

The True and Better Adam (Part 3)

Romans 5:12-21

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Well, I invite you to turn with me to Romans chapter 5. As we continue our journey through Paul's letter to the churches in Rome, we find ourselves in the second major section of this letter. It's a section in which Paul is reminding us of the amazing reality of the security, the certainty of our lives because of our justification. We are secure in Christ because we enjoy the reality of having been declared right with God through the work of Jesus Christ.

Specifically, we're looking at the paragraph that begins in chapter 5 verse 12 and runs down through the end of the chapter, verse 21. And in this paragraph, Paul reminds us that our salvation is secure because there is, in fact, a legal basis for the justification we enjoy. Paul's main point in these verses, as we've already discovered, is that Jesus Christ is able to secure our justification because God appointed Him as our legal representative, just as he did Adam in the garden.

It's representative headship, that's the key to the gospel. This is the only way that God can still be just and yet treat you as if you had lived Jesus' life, and treat you as if you had died for your sins in Christ when He died. The only way God can be just and treat you as if you were Christ is because He made Christ your legal representative. He had to appoint both Adam and Christ as official legal representatives of those who are connected to them and only then can He credit, legally, the consequences, or the benefits, of their actions to those they represent.

Now, theologians call this by a couple of names. Sometimes it's called federal headship. The word federal comes from the Latin word which means covenant, so covenant headship, that's not my preferred term, I personally prefer the other and that is representative headship. That is, Adam and Christ represented us; they had been appointed by God to that end.

Now, the heart of this paragraph is the truth that God appointed Christ as the representative of all of those who would ever believe in Him. But before he can explain how Christ could represent us, he first has to explain how Adam did, and so he begins then in verses 12 to 14, we've already seen this, with Adam our representative, how sin, condemnation, and death came to all men. Specifically, he explains the reality of this in verse 12 in one of the most condensely argued passages in all of Paul's letters. Look at verse 12, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned."

Now, in that one verse we discovered that Paul makes four foundational propositions about our relationship to Adam and how sin and death entered the world. Number one, sin entered the world through Adam. Number two, death entered the world through Adam's sin. Number three, and we've already looked at these in detail, death spread to all men because of Adam's sin. And number four, and this is the key proposition in this, God credited the guilt of Adam's sin to all men. Whether you like it or not, you are held, and I am held, legally guilty for Adam's sin, all humanity is, that's what Paul is saying. The only exception was our Lord Jesus Christ, whom the Holy Spirit preserved and protected from the taint of Adam's guilt and sin.

So, by "all sinned" there at the end of verse 12, Paul meant that we all sinned when Adam sinned, because God appointed him to serve as our representative. Think of it this way, he acted for us all, he acted for me, in the garden, he acted for you, he made a choice on your behalf and we received the legal verdict of guilty for his choice.

Now, last time we examined why that's not unfair. Our first response to that is, that's unfair, that God would do that, but we looked at the fact that it's not unfair. The two chief reasons, one would be because we would have done the same thing. It doesn't matter who was in the garden, we would have made the same choice he made, and so it's not unfair. In addition, if that's unfair, then it's unfair for Christ to represent you. You don't want to say that, you don't want to go there, all right.

So, it wasn't unfair, but having said that all are guilty of Adam's sin in verse 12, Paul realizes that that was as revolutionary in his day as it is in ours and so he sets out in the next two verses, verses 13 and 14, to defend that. And he defends it an interesting way, he wants to show that it's because of our guilt in Adam that people die, and he chooses the period of time between Adam and Moses. And he says, why did everyone from Adam, who had a verbal command from God that he broke, until Moses, when we've got written commands, so you have a period of time between Adam and Moses when there was no verbal command from God, there was no written command from God, why did all those people die?

Moreover, why did the infants during that period of time die? I mean, remember, death is the wage for sin, so why did they die? That's a great question and Paul's conclusion as to why the people in that period of time died is, there's only one explanation, they all died because they all sinned in Adam, their representative. That's his proof. That's how he defends the fact that God has called us guilty for the sin of Adam. So, how did sin, condemnation, and death come to all men? The answer is, through Adam, whom God appointed as our legal representative to act in our place.

