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God's Living Legends: Adam's Environment

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Series: God's Living Legends (Part 1)

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Oh, to understand the magnificent ways of God! He takes seemingly unusable people, and through the miracle of His transforming power, He invades their spirit by His Holy Spirit until they actually begin to become and behave like Him. Life's castoffs, life's seemingly wasted lives, are often the clay God chooses from which to mold the men and women who will ultimately change the course of history in the spirit realm. They become living legends. Once God has control of their lives, they become candidates for His hall of fame, a place where honor comes not from talent or from accomplishment, but rather from commitment and surrender.

We shouldn't be so surprised. The word of God is a composite of biographical sketches of the men and women God picked up from the scrap-heaps of life and turned into living legends. They all made mistakes. Some of them seemed to devote their lives to making wrong choices. In many cases, they went on to greatness. In some cases, their wrong choices ultimately caused them to stumble and fall. But by looking at them, we begin to see something incredible. We begin to see ourselves. As we do, we hopefully fall on our faces before God and get excited that if He could use them, He can use *even us*. We also begin to see the reason He included their lives in Scripture, in such detail.

We're going to pack up and go on a journey together. We're going to take a seat on God's Biographical Express and travel back to the beginning of time and examine the lives, both good and bad, of the men and women God chose out of all the lives who have ever lived, to include in the Holy Scripture. As we do, we will be looking for certain things. And we will be meditating, I pray, on a passage of Scripture God wrote to us for just such an occasion. It is found in I Corinthians, chapters 9 and 10. It says this:

I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

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But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. (I Corinthians 9:26,27 KJV)

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

(I Corinthians 10:1-13 KJV)

God carefully etched in the tablets of His word life stories. He knew that we were going to pass through temptations and trials, and He wanted to give us a way of escape. He knew we would think we were the only men and women ever to endure such difficulties. He wanted to show us that the generations that preceded us passed through the same troubled waters. Some of

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them made terrible choices: idolatry, immorality, discontented spirits, murmuring, ungrateful hearts. They were just like us! So God wrote it down. He wanted to show us that there really was a way of escape. There were some who made the right choices and others who didn't. Some appropriated His nature and others didn't. So He said this:

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. (I Corinthians 10:6,11 KJV)

God wanted to give us, in living color, a picture book of biographical sketches so we could see the cause and effect of living according to God's perspective. We are going to attempt in the months to come, to study those lives, not just for entertainment or enlightenment, but for transformation. We are going to look at their lives from two perspectives.

1- What attributes of God are being demonstrated as He responds to them and empowers them? We can see only so much by studying doctrine and only so much by personal experience. Let's see God's nature revealed as He responds to living legends.

2- What character qualities does He seem to desire in their lives and what qualities does He resist? Then how can we seek, by God's grace, to appropriate those qualities that please Him.

We will seek to better understand the attributes of God. You say, well, that could take a lifetime. It's supposed to. So there's no time to lose. We need to begin. Perhaps the one most evident lack in most of our lives today is the absence of the real handle of the essence and nature of God. I think we have to begin by understanding the supremacy of God. Our tendency is to look at God as one big step ahead of man, so to see what God is like, we look at the best man we know and say, "God is greater than that!" We think of the patience of Job and say God is even more patient than Job. Isn't that nice? And we look at the atom bomb and we say that God is more powerful than the atom bomb. Never look at God in the light of man. He is so much more than man that man cannot be used as a suitable frame of reference.

Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself. (Psalm 50:21)

The problem we have is we can draw conclusions about the character of man by looking at the character of God. But we cannot draw conclusions about the character of God by looking at the character of man.

Let me give you an illustration. Suppose you lived in the mountains in a faraway country and you had never seen civilization and you had never seen an airplane. A missionary comes to your area and you go walking across the mountainside one day and you come across the wreckage of a Boeing 707. You look at it and you say to the missionary, "What is this?" He says, "That's an airplane after the fall." You say, "What?" And he says, "An airplane." You look around and here is a wing, a crushed piece of a wing, and you think, "Oh, an airplane". Then you look way up yonder in the treetop and there is a piece of a steering column. Then you look over here and there are some dials, and then over there you see a piece of a fuselage. And you say to yourself, "Oh, yes, an airplane". So you go home and the missionary says, "Can you draw a picture of an airplane?" And you say, "Sure, I can, I know what an airplane looks like", and you proceed to draw a picture of a mountainside with a piece here and a steering wheel there and you say, "That's my airplane." Do you see the problem? You can't understand what an airplane looks like if you have never seen one whole and complete.

You can see perfection and *then* recognize imperfection. You can look at a perfect diamond and then when you look at an imperfect diamond, you can see the flaws. But you *can't* see various forms of imperfection and from *that* have a frame of reference enough to envision that which is perfect.

