

The Condemnation of Condemnation (and the Birth of All Things)

Romans 8:1-25

Romans (no. 20 in the series)

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Peter Hiett

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Transcript document prepared by: Brett Eades (brett@thesanctuarydowntown.org)

This document was prepared by Brett Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Brett know. Thank you!

Prayer

So, Father, I thank you that you are perfect in all of your ways, and I thank you that you're perfect to us, and I thank you that you are a good, good father. Father, I confess just at the start of the sermon that I feel utterly unworthy and incapable of preaching on Romans chapter 8. But Jesus, you are worthy, and you are capable. So, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, would you preach the message to us this morning? And I invite you to use me, use us. Thank you, Lord God, that you make your home in us. That's pretty good news. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Message

Last week, on Easter, the Apostle Paul shared his story, commented on Romans 7 and 8, borrowed my tent, and left it here. I thought his message was rather thought provoking, and actually expressed many ideas that have intrigued me for quite some time. Decades ago, in college, hoping to get spiritual, I memorized Romans 8 and it's haunted me now for over forty years.

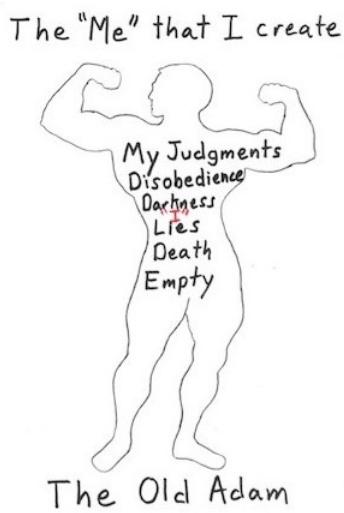
Most Commentators seem to think that, in Romans, Paul is making a legal argument to explain how individuals may be justified or condemned—and so those commentators pick it apart to obtain knowledge that you can use to prepare yourself for the day of Judgment—your day in court. And that's ironic, for Paul clearly states in Romans that no one will be justified by works of the law, and if we pay attention, I think we'll see that, even though he talks about law, all the talk is in the context of painting a picture, that is, in fact, a story—a story that the whole Bible is telling.

Well, to me Romans 8 appears to be a legal argument against legal arguments, and a picture more personal, passionate, and existential than any court case you could possibly imagine. And I think that's why Paul borrowed my tent on Easter, set it up, and started talking about the inner tent in the outer tent that became the stone temple.

As he said, this tent is the tent in which I used to go camping with my dad. Outside the tent I felt like I was never enough but inside the tent that thought just didn't occur to me and so I would fall into a delicious sleep, rest, or Sabbath, if you will. Outside the tent I was constantly occupied with what had been and what might be, but inside the tent I was always happy in the now. Outside the tent, I was always trying to be "me," but felt like I couldn't be "me," and always wondered, "Who is me? Why is me? And what's wrong with me?" But inside the tent, in my father's arms, I just am who I am; I'm home."

It's important to note, that not all fathers are good fathers and terrible things can happen in tents. But our Father in heaven is the best of all fathers. So, if we're terrified of his tent, it may not be because he is evil and we are good, but just the opposite—He is absolutely Good and, in his presence, all evil is destroyed, like shadows destroyed by light, lies destroyed by truth, pride dissolved by grace, and fear consumed by Love.

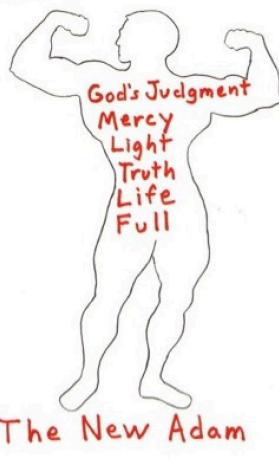
Well, last week, Paul told us that when he wrote that we are the temple, he meant that we really are the temple. Both individually, templesⁱ and then corporately, a temple.ⁱⁱ In fact, we all grow into one enormous living temple, according to Ephesians.ⁱⁱⁱ But right now, each one of us has a physical body, and a psychic body, that's a lot like this old stone church, or temple, built in 1920 with human hands.



He said that this old stone building is like our "Old man," our "Old Adam." It's the "Me" that I think I create by taking knowledge of good and evil, to judge myself, and then create myself in the image of God. Old "Me" is built with faith in Me-sus, the belief that I am salvation which is a lie. He's a false self and so actually dead and empty. Paul referred to him as "the tupos" in Chapter 5. And he will refer to him as "a vessel of wrath" in Chapter 9

But in the depths of this old stone temple, there is an inner tabernacle or tent. It's actually not built with human hands. It's eternal and in it "everything is good" and "it is finished".