Now, Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15, calls the Adam we're talking about, the first Adam. But today we begin to examine what he calls, or who he calls, in that same passage in 1 Corinthians 15, the last Adam, Jesus Christ our Lord. So, let's begin then to look at the second major part of this

paragraph, Christ our representative, how righteousness, justification, and life came to the many. This begins in verse 15 and runs down through the end of the chapter, verse 21.

Now again, let me remind you of the flow of Paul's argument because this is one of the most difficult, in fact, I would say this is the most difficult paragraph in the book of Romans. So, if you're visiting with us today, you're catching us in the middle of it, stay with us, but understand, this will make your brain sweat. But if you'll stay with it, it's worth the effort, because the truth in this passage is really rich.

So, here's the flow of Paul's argument, he starts in verse 12 with the main argument he wants to advance, but then he interrupts himself, that's why there's a dash in most Bibles at the end of verse 12. And then in verses 13 to 17 he addresses two parenthetical issues. At the end of verse 12 he said, "all sinned." In verses 13 and 14 he answers the question, what does "all sinned" mean? But at the end of that he says, Adam is a type of Christ, and so in verses 15 to 17 he interrupts himself with a second parenthetical issue, how is Christ better than the type Adam? Finally, in verses 18 and 19, Paul completes the main argument that he started back up in verse 12, and that's really the heart of this passage.

And then in verses 20 to 21 he briefly dealt with the role of the law. He's thinking of a question the Jews would have; they would say, okay Paul, you've talked about Adam, that's Genesis, you've talked about Christ, that's the gospels, but what about the law, all that stuff in between? What about that? And so, he briefly deals with the role of the law in the plan of redemption.

So, at the end of verse 14, as Paul finished his first parenthesis, he makes a remarkable statement. Look at it in verse 14, he says, "Adam is a type of Him who was to come." Who is the one "who was to come"? Well, obviously it's Christ, but just in case you need proof, look at verse 15, we're talking about "the one Man, Jesus Christ." So, in other words, Paul was saying that Adam is a type of Jesus Christ. That invites the question, in what way? What are the similarities between Adam and Christ?

And let me just remind you, we looked at these last time, here are the key similarities between Christ and Adam. They're alike in four ways. Number one, God appointed them both as representatives, as legal representatives. Now, if that concept scares you, don't let it. We deal with this every day. We have elected officials in this country. We choose them, they go to Washington, and they make decisions. If they make good decisions, we get the benefit of that. If they make bad decisions, we get the consequences of that. That's representative headship. They're representing us at the head of the country. The same thing could be said, for example, of a court appointed attorney. The judge says, this person is going to represent you, they are going to argue on your behalf, and you get the benefit if they do their job well, and you suffer if they don't. They represent you. God appointed both Adam and Christ as our legal representatives.

Secondly, God appointed both over their descendants, or their seed. In the case of Adam, it's his physical descendants, all humanity, all of us. In the case of Christ, it's His spiritual descendants, that is, those who believe in Him. Thirdly, they are alike in this way, God appointed both as the only two representatives of all of humanity, there are no others. How do we know that? In 1 Corinthians 15:45 Paul says, Adam was the first Adam and Jesus Christ is the last Adam. That's it, only two representatives. And number four, and this is really the key point of similarity, God credits the results of the work of both of them to their descendants or their seed, to Jesus' spiritual seed, which are those who believe in Him, to Adam's physical seed, those who are his physical descendants. So, Adam then is a type of Christ in those four ways.

Now, having said that, Paul was immediately concerned that we not misunderstand and think that Adam and Christ are somehow equals, that they're on par with each other. And so, he again interrupted the flow of his thought and includes a second parenthetical discussion before he finally gets back to his main point in verse 18.

Now, the point of this second parenthesis is to show this, how Christ surpasses Adam, how Christ as our representative is far better than Adam as our representative. And he makes this clear, that he's making this contrast to show one is better than the other. Notice verse 15, "not like," "much more," "not like," "much more." Verse 16, "not like." Verse 17, "much more." He's contrasting and showing how Christ is better, Christ is better than Adam.

