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The Men of Death and Resurrection

by Michael L Drake

Wycliffe Scholastic

As In Adam

Book 1

“For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”

1 Corinthians 15:22

The Men of Death and Resurrection

by Michael L Drake

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About this Book

This book is the first in the series **As In Adam**, contrasting man’s sad inheritance of sin and death from Adam with the Christian’s far better inheritance of redemption and life from Christ: *“For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”* ~ 1 Corinthians 15:22

Books in the series are grouped in two themes. Books 1-7, **Getting Adam Right**, aim to encourage faithful Christian discipleship by exploring and applying 1 Corinthians 15:21-58 and Romans 5:12-21, key New Testament passages that explain the heart of the glorious gospel of Christ. Books 8-11, **Getting Adam Wrong**, aim to encourage faithful Christian discipleship by guarding hearts and minds from common errors in understanding and applying those passages. For other titles in this series see page 31.

Contents

Series Introduction	1
1 The Gift is a Better Inheritance	3
2 From One, Death; from the Other Life	7
3 Adam Brought Death, Christ Brought Life	15
4 New Identity, New Likeness, New life	25
About the Author	33

So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.”

1 Corinthians 15:45-49

Series Introduction

We are all born to die. Sin and death rule life.¹ It is a grim reality of being in Adam's image that we live as he did, "dead men and women walking."² As descendants of Adam, every person enters life a sinner before God, under sentence of death from God, "dead upon arrival."³ But for the Christian, "death has been swallowed up in victory!"⁴

In his sin and death, Adam has certainly brought us all into sin and death; but in his death and resurrection, Christ, the "Last Adam,"⁵ has securely brought everyone who believes in Christ⁶ into righteousness and life. In Christ, life vanquishes death, and righteousness replaces both guilt and sin. Christ's gracious gift of redemption and life is far, far better than Adam's inheritance!⁷ "In Adam, all die; but in Christ all will be made alive."⁸

This series of booklets, *As In Adam*, explores 1 Corinthians 15:21,22 and Romans 5:12-21, key New Testament passages that explain mankind's fallen state through Adam, and how that contrasts with our far better redemption through Christ. From one man death, from the other, life. For the Apostle Paul, this is the heart of the glorious gospel of Christ through which we have peace with God, are justified before God, are reconciled to God, are saved from God's wrath, and are gifted eternal life with God.

¹ Romans 5:17

² An expression used in the USA of a prisoner walking to execution.

³ Thomas Schreiner "Original Sin and Original Death" in Madueme and Reeves, *Adam, the Fall, and original Sin*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2014, p282

⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:54

⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:45

⁶ Acts 16:31

⁷ Romans 5:15

⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:22

1 The Gift is a Better Inheritance

“So it is written: ‘The first man Adam became a living being’; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.”

1 Corinthians 15:45

Everything that Christians have in Christ is a gift of grace: “Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.”⁹

It is, though, no ordinary gift, as if given to us but never really belonging to us. We have been gifted peace, justification, reconciliation, salvation and life as an inheritance that now, through Christ, belongs to us.¹⁰ Have we earned it? No! But Christ has earned it for us making it truly ours.

Can we be certain it is ours? Oh yes! It is the inheritance sealed (or “signed,” as it were) by God with the Holy spirit, a deposit we already have, guaranteeing our inheritance.¹¹ It is the inheritance that both belonged to Christ as Son of God, and was added to as he inherited the church promised through Abraham.

It is an inheritance that by God’s grace became ours at the cross, and into which we are brought, for at his resurrection, not only did the Father restore to his Son his lost inheritance with

⁹ Ephesians 2:4,5

¹⁰ Hebrews 9:15

¹¹ Ephesians 1:13,14

even greater glory,¹² he seated us with him in that inheritance!

He raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come ... And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.¹⁵

It is hardly surprising that when contrasted with the inheritance we have in Adam, Paul finds this inheritance in Christ a cause for great joy. If like Paul we have come to God through faith in Christ, then when we read these texts we too should find our hearts, into which God has poured his love through the Holy Spirit,¹⁴ resonating with the same wonderful, overwhelming joy.

Sin & Death Came In Adam

The Bible reveals that God made Adam the first man from whom every other human is descended.¹⁵ Even his wife Eve was created from Adam.¹⁶ As God unfolds the history of the mankind he has made, he records that in the same way that he made Adam (and Eve) in God's own image,¹⁷ Adam's son was made in Adam's image¹⁸ ... and so began the populating of the world with people inheriting the image of the first man, Adam.

As Adam's nature was corrupted by sin in his fall,¹⁹ so the human nature inherited by each descendant of Adam is likewise corrupted by sin. From Adam, every person inherits a sinful nature, and as such is naturally and inescapably a sinner, addicted to sin in the heart and in action.

This is assumed by Paul in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15.

¹² Hebrews 2:9

¹⁵ Ephesians 1:20,21 & 2:6

¹⁴ Romans 5:5

¹⁵ Acts 17:26; Genesis 5:1,2

¹⁶ Genesis 2:22

¹⁷ Genesis 1:27; 5:1,2

¹⁸ Genesis 5:3

¹⁹ cf Genesis 3

These passages do not present an argument for the inheritance of a sinful nature from Adam; rather, they depend on it. It is on the fact that all people inherit a sinful nature from Adam that Paul builds the comparison he draws in both passages. That comparison contrasts the sinful nature and sin that is naturally inherited through Adam, with the overwhelmingly greater new nature²⁰ and righteousness²¹ supernaturally gifted in Christ's redemption.