The "Me" that GOD creates



I think he would call it the “New Man;” the “Me” that God creates. Not the “Me” built with disobedience, but the “New Me” built with Mercy. It’s built with the faith of Jesus and is, actually, the Body of Jesus. And so, Paul wrote to the Galatians saying, “It’s no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the son of God who loved me and delivered himself up for me.”^{iv}

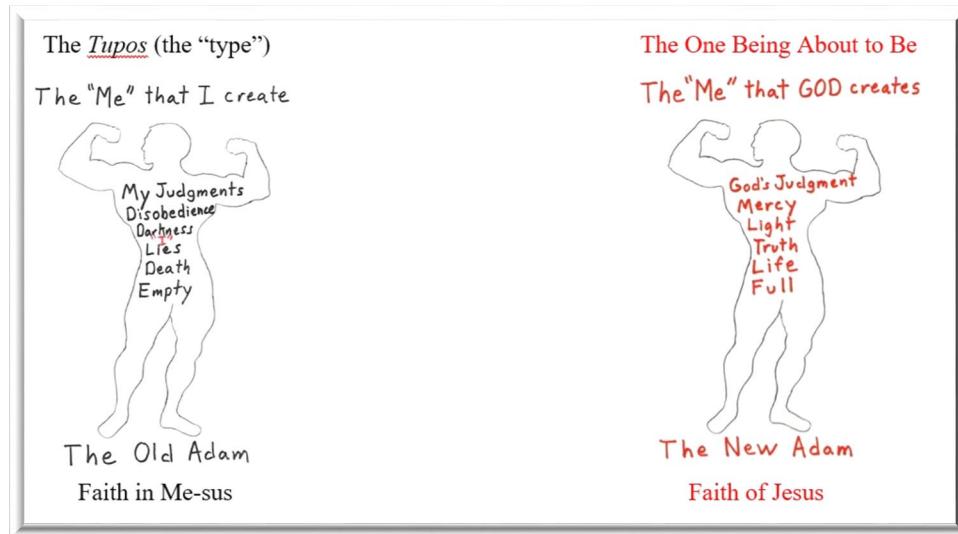
Well last week, Paul claimed that this inner tent is what he was picturing when he wrote Romans 7:22 “I delight with (but then doesn’t say who) I delight with [someone], in the law—or perhaps with the law—in my inmost man.” In Romans 1:18 he wrote, “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who imprison the truth in the chains of their unrighteousness.”^v So maybe Paul delights with the Truth, who is Jesus in his inner man? And Paul and the Truth are imprisoned somehow in Paul’s outer man, his Ego. So, he’s saying,

“I delight with the Truth... in my inner man, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Oh, wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” —Romans 7:22-24

So, his New Man is imprisoned in his Old Man. Which, I would suppose, would look something like this. Almost as if I was pregnant with myself. And so, asked, who will deliver me from myself—this body of death? Those are just interesting observations, when you consider that Jesus said to Nicodemus the Pharisee, “Truly truly... I say to you, you must be born again.”^{vi}



Whatever the case, Paul claims that there is a war being waged by his flesh against the Spirit; his Old Man against his New; his Outer temple against this Inner Sanctuary in which he delights with the truth. And, I think, that’s where we all live, somewhere between these two, right?



And so, we've been asking, "How do get from the Old Man to the New Man?"

- "How do I enter his rest? How do I live by grace through faith?"
- "How do I walk like Jesus? How do I live from the innermost tent?"

That's the struggle expressed in Romans 7. Then Paul writes Romans 8.

Let's read through, and then ask, "How do we connect these dots," "What is the picture that he's painting?" "What does it all mean?"

Romans 8:1:

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

In all sincerity, I believe that I have recited this verse, in my own mind, over the course of my lifetime, more than any other verse in Scripture. And I don't think there is any other verse in Scripture, that has filled me with such hope, and at the same time such confusion, and even abject terror.

First the Hope: The reason for hope is rather obvious, isn't it? Can you imagine the freedom that you would experience in a place where there was truly no condemnation? Freedom. Where would you go? What would you do? How would you live?

Hope, and then confusion: If there really were no condemnation, I'm not sure that I would even recognize "myself."

- The reason I don't drive 90 mph on 6th avenue is that I don't want to be condemned.
- The reason I dress the way I do, use the words I use, take a bath, and wash my hair is that I don't want to be condemned.
- The reason I worked so hard in school was that I wanted to justify myself with A's, so I wouldn't be condemned with D's and F's.
- The reason I start writing a sermon on Tuesday is fear of being condemned on Sunday, judgment day; it's coming and that's the reason that I begin writing.

Well, if someone says, “Who are you, tell me about yourself,” I share justifications, which are all ways that I have avoided condemnations. And the condemnation of others, is often the justification of myself. If everyone got an ‘A,’ I wouldn’t brag about my GPA. Apparently, condemnation tells me who I am (condemnation of others and maybe even myself)

Ever since about kindergarten, it seems like my world has been defined by condemnation for the sake of justification, that is blame. Our society runs on condemnation and blame; you’re not a Democrat if you don’t condemn Republicans and you’re not a Republican if you don’t blame the Democrats, it would seem. If there were no condemnation, you’d probably be maimed or dead in a few hours—someone would’ve clobbered you and taken your wallet or purse.

Our society, our world, runs on condemnation. And religion provides maximum condemnation, doesn’t it?

