

The New You, pt.7, 8.17.08

Romans 6.12–14

Prince's Temptation

Intro.

1. Read Text.

12 Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. 13 Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. 14 Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.

2. Paul gets real practical. He's saying, "Now that you know this new reality of who you are at the core of your being, this is how you deal with sin." We have been removed from sin's power, but not from sin's presence

3. Illustration of my life before & after I came to faith in Christ. Like a large oak tree with decaying roots are the current pockets of sin in my life. They look unmovable until a sustained wind and drenching rain pummel it. If I keep my life open to the Word & Spirit they will eventually upend the sin in my life, because the root (power) of sin has been defeated.

4. Tell a story of a way to gain victory. This story I began in my last Communicator article.

A King was traveling through his capitol city one day, when he entered an impoverished area. The storefronts were gray and dilapidated. The air was thick with stench of rotting garbage. Mangy dogs scurried in the alleyways. As the King exited the borough, he saw a young boy balled up underneath some newspapers in the doorway of a ransacked building.

Immediately, he told his driver to stop. The King gazed at the boy. His heart filled with compassion. The King unexpectedly burst from his coach. He walked directly to the child and awakened him. The child's eyes quickly opened. He instinctively recoiled from this large, overbearing figure.

The boy sputtered, "It-it-it-wa' wasn't me, I promise, promise, promise..." The strange man assured him he wasn't accusing him of crime, but simply wanted to know where his parents were.

The boy had no parents nor siblings or relatives. He was alone. His only friends were a few shop owners who occasionally let him work for food. He associated with young men who preyed upon the gullible and sold their souls for a drink.

The King inquired of the shop owners, who validated the boy's story. He sent an assistant to the city record keeper, who verified the death of his parents. The child had no one. He was destined to a life of misery, sin and terminal delinquency.

The King knew what he had to do...what he wanted to do. He would take the child as his own.

He asked the boy his name. "Adam," he responded. "Adam, would you like to be my son?" The boy, half shocked and half disbelieving, stammered, "Me. Why would you want me? I'm a street rat."

The King smiled. "Adam, I know your past. I want to change your future. What do you say?"

"Yes, yes, yes, yes." And with those words, Adam's life instantly changed.

With a beaming face, the King took the boy before his court and announced his adoption. He changed his name to Prince Christian. He proclaimed to both his allies and enemies alike that there was a new heir to his throne. He lavished upon the young prince wealth, honor, power, authority and, most importantly, love.

Prince Christian could not comprehend the full extent of his new identity. At times, he still thought like a poor orphan and was intimidated by his former conspirators. Yet, as he grew in his relationship with the King, he came to experience that the old had indeed passed away and all things now and eternally were new.

Everything was new. He had new beliefs...friends...environment. The King spent great quantities of time with him instructing him in the ways of royalty. The limitations of

thinking that he had embraced as a beggar, were being exposed and peeled back one layer at a time.

The King was kind and patient with his newest prince. He was eager to impart not only truth, but his very heart into Prince Christian. Christian grew in His relationship with the King and his knowledge of his newfound identity.

As the royalty gathered together for their weekly celebration, Christian noted how each person interacted with the King. Some stood at a distance and waved while others huddled near him asking for assistance on this and that and a few embraced him as a friend who was simply delighted to be in his company. He loved them all and related to them each at the level they preferred.

After one such celebration, the King invited Christian to go with him on a journey. They spent the day together traveling through a long lush valley. Before nightfall, they entered a small village. People were outside bedding down the animals, and tending to last minute chores.

The King stepped out of the carriage and surveyed the small town. It was a quaint community. The town folk were pleasant and the farmers, though salty, had a gentle quality about them. No one recognized the King or the royal carriage which was precisely why they came at nightfall.

He waved to the young prince to follow him to a near by house. Christian could not tell how large it was, but once inside he recognized the dimensions were much greater than he had anticipated. Greeting the King at the door was a butler and many other servants. Their faces lit up and expressed great delight in seeing the King again.

The King couldn't stay, b/c there was business to attend to at the castle. He told the staff that Prince Christian was the new steward of the village. They were to look after him and assist him in getting established in his new role. The King hugged his son bid the servant's farewell and went on his way.

Christian was shocked. He was the steward of one of the King's villages. He stammered, "Ah, how? How could this be? Doesn't he know how young and inexperienced I am?"