Through this one man Adam, Paul explains, sin and death have come to all. Paul goes on to explain that in contrast to that, in one man Christ, all God's people will be made righteous and resurrected to life. This glorious hope can come to us through one man because it was by one man we became sinners. Everything in these two passages rests on this foundational Bible truth: we are sinners because we have inherited from Adam a sinful nature.

Some confuse the sinful nature we inherit from Adam with the idea that we inherit Adam's sin, as if "Behind all our depravity and all our guilt and all our sinning, there is a deep mysterious connection with Adam whose sin became our sin and whose judgment became our judgment."²² This "deep mysterious connection with Adam" is the root of the idea that we are sinners because we are each said to have sinned "in Adam." It is right to call it "a deep mysterious connection." It is so mysterious that it can't be found in the Bible which teaches the opposite: Adam's sin was his, not ours, but it rendered him and all his posterity sinners by nature, so that we sin because we are sinners.

Although Christians are united to Christ and therefore the Bible frequently describes Christians as being "in Christ," nowhere does the Bible teach that we are "in Adam," in the sense of either partaking in his first sin or being united to him. 1 Corinthians 15 is the only biblical passage that uses the term "in Adam," although Romans 5 is conceptually linked to 1 Corinthians 15.

²⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:17

²¹ Romans 3:21-26

²² John Piper, *Adam, Christ and Justification: Part 1*, Desiring God, 2000, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/adam-christ-and-justification-part-1>

However, those passages do not teach that *all people* are “in Adam,” but that the *act of bringing death to all people* is “in Adam.”

It is not the people who are “in Adam,” nor their sin, but their death: the result of Adam’s sin. Paul “is not claiming that Adam’s one sin is imputed to all humanity, but that the domain of sin and death claims ‘the many’.”²³

Righteousness & Life Came In Christ

Similarly, it is the *act* of bringing righteousness and resurrection life that is “in Christ” in these passages, not people. Nevertheless, as other New Testament texts teach, Christ does unite believers to himself so that it can be said of believers that we are “in Christ” in a way that transcends our inherited sinful likeness to Adam. Although this is not what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5, to be “in Christ” in this other sense is such a glorious gift of grace that it is considered in Chapter 4 below and in other titles of this series in relation to relevant texts.

Our inheritance in Adam is more than a sinful nature however. We are human: born with a body and a soul. From Adam we inherit a fallen nature and an imperfect body. We do not simply have flesh and blood, but *are* flesh and blood. Our bodies do indeed carry the indelible corruption and terminality that belongs to this creation, but redemption is to be completed with a glorious resurrection to bodily perfection, not only with a spiritual new birth. We inherit a fallen humanity of body and soul – we are being redeemed to a glorified humanity of renewed body and re-born soul.

“For as in Adam all die,
so in Christ all will be made alive.”²⁴

²³ Constantine Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ* Zondervan Academic, Grand Rapids, 2015, Kindle Edition p403

²⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:22

2 From One, Death; from the Other Life

*“For since death came through a man,
the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.”*

1 Corinthians 15:21

At the beginning of 1 Corinthians 15 Paul calls on his readers to move on from his discussion in the previous couple of chapters about worship and spiritual gifts, and return to the heart of the gospel: “I want to remind you of the gospel ... by this gospel you were saved.”²⁵ He then identifies what he considers to be of “first importance”:

- a. Christ died for our sins ... according to the Scriptures
- b. Christ was buried and raised on the third day ... according to the Scriptures

It is a beautiful summary of the gospel: Christ died for sinners, Christ lives, and both happened according to the promises of God in God’s word. But that brings him to challenge and correct the false doctrine that there is no resurrection for the dead. Such a false teaching was apparently troubling the church at Corinth. He asks the rhetorical question of the Corinthians, that if it is true Christ is raised from the dead, “How can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?”²⁶ He adds that if indeed Christ is

²⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:1,2

²⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:12

not raised from the dead, then the Corinthians' faith is futile²⁷ and they are still in their sins. Paul will have none of that!²⁸ He declares that "if only in this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men."²⁹

Not only is Christ raised, but, Paul argues, because Christ is raised from the dead, all who belong to Christ will also be raised in life.³⁰ He then draws out the implications of this for both the hope we have in Christ for our eternity, and the ethical demands of living now as those who have such an eternity prepared for them. In the middle of this comes the simple and clear declaration:

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.³¹

Here is more than a rejection of the false doctrine that "there is no resurrection of the dead."³² He not only refutes what is false, but now asserts the opposite as a certainty. "But no! Christ most certainly has been raised." And not only has he been raised; the verb tense Paul uses affirms that Christ has been raised, and continues to be in that state of being raised from the dead, never again to be dead and entombed.

This resurrection is not only critical for Christ: Paul goes on to assert that Christ's resurrection is of utmost significance for all. Resurrection not only belongs to Christ; it is through this one resurrected, living man, Christ, that resurrection life comes to all who are to be raised, just as it is through one dead man that death came and comes to all.

²⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:17

²⁸ So critical is belief in the resurrection, that in Romans 10:9, along with acknowledging Jesus as Lord, Paul makes belief in the resurrection essential to salvation.

²⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:19

³⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:20-23

³¹ 1 Corinthians 15:20-22

³² 1 Corinthians 15:12

Christ, the Firstfruits

Before he makes this comparison between Christ and Adam, Paul identifies a stunning attribute of the risen Christ. This so distinguishes Christ from Adam, as to not only limit comparison between the two to the single point of similarity that he makes, but to overshadow the comparison with the glorious superiority of Christ. Not only has Christ been raised from the dead, but this risen Christ is “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”

Earlier in this chapter Paul described those who have died in Christ as “fallen asleep.”³³ This is more than a mere hint that they will one day “awaken” in resurrection life from the sleep of death. Here he continues the metaphor, identifying Christ as the “firstfruits” of those who are asleep (that is, those who are dead but will again live).

Describing Christ as “the firstfruits” of the dead is an obvious allusion to the firstfruits of the annual harvest, the first and best of the crop, which, under the Old Testament Mosaic Law, was given as an offering dedicated to God.³⁴ The firstfruits belonged to God. By offering the firstfruits in worship to God, God’s right to the firstfruits was acknowledged. But in this offering God was also acknowledged as the one through whom the whole harvest would come to ripeness and be gathered in a festival of “ingathering.”³⁵

So the firstfruits are not only offered in recognition that the harvest belongs to God and is provided by him, but they are also offered as a token of thanks to God in the hope of an abundant ingathering to come. Christ is certainly the first to be raised, and is raised for God and for God’s glory. He is also the token of an abundant harvest of God’s people who will be raised and gathered in a day to come. Christ is truly the “firstfruits” of the dead.

Further, the firstborn son was deemed to be the “firstfruits” of

³³ 1 Corinthians 15:6,18

³⁴ Leviticus 23:10; Deuteronomy 26:1-11

³⁵ Exodus 23:16

his father's strength,³⁶ to whom a double portion of inheritance was to be given. Christ is not only the firstfruits of the resurrection harvest, but he is the firstborn son, worthy to be honoured with a double portion of the Father's inheritance.³⁷

In similar imagery, God called Israel his favoured firstborn son,³⁸ the first of the international harvest that God had covenanted to give through Abraham. So God demanded that Pharaoh let "his son," Israel, go to serve God as a firstborn son dedicated to God ought to serve.³⁹ When Pharaoh, in his claim of strength, refused, God displayed *his* strength by slaying every Egyptian firstborn in that last of the ten terrible plagues God brought upon Egypt.⁴⁰ Every son of Egypt's strength died in the face of God's infinitely greater strength.

It is in a similar context that Paul can say that believers are given the "firstfruits of the Spirit,"⁴¹ a sort of sample of what it is to be wholly Christ's, a foretaste that is like "a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."⁴² As the firstfruits of what is coming to believers, "the Spirit not only makes the benefits of Christ's saving work effective in them, but also enables them to appropriate and enjoy in advance the benefits of the age to come."⁴³

This firstfruits imagery is picked up again in Revelation 14 where the "redeemed from the earth," represented by the 144,000⁴⁴ gathered around the throne in worship, are described

³⁶ Genesis 49:3, Deuteronomy 21:17

³⁷ Albeit as he inherits everything, it cannot be doubled!

³⁸ Jeremiah 2:3

³⁹ Exodus 4:22,23

⁴⁰ Psalm 78:51; 105:36

⁴¹ Romans 8:23

⁴² 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5

⁴³ F F Bruce *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1977, p209

⁴⁴ Some see the 144,000 as a selection of the redeemed somehow resurrected before the resurrection; but as the entire population of the world past and present is pictured in this chapter as either belonging to the 144,000 or under the eternal wrath of God, the number 144,000 is clearly a symbolic representation of *all* the redeemed.

as the offering of the “firstfruits of God and the Lamb.”⁴⁵ All the redeemed share in the inheritance of the Firstborn Son as co-heirs,⁴⁶ so resurrected believers are united in Christ as the “firstfruits” of Christ’s redeeming work, a token of a harvest to come. But if the redeemed are the firstfruits, what is the harvest to come?

In Revelation 14, the final judgement of the earth – the terminus of creation itself – has come,⁴⁷ and is pictured as a great harvest in two stages. First, the undefiled redeemed of the earth who have followed the Lamb⁴⁸ are gathered to God as the “firstfruits” of the harvest of creation. The harvest of the entire company of those for whom Christ died, is completed. As James declares, those given new birth by God through the word of truth are “a kind of firstfruits of all he created.”⁴⁹

Then comes the full harvest of all God has created that the firstfruits foreshadowed: the wicked, as grapes ripe for the harvest of God’s judgement,⁵⁰ are reaped⁵¹ and thrown “into the great winepress of God’s wrath.”⁵² First, the redeemed are gathered in God’s harvest of grace, the firstfruits of God and the Lamb. Then, the wicked are gathered in God’s harvest of wrath,⁵³ with every knee bowing and every tongue confessing “that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”⁵⁴

The final harvest of creation is a harvest that through grace and wrath renders eternal glory to creation’s Creator. All created and all of creation renders “honour and glory for ever and ever ... to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God.”⁵⁵

⁴⁵ Revelation 14:4

⁴⁶ Romans 8:17

⁴⁷ Revelation 14:7

⁴⁸ Revelation 14:4

⁴⁹ James 1:18

⁵⁰ Revelation 14:18

⁵¹ Revelation 14:15,16

⁵² Revelation 14:19

⁵³ Revelation 14:9-11

⁵⁴ Philippians 2:10,11

⁵⁵ 1 Timothy 1:17

Resurrection and Life Through Christ

But the firstfruits are more than a foreshadowing: they are always the first of the actual harvest, not just the promised one. Christ's resurrection is the harvesting of the first of what is being harvested. There can be no "firstfruits" if there is no harvesting of the remaining fruits or crop. The resurrection of Christ means that the harvest is not just promised: it has begun. Christ is the first of the harvest that will be completed as this creation ends and the new heavens and the new earth are ushered in.