I remember picking teams for baseball in second grade, terrified that I’d be picked last and so condemned, and hoping that Matt or Duncan would be picked last and so condemned. I suppose that’s when I started to wonder if that’s how people got into heaven, while others wound up in hell. Ironically it worried me so, that when I did play baseball I almost always struck out, and once playing basketball I scored for the wrong team. My mind was so stuck on myself, I couldn’t focus on the ball. And, actually, I probably couldn’t focus at all. Just a couple of years ago, Dr. Marisa Kruger checked my eyes, and then she said, “Hey Peter, did you have trouble hitting baseballs as a kid?” I was honestly so embarrassed I wanted to lie but I said “Yeah, I suppose.” And then she said, “Well that’s because you have depth perception issues and have needed corrective glasses your entire life.” My very first thought was, “You mean to tell me that I don’t have to hate myself.”

I wonder if I would even recognize myself if I didn’t condemn myself? And would I recognize anyone else if there is no condemnation? And maybe everyone needs corrective glasses, or corrective hearing aids, or corrective will power, or corrective faith, hope, or love. And maybe we’re to provide the correctives for one another--so one person is a hitter, and another is a catcher, and another is a pitcher, all on one team?

I’m just saying that all my life I’ve been preparing myself for some sort of judgment day; my day in court.^{vii}. And so, any stress, failure, or suffering makes me fear condemnation, and so I begin to condemn, hoping to justify, I take control.

I woke up around 3 AM on Thursday morning with Romans 8:1 running through my head “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” And then I thought, “You know, I condemn myself, like all the time.”

In fact, I realized, that I actually try to justify myself by condemning myself as if I could beat God and everyone else to the punch, and then maybe they would justify me, because of my humility. If I don’t have something to condemn in me, I’ll find something to condemn in me, all in a desperate attempt to justify “me,” which is an obsession with “me,” and the very opposite of humility but that realization is just more condemnation! “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

So, I started condemning myself for condemning myself—which is just a swirling vortex of condemnation and self... at 3:10 AM And then all of a sudden it occurred to me, “Holy Crap, I’m not in Christ Jesus, for ‘there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus!'” And the vortex of condemnation turned into a tornado. But then, I thought: “What is not in Christ Jesus?” (Colossians 1:16 “In him all things... were created... he is before all things and in him all things hold together.”) “So, if I’m not in Christ Jesus, I don’t even exist and cannot hold together” That’s terrifying. And I can’t stop condemning myself for condemning myself by condemning myself, so I condemn myself. And Judgment day is coming! Sunday is coming. And I’m to preach a sermon on “No condemnation in Christ Jesus!” when I’m a raging vortex of self-condemnation.^{viii} You see: The statement “There is therefore now no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus,” can be so thrilling, and so confusing, and downright terrifying, and utterly condemning. I just wanted to die! So, around 3:30 AM I just had to cry out, “Father, Dad, Daddy... help.”

Romans 8:1-3:

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of [the] sin and of [the] death. [God said, the day you eat of the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil, that is the day you try to judge yourself, the day you eat of it, dying you will die.] ³ **For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned [the] sin in the flesh.**

How exactly that works is the topic of much discussion, and according to Paul, the answer is beyond our ability to entirely comprehend.^{ix} But this much is clear, Jesus condemned my vortex of condemnation. “The Sin in the flesh” is my desire to take knowledge of good and evil and judge myself, so that I can justify or condemn myself, and everyone around me, including God.

You see it’s not ok to condemn yourself. And now I could, but I won’t, freak you out with a bunch of terrifying stories involving demonic and satanic oppression, and how evil inhabits condemnation, which is unforgiveness. In fact, unforgiveness is the unforgiveable sin; it means that you can’t be saved from condemnation until you have stopped condemning. Which would mean that the last judgement in this age of space and time, happens the moment you stop judging and surrender to the eternal judgment of God—forgiveness. “Nicodemus, you must forgive, just as you must be born again; that’s the eternal judgment of God—Grace.”

God condemned all our condemnations in Christ Jesus. As Paul told us last week: “the crucifixion of Jesus reveals that all of our self-righteousness just crucifies the righteousness of God and is therefore, infinitely unrighteous.” And I hope you see that Easter is the ultimate condemnation of all our condemnations. With every sin, I judge that “The Life”—and Jesus is the Life. With every sin, I judge that “The Life,” must die, so I may live. But with the resurrection of Jesus, God judges that my judgments must die, so that all can live the Life—who is Jesus the Christ: the Judgment of God. On Friday I condemned the Judge; On Easter the judge condemned all my condemnations.

It's utterly bizarre, in light of what Paul writes in Romans, but "Christians," of all people, have sometimes argued that Jesus was judged so we would not be judged. And Jesus was condemned so we would not be condemned. And Jesus died so we would not die. But Paul seems to think that Jesus was judged so we'd all be judged by judging him. And Jesus was condemned so we'd all be condemned by condemning him. And Jesus died so we'd all die in him and then live in him, in a reality where there is no such thing as condemnation, for that's God's judgment. Jesus said, "I know that the Father's commandment is eternal life."^x Life is a communion of sacrificial Love—that's the condemnation of condemnation. So eternal life must be the eternal condemnation of condemnation.

