

Triumphant!

The First and Second Adam – Part II

Romans 5:18-21

Introduction

At the height of the Civil War, Oliver Winchester married Sarah Pardee of New Haven, Connecticut. Because of Oliver's invention, the first true repeating rifle, known as the Winchester rifle, the Union army was given a huge advantage. And, Oliver became enormously wealthy. This young couple was rich beyond belief. Four years after they married, they had a little girl named Annie, but the baby died soon after. Sarah was so shattered that she withdrew into herself and nearly lost her mind. Several years later, William himself, developed tuberculosis and died.

As the heir to this vast fortune, yet overwhelmed by grief, Sarah Winchester did not know what to do or where to turn. A friend suggested that she seek help from a spiritist; that is, someone who believed they could contact the dead. During their session, the medium said, "Your husband is here. He says there is a curse on your family which took his life and that of your child. It is a curse that has resulted from the thousands of people who died because of the terrible weapon created by the Winchester family. You must make amends . . . leave New Haven and move west. Your husband's spirit will tell you where to stop and build a house. You must build a home for yourself and for the spirits who have fallen from this rifle. You can never stop building the house. If you continue building, you will live . . . stop building and you will die."

Now I will not take the time to uncover all the deceptions of this spiritist and these supposed spirit guides. However, as always, they led this woman

away from the truth and away from peace and satisfaction, into a life of aimlessness and fear.

Sarah Winchester obeyed and moved to San José. She purchased one hundred sixty two acres and began to build. For thirty six years, her crews built and rebuilt, altered and changed, constructed and demolished, and built all over again. The sounds of hammers and saws could be heard day and night. Railway cars brought in supplies. Every morning Sarah met with her foreman to sketch out some new room or addition. Rooms were added to rooms and towers and peaks were built. Staircases led to nowhere. Closets opened to blank walls. Doors opened to walls. Hallways doubled back upon themselves. The house became a vast, expensive maze, designed to avoid death for herself and to house the supposed spirits of the dead.

Sarah depleted the fortune. She believed that as long as she continued building, she would stay alive. But, she did not. On September 4, 1922, following a séance with her medium and the spirits, she went to her bedroom and died during the night at the age of eighty three. She had bought the lie that she would somehow cheat death!

The first lie ever communicated to a human being by the fallen leader of demonic hosts, was, as Genesis, chapter 3, tells us, "You shall not die . . . what does God know . . . what is He talking about . . . Eve, listen to me, you can sin and live forever."

Now, most people do not build houses to escape death, but humanity has attempted different ways to escape the reality of sin and death. Fatalism, Skepticism, Hedonism, Evolutionism, and

Universalism, to name a few, are ways that have been devised to deal with death without dealing with sin.

The Bible says, in Proverbs, chapters 14, verse 12,

There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

Triumph Over Death! Only Through Jesus Christ

In our last session, we began to understand God's explanation for sin and death. And I repeat today, Christianity is the only explanation for universal sin and universal death, and Christianity offers the only solution for both!

We have discovered in Romans, chapter 5, that the reign of death exists because of the sin of one man – Adam. And Adam, as the head of the human race, passed along to every person, the Adamic or the sin nature. It is a nature transmitted at conception.

King David wrote, in Psalm, chapter 51, verse 5,
. . . in sin my mother conceived me.

He is literally saying that when he was conceived by his mother, he was in sin, or was a sinner. At the moment of conception, David inherited his father Adam's sin nature.

Turn to Romans, chapter 5, and listen as Paul describes the effect of Adam's sin on all of humanity. Look at verse 12.

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

You might say, "Listen, I don't like being associated with Adam's sin – that's not fair."

My friend it is no more or less fair to be associated with the sin of Adam, as the head of our race, than it is to be considered righteous in Christ, the head of a new race. The truth is, whether we want to admit we have inherited the nature of Adam, we all act like him; we have his same penchant for sinning.

