

Personhood, Diagnosis & Cure

by Michael Flowers

The sermon explores the transformative nature of our identity in Christ and the implications of living as a new creation through grace.

Duration: 25:13

Scripture: Genesis 2:7, Genesis 3:6, Matthew 7:7, Romans 5:12, Romans 5:17-18, Philippians 4:13

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the topic of personal identity as revealed in Romans 5:12. He explains that Paul lays the foundation for understanding the presence of evil in the world and God's ultimate intention for the created order. The speaker emphasizes the concept of two humanities, with conflicting identities emerging from them. He also highlights the importance of receiving God's grace and actively waiting in faith.

Transcript

Over the summer and I would say probably the rest of the fall, we'll be considering the biblical foundations for one's new personhood, addressing Christians' new identity in Christ. So the question would be, how does being in Christ touch my inner self, my personhood? How does being in Christ touch, affect my inner self, my inward being, my very personhood would be another word for that. Who gets to narrate your identity? Who gets to tell that story? There are many ways to discover your identity.

You may consider various psychological insights, personality profiles, the enneagram, etc. In your constructed identity, you may place heavy emphasis on where you live geographically, your family of origin, the education and the vocation you have chosen. Christian identity goes beyond the many temporal ways of describing and knowing oneself.

And I believe that we know too little about the astounding reality of our identity in Christ. Who can fathom it? It's deeply theological and experiential. Last week, as an introduction, we pondered Galatians 2.20. We just peeped at that for a little while, where Paul addresses his new identity as a Christian, saying, I, the ego, it's the word in Greek for I, that inner being of his.

I have been crucified with Christ, a participation in the cross. It is no longer I, ego, who live, but Christ now lives in me, in the I, within me. In the life I now live in the flesh, in the body, I live by faith in or of the faith of the Son of God.

Who loved me and gave himself for me. We're going to be remembering this passage as we as we go through some of the biblical narratives about human identity. Paul's new identity is saying that within the inner life of a Christian, the Lord Jesus himself has taken up residence to animate and empower the inner being, the inner person.

That word is Anthropos, we noted that last week, means human being, the inner Anthropos, it's translated sometimes the inner man, it's better translated human being. To be in Christ is a sharing in the inner life of God. Christ in me and me in Christ, Christ in me, the hope of glory.

But to be in Christ is for me to be in Christ. And so there's this participation going back and forth. This is all coming from Paul's revelation when he was met by the risen Lord himself.

It's how he came to this understanding, a personal encounter with the risen Lord, thus providing revelation of Scripture's grand narrative, I believe. When he saw the risen Lord, the rest of the Scripture began to make sense for him. So we're going to begin with Romans 5, 12 through 21, and this is a very dense passage.

And so this is going to be one of those like helicopter rides over Romans 5, 12 through 21. We're going to go through Romans 5 to Romans 8 all summer and fall. And so I want to just get the highlights and relate it to our personal identity.

What is God saying about personal identity? So that's going to be the slant. Well, so in Romans 5, 12, Paul lays critical foundations for understanding the primal story of humanity within the world. He gives a widescreen view of the presence of evil in the world and the cure.

God's ultimate intention for the created order from disorientation to reorientation. There's conflicting identities here. There's participation in two humanities.

OK, Genesis 2 and 3 are playing in the background. Therefore, justice sin entered into the world through one man, Adam, he's referring to, and death through sin. And so death spread to all men because all sin.

Two humanities, the old and the new, from which our sense of personhood emerges. And out of these two humanities arise conflicting identities. Who am I? Paul begins a line of thought in verse 12, which I just read, therefore, justice sin came into the world through one man and death through sin.

And so death spread to all men because all sin. There's a mark there, there's an ellipsis. And then I've added the brackets in the bulletin reading just to bring some clarity, because Paul, like myself, starts talking and then he goes down another bunny trail.

And so he's in he's like, you know, he's in verse 12 and he says this amazing thing in verse 12 and he can't even finish his thought because he has to like now he has to explain all of those words in verse 18. He gets back to his train of thought. Bill and I have been going through and exchanging emails, you know, this week about how do we read this? How do we understand this? And there is an interruption of thought here.

And so if you find this confusing. It's OK, this is dense stuff. And so think about it this way.

Let's read it this way. I'm going to begin with 12 and I'm going to jump to 18. Therefore, just as sin came into the world and through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all

sin.

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience, the many will be made righteous. We can stop there.

When Paul is addressing sin in this passage, he's not talking about our individual struggles. He's not talking about where we have sinned in thought, word and deed. Those are the symptoms of something far more insidious.

