

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 28 – THE REPRESENTATIVE PRINCIPLE]

Last time we looked at three important reasons why Jesus needed to be both human and divine in order to be our Savior.

- ◆ First, God's justice demands a response, a price had to be paid for our many sins.
- ◆ As our Creator and God, Jesus was the only one capable of paying the price for the sins of all humanity.
- ◆ Second, as God is the one offended by our sins, Jesus had to be fully God in order to be able to forgive our sins.
- ◆ Third, Jesus had to be a human being in order for Him to be a true representative of humanity.
- ◆ It was only God who could fulfil these three criteria otherwise Jesus would not be our Savior.

Now we need to spend some time on why Jesus had to be fully human and that brings us to the "Representative Principle."

- ◆ This principle is critical to understanding Jesus' role in saving us.
- ◆ The apostle Paul in Romans 5 explains this principle.
- ◆ ***Romans 5:17-19 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!***
- ◆ Here we see the comparison being made between the first Adam and the second Adam and the subsequent consequences of their actions (1 Corinthians 15:21-22).
- ◆ ***V.18 Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.***
- ◆ Notice how the consequences of each Adam's actions affect all people for either good or bad.
- ◆ It's interesting to note how some commentators try to skate around this verse to make it sound like Adam's actions affect "all people" while Jesus' does not.
- ◆ This is usually done in an attempt to avoid being labelled a Universalist, in other words to avoid giving the impression all will eventually be saved.
- ◆ We will address that question at a future time. Suffice here to say, it isn't necessarily true that just because one's sins have been forgiven, doesn't automatically mean they will be saved.
- ◆ The other problem of trying to slide around this issue is to make the claim that Adam's sinful actions have a far greater effect on mankind than Jesus Christ saving actions.
- ◆ Yet this scripture clearly says, ***how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!***
- ◆ To insist Christ's actions don't affect all people is tantamount to saying God is unable to correct the damage done by Adam.
- ◆ The whole gospel message is precisely the opposite. It's the good news that through Jesus Christ, God is more than able to undo the damage done by Adam.
- ◆ ***V.19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.***
- ◆ This representation principle is foreshadowed in the role of the high priest on the Day of Atonement when he went into the Holy of Holies as the representative of the whole nation of Israel.
- ◆ However in this case we see the true High Priest's fulfilment of what the Day of Atonement foreshadowed for the nation of Israel, will now affect true forgiveness of sins for the whole world
- ◆ And instead of presenting the blood of an animal to God, this High Priest, this Lamb of God, offers His own blood as an act of sacrifice.
- ◆ Much of the Christian message rightly focuses on this saving aspect of Jesus' mission to save the world.
- ◆ However it would be a mistake to limit the representative principle to just Jesus' death on the cross.
- ◆ To limit Christ's role to just that one event, awe-inspiring as it was, is to miss so much more of what Christ achieved for us in his role of Mediator.
- ◆ We need now to go back to look more closely at Jesus' life to see how He acts as our representative in other important aspects of delivering us from our sinfulness.

Jesus' early life.

- ◆ The Gospels don't give us a lot of information on Jesus' early life.

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- ◆ We have the record of him visiting Jerusalem during the Passover season with his parents and dumbfounding the elders there with his knowledge even though he was only 12 years of age.
- ◆ We know he had brothers and sisters (Matthew 13:55) and one can only imagine how difficult it was for them to live with a sibling who was perfect.
- ◆ But it's not until Jesus is 30 years of age, the age one was eligible to enter the priesthood (Numbers 4:30) that we see the beginning of Jesus' official ministry.
- ◆ It begins with Jesus asking John the Baptist to baptise Him.
- ◆ Usually baptism is associated with repentance, so why is it then that Jesus, a perfect, sinless individual, needed to be baptised?
- ◆ Yet He insisted despite John's protests.
- ◆ It goes back to this principle of representation.
- ◆ As we will go on to show, Jesus did not only "die" for us, he also "lived" for us.
- ◆ Jesus by becoming a man, assumed the role of the second Adam, and set out to undo the work of the first Adam (Romans 5:17-19).
- ◆ The sorry history of mankind up to this point demonstrated beyond doubt that both with and without the law humanity was totally incapable of meeting the strict requirement of becoming God's holy people under their own steam.
- ◆ Self-salvation despite the best attempts of self-righteous groups such as the Pharisees and Sadducees, the Puritans and others throughout history, the goal of attaining the holiness of God has been a complete and unmitigated failure.
- ◆ As mentioned in an earlier session, it is the height of arrogance to think we, as the created can attain the holiness of our Creator and Father by our own efforts.
- ◆ This is the same trap the serpent sold to Adam and Eve by claiming they "would be like God, knowing good and evil."
- ◆ If holiness is the goal and that is God's purpose, it was not going to come from man's efforts.
- ◆ In the same way God has provided the means for our sins to be forgiven through the efforts of Jesus Christ, He is now going to provide the means for us to become "holy" through the efforts of Jesus Christ.
- ◆ The key to understanding this process is given by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5.
- ◆ **2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**
- ◆ In the same way Jesus substituted Himself on the cross for our sakes so the sins of the world could be placed on His shoulders, Jesus also assumes the role of living the perfect righteous life for our sakes so His righteousness can be attributed to us.
- ◆ As the created cannot attain holiness through their own efforts, the Creator is going to do it for us.
- ◆ This is why Jesus insists John baptise Him as He is stepping into the role of being our representative by identifying himself with sinners so he could vicariously live the perfect life you and I are incapable of living.
- ◆ We know from Hebrews 4:15 that Jesus, despite facing the combined evil forces of the cosmos, successfully prevailed in His task of both living a perfect life and suffering the ordeal of the cross on our behalf.
- ◆ **Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.**
- ◆ As a result of this sacrifice, our sins are forgiven and Christ's righteousness is attributed to us through faith.
- ◆ **Hebrews 10:14 For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.**
- ◆ **Unfortunately, this aspect of Jesus' ministry is rarely talked about yet it has far reaching implications for Christians standing before God.**
- ◆ Much is made of Jesus' vicarious death on the cross on our behalf, so that we know our sins have been forgiven.
- ◆ But precious little emphasis is laid on His living a perfect life vicariously on our behalf so that Christ's righteousness can be attributed to us.
- ◆ Yet this fact too is a truly liberating aspect of the Gospel message.
- ◆ Because of a misunderstanding of this aspect of the Gospel message too many Christians live under an unnecessary cloud of guilt.