And specifically, in these verses, Paul identifies three ways that Jesus and His redeeming work as our representative far exceeds Adam and his condemning act as our representative. Christ is better, he's a better representative, number one, because He brought us grace instead of judgment, He brought us grace instead of judgment. This is verse 15. Now, Paul begins verse 15 with the word but. In English, we just have one word for but, but in Greek that's not true. In Greek there are several and this is the strongest one he could have chosen, it's a strong adversative, because he wants to qualify that last statement about Adam being a type of Christ, and he's going to do so by several contrasts.

You see, there are similarities between Adam and Christ, but there are also huge differences. A gulf exists between them. I like the way John Stott puts it, he says, "Paul has called Adam the type of Christ. But he has no sooner made the statement than he feels embarrassed by the impropriety of what he has said. To be sure, there is a superficial similarity between them in that each is the one man through whose deed enormous numbers of people have been affected. There's the main point of similarity. But there the likeness between them ends," Stott writes. "How can the Lord of glory be likened to the man of shame, the Savior to the sinner, the giver of life to the broker of death?"

Now, before we examine the contrasts in verse 15 together I need to first step back and make one crucial point of clarification about this entire passage. Throughout this paragraph Paul repeatedly uses the words many and all, many and all. That can be potentially confusing if

you're not careful. In fact, some have, in over simplification, decided that since, "all always means all," when Paul later says that all are justified in Christ, that must mean everybody's going to be saved. Clearly that's contrary to the Scripture. In fact, it's contrary to what Paul writes in Romans. Back in chapter 2 verse 8 he says that those who are disobedient will have rendered to themselves, by God, wrath. Not everyone's going to be saved. So that's not what he's teaching here.

There's no need for confusion. Let me set the many and all straight for you. Remember, this passage is about representatives, Adam being our representative, Christ being our representative. So, when Paul speaks and he uses the word many or all in reference to Adam, he is simply talking about, and he always means, those Adam represents. And who does Adam represent? All mankind. So, whether he uses the word many or all, he's talking about all mankind, if it's in reference to Adam. On the other hand, when he speaks of the many or all in Christ, he always means those whom Christ represents. And whom does Christ represent? All those who believe in Him. So, many and all in reference to Christ is always the many or all whom Christ represents, those who believe in Him. And when it's for Adam, it's the many or all whom Adam represents. So don't let that be confusing to you.

Now, with that clarification, let's look at the contrast in verse 15. He says, "But the free gift is not like the transgression." Now, the Greek word translated transgression is the third different Greek word for sin Paul has used so far in this paragraph. This word means, to make a false step. Picture someone walking down a path and making a false step off of that path. It's even used sometimes of falling off the path, you get distracted and you fall off. That's why we speak of Adam's fall, it's this word, he fell from the path.

Now, that sounds not so bad, I mean you could easily think that this is accidental; it's not accidental. This word is never accidental, it's intentional. For example, it's like Isaiah talks about in Isaiah 53:6, he says, "All of us like sheep have," what? "Gone astray." Now, if you stop there you might say, well, maybe it was like an accident, maybe we really wanted to stay on the right path, but we accidentally strayed off the path. Well, Isaiah won't let us go there because the very next phrase says, what? "All we like sheep have gone astray," but, "each one of us has turned to his own way." This wasn't an accident, it's willful. Our sin, my sin, your sin, is willful, it's rebellion. It is of the essence of sin, it is self-rule, it is autonomy.

Now, with that in mind, look at what he says. Let me read it to you as it literally reads from the Greek text. It's a little unusual to our English ears, but it gives you a flavor. Here's what it literally says, "not as the transgression, thus also the free gift," "not as the transgression, thus also the free gift." What's he saying? He's saying, there is a huge difference between the transgression of Adam and the free gift that comes from Christ.

But what's the difference? Well, think about this, when Adam transgressed, when he stepped off the path, who was Adam thinking about? Do you think Adam, when Eve offered him the piece

of fruit that God had forbidden him, do you think Adam was thinking, you know, what about those people sitting in Dallas in the twenty-first century, think about the effect this choice will have on them? No, he wasn't thinking about us; he wasn't thinking about anyone but whom? Himself, himself. Adam acted solely for himself, without any thought of us; he intentionally left the path of obedience. Why? In utter selfishness, pursuing his own desires.