He expressed his alarm to the staff but they laughed. The butler placed his hand on the boy and said reassuringly, "You have to trust the King; he wouldn't make you responsible if he didn't feel you were ready."

Ready or not, the Prince now had a village to manage for the King.

The next morning the staff gave him his daily activity sheet per the King's orders. One of his first tasks was to walk through the town's square and meet the villagers. It was a pleasant experience and everyone was glad to have him. After several hours, he returned home. He noticed some men working his garden and flowerbeds. They seemed rather filthy and almost pig like in their appearance. The men didn't notice him until he cleared his throat and spoke.

"Hello, hello I'm the new steward of the town. My name is Prince Christian. Thank you for looking after my gardens...What are your names?"

All three looked at him, but only one spoke. "Hello sir, we are the Covetous Brothers. We are glad to have you."

"Covetous...hmm...What an odd name," he thought to himself.

"Thank you. I look forward to working with you...now, what are your individual names." They began walking towards him and the leader responded, "Yes sir, these are my brothers Selfish and Excessive. My name is Greed."

As they drew within 20 yards of him it appeared that the brothers were evolving. There pig like qualities – filth, rotund bellies, pointy ears, puffy faces, elongated snouts – evolved into something quite handsome and dazzling. The King figured it must be his eyes for he had never experienced anything of this sort.

Greed bowed to the Prince and extended his hand in friendship. The Prince took it. Greed's hand was the most assuring, warmest and embracing hand he had ever felt. A deep stirring awakened in Prince. A desire that he hadn't felt since he was a beggar gently ascended into his mind. He broke off the handshake, thanked them and mentioned he had more duties to attend to. Greed nodded with a knowing smile.

Several weeks elapsed and the Prince finally had a free day. He decided to visit the market to buy fresh strawberries. While there he bumped into his gardener Greed.

Greed introduced him to the fruit vendor and encouraged him to try his produce. He did. The fruit was exquisite. When he began to pay for it, Greed insisted he not pay anything. He was the steward of the village and he deserved it as a perk.

The Prince didn't know what to do, but it sure sounded good to him. The vendor smiled approvingly. With the vendor's blessing and Greed's insistence, he went along with it. He thanked them and was about to leave, when Greed said, "Have you ever tried our chocolate? Why it's the best in the kingdom. Come with me."

"Why not?" Prince Christian responded.

He walked into the shop with Greed and was intoxicated by the smell of rich chocolate. He was savoring the smell with his mouth half open when suddenly he had a truffle stuffed in it. He would have naturally spit it out, but the taste was so enamoring that he couldn't do anything but chomp. It was like there was a carnival in his mouth with all kinds of tastes and textures. It was amazing.

"How much is it?" the Prince asked. Before the shopkeeper could say anything, Greed interjected, "It's nothing...nothing...you deserve this. You take care of us and we want to take care of you. Right Mr. Chocolater?," he said with a wink.

All day long Greed took him through the village filling up his belly and pockets with trinkets, and food. This had a subtle but deleterious effect upon the Prince. He was developing an insatiable desire for more.

The next day, a man went by his house with a load of straw. The Prince insisted he leave some of it with him, b/c he needed it for his animals. Another farmer had a small apple orchard the King wrested from him because he wanted it. Prince Christian felt this probably wasn't right, but he was the steward and besides he didn't have much as a child. He truly did deserve special privileges.

Word traveled to the King about Prince Christian's appetite for the wealth and possessions of others. The King hurriedly left the capitol to confront the young Prince. When he arrived, he found Christian gorging on dainty petifores that he had taken from the baker just an hour earlier. About the same time, Greed walked into the room with a silver tray overflowing with plump grapes taken from a vineyard. Once Greed's eyes met the King's, he hunched over them and slinked away to a back room.

“Christian!” demanded the King, “what are you doing?”

Christian lifted his icing caked face from the plate he was licking, “Sir?”

The King was stunned. In little over two week’s time, Prince Christian had gained at least 15 pounds. His clothes were smudged with food stains. His hair was unkempt and his house in disarray.

“Don’t you see what has happened to you?”, blurted the King.

“See what?” the confused Prince asked.

The King was incredulous. Without saying a word, he walked authoritatively to him and grabbed him underneath the arm. He lifted him with such power out of his chair the Prince literally felt his feet leave the floor. The King marched him to the vestibule and put the young man in front of a mirror.