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- ◆ Don't misunderstand. Guilt plays an important role in a Christian's life. We should be disappointed with ourselves when we sin and let our Savior down even though Jesus knows our human frailty and has taken care of the sin problem with His atonement. We should accept His forgiveness and rest in His peace.
- ◆ Unfortunately "guilt" which is designed to drive us back to our Saviour for forgiveness and help in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16), has instead been used as a club to manipulate Christians into striving harder to overcome their many sins.
- ◆ The result pushes us back to self-salvation or performance religion.
- ◆ We're told to build more faith, more character, pray more, study more, fast more, believing overcoming sin is our problem.
- ◆ There aren't too many Christians who have not suffered at the hands of those advocating performance religion.
- ◆ Performance religion doesn't end well.
- ◆ Those with more obvious sins usually give up on religion. They already feel bad enough about themselves, the last thing they need is misguided Christians piling more guilt on them.
- ◆ At the other extreme we have those, like the Pharisees, who because of a focus on external performance, fall into the trap of self-righteousness, or self-salvation.
- ◆ If sin was our problem, Jesus didn't need to come.
- ◆ Sin is God's problem! Jesus is the one whose task it is to undo the work of the first Adam, not us.
- ◆ Acknowledging the sin in our lives is a critical part of the repentance process.
- ◆ Isn't that why we came to Christ in the first place because we didn't like what we saw and were frustrated with our inability to deal with sin and the sinful nature that causes it?
- ◆ Christians need to stop beating themselves up with unnecessary guilt.
- ◆ Instead when we fail, we acknowledge our sin before God, request His forgiveness which He so graciously grants and hand the sin problem over to the one who can do something about it.

However as we go through this process of repentance we need to remember our standing with God has not changed, we are still His holy children.

- ◆ When we fail to live up to the uncompromising demands of God's law we are still accepted by our loving Father as His adopted children because we are not accepted on the flawed life we live but rather on the perfect life Jesus lived when He walked the dusty roads of Palestine.
- ◆ This is the good news of Jesus representing us through the life that he lived. Children of God are not judged by their works, they are judged by Christ's works.
- ◆ I don't know about you, but that takes an enormous pressure off me as a Christian.
- ◆ It tells me I don't need to be perfect to be accepted by God, because the righteousness of Jesus Christ has been attributed to me.
- ◆ But it's much more than just a forensic transaction. It also has enormous implications for our daily walk.

Let me ask this question. Anyone here offer up perfect prayers this morning? I did! Why?

- ◆ Because those feeble pathetic petitions that I call my prayers are intercepted and wrapped in Jesus' perfect prayers before they even reach the Father.
- ◆ Jesus as Mediator and Priest effectively becomes our worship leader.
- ◆ You may not have a singing voice that makes it on to some celebrity TV show, but it doesn't matter. Jesus Christ intercepts your tone-deaf praises long before they are included with the heavenly chorus singing praises to the Father.
- ◆ What the representative principle means is, from God's perspective, whatever applies to Jesus Christ effectively applies to you and me when we accept Jesus as our Savior.
- ◆ This applies to every aspect of our lives. We may not be the perfect Christian, husband, wife, parent, teenager, etc. however Jesus is. It's on his ability and His righteousness that we are accepted.
- ◆ It is futile and harmful for Christians to continue to unnecessarily beat themselves up trying to be perfect.
- ◆ But know this and here's a news flash! This side of the resurrection, we're not going to be perfect at anything!
- ◆ While we are trapped in this body of flesh, we will continue to sin.
- ◆ That's what we are told in 1 John 1:8.

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- ◆ **1 John 1:8-9** *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness*
- ◆ Unfortunately sin is going to be with us while we drag around this body of flesh. That's just the way things are.
- ◆ The good news is we are no longer judged or guilty, but rather forgiven sinners clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ.
- ◆ **Ephesians 2:4-6 (NKJV)** *4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,*
- ◆ Notice the representative principle in this verse, we are made **alive together with Christ**, and we **sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus**,
- ◆ Salvation from start to finish is an act of pure grace flowing from the heart of God.
- ◆ This is why salvation is an act of faith as it is based on Jesus' saving work not ours – it is Christ-salvation, not self-salvation.
- ◆ We are not accepted by the Father on the life we live, but rather on the perfect life Jesus lived.
- ◆ As far as God is concerned, those in Christ are regarded as holy and righteous as Jesus Christ.