

There is no more important explanation of Christ's birth than that He took our flesh in order to succeed in all that Adam failed to accomplish. Though the scars on all creation are deep because of Adam's sin, we must never lose sight of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Last Adam – perfect in His obedience, sacrificial death and victorious resurrection. More than that, as the Last Adam, He created a new destiny for us. The time of the probation and failure of Adam is now over, since Jesus as the Head of the New Creation has passed all God's tests in Adam's place! When it comes to our inheritance and blessing, the Fall is reversed, and through Christ we inherit something better than the Garden of Eden. To help us believe in these glorious realities, we need to look once again at Romans 5:12-21.

Monday: read Romans 5:12-18

Christ's Work is Stronger

The massive effect of Adam's *universal* guilt, and the daily reminders of sin and death *in every aspect* of our lives could tempt us to wrongly think that Adam's sway is more mighty than Christ's. Indeed, Bunyan's character Faithful, at the foot of the Hill Difficulty, must have been in tears at the nearly overwhelming pain which "Adam the First" caused by his painful grabbing of Faithful's flesh! Do you remember Faithful's words in Pilgrim's Progress?

"Then Adam reviled me, and told me that he would send such a one after me, that should make my way bitter to my Soul. So I turned to go away from him; but just as I turned myself to go thence, I felt him take hold of my flesh, and give me such a **deadly twitch** back, that I thought **he had pulled part of me after himself**. This made me cry, O wretched Man!"

Meditate and Pray: Dear embattled believer, you struggle against the sins of your old sin nature, which Bunyan calls "The Old Man." Do not despair at the strength of your sins to grab ahold of you, as if "Adam the First" still ruled over your life. The Lord Jesus Christ took your humanity up to Heaven so that He might be for you there "a merciful and faithful High Priest." Every time you are sorely tempted, and especially when you fall, His compassion is fresh and His heart goes out to you. Be assured that He is praying for you, even now, that your faith won't fail. Moreover, the Lord will not let your time of temptation go on forever (1 Corinthians 10:13). He is faithful!

Tues/Weds: Read Romans 5:12-18; Romans 2:12-16 & 1 Corinthians 15:22-25

The Fullest Extent Possible

The vast extent of the Fall cannot be missed when reading 1 Corinthians 15:22's simple statement: "In Adam all die." This is a brief summation of what we have read in Romans 5. Romans 2 expresses the same statement of death's toll on all mankind in Romans 2:12: "For all who have sinned without the law will perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law."

Remember: Don't think that Adam's *misdeeds in the Fall* have as much impact as Christ's *obedience in our place*. When Adam fell by eating the forbidden fruit, he did not care about the sin and misery which his sin would cause all who came after him. He chose to reject God's command *simply due to his own desire to be like God*. He failed the probationary test of the Garden of Eden, and fell from the innocence of the Garden. But how much more did Christ gain than Adam lost! Adam's was a bare innocence; an untested character and a clean slate which he marred by the Fall. But Christ's obedience *went to the fullest extent possible*, earning for us a full and complete righteousness! This is where our justification finds its source – so that in our salvation God imputes to us a perfect righteousness which Christ has earned. Adam lost his innocence by giving into one sin. Christ gained full righteousness for us by resisting every sin that it is possible to commit. Complete salvation is the result.

Meditate and Pray: Sing and thank Jesus for the secure position He won for us and all believers. How does hymn 520 put it?

*Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.*

*Bold shall I stand in Thy great day;
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
Fully absolved through these I am
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.*

*This spotless robe the same appears,
When ruined nature sinks in years;
No age can change its glorious hue,
The robe of Christ is ever new.*

*O let the dead now hear Thy voice;
Now bid Thy banished ones rejoice;
Their beauty this, their glorious dress,
Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness.*

Thursday: read Romans 5:15-18 & 1 Corinthians 15:22-25

Jesus is Content!