The harvesting of the kingdom of God began with Christ; the harvesting of the kingdom of God will end at the "end" – but it is a harvest being gathered from the day of the first resurrection till the day of the last. This glorious excellence of Christ, the first of the firstfruits of the resurrection gathered before the final harvest of wrath, is the setting for the next two verses in 1 Corinthians 15.⁵⁶

Affirming the beyond-comparison excellence of Christ, Paul has made just one point of comparison with Adam: just as death came by one man, Adam, so resurrection and life come by one man, Christ. This comparison does not diminish the unique excellency of Christ, as if comparison with Adam makes Christ too like Adam, since Christ came as the "second or last Adam."⁵⁷ The first man Adam is the firstfruits of the dead; the second man Christ is the firstfruits of the living. The comparison enhances our vision of Christ's excellence.

In verse 45 Paul intensifies the comparison by referencing Genesis where "it is written," the first man Adam *became* alive,⁵⁸ whereas the last Adam *came* with life, "a life-giving spirit."⁵⁹ Adam came as a man, and became a living man; Christ came as a man, already a living man.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:23,24

⁵⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:45

⁵⁸ Genesis 2:7

⁵⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:45

⁶⁰ John 1:4

While the first man, Adam, became for a time a living being until he thrust himself and all who followed him into death, the last Adam, Christ, came as a life-giving spirit, thrusting all who follow him from death into life. So Adam came, and became a living man then a dying man, bringing sin and death; but Christ came, a living man, and was raised a living man despite tasting death for us,⁶¹ bringing resurrection and life. Christ is far, far better!

This looks more like a contrast (which it is) than a comparison (which it nevertheless also is)! The contrast is clear: Adam brings sin and death, in contrast to which Christ is bringing resurrection and life. But Paul begins verse 21 with “For since ...” and verse 22 with “For as ...” making clear that there is also a point of similarity. Verse 21: since death came through one man, one man is the way resurrection from death comes. Verse 22: in one man Adam, all die; in one man Christ, all live.

Paul wants the Corinthians to be certain: there is a resurrection from the dead. What makes it certain is that resurrection and life will come through one man *just as death came through one man*. One man, Christ, can and will roll back the death brought by one man, Adam – and he will do so (as he has already begun to do) with glorious excellence.

This is the argument of verse 21. Christ is not only risen from the dead, but he is the firstfruits of the full harvest of resurrection, *for* resurrection comes through one man, *just as* death came through one man. There are two important points to note. Firstly, only one man is needed to bring life, because it was through only one man that death came. Secondly, Paul is not saying more than this. He says that just as one brought death, so one will bring resurrection life, but he draws no parallels between the *way* in which Adam brought death and the *way* in which Christ will bring life.

Death and life each came by one man, but the ways by which they came through those two men are vastly different. Adam brought death by selfish, disobedient sin with no love for God or

⁶¹ Hebrews 2:9

for those who would be born in his image. Christ brought life through selfless obedient righteousness and unreserved love⁶² for God, and love for those by God's grace called to be conformed to his image – even to the point of his substitutionary, propitiating death on a cross⁶³ that on our behalf turned aside God's wrath.⁶⁴

Just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. 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.⁶⁵

Verse 21 of 1 Corinthians 15 has declared that death came through one man. So, in the same way, life will come through one man. Verse 22 of 1 Corinthians 15 identifies the two men involved: death through Adam, life through Christ. Elsewhere there will be discussion of how each did what he did;⁶⁶ here all Paul is doing is declaring what resulted from what they did.

“For as in Adam all die,
so in Christ all will be made alive.”⁶⁷

⁶² John 3:16

⁶³ Philippians 2:8; Romans 3:25 (ESV)

⁶⁴ 1 John 4:10

⁶⁵ Romans 5:18,19

⁶⁶ See especially what follows in Romans, chapters 6-11

⁶⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:22

3 Adam Brought Death, Christ Brought Life

“The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.”

1 Corinthians 15:47-49

Adam *brought* death. Adam’s legacy continues as a dead humanity continues in his deadly image. What he did in sinning, effectively brings mortality to every man. What he did entombed his every descendant in death even as we begin life. In fact, through Adam, *we never* truly live; we are only ever the dead putridly imitating life.⁶⁸

Contrast that with Christ! Yes, there is a likeness in that just as death came by one, so resurrection will come by one. That is the essential point Paul is making: it took one for all to die, so it takes one for all to live. But even in the similarity of that bare fact of the transmission of death through one man and life through one man, there is a world – no, an eternity – of difference. Through Adam, death is brought to the dead from the dead; through Christ, resurrection will bring life to the dead from the

⁶⁸ Romans 3:10-18; Ephesians 2:1-3

living.

Christ *will bring* life to those who are dead. Although elsewhere Paul shows that such life comes through Christ as our substitutionary sacrifice, that is not the point he is making here. Paul is simply saying that just as in one man death actually came, so in one man resurrection life will actually come.