Romans 8:3-8:

³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned [the] sin in the flesh,⁴ so that the just [or "the righteous"] requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.⁵ For those ~~who live~~ [being] according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.⁶ ~~To set the mind on the flesh~~ [literally: "For the mind of the flesh"] is death, ~~but to set the mind on the Spirit~~ [literally: "but the mind of the Spirit"] is life and peace.⁷ For this reason ~~the mind that is set on the flesh~~ [literally; "the mind of the flesh"] is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law [His law is Love]—indeed it cannot,⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

We've already spoken about the flesh quite a bit. The problem isn't that it's physical—I mean Scripture claims that the New Jerusalem is a Bride and a Wedding Banquet with food and wine on streets made of gold. The problem with flesh isn't that it's physical, but that it's isolated, lonely as hell, and dead and dying; my flesh only feels its own pleasure and its own pain except for one or two sacramental exceptions. We've spoken about the flesh, but now Paul starts talking about the Spirit, and at this point it's almost impossible to keep talking.

We love to talk about "the gifts of the Spirit," because they're tangible and we can judge them. And we love to talk about "the fruit of the Spirit," because we can pick fruit and claim it as our own—"Aren't you impressed with my love, joy, peace, patience, kindness and goodness, etc. etc." But the Spirit is almost impossible to contain in a word, it blows where it wills, and we know not whence it cometh, or whither it goes.^{xi}

In a previous message, we referred to it as "the 'I' that observes 'Me.'" And we noted that we can't really even find it (the "I" that observes "me") in space or time. The moment you think that you have observed the observer, the observer has become the observed which is your image of the observer in space and time. The moment you think you observe "I," I has become "Me." If I look in a mirror (a physical mirror), I don't see "I," I see "me." "I" do not actually exist in space and time, so I don't really know what I am, although I constantly confuse "I" with "me." "Me" myself exists in space and time, but I am of another reality.^{xii}

And to make matters worse, neither Greek nor Hebrew have capital letters and Paul doesn't seem to think it matters. Most English Bibles will include a footnote to many of these references to "spirit" in Romans 8, noting that the translator really doesn't know whether or not spirit should be capitalized. In other words, they don't know if Paul is talking about God's Spirit or our spirit or both. And to make matters even worse, in some of Paul's writings, he claims that there is only one Spirit.^{xiii} And in 1 Corinthians, he claims that "he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him..." and we know his spirit is the Holy Spirit.

And to complicate matters even further, "Spirit" (*ruach* or *neshamah* in Hebrew, or *pneuma* in Greek) "Spirit" is also translated "breath." And the thing that makes you conscious at all, or human at all, is that on the sixth day of Creation, God took some dust, and breathed his Breath, his Spirit, into that dust, and you became a living soul—a *nephesh* in Hebrew, a *psyche* in Greek, which is sometimes translated "life." Jesus said that you have to lose your psyche to find it, and he who seeks to save his psyche, his life, his soul, will lose it. And that's a bit surprising for religion often seems to say, "We'll give you some knowledge of good and evil, so you can save your psyche and never lose it, save your life and never die, that is save your soul from the judgment of God."

Romans 8:8-9a:

And those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since^{xiv} the Spirit [the Breath] of God dwells in you.

Any Jew would say, "Of course the Breath of God dwells in me, if it didn't dwell in me, I wouldn't be me; I'd be dead."^{xv}"

Romans 8:9:

But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since^{xvi} the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

You can't help but notice that Paul just distinguished between the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ, as if they were two and yet, in reality they're one. Well, it's worth pondering the fact that every soul has, (or at least had), the spirit of God. But Paul talks as if some may not have the Spirit of Christ, or at least the living, moving Spirit of Christ.

Perhaps the Spirit of God is entombed in every human heart. And moves when the curtain is ripped and the Spirit rises and descends, descends and rises, like the breath that's breathed in our lungs. On the cross Jesus breathed his last and delivered up his spirit and, at that moment, the curtain in the temple separating the inner tent from the outer temple, ripped from top to bottom, as if something got in, or something got out, or maybe both. And it's at that moment, the edge of time and eternity—it's at that moment that we say a person is "born again," or "born from above," which can also be translated, "begotten from above."

You know, just before, John records Jesus saying to Nicodemus, "You must be born *another*—again or from above," "you must be begotten from above." Just before John records Jesus as saying that, he writes that Jesus is the "only begotten son of God, or only born son of God"

So, when Jesus says to Nicodemus “You must be begotten, or born, from above,” he seems to also be saying “you must be me.” And that’s really wild in light of the fact that Paul writes to Galatians saying, “How I am in travail with you, until Christ be formed within you.”

Paul talks as if Jesus really is The Promised Seed—that’s *sperma* in Greek. Paul talks as if Jesus really is The Promised Seed, and that through his death, he impregnated us, his church—who is his Bride, and his mother—he impregnated us with himself. He talks as if, at that moment, his Spirit became one spirit with our spirit, such that my old “me” has now become pregnant with a new “me,” that is also Jesus’s “me,” and that “me” is growing and fixing to be born. He talks as if through his resurrection, each of us, is born with him.