What about Christ? Notice the contrast, in verse 15 Christ acted completely without thought of Himself. His only concern was for us, it was to bring us, what? To bring us the free gift. He wasn't after something for Himself like Adam was, He was after something for us. But it doesn't stop there. Go over to chapter 6 verse 23, you need this in your mind to understand this verse. Chapter 6 verse 23, Paul says, "For the wages of sin is death." Now, that is so familiar to most of us that it just, sort of, you hear it and you don't hear it, so let me say it differently. Here's what Paul is saying, death is the wage we earned in Adam, death is the wage we earned in Adam.

Now, look back at chapter 5 verse 15, death is the wage we earned in Adam, Christ came to secure the free gift for us. The wage, what we earned, death. What Adam earned for us, death. What Christ came to earn for us, what? A free gift. A wage or a free gift? We get what we earned and deserve in Adam, we receive a gracious free gift from Christ. In fact, verse 23 of chapter 6 goes on to say, "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." The wage and the free gift, that's the point of contrast here.

Now, after that introductory comment, Paul goes on to explain this contrast even more. Notice what he says in verse 15, "But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one," that's Adam, "the many died," by Adam's single sinful act of rebellion, what was it? Eating a piece of fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we aren't told what that fruit was, we're just told it was from a tree that God said, "you may not eat of it or you will surely die." God had expressly forbidden it, Adam ate, and by that one sin, notice what Paul says, "many died." Who are the many? Well, remember what we've learned, the many are all of those Adam represented. And who is that? All of us. All of humanity. All died.

He's already said this, back in verse 12, "death spread to all men." Verse 17, "death reigned." In 1 Corinthians 15:22, "in Adam all die." Who are the only exceptions? There are only a few, there's Enoch in Genesis 5, there's Elijah in the book of Kings, and then there are those who will be alive when Christ returns. Those are the only ones, everyone else dies. Death reigns.

Because of one sinful act of Adam, our representative, we all die. Spiritually, we have no connection to God. We're born without a connection to God, we don't know God. He's our Creator, Sustainer, He does everything for us, but we don't know Him, and we don't really want to know Him. We're dead spiritually. And we will die physically, every person in this room will die. If Christ doesn't come back, you will die. And eternally, apart from the grace of Christ,

every person will die eternally, in a place John the Apostle calls the lake of fire. That's the reality.

But notice the contrast, verse 15, "if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more," I love that, "much more." What does he mean by "much more"? He means, in Christ the results are much greater, what we get in Christ is much better than what we got in Adam. But he also means the outcome of what Christ does for us is much more certain than even what we get from Adam. In the immediate context, back in verses 9 and 10, that's how he uses this "much more" expression, it's to bring in the idea of certainty. Here's what he's saying, we can be even more certain that we will receive the benefit of what Christ has done than we are certain that we will experience the consequences of what Adam did, "much more."

Now, look at what he says in verse 15, "much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many." Now, notice the contrast, Adam brought the judgment of God. Look at the word death. Adam brought the judgment of God on those he represented. Christ brought the grace of God. So, the judgment of God and the grace of God. In Adam, we receive the judgment that he earned for himself and for us, but in Christ we receive God's grace, completely undeserved and unearned.

Now, look specifically at how Paul describes what Christ has brought us. Verse 15, first of all, the grace of God. Adam brought only God's judgment upon us, Christ brought grace. Do you understand what grace is? I love that word and I hope you never get tired of that word or of even being reminded of what it means. What is grace? Grace describes an attribute of God. It describes something that is innately and entirely true of the character of God. And here's what it is, in the character of God there is that quality that moves Him to find joy and delight in doing good to us even though we deserve the worst from Him. Let me say that again, there is, in God, in the character of God, a quality that finds joy and delight in doing good to you even though you deserve absolutely the worst from Him. That's grace. And that's what Christ brought us through His representation, God's grace.

Notice, it was God's grace that was the motive behind the next expression there, "and the gift." In chapter 6 verse 23, Paul calls it, "the gift of God," the gift which comes from God. What is this free gift? Well, look down in verse 16, there we are told this gift, whatever it is, results in our justification, in our being declared right with God. But what is the gift? Well, verse 17 tells us, "the gift," which is "righteousness." That's the gift.