In Adam

The figure of speech “in Adam” can be misunderstood, yet it is not that difficult to see that in 1 Corinthians 15:22, “in Adam all die,” is both an affirmation and extension of the expression “death came through a man.” It affirms that through one man, death came (which is the main point of its comparison with Christ). It extends the expression by identifying that one man as Adam, and by saying that death came on all that way. But it in no way suggests, as is sometimes claimed, that it is “all” who are in Adam rather than their death.

To say that in Adam all died is not the same as saying all are in Adam when he died. When Adam died, it was Adam who died. No one was “in him,” although our death certainly was. By his death he brought death to all. All who die are not in Adam, but the death of all certainly is.

Some understand “in Adam” to mean that Adam acted for us as mankind’s head⁶⁹ in a Covenant of Works.⁷⁰ In that construct, Adam acted as our representative on our behalf, and/or in such a way that we actually sinned with him, and/or had his sin imputed to us. This would mean that Adam not only recast human nature in sin, but that we somehow “personally and actually” took part in his sin by sinning there in the garden with him or by his sinning for us.

This changes Adam from being our first parent whose nature we inherit and imitate, to one whose sin and guilt we directly

⁶⁹ Such headship is frequently termed “Federal Headship.”

⁷⁰ See *Life and Death In the Garden*, Book 11 in this series, *As in Adam*, for discussion of this.

share. In that construct, it is not our inherited sinful nature which is the source of our guilt and sin, but it is our shared sin and guilt with Adam that defines us as sinners who, as a consequence, corrupt our own nature by our own sin.

Instead of recognising that we are sinful because we inherit Adam's sinful nature, a nature that, once corrupted by sin became our inheritance and our model, this mysticism⁷¹ claims we sinned and became personally guilty at the fall in some conjoint existentiality with Adam. It is not only mystical, but mythical. The Bible knows and speaks nothing of this.

Consider Eyam

By way of illustration, I recall visiting the village of Eyam in the Derbyshire Dales of England many years ago. It is properly famous for the fact that when the bubonic plague struck the village in 1665, the residents chose to completely isolate themselves from the surrounding communities to prevent the plague spreading further.⁷² It transpired that the disease had come to Eyam with fleas infesting a bundle of cloth brought into the village by their tailor, Master Hadfield. In the following 14 months, half the inhabitants of the village died. Through Master Hadfield, disease and death came to Eyam.

It could be said truly that since disease and death came to Eyam through Master Hadfield, "in Hadfield, Eyam died." This is identical to the pattern by which Paul says, "in Adam, all died." But it was not the case that in Hadfield's act of importing a bundle of cloth, he represented the residents of Eyam or that they were mystically in him, sharing the act and responsibility of importing disease-spreading cloth with him. They all suffered the consequences of Hadfield's act, but the act was Hadfield's alone. It could not be said that the residents of Eyam acted actually or vicariously to import a bundle of disease and death with Hadfield.

⁷¹ As noted on page 5 above, even advocates describe it as mysterious.

⁷² Lockdowns are not a modern invention in the face of Covid-19! cf Leviticus 13 & 14.

It was Hadfield's act that brought death and slew Eyam. The residents suffered the consequences of that act such that in Hadfield they died, but it was not their act that brought their disease and death. Hadfield brought disease and death to Eyam, but Hadfield did not represent Eyam in that act, nor did the villagers of Eyam act with Hadfield.

In the same sense it can be said that in Adam all died, but none apart from Adam sinned through his sin, or was in or with him as he sinned. No one apart from Adam became guilty of sin by Adam's sin, albeit all suffered the consequences of his sin, became sinners by nature inherited from him, and subsequently sinned their own sin. While Eve provoked Adam and was guilty of her own prior sin,⁷³ Adam sinned in his own "right" and God declares that it is expressly through Adam that we inherit a sinful nature.⁷⁴ Our heritage in Adam is found in our being born in the natural line of those whose nature is like Adam's.

Adam died in his own stead for his own sin, and not for anyone else's sin. This is not representative or vicarious, but it is destructive. In contrast, Christ died in our stead for our sin, and not for his own sin (for he was without sin). This is representative, but not merely representative: it is substitutionary.

The concept of man in the image of Adam is introduced in Genesis as something that is in the very nature of being man – it is in the very nature of being a descendant of Adam. This contrasts with the concept of man being in the image of Christ however, which is not in the nature of man. That is something that can only come by new creation, as we are united to Christ, made to be like Christ,⁷⁵ and conformed to the image of Christ that is not naturally ours.⁷⁶

⁷³ Genesis 3:6

⁷⁴ God has determined that it is through Adam, who he made in his own image, but not through Eve that we inherit a sinful nature. Examination of Eve's role must be left to another time and place; sufficient to say here though that even Eve came from Adam [Genesis 2:22] albeit not yet an Adam of corrupted nature.

⁷⁵ Colossians 3:10

⁷⁶ Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 4:24

In Genesis 1:27 God declares that he has created man “in his own image, in the image of God.” Although subsequently horribly corrupted by his sin, something of the image of God remained in Adam and remains in man.⁷⁷ Yet what Adam also images after he has introduced sin and death into the world is sin and death in himself. So to be Adam’s descendant is to have that image or likeness to Adam: it is to have the image of God disfigured by a nature of sin and death.