God is perfect. He has perfect knowledge. He is omniscient. There is nothing He does not know. He knows all things in totality. He knows all things in detail. He knows all things in perspective. He knows all things simultaneously. He knows all things separately. He knows all things in the light of all other things. He knows all things past. By an act of His sovereign will He has chosen to forget some things, our sins, confessed and forgiven. But by nature of being God, He is incapable of forgetting anything He does not choose to forget. Perfect recall is a part of perfect knowledge. In His perfect knowledge is included perfect foreknowledge. There is no tiny detail of thought or deed yet to unfold in the years to come and the eternity to come that God does not know. In eternity past, before the foundations of the

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world, He knew all things yet to come as though they were now. God is perfect knowledge.

God is also omnipresent. He is by nature always everywhere. Man has the mistaken idea that God's being omnipresent means He *can* be anywhere at anytime or everywhere all the time. Negative. Anytime God ceases at one moment to be *all* places *all* the time, He ceases to be God. He holds the universes together with His presence, so His presence everywhere is always a part of His nature.

God is omnipotent. That means there is nothing He cannot do.

He is sovereign. That means there is nothing beyond His control. Never for one millisecond does God lose control of an ant or a raindrop.

God is perfect truth. He is without error. There is no variance in Him.

God is perfect righteousness. That means He is without compromise.

He is perfect love. That means He gives without regard to worth or response.

He is perfect grace. That means He gives with no merit or expectations.

He is perfect mercy. That means He gives and forgives with no limits.

He is immutable. It is impossible for God to change.

He is holy. It is impossible for God to co-exist with sin.

He is self-existent. Anytime God needs anyone to help Him be God, He ceases to be God.

He is perfect order. Though sin has created chaos, God exists in perfect order. The seasons change, the days change, the sun rises all in perfect order. God is perfect order.

He is perfect availability. There are no restrictions to His response, no interruption to His service. The Lamb is never too busy to hear us or respond to us.

God is eternal. He has no beginning and no ending. He has no limitations. He is not bound by the limitations of time.

God is perfect patience. His long-suffering is beyond our understanding.

God is beyond comprehension. We are seeing through a glass dimly. He is infinite, therefore only His shadow can be seen with our finite eyes. So God IS, and you cannot grasp His character by looking at man's character. You cannot grasp His character by experience. Your experience changes from day to day, but God IS, He cannot change.

There is only one vehicle in this world designed to show you the unchanging character of God apart from man, apart from experience, and that is the unchanging Word of God. Because the Word of God is part of God, IT alone can reveal the character of God.

As we search out God's heart, we also want to look at the character qualities of man. The definitions and examples of words such as contentment are well worth the time to study. Contentment – the state of being satisfied with your lot in life; so satisfied that no person, no thing outside the will of God has any attraction for you. What, then, is the opposite of a discontented spirit? Ingratitude, presumption, bitterness, jealousy, unfaithfulness. So we must learn to recognize the qualities that make us what we are. Here are a few more examples:

Faithfulness – being consistent in your expression of faith.

Generosity – being unselfish, freedom in the use of God's resources.

Gentleness – the spirit that always responds in consistent love.

Courage – the absence of fear in the presence of adversity.

So here is our objective for our study: to study from Scripture the lives of Bible characters, God's living legends, with an eye, not to their accomplishments, but to their character, i.e., the qualities in their lives that drove them to be what they were. We want to learn to measure those qualities in ourselves, all the while looking at the character of God and learning to appropriate what is ours from His. In other words, we will look at God's living legends through the lens of character, then focus the lens on infinity to more clearly see the attributes that make God God, and, when appropriated, make men godly.

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Now we have time for only a bird's eye view of our first subject. We are going to begin by looking at old man Adam for our first biography. Life as we know it began with Adam. But alas, spiritual death, separation from God, began with Adam as well. So if we are going to study God's nature as it applies to man, and man's nature as it reflects God, it seems only fitting to begin at the beginning with Adam.

Let's begin then by looking at Adam's environment. This one man's choice to rebel against God's spoken word, and thus send all of humanity and all of nature into a tailspin, defies all the laws of humanistic philosophy and psychology. Have you ever looked at what Adam had going for him? My friend, the problems in our lives are not the result of uncontrollable pressure brought into our lives through wrong parents, bad environments or traumatic circumstances. The problems in our lives are the result of sin. The fire that hardens one substance, softens another. The difference is in the response to the fire. Adam once and for all defies the notion that rebellion is the result of forces beyond our control. My friend, Adam had it all and threw it all away.

1- He had the world's best father. His father was God. So there was no flaw in the character of the Father in which to blame his disobedience. He didn't respond to Eve the way he did because he was so insecure because he was rejected by his parents. He had a perfect father. He also had a perfect relationship with his father.