You know that Paul refers to Jesus as the “first born from the dead...^{xvii} firstborn of many brothers and sisters^{xviii}... firstborn of all creation.^{xix}” None are born, or “finished,” before Jesus. And all creation is born in, of and through Jesus. And that’s the judgment of God—Genesis chapter 1 verse 31: “And God saw everything that he had made [with his word] and behold it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.” It was the Sabbath, God’s Sabbath, the endless 7th day, the eternal judgment of God: “everything good” and “it is finished.”

Romans 8:9b-10:

...Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

And now remember, faith is reckoned as righteousness because it is. So “The Spirit is life, because of the righteousness of faith” that is “The Breath is life, because of faith.” You know, it takes faith to breathe. To breathe is to expire, as in surrender the spiritus, the breath, the wind. And then inspire, as in receive the spirit, the breath, the wind.

It’s rather shocking when you see it, but in all of Scripture Jesus is the first Adam or man, said to consciously surrender his spirit. It’s recorded in all four gospels: he did it on the tree in the garden and it was at that moment that the curtain in the temple, (that turns out to be us), ripped from the top to the bottom and something got out and something got in. [Peter takes loud breaths in and out]. Until that point, all of Adam, had been holding his breath—and the breath is life—Adam, must’ve thought it was his own Life. [Peter gasps a big breath in and holds it].

The breath is life, and the life is in the blood, like breath is in the blood. Well, you cannot live, if you won’t breathe, unless of course you’re a baby in a womb. A baby in a womb receives the breath in the blood that comes through a cord—a cord made of flesh, actually baby flesh—the same genetics as the baby, that chord is called the umbilical cord. To a baby it would be the most important thing in the entire world, while mouth, lungs, and lips would all seem entirely superfluous. And that’s all rather interesting, for we receive the Spirit in the blood that comes from the tree, whenever we take communion. It’s the blood from the Mercy Seat on top of the Ark in the inner tent of the temple that is you.

One night a few years ago at the end of the sermon up in the Sanctuary foothills, I had everyone close their eyes and meditate, just before communion. After the service, Susan said, “Peter, you won’t believe what I saw—I don’t know if my eyes were open or closed—but I looked at the cross and saw Jesus hanging there. And I saw an umbilical cord running from his belly button as he hung on the cross and attaching to mine. Then I did close my eyes and I saw myself as an infant in his arms.”

See? There’s Spirit in the Blood; there’s Life in the Blood; It’s eternal life—that means it comes from another age and from another world. To be born into that other age in that other world is to lose this world and to be cut from that cord not the breath that’s in the blood or the blood that’s in the cord, but the cord that’s made of flesh, which you once thought was the most important thing in the world, kind of like your body right now.

It must be judged (cut) and thrown in the trash or burned in an oven. Jeremiah prophesies a day when no one will even mention the Ark that was kept in the tent in the temple.^{xx} And it’s rather surprising, but not one of my children ever mentions their umbilical Cord—they just stare at their navel and never give it a thought.^{xxi}

Romans 8:11:

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies [your bodies of death] also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

Your old mortal body is condemned, but only to be made new. This old temple of stone is condemned but only because it will be made new. Maybe even the Ark is made new, it’s just that we’ll call him “Jesus.”

The body of death is condemned, but only because it will live; Just like a lie is condemned when it’s transformed by the Truth.

- Like a shadow is condemned when it’s filled with the Light.
- Like sin is condemned when it’s filled with Grace.
- Like “I am not” is condemned when filled with I AM that I AM.

Romans 8:12-13:

¹² So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—¹³ for if you live according to the flesh [constantly trying to save yourself and justify yourself], you will die [are about to die]; but if by the Spirit [the Spirit of Love] you put to death the deeds of the body [which is a body of death], you will live...

You see, it’s not as if Old Adam and his world is not condemned. It’s just that I don’t need to condemn it; I just need to see that it’s already been condemned. There’s no condemnation for something that’s already been condemned. God condemned sin in the flesh in the death and resurrection of Jesus. That’s why Paul told us in chapter 6 to consider ourselves, “Dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

You don't need to kill something that's already dead. In the same way, I don't need to defend myself, justify myself, condemn myself, or punish myself; I just need to forget myself, like I forgot my umbilical cord. And how do I do that? How do I lose myself and my vortex of justification, condemnation, and abject fear?

Romans 8:14-15a:

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.^{xxii} ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption [uiōthesias: “son”+ “place” = “sonship” (RSV)].

That's two words, *uios* (son) and *tithemi* (to place). The RSV translates the word as "sonship." When the prodigal son returned, he was put in his place as a son, but he had been a biological son all along.^{xxiii} In the same way, Paul tells the Athenians that we are all God's offspring, his "*genos*," his genetics, his begotten.^{xxiv} Which is truly astounding considering the fact that John claims that Jesus is the "*monogenes*," the only begotten,^{xxv} which clearly implies that when we come home to Jesus, we come home to ourselves, and to everyone that's anyone, including our Father.