Genesis 5 picks up from Genesis 1:27 with the words, “When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God.”⁷⁸ But in the intervening chapters, Adam has not only ushered sin and death into the world, he has become a sinner by nature, imaging sin and death. So when Adam has a son, it is not his likeness to God that is stressed, but his likeness to Adam: Adam “had a son in his own likeness, in his own image.”⁷⁹

What follows in Genesis 5 is a catalogue of the *Genesis Dead*. For sure, Adam had other children,⁸⁰ but in the end Adam dies. God sums up his 930 years of life with the pathetic words, “he died.”⁸¹ The same epitaph is written over every descendant of Adam right through the chapter until God intervenes with a dramatically contrasting miracle of saving grace: “Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.”⁸² Adam brought death into the world and upon every descendant, except that in Enoch God demonstrates that God still controls death and life, and can overturn the heritage of death through Adam for life in God when he chooses.

Even at the Fall, God promised an overturning of death,⁸³ and although death reigns for hundreds of years after Adam, God had not forgotten his promise: Enoch received life without death,

⁷⁷ James 3:9

⁷⁸ Genesis 5:1

⁷⁹ Genesis 5:3

⁸⁰ Genesis 5:4

⁸¹ Genesis 5:5

⁸² Genesis 5:24

⁸³ Genesis 3:15

foreshadowing and participating in the salvation and resurrection that will come through Christ.

In Christ

In contrast to what it is to “be in Adam,” to “be in Christ” is to be Christ’s,⁸⁴ belonging to Christ and in the heritage of Christ, and therefore being recreated in the image or likeness of Christ⁸⁵ as heirs with him of all that is given him by the Father.⁸⁶ To be in the likeness of Christ is to be in the supernatural line of those who share Christ’s likeness: children of God, inheriting righteousness and life.⁸⁷

Taken in isolation, 1 Corinthians 15:22 can lead to assuming everything about what it is to be “in Adam” applies to being “in Christ” – and *visa versa*. As John Calvin points out, however, Paul makes a comparison of opposites.

A clearer realisation of what we possess in Christ can come only when we have been shown what we have lost in Adam. The comparison, however, is not similar in all respects.⁸⁸

That is, while there is a comparison, it is a comparison that involves difference as well as similarity. Denlinger shows how Calvin’s thought at this point explains the distinction between being “In Adam” and being “In Christ”:

[Calvin] does not ... suggest that Adam and Christ agree in *representing* humankind/believers; they agree, rather, in

⁸⁴ The obvious term to use here is “Christic,” as in its 19th Century coinage: “Of, relating to, or resembling Christ.” As such it is the perfect counterpoint to “Adamic,” “Of, relating to or resembling Adam.” However, the term has been so perverted by the mysticism it now sounds like – from pseudo-Christians such as Teilhard to clones of eastern mysticism piggybacking on popularly perceived Christology – that the term “Christic” is better avoided.

⁸⁵ Ephesians 2:10; 4:24; 1 John 3:2

⁸⁶ Romans 8:17; Ephesians 3:6; Titus 3:7

⁸⁷ John 1:12; Galatians 3:26

⁸⁸ John Calvin (Ross Mackenzie trans.) *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, Torrance & Torrance (Ed), Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1961 (1540), p114

The Men of Death and Resurrection

communicating something to humankind/believers. ... Calvin compares Adam's *destructive* influence on humankind with Christ's *sanctifying* influence on believers – a sanctifying influence that is realized through communication, not representation.⁸⁹

Quite specifically, Calvin rejects any idea that Adam

had as if he sinned for us. [Rather] Adam's posterity are subject to the dominion of death ... because we have all sinned. To *sin*, as the word is used here, is to be corrupt and vitiated. The natural depravity which we bring from our mother's womb ... is still sin before God, and deserves his punishment. ... By falling from the Lord, in himself [Adam] corrupted, vitiated, depraved and ruined our nature ... We have, therefore, all sinned, because we are all imbued with natural corruption, and for this reason are wicked and perverse.⁹⁰

The comparison Paul makes between being "in Adam" and "in Christ" makes it clear that there is a truly radical contrast. To be "in Christ" is not what it is to be "in Adam." It is possible to make too much of what it is to be "in Adam." It is just as possible to make too little of what it is to be "in Christ." Just as too much can be made of the similarities of being "in Christ" with being "in Adam," we can also make too little of the differences.

The dramatically comprehensive and radical nature of what it is to be "in Christ" must not be missed! It is breathtakingly dramatic, involving a new birth transforming the dead to life, transforming the enemies of God into his loved and loving sons and daughters,⁹¹ and transforming those under certain sentence of eternal wrath into those gifted certainty of eternal life with God. It is stunningly comprehensive in that every blessing we have as believers is bound up with our being "in Christ." It is overwhelmingly radical, in that it transforms everything about

⁸⁹ Aaron Denlinger "Calvin's Understanding of Adam's Relationship to his Posterity" in *Calvin Theological Journal #44*, Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, 2009, p235 [His italics]

⁹⁰ Calvin *Romans* p111f [His italics]

⁹¹ 2 Corinthians 6:18 & Hebrews 2:10

how we stand before God, and how we live.

As already noted, it is only here that Paul uses the expression “in Adam,” whereas he uses variations on being “in Christ” some 83 times in his letters.⁹² Yet Paul does not use “in Christ” in Romans 5, which suggests that whatever “in Christ” means, it is not definitive for understanding the Adam/Christ comparison common to Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15. These two texts reference a simple comparison: in one man death and sin come; so in one man resurrection, life and righteousness come.