He personifies sin in the singular and sin is sort of like the mouth of the river. Sin is the source of that river, which creates multiple expressions of evil and sins in the plural. Right.

So he's dealing with the way sin entered into the world. Paul is recounting the Genesis story to say that all humanity are in Adam. And participates, all of us participate in the consequences of Adam's disobedience, the entrance of sin, singular, is accompanied by death.

Spiritual and physical, if you eat of this tree, you will surely die. I believe when that happened, they died spiritually immediately and then they eventually died physically. Let's read sin not as a series of wrongs.

Those are the symptoms. But let's read the entrance of sin into the world as an invasive power, an invasive power set on destruction of creation. Not just human beings, but all of creation is groaning under this weight and curse of sin and is accompanied by death, the enemy of life within creation.

Many would say that sin is nothing, sin is not a substance, sin is negation, it's the absence of something that we're all born in, could be that hole within us that longs to be filled with God and that hole creates a craving for more and more and more. And it's distorted because our creator is not there. So it takes the image of God, Jesus Christ, to come and untwist what Adam has twisted.

So in this passage, what are the similarities and the dissimilarities between Adam and Jesus? Verses really 14 through 17, talk about the dissimilarities in verses 18 through 21, talk about the similarities between Adam and Christ, the two humanities. I think it's easier to begin with what are the similarities from verse 12, jumping to verse 18, beginning with the similarities. Adam, by one act of disobedience, brought condemnation on the whole world, on the whole human race, descended from him.

He was given the one command from God and disobeyed it. Sin entered the world and death followed sin. And sin and death have passed over to all of Adam's descendants, including all of us today.

But Jesus, through one act of righteousness, mirroring Adam's one act of disobedience, obtained the possibility of justification of life to all humanity. The one act of righteousness to which Paul is referring is the sacrifice of Christ on the cross himself. That is that one act of obedience for the sin of the whole world.

The scripture says and our liturgy repeats, therefore, both Adam and Jesus are representatives of a kind for the two humanities, the old humanity and Adam under the curse of captivity to the reign of sin and death. And Jesus, the second Adam, the new humanity, the new human being, calls us to participate with him under the reign of righteousness. It's a new participation that he's offering.

Verse 18 is saying this one act of righteousness, the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, leads to justification and life for all. The reversal of condemnation in Adam. What does it mean to be justified?

Means to be acquitted.

A release from the penalty of sin, which is death, to be justified in Christ is to be justified, maybe you've heard this before, just as if I'd. Never sinned to be counted, to be reckoned righteous and verse 19 to be made righteous through that reckoning and through the spirit of God living inside of us, he is making us righteous sanctification. Right.

Verse 19 reads this. For as by one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners. Here's the similarity between Adam and Christ, so by the one man's obedience, the many will be made righteous, made righteous, both imputation and impartation in a sense.

Any kind of impartation comes from imputation, that announcement over us, that declaration over us that we've been made righteous in Jesus Christ. Christ is our righteousness, but he's having an effect on the way we live. So in Christ, there's been a cosmic transfer of all his redeemed community, a transfer from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of his beloved son.

That's the transfer that we've all made who claim Jesus is Lord. It's coming from Colossians 1, 12 and giving joyful thanks to the father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. Here it is, for he has rescued us from the domain of darkness through that one act of righteousness on the cross from the domain of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of his beloved son.

In whom we have redemption, the new exodus, the forgiveness of sin, the deliverance from Egypt, tithologically speaking. And so Paul is saying that we were born into the Adams family. And, you know, if you're familiar with the Adams family, how do they spell it? The A.D.D. Yes, we all had A.D.D. That's right.

I'm still trying to do that without drugs, but A.D.D. Yes. OK, you get it. And can anybody sing it? They're creepy and they're kooky, mysterious and spooky.

They're all together. OK, the Adams family, such as we were, you see, the Adams family invented the goth culture. There it is.

We're all translated. We're all transferred into the kingdom of his beloved son by faith and grace and the free gift of righteousness. And we reign in life through the one man.

Here's another. Here's the transfer. We were under the reign of sin through the one man, and now we've been transferred over.

And therefore he becomes the great cosmic lawyer, justifying us and declaring us just before him because he places us in him. He's translated us from the Adams family into God's family. He's adopted us as children, his children.

We've been translated from the reign of sin, frustration, futility and death into being seated in heavenly places with Christ. Christ shares his throne in a sense with us because we have been seated with Christ and we get to reign in life now through the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness that we reign in life. You see, we have to read this, pray it, meditate it, apprehend it and come into alignment with it.

Otherwise, we're not receiving. The free gift of righteousness, you see, says in verse 17, let me read it to you. For if because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man and then look at this, the

superlatives, how much more, how much more? It's not even a comparison.