We are all like John J. McGraw. He is the baseball player responsible for the decision to have a third base umpire at baseball games. John J. McGraw was the third baseman for the old Baltimore Orioles before he went on to manage the New York Giants. If you know anything about baseball, you know that a runner must stay on base when a ball is hit into the air, until it is caught. Then, he can run for

the next base, which is called "tagging up". If the ball is hit deep enough, even if it is caught, the runner on third base will have a good chance to run from third base to home plate and score before the outfielder's throw reaches the catcher. He cannot run, however, until the ball is caught.

Well, John J. McGraw played third base. And he had the habit of hooking his finger around the belt of the runner who was tagged up on third base. He would stand very close to the runner, with his finger hooked around their belt. For just a split second, he would be able to hold the runner back. It would be just enough to throw the runner off track and give the outfielder a one second head start to throw the ball home. Everyone violently protested this, but no one could prove it. And, John J. McGraw would just as violently defend his innocence. This was in the days before television and slow motion and instant replays.

John J. McGraw got away with this time and time again. Finally, one runner, who was tagged up on third base, unbuckled his belt. As usual, McGraw hooked his finger in the runner's belt. Then, when the guy took off to run for home plate, there stood John J. McGraw with a belt dangling from his finger! After that incident, professional baseball instituted a third base umpire.

That is classic humanity! Humanity says, "I haven't done anything wrong . . . I'm not that bad . . . I'm not even a sinner."

Yet, the belt of sin dangles from our fingers, even while we protest our innocence. As Paul declares, without apology, *all* have sinned.

The effects of Adam's sin in contrast to the effects of Jesus Christ's righteousness

Now, having revealed our connection with the sin nature of Adam, Paul will begin a series of contrasts from verse 15 through verse 21 of Romans, chapter 5. This is to show the effects of Adam's sin in contrast to the effects of Jesus Christ's righteousness.

I want to summarize these remaining six verses simply because they all illustrate the same point. Adam and Christ are contrasted as heads of two races.

- The first Adam began the fallen race of mankind; the second Adam, Jesus Christ, began a new race of redeemed mankind.
- Adam bred a race of sinners; Christ breeds, by faith, a new race of saints.

I want to stop briefly at this point to explain that throughout the centuries, men have taken this paragraph in Romans, chapter 5, and twisted it into false doctrine. Everything from Universalism to even a modified Universalism have been extracted from this paragraph. This is the belief that all of humanity is going to be redeemed in Christ, just as all of mankind is condemned in Adam.

I will simply answer that by saying that we are all condemned, but all who receive Christ are justified. Look at 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.

Yes, all of humanity is lost, but all within humanity who receive the gift of Christ's righteousness are justified.

Another false doctrine taken from this paragraph is Arianism. This view teaches that because Adam is contrasted with Christ, and because Christ is called the second or last Adam, as He is by Paul in I Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 45, Christ then, was only another human being. Christ was not divine, but was a human who became divine through His obedient life.

This false doctrine of Arianism, which was named after Arias, the founder who was condemned by the early church, has resurfaced and been repackaged in modern day Mormonism. Mormonism takes a casual glance at this passage in Romans, chapter 5, and declares that Adam got it wrong by abandoning God's will, but Jesus got it right and, as a result, Jesus has been elevated to His own status of divinity that we too can reach one day.

In addition, Mormonism believes that Christ was the first spirit son of God the Father who, with His many wives, bore many sons. Lucifer was one of those sons, effectively making Jesus the brother of Satan.

What about the verse, written by Paul in Colossians, chapter 1, verse 15, that says,

He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Arianism, or of late, Mormonism teaches that, "Jesus Christ was the first creature God ever pro-created."

Isn't that what that verse means, when it says, "He is . . . the firstborn of all creation"?

The Greek word for "firstborn," which is "prototokos," can, in fact, refer to the birth of a firstborn child. I can use "prototokos" in referring to my son Benjamin, who was the firstborn of my twin sons. He was followed two minutes later, two very long minutes later, by our second born son, Seth, who has never been happy with second place since.

"Prototokos" can mean the firstborn of many. However, it can also mean first in rank; first in prominence. Jesus Christ is the prominent One over all of creation. That meaning would be consistent with the record of scripture that Jesus Christ was, in fact, the creator of all of creation.

So, as we compare the first Adam with the Second Adam, we want to avoid the pitfall of Arianism or Mormonism. As the head of two races, they are similar but eternally different.