Christian, you have received so much more than just the forgiveness of your sins. You have received that, if you've repented and believed in the work of Jesus Christ, you have been forgiven, but you've been given so much more. You've been given the gift of righteousness. What does that mean? It means that God has credited to your account the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, His own Son. It means He has put in your account, the 33 years of perfection that was the life of Jesus Christ. And now, He treats you as if you had lived that life. The gift of

righteousness, He treats you as if you had earned it, when you didn't earn it, Christ earned it. It's a gift to you.

But notice, that gift comes to you because of the grace of God, that quality in God that delights in doing good to you even though you don't deserve it. In fact, you deserve the opposite. But also, He's not done, verse 15, that gift comes to us also "by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ." You see, it's not just the Father who has grace, Jesus Christ is filled with the same quality.

You see, Jesus didn't come to earth grudgingly, He didn't come to Earth, you know, whining and complaining that He had to come and do this, and suffer all of that for you. No, there was within Him the same quality. He was filled with joy to come and to do good to you when you deserved the opposite from Him. He did it willingly, gladly, with joy and delight, "the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ."

In fact, it's by the grace of Christ that we're saved. Peter, in Acts 15:11 says, "we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus." You see, in Adam we received the strict measured justice of God. In other words, in Adam and his sin, we got exactly what we deserve and nothing more, but in Christ we receive the grace of God, the free gift of righteousness, "by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ."

But Paul's not done, look at what he says, "much more," verse 15, "did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ," underline this, "abound to the many." I love that word abound. It means, to have in abundance, to have more than enough, to have some left over when you're done. Do you see what Paul is saying? He's saying that in Adam we receive the exact precise justice of God, but for us who are in Christ, Christ received the exact justice of God in our place and we receive the extravagant super-abounding, more than enough, plenty left over when He's done, grace of God. I don't care what your sin is, the grace of God is greater. It abounds, it abounds. There's more than enough. When God is done extending His grace to you, He won't have started to expend it, He'll still have it all left.

Verse 17 speaks of the abundance of grace. Look at verse 20, "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." Listen, however high your sin rises, the grace of God is greater. It's not an excuse for sin, Paul is going to deal with that in the next chapter, but if you will come humbly and repentantly to God, the grace of God will always be greater than whatever sin you bring. This is our God. This is who Jesus is.

I love the way John puts it in John 1:16, he says, speaking of Jesus, he says, "of His fullness we have all received," that is, all of us in Christ, we've all received of the fullness of Christ, and then he says this, "and grace upon grace." It's a beautiful word picture. He says, okay, God gave us grace and then He stacked more grace on that, and then more grace, and more grace, and more grace.

Ephesians 2:7 speaks of “the surpassing riches of His grace,” not just riches, “the surpassing riches of His grace.” God never runs out of grace. Adam brought the judgment of God on those he represented. Christ brought the surpassing riches of the grace of God. “Much more.” In Adam, we got the sentence of death that he earned and deserved from God’s justice. But we can be much more certain we will get what Christ earned, but what comes to us as a free unearned gift. The grace of God and the grace of Christ, abounds to all of those He represents. Christ brought us grace instead of judgment. Christ is better.

He’s better, secondly, He surpasses Adam, secondly, in that He brought us justification for our many sins instead of condemnation for Adam’s one sin. We learn this in verse 16. Paul writes, “The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned.” Now again, you’ve got to remember, Paul is very tight and condensed here, so let me translate that for you, let me paraphrase that for you. Here’s what he’s saying, the free gift that came through Christ is not like the condemnation that came through Adam, the free gift that came through Christ is not like the condemnation that came through Adam. And then he follows with a couple of contrasts.

First of all, he contrasts the result of what Adam did with the result of what Jesus did. Look at what Adam did, verse 16, “for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation.” Excuse me. From Adam’s one sin arose judgment, Paul says. Now, the word judgment is a Greek word that just means, a legal verdict. God rendered a legal verdict on Adam’s sin, a legal decision, and what was God’s verdict about Adam and about us, whom he represented? Condemnation, “the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation.” The verdict was condemned, legally guilty.