Paul has introduced the Corinthians to the concept of being “in Christ” at the beginning of his first letter to them. That discussion starts with Paul contrasting the gospel of the cross of Christ with the powerlessness of human wisdom. It seems the Corinthians were confronted with teaching that despised the cross and the resurrection as things no one who is wise could contemplate. Whether they were claiming that true wisdom was to be found in objective rationality or in a mystical experience,⁹³ Paul boldly exposes their truly “foolish wisdom” by declaring, “The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but ... the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom.”⁹⁴

To counter any drifting to a faith of wisdom that can be explained either by the naturally observable or the supernaturally mystical, Paul insists on a gospel of wisdom that is foolishness! This “foolishness” that leads to faith in what cannot be seen,⁹⁵ is founded on God’s clear declaration of who Christ is, what he has done, and what he is doing. The wisdom of God is anchored in the word of God, not in the insights or experiences of man.

Paul does not point the Corinthians to some experience they lack, some rite that will lift them into a super-spiritual realm, or some powerful unction of the Holy Spirit, but to simple and clear

⁹² It is also used once each in Acts and Hebrews, and three times in Peter’s letters.

⁹³ While Gnosticism had not yet fully developed, it would appear that some in Corinth were at least forerunners of Gnosticism, searching for a mystical experience that would lift them to a higher plane of faith and wisdom.

⁹⁴ 1 Corinthians 1:18, 25

⁹⁵ 1 Peter 1:8; Hebrews 11:1

statements of gospel truth. The wisdom of God is to believe what God says:

I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.⁹⁶

Yes, this does involve the powerful inward working of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁷ But the work of the Spirit was not to vivify with a transcendent, irrational experience, but to vivify through faith resting in knowledge of the power God has displayed in Christ,⁹⁸ and made known in words that can be understood, explained, and believed.

Yet nor does Paul point the Corinthians to some intellectual exercise, as if a mere mental assent to the words of God equates to faith in God's word. Faith is knowledge of revealed truth, believed with the mind, embraced with the affections,⁹⁹ and openly confessed. He makes that clear in Romans 10:

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.¹⁰⁰

It is in the middle of this discussion that Paul writes "you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."¹⁰¹ Here is what it is to be "in Christ."

There is a spiritual union with the living Christ,¹⁰² wrought by

⁹⁶ 1 Corinthians 2:1,2

⁹⁷ 1 Corinthians 2:4

⁹⁸ 1 Corinthians 2:5

⁹⁹ Mind and affections are united in the innerness of the person referred to as "the heart" in both Old and New Testaments.

¹⁰⁰ Romans 10:8-10

¹⁰¹ 1 Corinthians 1:30

¹⁰² See *In Christ: Heavenly by Nature*, Book 3 in this series *As in Adam* for more detailed discussion of the wonderful doctrine of union with Christ.

the indwelling Holy Spirit who testifies with our spirits that we are God's children,¹⁰³ revealing true wisdom – the wisdom of God – so that we grasp and believe who Jesus is and what it is to be righteous, holy and redeemed in him. Not only do we grasp and believe the truth *about* Jesus, but we grasp and believe that it is *in* Jesus that we have righteousness, holiness and redemption. United to Christ so as to be in Christ, *Christ* is our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

“For as in Adam all die,
so in Christ all will be made alive.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Romans 8:16

¹⁰⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:22

4 New Identity, New Likeness, New life

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ.”

2 Corinthians 5:17,18

The Christian’s identity is “in Christ:” we belong to Christ,¹⁰⁵ we are aligned with Christ, we are set aside as Christ’s, and everything that we have, we have because of Christ. The faith that finds such identity in Christ is not built on mysticism: it is built on the objective truths that we are united to Christ; that we have been born again with a new nature in place of our total depravity; that we have been given Christ’s righteousness in place of our sin and guilt; that we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ; and that we have been set aside as holy to God because we belong to Christ. Nor is such faith built on mere agreement in our minds that these things are true. The faith that finds identity in Christ is faith built on truth believed.

The truths of the gospel are not things we can see,¹⁰⁶ and although the peace of God that transcends our understanding wonderfully fills our hearts,¹⁰⁷ our faith is not anchored in what we feel, but in the truths of the gospel passed to the Corinthians (and to us) in words that lacked the wisdom of the world but were

¹⁰⁵ Romans 14:8

¹⁰⁶ Hebrews 11:1

¹⁰⁷ Philippians 4:7

the power of God himself.¹⁰⁸ This is a gospel that is indeed brought to us by the Holy Spirit, but in words, “words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.”¹⁰⁹

It seems that the Corinthians were looking for some anointing of spiritual wisdom beyond the foolishness of the simple gospel, but Paul says the true wisdom of God is to believe.¹¹⁰ Just look at some of the other things being “in Christ” involves: “In Christ” we were chosen before creation;¹¹¹ “In Christ” God’s grace was given to us before the beginning of time;¹¹² “In Christ” we are loved by God with an unbreakable love;¹¹³ “In Christ” we are redeemed by the his blood;¹¹⁴ “In Christ” we become the righteousness of God;¹¹⁵ “In Christ” we are made God’s own children;¹¹⁶ “In Christ” we are to count ourselves dead to sin;¹¹⁷ “In Christ” we can be assured we are not condemned;¹¹⁸ “In Christ” truth is spoken;¹¹⁹ “In Christ” we join with other believers as one;¹²⁰ and “In Christ” we serve God.¹²¹