It is very easy to fall into a mistaken, *universalistic* interpretation of Paul's statements about both the Fall and Christ's saving work. In both Romans 5:18 and 1 Corinthians 15:22, Paul declares that, just as in Adam all are condemned because of sin and die as a consequence, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But 1 Corinthians 15:23 makes clear that the only ones who will be made alive will be those who belong to Christ, who will rise to eternal life because of their faith-union with Christ. He is the First Fruits of the new creation: "But each in his own order: Christ the First Fruits, then, at his coming, those who belong to Christ." No universalism here! Christ died to purchase a people for Himself, and prays savingly only for these "elect," chosen out of the mass of lost humanity (John 17:9).

Meditate and Pray: Glory in the truth that we believers form the *remnant* chosen by grace. Pause to think of how human dictators demand *universal allegiance*. One can think of the current "Dear Leader" of North Korea. Imagine how angry he would be if, out of 100,000 subjects being forced to bow to him, there stood one defiantly refusing to bow! He would not rest until he made that one rebel bow the knee. Total dictators lust for a universal following.

How humble and patient Jesus is, by contrast! Though all will one day bow and confess His Lordship, Christ is content with *not having* the wise ones, the proud ones, the great ones and the ones praised by mankind as His inheritance! He shouts jubilantly: "Here am I and the children God has given Me" (Hebrews 2:13), even though we as His inheritance are not of noble birth nor of great importance in this world. He is nonetheless *content* to have us as His Bride, when no one else will! Well may we cry out in the words of hymn 469, when we realize how many mighty ones Christ has passed by to claim us!

*Why was I made to hear thy voice,
And enter while there's room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?*

Friday: Read Romans 5:18-21 & Romans 7:24-25

Sniffing out the Old Man

If we are not overwhelmed by the power of "Adam the First" and his reign of sin and death, we might go to the other extreme and dismiss such a lurid description of Adam as meant only to describe grave sinners. There even might be some in this world with the temerity in their secret thoughts to believe that perhaps they would perform better than Adam when faced with the temptation of the Fall. Such arrogant thoughts have been expressed by Jesus' disciples before this: "Even if all forsake you, I will not." Isn't that what Peter said?

To cure us of even *the barest hint* of such arrogance, remember how “Adam the First” appears to John Bunyan’s character Faithful, noting especially the words which Faithful saw on Adam’s forehead when his eyes were opened to Adam’s deceitful words.

Faithful: When I came to the foot of the Hill called Difficulty, I met with a very aged Man, who asked me, What I was, and whither bound? I told him, that I was a Pilgrim, going to the Celestial City. Then said the old man, Thou lookest like an honest fellow; wilt thou be content to dwell with me for the wages that I shall give thee? Then I asked him his name, and where he dwelt? He said his name was Adam the First, and he dwelt in the town of Deceit. I asked him then, What was his work and what the wages that he would give? He told me, That his work was many delights; and his wages, that I should be his Heir at last. I further asked him, What House he kept, and what other Servants he had? So he told me, That his House was maintained with all the dainties in the world; and that his Servants were those of his own begetting. Then I asked how many Children he had? He said that he had but three Daughters: The Lust of the Flesh, The Lust of the Eyes, and The Pride of Life, and that I should marry them all if I would. Then I asked how long time he would have me live with him? And he told me, As long as he lived himself.

Christian: Well, and what conclusion came the old man and you to at last?

Faithful: Why, at first, I felt myself somewhat inclined to go with the man, for I thought he spoke very fair; but looking on his forehead, as I talked with him, I saw there written, Put off the old man with his deeds.

Meditate and Pray: Lord, do not let us look down upon fellow believers who are being sorely pressed by Satan. Rid us of the self-righteous self-confidence which causes us to set ourselves apart from others like Peter did. Help us to identify with Paul when we confess our own wretchedness in the words of Romans 7:24-25. Help us to also see that Bunyan was not writing about the *historical Adam* saved by grace in Genesis 3:15, but about the *Adamic sin nature* which we all possess and must fight against every day of our Christian pilgrimage. Give us grace to fight against our “old sin nature” and put him to death each and every day. In the name of Christ, who has won the victory for us. Amen.