philosophy of Universalism.

Universalism was created by people who intuitively knew that a Creator existed and that they were probably going to meet Him one day. So, they created a God who exists to make everyone happy; a God who does not ask you to believe in Him because He only wants to believe in you! Eventually, He will embrace all people, no matter what they believe. Just be sincere and you will make it to God.ⁱⁱ

Now, if you bind all of these philosophies together, you get one main idea – we really do not like the idea of death and we would rather not discuss it. So, we will come up with ways to deny it, ignore it, recreate it, or simply refuse to believe it will ever happen.

In our generation, perhaps more than any other, our culture is living in that kind of state of denial. The thought prevails that, “We’re gonna live forever . . . and we’re not gonna accept the reality of death.”

The philosophy of life that our culture has embraced is best expressed by an advertising slogan for face cream that says, “I don’t intend to grow old

gracefully. I intend to fight it every step of the way.”ⁱⁱⁱ

People are frantic today with their age defying creams, wrinkle erasing shots, face lifts, health spas, exercise regimes, health foods, vitamins, and Krispy Kreme . . . what’s that doing in the list?! I am not against exercise, a healthy diet, and age defying creams, and maybe even a little Rogaine for men, huh?! It worked a miracle for me!! The tragedy is that someone can do all of the above for no other reason than to try to drown out the message that grows louder as he grows older – you are going to die!

Even more tragic is the hope of people like one baseball hall of famer who recently died. As planned, his body was handed over to a Cryogenics Center. His family shelled out \$120,000 to have his body frozen, in hopes that eventually, medical science will discover the answers to physical regeneration and immortality and bring his body back to life.^{iv}

Why have all the philosophies, speculations, and denials? Because the Bible says, according to Hebrews, chapter 9, verse 27, and the Law of God whispers into the heart of every person,

. . . it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment

You are going to die!

Humanity stuffs into their lives, things, events, noise, people, entertainment, sports, music, education, business, etc. None of these are evil in themselves, but they are used to fill the minds, hearts, and lives of people who are frantically trying to escape the fact that they have an appointment with death! The trouble is, mankind is terminally ill; he has been infected with the scourge of sin – and sin brings death.

Christianity – the only solution to death

Ladies and gentlemen, Christianity is the only explanation for universal sin and universal death and, Christianity offers the only solution for both of them! Turn in your Bible to Romans, chapter 5, where we will discover both the explanation and the solution for sin and death.

Markers of divine truth

As we travel along the interstate highway of this text, I want you to notice three mile markers of divine truth.

Adam initiated the universal epidemic of sin!

1. The first truth is that Adam initiated the universal epidemic of sin!

Paul writes in Romans, chapter 5, verse 12a,

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world . . .

In other words, through Adam’s disobedience, the epidemic of sin entered the world. The origin of sin, *in the world*, is Adam.

Notice that Paul did not write, “sin came into existence through Adam”. Why? Because the first sinner was Satan. Satan had already rebelled against God before the creation of Adam and Eve.

However, it would be Adam who would be held responsible for introducing sin into the realm of humankind.

Perhaps you are thinking, “Wait a second! It was Eve who first ate the fruit of that tree.”

That is true, but the responsibility for sin was Adam’s. He was the one whom God commanded, as we read in Genesis, chapter 2, verses 16 through 18.

The Lord God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” Then the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.”

In other words, God gave Adam the responsibility to obey Him and subjugate the earth and cultivate the garden. Eve had not been formed yet.

It was after God communicated this one prohibition to Adam that God then created his life long partner for him. She was to not only keep him from being lonely, but to keep him out of trouble. She was his helpmeet; that is, among other things, she would help him obey and perform the will of God in serving God.

The book of I Timothy, in chapter 2, verses 13 and 14, tells us more details about that scene in the garden. Paul informs us that Eve was deceived, but not Adam. In other words, Eve literally believed the serpent who came along and said, “God really didn’t mean that if you eat that fruit you will die! In fact, He’s really keeping something from you that you deserve to have. It will make you wise and you will

become like God. I know Adam told you that God said you shouldn't eat it, but Adam just doesn't understand. I mean, look at it Eve, it's pleasant to the eye. Besides, everything else in the garden is good, how could this be bad? Take a bite!"