Romans 8:15b-17:

When we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶ it is that very Spirit [“that Spirit himself”] bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ [who inherits “all things”]—if, in fact [*eiper*: since], we suffer with him [*sympascho*: Literally, “suffer passion with him”] so that we may also be glorified with him.

Do you understand? Thursday morning at 3:30 AM as I lay wide awake in bed, trapped in a vortex of condemnation, condemning myself for condemning myself, and terrified that judgment was coming, Sunday was coming, and I would have to preach on the fact that for anyone in Christ there is no condemnation. Thursday morning at 3:30 AM when the accuser was breathing down my neck whispering “you’re not worthy to preach the Gospel.” Thursday morning at 3:30 AM I remembered the Gospel that we’re preaching. So Thursday morning at 3:30 AM I just cried out “Dad...” “Help me, Dad.”

And something happened: I passed through judgment and entered the innermost tent. Just by speaking the word, “Daddy,” I became a child, entered the Kingdom, and was delivered from a vortex of condemnation.



Something was lost and something was found. A new psyche was found, or perhaps I should say, I was “born.” When I’m born of that place, I don’t need the flesh, for I breathe the Spirit.



“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;” wrote Paul in 2nd Corinthians 5:17, “old things have passed away; behold all things have become new.” The true “me” is actually born of a false “me” that doesn’t actually exist and cannot “hold together.” A “me” that cannot be

condemned is born of a “me” that is already condemned—that “me” is born of and into eternity; that me is the eternal “me.” I entered the tent, and I still must enter that tent, every day, until that day when all things are in the tent or born of the tent. I don’t know exactly how to say this, but I do know it hurts to die, and it hurts to be born. So, Paul writes, If we suffer the passion with him, we will also be glorified with him, the firstborn from the dead, firstborn of the new creation.

Romans 8:18-24:

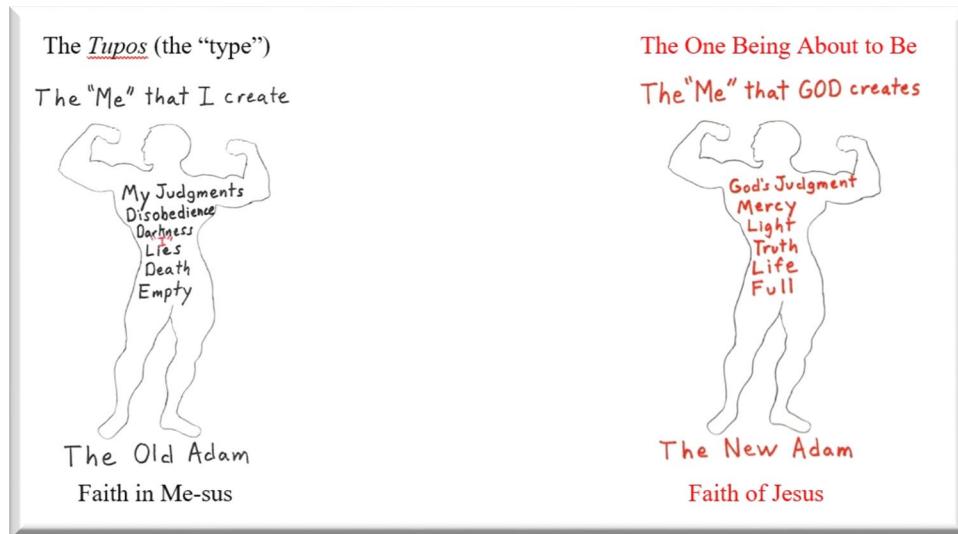
I consider that the sufferings [passions] of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God;²⁰ for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now;²³ and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption [*uiothesia*: sonship], the redemption of our bodies.²⁴ For in [this] hope we were saved [*sozo*: delivered] we were delivered.

We’re out of time. So, I’ll need to leave you with this. Several years ago, I used to regularly stop at a particular Conoco on my way up the hill to work at my church—Lookout Mountain Community. And over time I got to know the young clerk behind the counter. He disappeared for a time, and then one day I walked in to find balloons, streamers, pictures of a young woman—rather chunky—and a baby, and my friend smiling ear to ear behind the register.

