

Our Human Legacy 2: “Fallen and Forgiven”

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*...**forgiveness** is your habit, and that's why you're worshiped. Ps. 130:4*

This dawning new decade finds us reveling in the glow of a Christmas Miracle, and launching a new ministry direction under a new church name: Legacy UMC. I like the sound of that. In the midst of this frigid time of year, I've chosen to spend some time in these opening weeks exploring our human legacy. What is it that we have received as human beings? What is it that we are trying to achieve in our human experience? What can we possibly leave to the next generation from what we've learned in this one?

Last week we studied how our Human Legacy began as Created and Loved Spiritual human beings. Let me remind you of Pierre Chardin's quote: "We are not human beings have Spiritual experiences; we are Spiritual beings having human experiences." From the heart of God, because of the love of God; we were created by God. It is part of our legacy. We receive it by recognizing that we are special and accountable. We achieve it by being fully human; living authentic Spiritual lives. And we leave it as a legacy to our ancestors by passing on the blessing of belonging to God.

The second chapter in this unfolding drama is that we are Fallen and Forgiven. This is a two sided coin. Because our original Grand Parents; Adam and Eve made a choice to sin, we've inherited, as spiritual human beings, that negative side of the coin. But because God's grace is greater than any sin, we are forgiven, and that forgiveness is a gift to us, because of the death of Jesus Christ on a cross; that's the positive side of the same coin. We are fallen and forgiven. One side cannot be separated from the other. They are part of our human legacy.

Over the past few months we've all been inundated with more news than we'd like to hear, about Tiger Wood's accident and his subsequent admission (if you call it that) of indiscretions, transgressions, and infidelities. As many as 18 different women have come forward to gain access to his millions by claiming they were partners in his adulterous affairs. I don't know the truthfulness of any of this, but he is just another in a long line of celebrities and athletes and political and media superstars, who have fallen from the pedestals we so easily erect for them. Having spent some time on a pedestal... it is a precarious place to try and live.

I'm not here to make a judgment on Tiger, or Roger Clemens, or Alex Rodriguez or Bill Clinton, or Newt Gingrich, or Jason Williams, or Ted Haggard or Paris Hilton. What I am here to discuss is how falling is part of the human nature, and how forgiveness is part of God's character!

1. WE ARE ALL FALLEN, SPIRITUAL, HUMAN, BEINGS.

*We've sinned a lot, both we and our parents; we've **fallen** short, and hurt a lot of people. Ps. 106:6 Everyone has sinned; we've all **fallen** short of God's glorious standard. Rom. 3:23*

Our fall may not garner the headlines of Tiger's or Ted's, but in our lives and circles of influence, our own fall is even more traumatic. And I'm not just talking about some public screw-up or private secret; I'm talking about the fact that each of us has inherited the sin nature as a product of being born human. We are not just born sinners like some innocent victims, but we make this sin-nature personal by willfully choosing to sin. AND we are not satisfied to sin just once, we like it, so we become habitual sinners. That is our Fallen Human DNA and unfortunately part of our legacy.

For some who've long been forgiven, we might forget from where we've come, or how far we've come. And the great danger there is that we'll become arrogant and intolerant of people who are still struggling and wrestling with their own fallenness.

My sinful human nature resides way too close at hand for me to every be very judgmental, yet sometimes I think my good deeds qualify me to look on others with more grievous sins as worse than me...until I'm reminded...of my own three fingers pointing back while one points at others. I am a fallen, Spiritual, human, being.

By virtue of the fact that living on this earth prohibits us from ever leaving the realm of Spiritual Human beings, I'm not sure this sinful fallen nature ever entirely leaves us, either. I know that once forgiven, the power of sin, and the consequences of sin have been broken. And I know that once forgiven the power of humanity has been diminished, but I for one, have still to wrestle with my own stupid human and sinful choices, even though I've tried to be a faithful Christian believer some 38 years now.

I know there are passages that say that if we are forgiven, if we truly believe in Jesus...then we're to never sin again: *Anyone who continues to live in Him will not sin.* As much as I am trying to live in Him, and want to live in Him...I also know that I still sin.

So I look to other passages for balance: *If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth.* Don't you find that interesting? I do. And I'll cite another that gives me some hope, and maybe brings some measure of integration to both sides: *My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father, He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous.* This might appear confusing or even contradictory, but it gives me some sense of hope...you see the author of all three of those passages is the same guy, John. In his first letter they are verses 3:9, 1:8, 2:1

All I guess I need to say in summary is that part of our Spiritual Human Experience is that we are sinners, we are fallen human beings. And I'm not sure, but I'm afraid we are going to have to figure out how to live in that reality, until the time we are released from it at our death, or his return.

2. WE CAN ALL BE FORGIVEN, SPIRITUAL, HUMAN, BEINGS.

*When you were stuck in your old sin-dead life, you were incapable of responding to God. God brought you alive—right along with Christ! Think of it! All sins **forgiven**, the slate wiped clean, that old arrest warrant canceled and nailed to Christ's cross. Col. 2:13-14*

I love the image that forgiveness was bought and paid for us on the cross of Calvary. When someone asks you when were you forgiven...you might accurately say: "In 32AD." I know we have to appropriate and make that forgiveness our own by choosing to receive it, but it was made possible on Christ's Cross. I also really appreciate that fact that God's forgiveness has a past, present, and future component to it. I'm not sure I can completely believe it, but the implication of our arrest warrant being canceled means that we are completely forgiven.

I feel compelled to mention two potential misuses or abuses. 1) If we continue to wallow in the wantonness of our fallenness without ever appropriating God's forgiveness, we are spitting on His gift, and we are denying ourselves the forgiveness we all need. Why would anyone do that? I guess there is some report that Tiger has turned to some Buddhist teaching or teacher to remedy his situation. That's fine, but what he needs is Jesus to forgive him, if he wants to save soul. He'll need his wife's forgiveness if he wants to save his marriage, and as far as his professional life, I don't really care, if he gets the other two in order. It's the same thing we need, and can't receive if we try to find it anywhere else but in Jesus.

2) The second abuse of God's forgiveness is to use it as a license. I know that there have been many times throughout my life, where I've willfully engaged in obvious sinful behavior, because I knew that God would forgive me if/when I asked. That is wrong. I know that the balance between living on the tight-rope between the freedom we have in Christ, and the licenses our human minds inappropriately devise...is a thin one.

I enjoy, appreciate and LOVE the freedom that being forgiven creates in my life, but I never want to willfully abuse that freedom, and take advantage of my relationship with God and the forgiveness that promises.

Our Human Legacy includes this bad news: we are all fallen. Yes, we are created and loved, and spiritual and all that, but we are fallen, by nature, by choice and by habit. But our Human Legacy also includes some very good news: we are forgiven. Not accidentally or haphazardly, or to create an unrestricted license; but intentionally by the will of God and the work of Christ on the cross.

If you have made a mess of your life, if you are fallen and can't get up...from some sin, or some habit, or some addiction, or some attitude, or some behavior or some action...know this: you are forgiven, and you can make that real today, right now! Let us pray!

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