How much more will those who receive, receive? Are we good at receiving? Yeah, I mean, I hope so. We have to learn how to receive, right? I can do it myself. It's like guys who don't need GPS.

We get lost and our wives say, I told you so. That's the Adams family. But yeah, I'm still learning how to receive from God because I am so independent and I can do it myself or I've walked with God long enough that I can now walk in my character.

I've got this Christian character and I can assume all things in Christ who strengthens me. Assumptions, that is, that's for sure. How much more will those who receive just open up your hands today, just do that as a as a physical act of saying, Papa, Papa, I receive.

It's not a one time receiving. But it is receiving the grace, it is receiving Christ, it is saying, yes, I surrender. Receiving is surrendering, right? Especially on our side, coming out of the Adams family, we have to learn how to surrender.

We were creepy and kooky. We get a new mysterion that we get a new sense of mystery in all of this. I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.

What on earth does that mean and how can I live into that? Not without prayer, contemplation and asking for it, ask, seek, knock. It's all yours. It's being given to you, but you've got to receive it.

You've got to go to the bank. We went to the teller yesterday, did this. We made a transaction.

I need to receive. I need you. I waited.

I waited on the Lord most high, I waited and he heard my cry. If you're waiting, don't be discouraged in your waiting. I waited on the Lord most high, I waited and he heard my cry.

Said in the Psalm 40, keeps coming up today throughout the service, I waited. I waited for the Lord on high. I waited and he heard my cry.

He lifted me up out of the slimy pit and placed my feet on a rock. But waiting is not passive, is it? It's active, anticipatory faith. I am waiting.

Because I know your faith, those who receive the abundance of grace, that means more than you need grace. Those who receive the abundance of grace. And grace is not just God's unmerited favor, it's not an attitude, it's not just a divine attitude toward us.

Grace is empowerment, grace. The Holy Spirit is called the spirit of grace in the book of Hebrews. Grace of God has appeared and it teaches us to say no to all unrighteousness.

Grace is personified and is what has overcome the personification of sin. It teaches us to say no to sin. The grace of God has appeared, Titus.

But he gives us more grace than we need, perhaps to share that grace with others. The abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness. That's how we reign in life, that's how the rule of God comes through our lives.

Super abundant grace and that gift of righteousness. We begin to reign, begin to rule with Christ. As we're seated in heavenly places, it affects the way we live, the way we talk, affects our marriages, our relationships, it affects our identity.

This is who I am in Jesus Christ, because I not only believe it, I'm experiencing it, right, because I'm receiving, I'm receiving the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness. We will reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ, Amen. Amen.

So this is the source of our transfer from one reign or dominion into another one. From the Adams family into God's family, restored communion is where God's family live. What family do you most identify with? Are you watching reruns of the old person, that old self? Do you have reruns and tapes running through of what episode is your favorite episode? That's me, that's me, that's me.

Paul has a solution for that, it's called crucifixion. I have been crucified with Christ, I, the I that runs the tapes and says, this is who I am and believes the lie, right? Because condemnation is reigning. We have not yet believed that there is now no more condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, there's plenty of it to go around in Adam.

There's plenty of condemnation, and that's not just a subjective psychological term, condemnation, it's a legal term, it's in the courtroom, you've been condemned to death and there is no condemnation in Jesus Christ. So you've got to take it out of the realm just of feelings and personal subjectivity that affects that. But the declaration must affect the subjectivity in our lives.

The I no longer lives because Christ lives within us. I mean, yeah, I mean, this is this is so important, you guys. I mean, and it's so hard to get, at least for me, I have to preach the gospel to myself every day because I do not believe this.

Half the time. Now, when I say half the time, it's just those moments and those flashes where I am so tempted to believe the lie. Do I really believe the gospel? It's so good, you guys, condemnation or justification, you can choose.

We can choose by choosing either to receive the abundance of grace or not receive the abundance of grace. You see, the Adams family still offers hospitality, come and stay a while thing will come up out of the box. The old Adamic personhood calls us back to visit.

And Paul says, put off the old self. Put thing back in the box and put a lock on it, thing that points the finger at you, accusation. The accuser of the brethren, that's thing coming up out of the box.

Put off that old self, it's not nature, it's not the word used, at least it's translated nature. It's old self, Anthropos. And put on the new Anthropos, the new man in Jesus Christ.

This is baptismal language. This is why we must remember our baptism daily and live a baptismal life. Being renewed day by day in righteousness and holiness.

May we choose to believe the good news for us in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/michael-flowers/personhood-diagnosis-cure/>

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