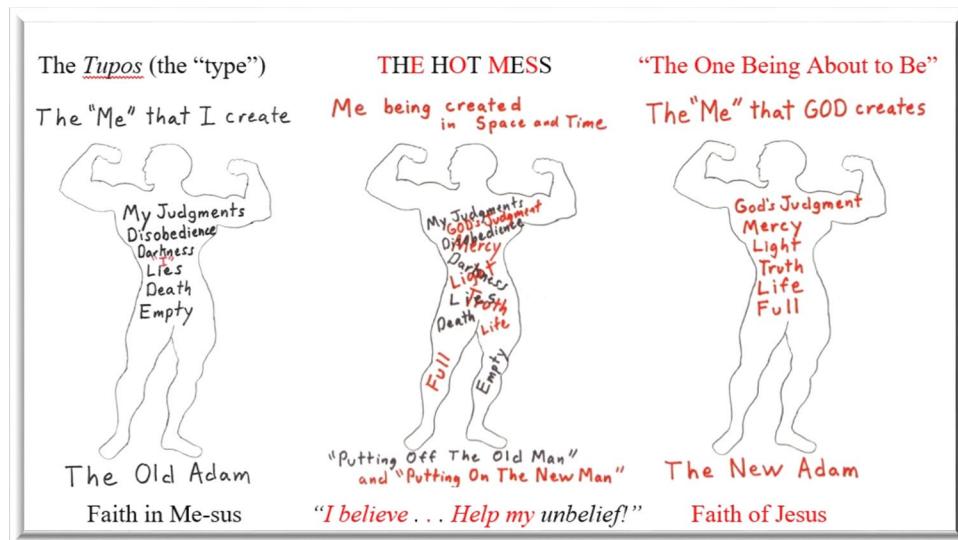
I said, “What happened?” And he said “Dude, Good News, my girlfriend had a baby!” I said, “Wow. Congratulations. I didn’t know she was pregnant.” And he said, “I didn’t know she was pregnant either.” Then he explained, “A few days ago, we ordered a pizza, and then she started having these really bad pains deep down in her abdomen. We thought maybe she was having an appendicitis or bowel obstruction; we thought maybe she was dying. So, I drove her to the emergency room, and then sat waiting for the doctor’s judgment—would she live or would she die. The Doctor came out and said, well she’s not dying, but the two of you are having a baby.” And so, he stood there, in the Conoco, not a widower in mourning but a proud new Daddy who couldn’t wait to show me pictures of his adorable new baby. His girlfriend didn’t die, but his old world did. He lost his old world and found a new world the moment he heard the Good News; he lost his psyche and found it.

People sometimes ask, “What difference does the Gospel make?” Well, I’m not the only one that stresses out at four in the morning. And what if in a moment of stress, failure and great suffering, someone told you, “You’re not dying; you’re being born” And what if you actually believed it? Maybe in this hope you would be saved.

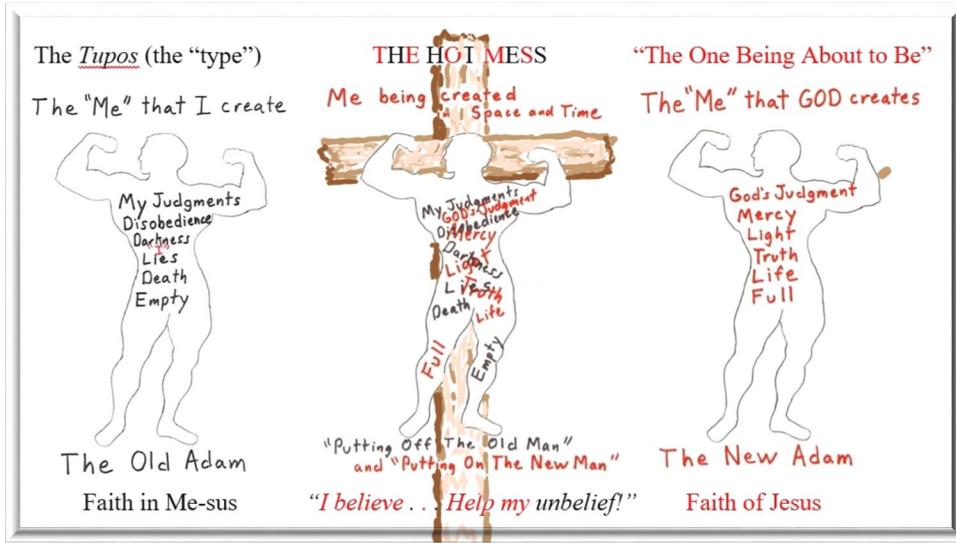
We've been asking: "How do we get from the Old Man to the New Man, from me-sus to Jesus?"



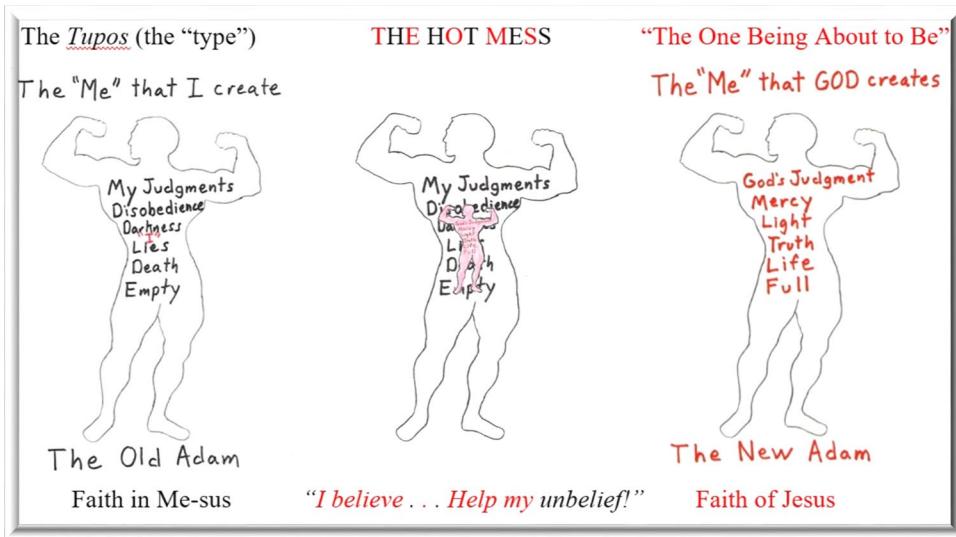
"How do we deal with the “hot mess” that I am right now, and in between?"