Eve did take a bite. She was deceived into believing that this was actually a good thing!

Then, Adam comes along and the Bible says, in Genesis, chapter 3, verse 6b,

... she gave also to her husband . . . and he ate.

There was no serpent around; there was no crafty insight from Satan when Adam ate. Adam was not deceived. He was fully cognizant of the fact that if he ate it, he would be rebelling against the command of God. He was not deceived into believing it would make him wise; he was not deceived into believing that he would become like God. In other words, he was fully aware that he was choosing to violate the word of God, and he ate in utter rebellion against God.

When Adam disobeyed God, sin entered into his life and, theologians summarize,

... sin generated a constitutional change in his nature. He went from innocence to sinfulness – an innate sinfulness that would be transmitted to every one of his descendants [to this very day].^v

The singular word "sin," in verse 12, does not represent a particular act of disobedience, but a fundamental propensity toward unrighteousness. We call it the sin nature.

David wrote, in Psalm, chapter 51, verse 5,

... in sin my mother conceived me.

David is not saying that his mother was sinning when he was conceived, but rather that he was a sinner at conception! In other words, there is never a time in anyone's life when they are not considered a possessor of Adam's nature – even at conception.

Let us move on to the next mile marker.

The epidemic that Adam initiated is not only universal, but terminal!

2. The epidemic that Adam initiated is not only universal, but terminal!

Paul writes, in verse 12,

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men . . .

The wages of sin is what? It is death!

What eventually happened to Adam? He died! The consequence of death followed the introduction of sin. Read the tragic record in Genesis, chapter 5, verse 5b,

... and he [Adam] died.

The record of our forefathers continues throughout chapter 5 saying, ". . . and he died . . . and he died . . . and he died."

Paul anticipates the Jew saying, "But the Law wasn't given until Moses; therefore, how can a person be considered a sinner without the Law of Moses being given?"

Paul answers by saying in Romans, chapter 5, verses 13 and 14,

for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam . . .

In other words, Paul is saying, before the Law was given, man was still a transgressor; still a violator of the character of God. If you read the stories of Noah and of Sodom and Gomorrah, you see that even before the Law of God declared, "You shall not murder," mankind knew that killing was wrong. And the proof that the Law of God was written on their hearts was the fact that in the time between Adam and Moses, before the writing of the Law on tablets of stone, mankind was still dying.

Death is proof of sin. Romans, chapter 6, verse 23a, tells us,

For the wages of sin is death . . .

The Greek words in verse 12 of Romans, chapter 5, are chilling in their description. Paul writes,

... sin entered into the world, and death through sin . . .

The verb "to enter" is used of someone who enters a house through a door that has been opened.

Paul is describing the introduction of sin and death into the world. Let me expand and paraphrase verse 12 in this way,

Adam opened the door to the house where all of humanity lived and he invited sin to come in – and sin came in, but then stopped and

held the door open so that death could slip in too.

Some might argue, “I wasn’t there in the garden, so why does God hold me responsible, in Adam, for having sinned?”

That is a good question. And, in case you are not sure that that is exactly what Paul means, look at the last phrase of verse 12, where Paul tightens the noose even more, saying,

. . . death spread to all men, because all sinned

He is not saying that everyone eventually sins, so they are going to die. No, this verb is in a tense that refers to a past event that created a present state. He is saying that everyone sinned in the past, in Adam, the head of our human race.

Adam is the head of the human race. Paul says we all sinned, in Adam, our representative. The important point that Paul is going to make is that since we sinned, in Adam, the head of the human race, we are sinless in Christ, the head of a new race. Since you were in Adam, the head of the human race, when he sinned, you are also in Christ, the head of a new race, when He hung on the cross; when He was buried; when He arose. You can say with Paul, “I am crucified with Christ.” Because you were in the first Adam as he sinned and fell, you are in the Second Adam when He was buried and arose from the grave.^{vi}

Paul wrote, in I Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 22,
For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

Paul also wrote, in Romans, chapter 6, verse 8,
Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him

If you are getting lost at this point, I need to tell you that everything we have talked about so far is easy to understand, compared to the next part of our discussion. It is going to get more difficult to understand, so, “Stay alert!”