Another contrast is that:

- Adam was created out of dust; Jesus Christ had no beginning.

In fact, according to Colossians, chapter 1, verse 16a, Christ was the creating agent. We read,

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth . . .

Also in contrast is that:

- All of mankind is fallen through Adam's sin; believing mankind is redeemed through Christ's sinlessness.
- Mankind is lost in Adam; mankind is saved in Christ.

Notice verse 15 of Romans, chapter 5.

But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one 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.

Another contrast is that:

- We are called sinners because of Adam; but because of Christ, we are called saints.
- We inherited death through Adam; we inherit eternal life through Christ.

Notice verses 18 and 19.

So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through

the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

If I could go outside of this text for a moment, the comparisons and contrasts between these two Adams are not only fascinating, but divinely orchestrated to prove the beauty of grace and redemption. For instance:

- Adam disobeyed the will of God in the garden; Christ obeyed the will of His Father in another garden, where He prayed, “. . . not My will, but Yours be done.”
- After sinning, Adam was banished from the garden by angels; after defeating Satan, Jesus was ministered to by angels.
- Adam sinned while surrounded by beauty, love, and a perfect environment; Christ refused to sin all the way through the crucifixion while surrounded by hatred, ugly cruelty, and bitterness.

Now, Paul moves to the climax of this text. Look at verse 20a.

The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; . . .

What does Paul mean by, “the law makes transgressions increase”? Let me explain with an illustration.

In my neighborhood, which is now completed, two stop signs have been erected. If I were to give directions to my house, I would say, “Go to the dead end and turn right, then go to the next dead end and turn right, and we’re on the left.”

Once you drive into my neighborhood, it is an easy drive. You come to the dead end and make a smooth right, then after a block, you come to another dead end and you bear right. Now they have put two stop signs at those dead end streets. Stop signs! Why were they put there? To remind me that I am a sinner.

I do not see those signs and think, “Oh boy, now I have one more opportunity to be a perfect, law abiding driver! I love new opportunities like these to reveal the purity of my heart.”

I can no longer just swoop to the right and keep moving and then, at my street, flow to the right and up to my driveway – now I have to stop! Those stop signs are messengers of Satan sent to buffet me.

The speed limit on a section of nearby Kildaire Farm road, just past the Cary Parkway, was recently changed from 45 miles an hour to 35 miles an hour.

This is a five lane highway! Forty-five miles an hour was already slow enough. When I saw that speed limit sign, did I say to myself, “They’ve changed the speed limit so I can now be among those who abide by the new speed limit with great joy!”? No, I thought to myself, “Will they ‘grandfather me in’ since I lived here before they changed it, so that I get to go 45?”

Have you ever thought, “I wonder how much I can exceed the speed limit without being pulled over?”

How many of you have seen a highway patrol car on the side of an interstate highway and instinctively put on the brakes?

I am not condoning any of this, but I am certain that I am a sinner speaking to a multitude of sinners! You have unconsciously discovered the truth of Paul’s declaration in verse 20, “The Law came in so that the transgression would increase . . .”.

More laws only meant that we would break more laws. Why? Because at heart, we are just like Adam. Even though he only had one rule that he had to keep, he could not keep that one little rule.

Adam could eat from every other tree in the garden, but one. Put ten pieces of candy in front of a child and set one over to the side. Then, tell him that he can have any of the candy that he wants, except the one that is set aside. Which one does he want? Like Pavlov’s dog, he will salivate and negotiate for that one piece of forbidden candy.

Where the law abounds, sin piles up.

Paul continues, however, and gives the good news! Continue to verse 20b.

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

There are two words used by Paul that are missed by many translations. The word translated “increased” and the word translated “abounded” are two different words in the Greek language.

Paul wrote, “where sin increased”. The Greek word in this verse for “increased” is “pleonazo,” which has the idea of numerical increase. Paul is saying, “where there is one sin upon another”.

By the way, do you remember from the record of Adam and Eve, how many sins it took to expel them from the garden? One. One sin, and paradise was lost.