2- He had a direct line to heaven. He knew what it was to walk with God, and he knew what it was to talk with God. Adam did not lack a personal working relationship with the Father. They had intimate fellowship. He knew God's heart, He knew God's creation, He knew God's objectives. He didn't just know *about* God, he *KNEW* God. Adam had his quiet time every day with God. He talked with God as Moses did, as a man talks to his friend. Even those who have been exposed to all of the principles of growth and have really developed a walk with God are not immune from real disobedience if they do not heed the caution lights of character. The Bible is full of God's choicest servants who disobeyed.

3- He knew what it was to work and have responsibility. Who do you think it was who named all of the animals? Adam. A horse is a horse today because Adam called it a horse. A camel is

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a camel because Adam called a camel a camel. A pig is a pig, etc. All of the animals were named by Adam. Who was responsible for the garden? Adam was. He was given dominion over all of the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, the fish of the sea. He had to tend the garden which literally means to cultivate it and care for it and watch it grow. But he was also told to keep the garden. The Hebrew word used here is *shamar* which means to guard or protect against intruders. In our next study, we will look at that to see if he did his job. He was to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. Adam wasn't raised without the proper work ethic. He was brought up with a good share of responsibility, Adam knew what it was to work. He did so.

4- Adam had a perfect environment. He lived in paradise. Oh, the noise the world is making today. Man is the product of his environment. Negative. Man is a product of his relationship with God. Sin mars the relationship; Christ heals the relationship. The depth of that relationship and our obedience in that relationship can overcome and even be used to God's advantage and change the results of the disadvantages of our environment. You say, "If only circumstances were better, I wouldn't disobey." Nonsense. Adam lived in paradise. He never had a cold. His car never broke down because his Die Hard died. He never had a collision. He never had a reason to cry. Adam never had an Excedrin headache. Adam never had ring around the collar or split ends. Adam had never seen a broken home, never been to jail, never seen a judge. Adam never had a fuel shortage, a food shortage, no high interest rates, in fact, no interest rates at all. No pollution, no pests and no politicians. There was a perfect working environment. He was a farmer with no storms, no stones, no plagues, no thorns, no thistles, no weeds, and no worries. No in-laws, no out-laws. Adam lived in paradise. He couldn't blame his environment, and neither can you.

5- Adam had a marriage made in heaven. Literally. You know the story. I know the story. Counselor looks you in the eye and says, "It's not your fault. Bad marriage. Your mate is responsible for all of your problems." We will see that next week when Adam says, "Lord, it was my wife who was the problem." Nonsense. Adam had the perfect mate. God asked him if he was lonesome and Adam said, "I guess so." God recognized the need before Adam did. God said, "How would you like a helpmate? A perfect mate. A perfect match. A helper fitted just for you. Custom-

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designed.” This was before computer dating services came into being. Adam didn't even know what God was talking about. God told Adam to take a siesta. God used the first anesthetic recorded in history. Adam fell into a deep sleep. God ribbed him a little. What came out of the surgery was one perfect mate. A marriage made in heaven. The Scripture says that Adam looked and said (loose translation), “Wow, that's neat!” Adam, as well, as we shall see next week, listened to Eve when he should have listened to God. But he was not a victim of a bad marriage. That was no excuse for his rebellion. No excuse for yours either.

You may be involved in a bad marriage, even in a divorce. I do not for one minute minimize the pain and the agony of it, but don't shake your fist at God. Instead, behold the love of God and drink it in and learn more of Him as you grieve. You have more grace than those who do not pass your way. Adam blamed his marriage. His marriage wasn't the problem. He was disobedient to God. That was Adam's problem.

6- Adam wasn't deprived. He wasn't the victim of a childhood of neglect. He was allowed everything he ever wanted but one thing, so he went for that. The Lord commanded the man saying, “Of every tree of the garden thou art free to eat.” Can't you just see the sign, Eden's Eatery, Smorgasbord. All you can eat. Free. “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not.”

Do you see Adam's problem? He had a perfect father, and he had a perfect relationship with his father. He had a perfect walk with God, and a straight line to heaven. He experienced work and carried responsibility. He grew up in paradise with no problems. He had a marriage made in heaven. He was given freely everything He would have ever wanted. But He *chose* to sin. That's the real issue. That's the real issue with me. That's the real issue with you. As we prepare for our next lesson about Adam, I hope you look and see as you study this passage, that at least four character deficiencies are surfacing in Adam's spirit. Look for character qualities and see if you can find them. In that same passage you will find at least four of the attributes of God that were manifest in that experience with Adam that were God's warning lights. Look for those four.

In our next study, we will return to the garden and look at Adam's apple, and what it was that led to his disobedience. We

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will look more closely at the God of creation who gave it all to him but kept a little from him for his own good. You and I can learn a lot from Adam, a lot about ourselves and a lot about God. “These things *were* written for our admonition.” They were indeed. Now it’s our job to look and to listen as we begin our journey through the land of God’s living legends.

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