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In Adam or In Christ

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Reading: Rom. 5:12-19; 1 Cor. 15:45-49; Col. 2:11-13, 3:1-3.

These passages bring before us several quite precise things. They bring to us a series of couplets, or two things.

Two Men

Firstly, they present two men, Adam and Christ, and set them forth as two racial men, that is, two men who are the heads and the inclusive representatives of two different races, and they make it perfectly clear that it is impossible to be in both of those men at the same time, or belong to both of those races. If you are alive in Adam, you are dead to Christ. If you are alive in Christ, you are dead to Adam. These two, therefore, set forth no smaller, no lesser fact than that of life and death, and those two things are set far apart, for it is a very different thing indeed to be alive in the divine sense from being dead in the divine sense.

Two men - and the Word of God says that we are in the one or the other. By nature we cannot help ourselves, we have no choice. We are born in, and of, Adam. He is our natural head, the progenitor of our natural race and order. We are in him by nature and we cannot help ourselves. And yet God has made provision for us to get out of Adam, that we should no longer be in Adam but that we should be in Christ. He says, "*In Adam all die*" or "*all are dead*". Death reigns over the whole Adam race. In Christ all are alive, for Christ is alive, and lives in the full divine sense. But the question arises, how can we get out of Adam into Christ? And that is the point upon which we are going to focus our whole meditation presently when we have just gone over the other truths that arise in these Scriptures.

There are two men, to begin with, and they are utterly apart. They have no fellowship, no relatedness, no communion, nothing in common. Adam and Christ are two distinct types and belong to two distinctly different worlds and realms, and, out of Christ, we are in Adam. In Adam we are out of Christ. In Christ we are no longer in Adam. That is what this Scripture makes perfectly clear and it is as well that we are perfectly clear ourselves about it. There is a very great deal going on nowadays which seems to try to bridge that gap, somehow to get across it, to make it less different and distinct than it is. You find people going to work to try and get others into Christ by going out on their ground, taking up their ground and trying to meet them on their own ground, and that is a very common phrase - 'to meet people on their own ground' - but it is a fatal mistake when you are seeking to bring people onto Christ's ground. We often hear of things being done and methods being adopted to try and win over to Christ by going over to the people concerned or the people in view. For instance, take the student class. To win the students, you must go on students' ground and take up an intellectual position and deal with them along an intellectual line. That is taking natural ground, and it never really results in a real definite position in Christ. And in many other ways, this kind of thing is done.

Now, the Lord Jesus knew quite well, if anyone knew at all, that this sort of thing cannot work. There came to Him one who is a good type - Nicodemus. Nicodemus was firstly a religious man naturally, then no doubt an educated man, and then a man of social position and influence, a man who had many things on his own side of nature which in themselves gave him a standing and made him something. He came to the Lord Jesus and started to talk on his own line, in his own way. "We know that thou art a teacher come from God." "Stop, Nicodemus, you cannot go any further. If you have come to get help from Me, I cannot help you until you come onto My ground. You are in one realm, I am in another. You belong to one man; I am another Man altogether. I cannot come out along your line. Nicodemus, if you are going to have anything at all from Me, you must be born anew, you must be born from above. You must come onto My ground, off your own ground. I cannot meet you there.' He stopped the whole thing at once, and put the issue - 'We are two different men. You belong to one race, I belong to another. You belong to one world, I belong to another. There are many good things about you as to your world, but in My world they do not count.' You have got to get out of one into the other and recognize that nothing of that which is in Adam is of avail when it comes to salvation. No, there is a big gap between and nothing can bridge that gap. You have got to come off that ground onto the other before there can be a start made in really understanding the things of Christ.

Two Births

Two men representing two so utterly and completely different realms and natures as to make communion between them completely impossible. Well, two men, that is what is set forth, and we must be very frank about this. Let us recognize it and always present it to men and never try to come out on their ground and take up their position, hoping to win them to ours or to Christ's. It will not work. We have got to stand on Christ's ground and say, "You must be born again before you can make a start, before there can be the first glimmer of light or life so far as heaven is concerned". So that the two men, as these words make clear, represent two births: "*that which is born of the flesh*", as the Lord Jesus puts it to Nicodemus, "*is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*" - two distinctly different births. The birth of Adam is birth after the flesh. The birth of Christ is that which is born of the Spirit. "You must be born anew."

Two Heredities

Then by the different births there will surely be the two heredities - that which the New Testament calls 'the old man' and that which is called 'the new man'. We know quite well that we have got our old man heredity; we have got the Adam heredity. We are not only in Adam by birth, but Adam is in us by birth. When the people of Israel were in Egypt, they were in Egypt, and then God got them out of Egypt, but for forty years it was quite clear that Egypt was not out of them. That was the trouble; for forty years in the wilderness the Egypt in them was being dealt with. Their hearts were always linked with Egypt. The one thing which became so manifestly necessary was that Egypt in the heart had got to be supplanted by the Land of Promise, and those people who did not have the land in their heart perished in the wilderness because Egypt was still in their heart, but the new race, the new generation, in whose heart the land was, went in and possessed. We are in Adam, but Adam is in us too. We have got heredity from Adam and we know it quite well, but then there is this other side.

When we are in Christ, when we are born again of the Spirit, then we have got the new heredity. We inherit what is in Christ. Peter speaks of our becoming "*partakers of the divine nature*". There is implanted in us at new birth the heredity of the Lord Jesus Christ. We inherit something by birth from Him, and it is in that which is in Christ as in us that is the hope of everything. As Paul puts it - "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*" (Col. 1:27). Now not only in Christ, but Christ in us by new birth, so that it is not only that we have come into the realm of Christianity, a sphere called 'Christ', but there have come into us the mighty energies of Christ's own life and Christ's own disposition and nature to grow. Just as what is born in the bone comes out sooner or later in nature, and all our natural lives are but the gradual unfolding of what is in us by nature, and the older we get, the more conscious we are of how like certain people who went before us we are, how many more traces of our forebears we are able to discover, so it is in Christ. As we go on, if we really do go on in Christ, what we have inherited from Him grows and becomes more and more manifest.