You recognize these words are legal words, they come from the courtroom. God’s verdict about Adam’s sin was condemnation. God reached the verdict of guilty. Adam was legally guilty of breaking God’s command and therefore deserving of death. And here’s the hard part, everyone Adam represented, including you and me, was legally guilty and deserving of death as well. That’s the result of what Adam did.

But look at the result of what Christ did, verse 16, “but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification.” Instead of sin and the legal decision of guilty, Christ brings us a free gift, the gift of a declaration of righteous. Notice, therefore, His work results in “justification.” Do you see that word? Justification. These are opposites, condemnation, justification. Condemnation, a verdict of legally guilty. Justification, a verdict of legally righteous. Adam earned us a verdict of guilty. Christ earned us a verdict of righteous. In Adam, we are guilty before God’s law, we’re deserving of death. In Christ, we are righteous.

But that’s not the only contrast in verse 16, do you see the other one? You have Adam’s one sin on the one hand and you have the many sins on the other. What are we talking about here? Well, in response to Adam’s one sin, God measured out exactly the justice that sin deserved, to Adam and to us. But when Christ came, He didn’t come just to take care of that guilt that we

had because Adam's sin was credited to us. No, He came for much more. Notice, He came to take care of the "many transgressions." What are the many transgressions? Whose are those? Those are the sins of every person who would ever believe in Him.

Do you understand what this is saying? It's saying every sin, believer, you have ever committed, every sin, every sinful thought you have had, every sinful attitude you have had in your mind, every sinful word you have spoken, every sinful act you have ever committed in your entire life to this point, and every sin you will ever commit as long as you have breath on this planet, every single one of those sins has been eternally erased from the divine record. It's as if you never committed one of them. In the records of heaven, not one of them stands. And today, as you sit here, you wear the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

What does that mean? It means, God sees you as if you had committed all the righteous acts and thought the righteous thoughts and spoke the righteous words of Jesus Christ, your representative. And He always sees you in and through your representative. You have received the reward of His righteousness, the benefit of His death. That's why Paul can say, later in chapter 8 verse 1, "There is, therefore, now no," what? "Condemnation." There is no legal verdict of guilty now, for us, for those who are in Christ Jesus. Adam committed one transgression and was judged, resulting in condemnation for him and for all who were in him, but Christ overcame a flood of sins to extend the free gift of His righteousness resulting in the justification of all who are in Him.

I love the way one commentator, Cranfield, puts it, "That one single misdeed," that is, of Adam, "should be answered by judgement, this is perfectly understandable. But that the accumulated sins and guilt of all the ages should be answered by God's free gift, this is the miracle of miracles, utterly beyond human comprehension." Folks, Christ is better, He far surpasses Adam. He brought us justification in exchange for our many sins, for all of our sins, instead of the condemnation of Adam's one sin. Christ is better.

Thirdly, Christ is better because He brought us life instead of death, He brought us life instead of death. Verse 17, "For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one." Now, Paul here is summarizing what he's already taught us. Back in verse 12 he said, "death spread to all men," through Adam's sin. Verse 14, "death reigned." And now here again in verse 17 he says, through Adam's sin, "death reigned." That is such a powerful and picturesque description of life on this planet, death reigns, death rules. It pictured death like a mighty despot whose reign of terror is over every person. Listen, the control of ISIS can't come close to the reign of terror of death, it's over every human being.

Hebrews 2:14-15 says, "Therefore, since we as God's children share in flesh and blood, Christ Himself also partook of the same," He became like us, He became fully human. Here's part of the reason, "that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is the devil," and listen to this, "and might free those who through fear of death were subject to

slavery all their lives.” If you’re here this morning and you don’t know Jesus Christ, I can promise you this, in the truest middle of your heart, you live in fear of death, you live in slavery to the fear of death, that’s what the Scripture says, and the only hope for you is in Christ, who has defeated death.

We live in a world in which death reigns. I like the way Lloyd Jones puts it, he says, “The world is a place of cemeteries.” But again, notice the contrast, verse 17, “if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.” Now, it’s clear that Paul isn’t teaching universalism here. You didn’t volunteer for Adam to represent you, nobody raised their hand, said yes, I want Adam to represent me. God made him your representative. But, in this passage Paul says, it is only those who receive the gift, those who respond to God’s grace in Christ, in faith, who receive the free gift.