Paul’s explanation of sin and death is based on headship. In fact, that is a great word to write in the margin of your text, “headship”. That is exactly what he is explaining in Romans, chapter 5, verse 17.

For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Did you catch that contrast? In Adam, you have the reign of death; in Christ, you have the reign of life.

Adam, as the head of the human race, sinned. God saw, in Adam, the whole human race as guilty. On the other hand, the Second Adam, Jesus Christ, did *not* sin, and all who unite themselves to Him by faith, are also considered sinless. That is the good news.

Let me say it this way, just as we get the blame for Adam’s sin, so we get the credit for Jesus Christ’s sinlessness.

The contrast in Romans, chapter 5, is this:

- Adam is the head of the human race, into which we were born and will die as sinners and go to hell;
- Jesus Christ is the head of a new race, into which we were born again by faith, and will die as saints and go to heaven.

That leads me to the last mile marker.

Jesus Christ is the antidote for terminal humanity!

3. Jesus Christ is the antidote for terminal humanity!

Look at verses 15 through 16 of Romans, chapter 5.

But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one [Adam] the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification.

Three times, in these verses, we are told the antidote is free. In verse 15, “the free gift,” and in the beginning of verse 16, “the gift,” and again at the end of verse 16, “the free gift”.

Conclusion

So, what about death; that enemy we do not like to talk about; the mystery we resist?

Death is now simply the hand that turns the latch and opens the door to heaven. Death is a defeated tyrant that no longer reigns over the believer. Yes,

death is the king in this world, but for us, he is nothing more than a hired hand who opens the door whenever a believer dies, and says, “Here, let me help you. Your King awaits you. The everlasting King has called you home!”

The cause of sin was the first Adam; the cure for sin is the Second Adam. The first race from Adam is terminally infected; the second race from Jesus Christ is eternally healed.

By His stripes, Isaiah prophesied in chapter 53, we were healed! The awful, putrid, poisonous effects of evil have been dealt with by Christ. Therefore, our case is no longer permanent death, but passing from death into permanent life.

My friend, because of Adam, you were born into a funeral procession. That is why there is no lasting joy; that is why life is meaningless; that is why every promotion and every thrill you get out of life does not make you happy and no amount of money satisfies you. But, through faith in Jesus Christ, you have left the funeral procession and have joined the wedding procession. You are now the bride of Christ.

Do you know what that means? It means that you have stepped out of the funeral march and have joined a wedding party. My friends, we have left the funeral procession and are heading for a wedding reception. It is going to be like a northern wedding with a sit down dinner that cost the family a fortune! This will be the marriage supper of the Lamb. Oh, but all the wedding expenses have already been paid in full by the living Lord who takes His bride away.

My friend, you are not ready to live, nor are you able to live, until you answer the question of life after death. It is not until you are ready to keep that appointment with death that you are able to really live.

Where are you today? Are you a child of Adam . . . or are you a child of God? You were not born into the family of God, you were born, first into the family of Adam. You must be born again – into the family of God. That comes by faith, as you receive from Him, the gift of salvation.

John recorded the promise, in the book of John, chapter 1, verse 12,

But as many as received Him [Jesus Christ], to them He gave the right to become the children of God . . .

And what is the child of God’s view of life and death? Thomas Watson, a puritan theologian and church leader, said,

The world is but a great inn, where we are to lodge a night or two, and be gone; what madness is it to set our heart upon this inn, and forget our home.

“Just think,” the poet wrote,

*Of stepping on shore, and finding it heaven,
Of touching a hand, and finding it God’s,
Of breathing new air, and finding it celestial;
Of waking up in glory . . . and finding it home.*

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 3/9/2003 by Stephen Davey.

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ⁱ Money in the Casket, July 9, 2002, <http://www.GCFL.net>.

ⁱⁱ Charles Swindoll, The Darkness and the Dawn (Word Publishing), p. 272.

ⁱⁱⁱ James Montgomery Boice, Romans: Volume Two (Baker Book House, 1991), p. 572.

^{iv} Christianity Today International, <http://www.PreachingToday.com>, 2003.

^v John MacArthur Jr., Romans (Chicago, Illinois, Moody Press, 1991), p. 292.

^{vi} Ibid., p. 297.