Two Courses

Then - two courses. There is the course of Adam and the course of Christ. The course of Adam is called, or termed, here - 'the earthy'. Since Adam sinned and fell, his course has been entirely earthy. Everything down here - all his interests, all his vision, all his energies, down here and of this earth, earthy. Paul speaks of that, as you notice in the passage in 1 Cor. 15. "*The first man is of the earth, earthy... As we have borne the image of the earthy*". I like the way it is put. The Holy Spirit knows what He is doing when He uses words. He could easily have used there 'earthly', but here it is 'earthy'. You may think there is very little difference. If you say 'earthly', that means that you belong to a certain realm and your association is with that realm. But if you say 'earthy' it means you are of the very nature of that realm, and there is quite a difference. You may be in the world so far as your physical being is concerned, but it is not at all necessary for you to be one with the world in your nature and disposition. The Lord Jesus said, 'They are in the world, but they are not of the world', and 'earthy' means that we are not only earthbound, but we partake of something that is called 'earth', a nature, and our course is that - an earthy course - and there is no open heaven for us.

But then there is the course of Christ, and you know how always in connection with Christ, it is the word 'heavenly'. "*Ye are from beneath; I am from above*" (John 8:23). "*I came down from heaven...*" (John 6:38). The heavenly Man, the last Adam, is the Lord from heaven, and the course in Christ means that our course is a heavenly course, our interests are heavenly, our resources are heavenly, our goal is heavenly, our labours are heavenly. Ours is heavenly life in nature, substance and strength. "*If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is... your life is hid with Christ in God*" (Col. 3:1,3). The course of Christ is a heavenly course.

Do not forget that the one object of the great enemy, Satan, is to bring about a link between the children of God and that which is earthy. He has tried and succeeded with the Church almost as a whole for centuries, making it something earthy, something down here, belonging here, whereas in its beginnings it was entirely and only heavenly - very simple. Its meeting-places were very simple, not taken account of by the world; all its ways were very simple indeed. There was nothing here in this earth and world to gain it favour, reputation or recognition, but its life was heavenly. The only thing it had down here was a testimony, and that was a testimony to a heavenly, reigning Christ. Satan has triumphed tremendously in making the Church something earthy, and he is always trying to do that with you and me to get a link between us and what is here and rob us of our essentially heavenly life. If he cannot do it one way, he will seek to do it in another. Unconsciously, imperceptibly, the thing works until our hearts have been drawn away from the heavenly Lord and got an interest in what is here.

Two Destinies

Then finally, two destinies. In Adam - judgment unto condemnation. That is the destiny for the Adam race, for the Adam life - condemnation, judgment, death, eternal death. The other destiny, in Christ, a glorious destiny, eternal life, eternal honour and glory.

You see how very briefly I am speaking of these things, but here is the great divide in every respect.

The Way out of Adam into Christ

Now, how out of one into the other? How out of Adam into Christ? How from the old birth to the new birth? How from the old man heredity into the new man heredity? How away from that old earthy course to the new heavenly course? How from the destiny of judgment and death to the destiny of life and glory? How? Well, these Scriptures make it perfectly clear. How out of Adam? You never struggle out of Adam into Christ. You can never, by any will-power, get out of Adam into Christ. If your will is stronger than the will of Satan, then you might manage it, but all who have attempted it have found that it does not happen. Satan is far too clever and far too powerful, and he does not let his own go easily. How then?

There is only one way. God has found a way and God has appointed a way. How can I get out of Adam? Well, die - that is all. If I die, well, that is the end of that. Out of Adam, only by death. Into Christ - how? By resurrection. So we are represented as having died in Christ. How can we die? We cannot commit suicide, we cannot kill ourselves, we cannot bring an end to this miserable Adam relationship of life by any means of our own. God has provided a way, and He has made His Son our representative, to die a mighty, inclusive death as our death. He has died as us in the eyes of God, and the death of Christ is a mighty thing. It is made an effective thing by the Holy Spirit. So then, what we have to do is to see, firstly, Christ as our representative dying in our place as us. Then, by faith, to accept Him and His death as our own and regard ourselves as having died in Christ, and then, by the same faith in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, see that He is raised for us and as us for our justification, and we in faith take Him as the risen Lord, as our new life, to be in us the new life. We died in Him, we are raised in Him, and we count on the Holy Spirit to make that good.

Then the Lord says, 'Here is a way in which I designed that you should testify to all seen and unseen intelligences to the position which you have taken. Here is water, here is a grave. Step down into it, and in doing so, declare on earth and before heaven and before hell, that in Christ's death you have died, and that is the end of Adam and all that belongs to Adam. In Christ you live again, but no longer to Adam'. 'Henceforth unto Him' and all that He represents. That is your way of making a

declaration, and the Lord sets His seal to that testimony. This does not do the thing but it does provide a way of our testifying thereto and God has ordained it.

That is all very elementary, but it is very important that we should be very clear on things that are clear, and that we should put things in their place and see that here are distinctly different realms and relationships set apart by God, out of all fellowship with one another, and we are in the one or we are in the other, and we can never be in both at the same time. We are in Adam or we are in Christ. If we are in Adam, we are not in Christ. If we are in Christ, we are not in Adam; Christ is our life. I hope that you have made that distinction and taken up divine ground.