

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 29 – REDEEMING SINFUL NATURE]

Last time we looked at the Representative Principle Jesus began His official ministry by asking John the Baptist to baptise Him.

- ◆ Although He was perfect and had no need for baptism, He insisted John baptise Him as Jesus needed to step into the shoes of sinful humanity so He could act as their representative.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ In the same way, God has provided the means for our sins to be forgiven through the efforts of Jesus Christ. He also provides 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.***
- ◆ As a consequence of Jesus stepping into the role of representing us, we are accepted by the Father not on the life we live, but rather on the perfect life Jesus Christ lived on our behalf.
- ◆ As far as God is concerned, those in Christ are regarded as holy and righteous as Jesus Christ.

But there is another aspect of human depravity that needs to be addressed as part of Jesus' mission to free us from sin and that is the sinful human nature that causes our sin.

- ◆ As a result of Adam and Eve's fateful decision to reject God, the gift of freewill they were created with defaulted and came under the domination of self-will with the resulting dehumanising consequences.
- ◆ It would be a hollow victory to save humanity without taking care of the sinful nature that causes sin and its subsequent death.
- ◆ To use a medical illustration, the patient was resuscitated, but nothing was done to address the disease that caused his death, which means he would only die again.
- ◆ The cause of death had to be addressed.
- ◆ This too was part of Jesus' mission as our representative, He came not only to live and die for us as we saw last time but also to heal the disease that causes death.
- ◆ There is a famous quote from the 4th-century Bishop, Gregory of Nazianzen, “the unassumed is the unhealed” (or “unredeemed”).
- ◆ Remember, the goal of salvation is to make us in God's image.
- ◆ It would be of no use to save us without addressing the cause of our inhumanity and making it possible for us to receive a nature consistent with God's nature.
- ◆ This phrase “the unassumed is the unhealed” stresses what is at stake when it comes to Christ's humanity.
- ◆ If Jesus did not assume our flesh and nature completely then that part which He did not assume remains unredeemed.
- ◆ It was crucial then that the human nature Jesus was born with was the same fallen nature that comes along with every corruptible mortal body.
- ◆ ***Romans 8:3 For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh,***
- ◆ It had to be this way in order for him to take that sinful nature and restore it to God's original intention for humanity.
- ◆ Jesus' whole life was one of wrestling with, overcoming and defeating that sinful nature in order that he might heal, sanctify and redeem it.
- ◆ Of course the climax of this whole process came at the cross, where Paul says, “***God made him who had no sin to be sin for us***” (***2 Corinthians 5:21***).
- ◆ It was at the ordeal of the cross when the wicked forces of the cosmos including the devil, his demons, the secular and religious leaders, the baying crowd, along with the fallen nature of humanity combined in an attempt to defeat God's plan of redemption.

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- ◆ On top of this, the burden of the sins of the world were heaped on His shoulders to the point where He felt like God had abandoned Him and He uttered that God forsaken cry, although of course God hadn't abandoned Him (Psalms 22:1-24).
- ◆ One can only imagine the internal struggle that played out within Jesus as He battled these evil forces without retaliating or compromising His holiness.
- ◆ But from start to finish, Jesus' whole life was one of undoing the damage done by the first Adam.
- ◆ As the second Adam, Jesus took on sinful human nature and through his sinless life sanctified our fallen humanity.
- ◆ He was able to achieve this victory through the intimate relationship He maintained with the Father and the divine power of the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ ***Luke 4:13 When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. 14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.***
- ◆ We spoke earlier about the Spirit of God descending on the man Jesus at his baptism. And it was Jesus' willingness to rely completely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit rather than trust His independent human nature that guided His steps.
- ◆ In other words, Jesus lived in the power of the Spirit rather than the power of the flesh.
- ◆ Jesus was not omnipotent as a human. When the situation required it, the Holy Spirit provided Jesus with the knowledge, wisdom and power He needed that was appropriate to the situation.
- ◆ This was the key difference between the two Adams.
- ◆ The first Adam when confronted with a choice to let God be God, or to "become his own god" decided to trust in his own ability as to how he should conduct his life.
- ◆ In contrast, the second Adam, Jesus, committed to live His life in unbroken trust and obedience to the Father, in other words to let God be God.
- ◆ ***John 6:38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.***
- ◆ Despite the immense pressure to succumb to the evil forces arrayed against Him, He was never going to surrender his will to the kingdom of darkness.
- ◆ His intimate relationship with the Father and the Holy Spirit prevented this from happening.
- ◆ However, this was not an easy task as scripture records this overcoming did not come without "***Strong crying and tears***".
- ◆ ***Hebrews 5:7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.***
- ◆ His ***reverent submission*** to the Father's will, and His intimate relationship through ***prayers and petitions*** with the Father were the keys to Jesus overcoming sinful human nature all the way to the hideous cross.
- ◆ Unlike his rebellious forefather, He willingly submitted to the Father's will in directing His life, in the way an obedient created son should respond to His Creator and Father.
- ◆ This second Adam is living the response of the obedient son the first Adam should have lived and He did it not only for the first Adam but also for all those who have followed in his rebellious footsteps.
- ◆ On behalf of all humanity as our representative, Jesus is fulfilling the role of the obedient son, recognizing the comprehensive claims the Father has on each one of us.

So now as we go back to 2 Corinthians 5:21 we see the full implication of Paul's statement.

- ◆ ***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.***
- ◆ The first part of the verse speaks about Jesus acting as our representative by accepting the penalty of sin on our behalf on the cross.
- ◆ The second part is referring to what Jesus has accomplished so He can impute His righteousness to us.
- ◆ He was able to do this by first living the perfect sinless life we are incapable of living, and second by assuming our fallen human nature in order to redeem it by wrestling it to the ground, defeating it and restoring it to God's original intention.
- ◆ This transaction has been called, "the great exchange." It's the bargain of the cosmos in that we give Jesus our sins and He in turn gives us His righteousness.

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This was the path Jesus committed Himself to when He insisted John the Baptist baptise Him.

- ◆ He joyfully headed down a path even though at the end of it stood the hideous cross.
- ◆ ***Hebrews 12:2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.***
- ◆ It was not just the power of the Spirit, nor following the will of the Father or his intimate communication with the Father that motivated Jesus. It was for the joy of setting his creation free from the power of sin and darkness.
- ◆ It was joy motivated by pure love for His creation that allowed Him to counter the evil forces arrayed against Him.
- ◆ He saw past the temptations, the betrayals, the opposition, the scourging and the cross to a humanity living in intimate relationship with the Trinity.
- ◆ Jesus was never going to betray that outcome. That's why he went not only with a godly confidence but also with joy to confront the forces of sin and evil.
- ◆ Along the way, He lived a perfect life of trust and obedience, and wrestled to the ground and defeated our sinful human nature.
- ◆ As a result of Jesus' effort on our behalf as our representative, the good news is we no longer need to feel judged or guilty, but rather forgiven sinners clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:27).
- ◆ In the Father's eyes we are now considered as righteous as Jesus Christ.

At Jesus' baptism, the heavens opened and a voice was heard from heaven.

- ◆ ***Matthew 3:17 "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."***
- ◆ Not only does this statement show the close bond between the Father and the only begotten Son, but it has some interesting implications when the representative principle is taken into account.
- ◆ ***Hebrews 2:11 Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.***
- ◆ Now that we are ***made holy*** and are considered ***brothers and sisters*** with Jesus through His righteous works, the words the Father spoke to the Son on His baptism also apply to His adopted children.
- ◆ Can we believe that? As adopted children of God, what the Father said about Jesus is also said about us!
- ◆ ***Matthew 3:17 "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."***