To be in Christ is to have a standing of godliness before God through the work of Christ, in imitation of and in union with Christ, as we consciously serve Christ. While we receive the gift of life passively, responding with faith, it is also with faith that we actively live the life we have been gifted.¹²² To be in Christ is to be Christ’s and to live by the benefits of everything he has won

¹⁰⁸ Hebrews 4:12

¹⁰⁹ 1 Corinthians 2:13

¹¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 1:21

¹¹¹ Ephesians 1:4

¹¹² 2 Timothy 1:9

¹¹³ Romans 8:38,39

¹¹⁴ Ephesians 1:7

¹¹⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:21

¹¹⁶ Galatians 3:26

¹¹⁷ Romans 6:11

¹¹⁸ Romans 8:1

¹¹⁹ Romans 9:1

¹²⁰ Galatians 3:28

¹²¹ 1 Corinthians 15:58

¹²² Ephesians 2:10; James 2:14-26

for us at Calvary.

Yet all these acts of faith belong to those who are in Christ – they do not make a person “in Christ.” Not even faith makes one “in Christ.” Faith, and acts of faith, are the attributes of someone who is “in Christ,” made alive in Christ when we were dead in our sins,¹²³ so that faith itself springs to life from the life gifted to us by God.¹²⁴

God’s Work

So when Paul says that “in Christ all will be made alive,”¹²⁵ he does not have in mind some actions we take, but God’s work of creating a new heart intrinsic to our being, and a new relationship to Christ from which these acts of faith arise.

Before moving on, a brief comment on the “all” who are “in Christ” is warranted, as there are some who bizarrely want to use this to claim all who are raised, whether to life or wrath, are raised in Christ.¹²⁶ There are also those who want to use it to argue that “all” – as in the “all” who die in Adam – will be saved. But to argue that either idea is what Paul intended is to make Paul contradict virtually everything he says in all his letters regarding salvation, resurrection, and life in Christ. Leon Morris responds,

The all who are in Adam are not identical with the all who are in Christ. ... This verse gives no countenance to universalism. Paul is saying that in Adam all that are to die, die, while in Christ all who are to live, live.¹²⁷

Those “in Christ” are made alive, and exhibit the fruit of the

¹²³ Ephesians 2:5

¹²⁴ Ephesians 2:8

¹²⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:22

¹²⁶ eg “The ground of the universal resurrection is the union of all mankind in nature with Christ.” [Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Vol. 2, p. 293). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.]

¹²⁷ Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Volume 7, IVP, Nottingham, 1985 (eBook - no page number)

Spirit, the attributes of the new life of the redeemed. Through Christ we have been made sons and daughters¹²⁸ of God with whom we had once been at enmity. Our family relationship has changed such that we are no longer counted as sons and daughters of Adam, but as sons and daughters of God:

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! ... when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.¹²⁹

It is as sons and daughters of God through Christ that we come to share with Christ an inheritance of glory.¹³⁰

All of this can be summed up in the fact that through the gift of new birth given to us in Christ we have received a new heart that loves God and draws us to imitate Christ. Fundamentally, to be in Christ's likeness is to love God. That love for God arises from the new heart engrafted into us¹³¹ replacing the heart that was at enmity with God.

All the references above that characterise the faith of everyone who is "in Christ" arise from this fact: everyone who is in Christ has new life that has a love of God at its very foundation.

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. ... God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."¹³²

To be in Christ then is to be in the family line of Christ, made alive through the regeneration that implants in us and grows in us a likeness to Christ. The similarity and difference of a likeness to Adam and an inheritance from him, and a likeness to Christ and an inheritance from him can now be seen in clarity.

To be "in Christ" is to be in the new family line of which Christ

¹²⁸ 2 Corinthians 6:18

¹²⁹ 1 John 3:1,2

¹³⁰ Colossians 3:24

¹³¹ Ezekiel 36:26

¹³² 1 John 5:1-12

is the founder and model, a new family line in which each and every one who belongs to Christ is made alive with him, bringing to life the good works that image Christ. In contrast, to be a descendant of Adam is to be in the original family line of which Adam is the founder and model, the old family line in which each and every one inherits Adam's nature and is dead like Adam, "bringing to life"¹³³ the death evidenced in sinful works that image Adam.

There is a similarity: through one comes an inheritance of likeness and through the other one comes an inheritance of likeness also. But the inheritance of the one is an inheritance of sin and death, and the likeness is that of sin, an enmity to God that is inalienably aligned to the tempter's "wisdom." The inheritance of the other is righteousness and life, and the likeness is that of righteousness, a love for God wrought through redemption and expressed in holiness of life, incorruptibly aligned to God's wisdom.

Engaging in New Life

The gift of life in Christ, replacing the curse of death in Adam, is a staggering gift. But it does more than give us a righteous status and peaceful fellowship with God; it does more than regenerate us with a heart that delights in God; and it does more than launch us into life as citizens of heaven and strangers or aliens on earth being evermore conformed to the image of Christ. It calls and empowers us to embark on a new, transforming way of faith, life and worship *now* with hearts and minds set "on things above."¹³⁴ Those are the themes that the rest of the booklets in this series explore and apply.

"For as in Adam all die,
so in Christ all will be made alive."¹³⁵

¹³³ Romans 7:9

¹³⁴ Colossians 3:1,2; Romans 12:1,2

¹³⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:22

As in Adam

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