Even if you do not like the idea of the transmission of the Adamic nature to all of humanity, then stand on your own two feet and answer the

question, “Have you committed at least one sin?!” How do you think you will inherit heaven, having committed at least one sin, when Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden for one sin?

According to the implication of scripture, the truth is, we are not guilty of one sin, but of a multitude of sins. But, Paul gives the good news, in verse 20b, saying,

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

Abounded! What a great word. It is the Greek word “perisseuo,” which means, “to abound”. And, it has the Greek prefix “hyper,” so that it is “hyperperisseuo,” which means, “to abound more exceedingly”.

You did not know the word “hyper” was a biblical word did you?! Have you ever been around a hyperactive child? Do you live with one? The throttle is stuck in fifth gear. They never stop!

You could paraphrase this verse to read, “. . . but where sin piled up, grace was hyperactive”.

You cannot slow grace down; it will never cease its activity. This is never ending, never stopping grace.

Two points about grace

Paul’s statement means at least two things. Let me give them to you.

The grace of God is never withdrawn because of sin

1. The grace of God is never withdrawn because of sin.

We do not operate that way, do we? When someone hurts us, we withdraw from them; we withhold kindness; we stop talking to them. When you hurt God because of sin though, guess what? He does not withdraw from us. In fact, when Adam sinned, you may remember that God came calling.

For the believer, grace is never withdrawn because of sin. It does not matter what law you have broken or how many times you have broken it, grace is never withdrawn. This truth is so incredible that many people thought Paul was condoning sin. He was not, and he will talk about that in chapter 6 of Romans. This truth is one of the mystifying things about the grace of God to His sons and daughters. When we sin, we discover His grace is still His gift to us.

The grace of God will never run out because of sin

2. The grace of God will never run out because of sin.

One author said we tend to think of God’s grace as a bucket full of water. You sin and He sloshes a little bit on you to put out the fire. You sin a little more and a little more, and your brothers and sisters sin with you, and God sloshes out the water of grace until eventually, the bucket is empty, “Sorry, no more grace.”

Paul is teaching the unbelievable, inhuman, divine characteristic of God’s grace. Sin spills into your life, but grace rushes over it like the Niagara Falls.

This is also the attraction of Christianity. James Montgomery Boice provoked my thinking as he wrote, “There are a lot of things about Christianity that are unattractive to the world, but grace is attractive.”

That is so true.

Holiness! “Hey world, wouldn’t you like to come to Christ and you too can pursue holy living?!”

Humility . . . that is an attractive feature of Christianity! And, servanthood, abhorrence of sin, repentance, spiritual discipline, self-sacrifice as well.

These will never be on a billboard for the world to read and say, “That’s what I’ve been missing. I don’t need a new boat or a new car or a new home or a new job, what I’ve been missing is servanthood. Please give me some of that self-sacrifice.”

But grace! Oh that winsome quality in the believer that gives to others what they do not deserve. Just as Christ has, by grace, given us everything. Grace is contagious; the world is attracted to grace.

Someone took the word “grace” and made an acrostic out of it.

- G – God’s
- R – riches
- A – at
- C – Christ’s
- E – expense.

GRACE – God’s riches at Christ’s expense. That is a wonderful attempt at putting Niagara Falls in a bottle.

This is Paul’s point:

- With Adam you have the waterfall of never ending guilt; with Jesus Christ you have the waterfall of never ending grace.

An anonymous poet wrote:

Have you on the Lord believed?

There's so much more to follow.

Of His grace have you received?

Still there's more to follow.

Oh, the grace the Father showed;

Still there's more to follow

Freely He His grace bestows.

Still there's more to follow.

More and more and more and more,

Always more to follow;

Oh, His matchless, boundless grace,

Still there's more to follow.ⁱ

Now, notice verse 21.

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

- Adam took of that tree and began to die; when we believe in Christ who hung upon another tree, we begin to live.
- Adam was a thief and was cast out of Paradise; Jesus Christ hung next to a thief and promised him, “. . . today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”
- Adam lost Paradise through greed; Jesus Christ promises Paradise by grace through saving faith.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 3/23/2003 by Stephen Davey.

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ⁱ Kent Hughes, Romans, p. 119.