There he was in all his glory. He thought he had put on a few pounds, but he was silenced by the sight of himself. His face covered in cream, food caught in his mustache, grease stains from who knows what illicit meal. He was dirty and he saw it.

“What do I do? “

“First, go quickly and clean yourself up!”

Christian hastily went and took a bath and changed his clothes. Dropping off the shameful wardrobe and changing into something fresh was exhilarating. He felt clean again and wanted to skip. He rushed back into the King’s presence.

“Now what?” he quizzically asked.

With clinched teeth the King said, “You must take care of that Tempter Greed. He knows your weakness. He knows the impoverished condition from which you come and he plays that to his advantage. He has taken legitimate desires and turned them into a trap for you. He has filled you with the false conviction that you will lack and that I will not tend to your needs. He has built into you the strong beliefs of covetousness and envy. You must both recognize his work and cast him from your home.”

The Prince was still waiting for more...almost like a dog waiting for his owner to throw the ball.

“Do it now!” insisted the King.

Christian was suddenly filled with rage. He bolted from the room and hunted down his quarry. He found him in the kitchen. He was cooking the Prince’s favorite meal. The Prince charged at him, but then fell transfixed under the delightful aroma of baking lasagna.

“Ah, it’s you young prince, I thought I would prepare you your favorite meal. It’s wonderful isn’t it?”

The prince was now salivating and could barely utter the words, “uh–hah.” He stood their paralyzed.

“Prince Christian, awaken from your stupor!” roared the King, who standing in the doorway.

The prince’s eyes shot wide open and then he began a blistering tirade against Greed.

“You’re an evil person who has duped me long enough. You don’t belong in my house. I will not succumb to your temptations any longer. You have played to my weaknesses. You are not my friend and you must depart NOW!” he barked

Greed was unmoved. Looking at the baking lasagna in the oven he calmly responded, “Now listen young prince, I understand your consternation and guilt, but this isn’t the time to be hasty. Consider all the wonderful things you’ve enjoyed at my behest. Don’t be so rash. I am your friend and only want the best for you. Besides I come with the place and what would it be like w/o me?”

The Prince was about to let out another volley when the King tapped him on the shoulder. The Prince did not feel this was time for a consultation, so he shot back at Greed. “I demand that you leave and leave right now. You are no friend of mine.”

Greed’s eyes filled with menacing intent; his voice cold; his mouth half cocked with sarcastic grin and in a deep, guttural voice tone he snarled, “I’m not leaving. I came with this place, ADAM!”

Again, another tap on the shoulder from the King, this time Christian circled around like a whipped puppy. He muttered to the King, "What do we do? He knows the real me." The King smiled and motioned with his finger to follow him to another room.

The Prince had defeat written all over his face. He couldn't beat Greed. He was too strong. The King stated that there were several strategies to overcome the tempter and he instructed the Prince in them.

Prince Christian had a fresh confidence. He walked back into the room, but was taken aback. He was not only greeted by Greed, but also by his brothers, Selfish and Excessive

Before he could utter a word, the two boys launched into him, "You can't make us leave and if we do we're going to tell them what a phony you are ADAM...we'll tell them about your thievery. You will not be welcomed in this town...people are going to start talking."

The Prince had had enough. He summoned his servants. "Take these two and throw them off my property." They were startled at his quick response and left w/o even a whimper.

"Now for you Mr. Greed, You are aware of my history and the void I felt as a child because of my want. You have played to that fear, but no longer. You see I am the heir to a throne, a prince in a Kingdom and my Father, the King, has and will take care of all my needs. I no longer live on the streets, but in a mansion. I am no longer a beggar, but a prince. I am no longer Adam but Christian. Your foul temptations do not alarm me. I am not bond to your whims. I have a new life that is far superior to anything you could ever offer and the only one I serve is my King."

Greed felt the intensity of those words and saw the burning conviction of the Prince. He knew for now the argument was over. He turned and walked silently away.

As he exited the door, he turned to look at the Prince. The Prince couldn't believe his eyes. This dazzling and sophisticated man had transformed into a filthy, hoggish creature.

The King says to you his prince and princesses,

12 Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful (hoggish) desires. 13 Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now (you are royalty) you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. 14 Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.