We said that we needed to “Present that Hot Mess to Judgement.” And that’s true: Something must die.



But this is also true: Something is being born.



Can you see that? There’s a little inner New Man inside the Old Man.

So, what’s wrong with you? And, what’s wrong with everyone else? What’s the reason for all the stress, failure, and suffering in you and those around you? What if you learned that you were pregnant, and so was everyone around you? What’s wrong might become what’s right. And you might surrender control and in this hope be delivered. And what if you learned that we were all about to be born? You might just lose your psyche and find it. We’ll need to talk about all of this some more.

Communion

But for now, in this womb of a world, Jesus took bread and broke it saying this is my body given to you. In the same manner, he took the cup saying this is the covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. And then he said drink of it, all of you. The breath is in the blood, but before you know it, you'll be breathing it in a new creation—and “in this hope you are delivered.”

Benediction

I'm sorry this message is so dense, but this is what I think I'm trying to say:
 You will be judged but not by Judge Judy on daytime TV. You will be judged and have been judged by your Creator.



And this is his judgement: You must be born again. The only place safe from that judgment is hell. But only for a time, for even there, the Judgment of God will find you. As Isaiah says, even “the earth will give birth to the dead [*raphaim*: “the ghosts”].”^{xxvi}
 But you don't have to wait until then, you can believe the gospel now.

Endnotes

ⁱ 1 Cor. 6:19

ⁱⁱ 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

ⁱⁱⁱ Ephesians 2:21

^{iv} Galatians 2:20

^v Karl Barth's Translation in The Epistle to the Romans, p.42

^{vi} John 3:5-7

^{vii} And so, I condemn some things, in order to justify other things, that I might be picked for the team. So that my team might condemn another team and justify my own team by the time the whistle is blown and the game is over.

^{viii} I thought, “I am thinking about “me,” so maybe “the me” that condemns “me” doesn’t actually exist, and I have believed a lie... So maybe I am “a me,” that is actually not “me...” existing in a reality that is not real...

^{ix} For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all. Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.
 –Romans 11:32-36

^x John 12:50

^{xi} John 3:8

^{xii} I am not a human having spiritual experiences, I am a spirit having a human experience.

^{xiii} There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call -Ephesians 4:4

But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. – 1 Corinthians 6:17

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.... Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.
–1 Corinthians 12:13, 27

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, --
Philippians 1:27

^{xiv} Some versions translate *eiper* (since) as “if”, but *eiper* is not simply “if,” rather “if indeed,” or “since.” Paul has already used the word once in Romans 3:30 where the phrase is translated, “‘since’ God is one.” In that instance, Paul clearly doesn’t mean that God might not be one, but that since he is one, these other things are true—he will also justify the gentiles by faith.

^{xv} Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth... before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it
.—Ecclesiastes 12: 1, 6-7

All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return. Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth?
—Ecclesiastes 3:20-21

^{xvi} Some versions translate as “if”, but *eiper* is not simply “if,” rather “if indeed,” or “since.” Paul has already used the word once in Romans 3:30 where the phrase is translated, “‘since’ God is one.” In that instance, Paul clearly doesn’t mean that God might not be one, but that since he is one, these other things are true—he will also justify the gentiles by faith.

^{xvii} Colossians 1:18, Revelation 1:15

^{xviii} Romans 8:29

^{xix} Colossians 1:15

^{xx} And when you have multiplied and been fruitful in the land, in those days, declares the LORD, they shall no more say, “The ark of the covenant of the LORD.” It shall not come to mind or be remembered or missed; it shall not be made again. At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart.
—Jeremiah 3:16-17

^{xxi} But when my son Coleman was born, the cord was wrapped twice around his neck—the very thing that brought him life in the womb world, was strangling him in this world.

He would've died except the doctors quickly cut it away, they judged it.

You see hell—that is hades—isn't for people that surrender to God's judgment.

Hades is for people that hide from God's judgment.

^{xxii} “...all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.” That’s quite a statement when you consider that to a group of random people on a hillside, Jesus said “when you pray say ‘our Father.’”

In Aramaic he would have said, “say ‘Abba,’ say ‘Dad,’ say ‘Daddy,’”

Which implies that the Spirit of God was already in them.

Or that just hearing his Word, is receiving the Holy Spirit.

^{xxiii} Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying “Abba Father.”
- Galatians 4:6

^{xxiv} Acts 17:28

^{xxv} John 1:18

^{xxvi} Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy!
For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead [raphaim: ghosts].
- Isaiah 26:19