Notice what we receive, verse 17, “the abundance of grace,” there is that expression again, “and the gift of righteousness.” Now, Paul has already dealt with this. Go back to chapter 3 verse 24. When he was explaining the gospel, he says, we are “justified.” That is, we are declared right with God; we’re given a right standing before God, “as a gift.” Listen, a right standing before God is not a wage to be earned, it is a gift to be received. He says, “being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus,” through the work of Christ on the cross, that’s how we can be made right with God.

Now, go back to chapter 5. Did you notice what Paul doesn’t say in verse 17? He doesn’t say what we expect him to say. What we expect him to say, on the one hand death reigned in Adam, so in Christ, what? Life reigns. That would have been great, that would’ve been very gracious of God, but the grace of God is so much greater. That’s not what Paul says. What Paul actually says is that in Adam death reigned and in Christ we reign, in life. What does he mean? Well, obviously, he means that in Christ we get life, eternal life, instead of death, but that’s not all he means. What does he mean, “we will reign”?

Well, we reign with Christ now in one sense. Paul says in Ephesians 2:6, we are seated with Him “in the heavenlies,” today. What does that mean? It means, that for all practical purposes we are no longer the slaves to the reign of sin and death and Satan and the world; we don’t live in slavery anymore, we reign. But it also means we will reign with Christ forever.

Turn over to Revelation. I love the way Paul puts this in Revelation chapter 3. I’m sorry, the way our Lord puts it, not Paul, the way our Lord puts it, as John writes it here in Revelation 3:21. He’s speaking to the church in Laodicea and He says, ““He who overcomes,”” and now in context, that’s every believer, if you’re a believer, you’re an overcomer, “He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”” You’re going to reign with Me.

But it's even clearer, go over to chapter 20, chapter 20 verse 6, "Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection," that's the resurrection of the righteous, "over these the second death," that's the lake of fire as it's defined later even in this chapter, "over these the second death has no power, but they," that's us, believers, "will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years," through the entire millennium, through the entire time Christ reigns on this earth, we will reign with Him.

But John isn't done. Go over to chapter 22 verse 5. We're now in the eternal state, we're in the new heavens and the new earth, and notice verse 5, "And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them and they," this is us, believers, "the bond servants of God," verse 3, verse 5 says, "and they will reign forever and ever." "Forever and ever," you're going to reign with Christ. We who were once slaves of sin and death will be kings.

Now, go back to Romans 5, because it's crucial that we remind ourselves of how these gifts become ours, and they are gifts. Verse 17 says righteousness is a gift. Chapter 3 verse 24 says justification is a gift. Chapter 6 verse 23 says eternal life is a gift. So, righteousness and justification and eternal life, they are all gifts. How do they become ours? Look at chapter 5, the end of verse 17, "through the One, Jesus Christ."

Do you see the point? Just as through the sin of Adam you were condemned and you didn't participate one bit, you contributed nothing, Adam acted on your behalf and you got the guilt of his choice. In the same way, your only hope is found in one Man, Jesus Christ. If you would be saved from your sin and its penalty, it will be by that one Man, Jesus Christ, and it will be completely and totally without any contribution from you, without any participation by you, without any effort or merit on your part. All you have to do is receive the free gift. Remember, it's not a wage you earn, it's a free gift you receive.

But there is one catch, you can't take the free gift Christ is offering while you're still holding on to your sin. That's why the Bible talks about repentance. It means you've got to drop your sin, you got to be willing to turn from your sin to receive the free gift that is offered in Jesus Christ.

So, I ask you again, today, are you still in Adam? If you're human, you were born in Adam. Are you still in Adam or are you in Christ? Who is your representative? And if you're in Christ, let me just ask you, have you begun to understand and to live in light of the "much more" that is yours in Jesus Christ? Do you understand the abounding, the super-abounding grace of God? Is this what you live in? Is this what you understand and meditate on? Do you live in the knowledge of the abundance of grace and the free gift that is yours?

So many Christians just waddle along because they don't understand what they have in Christ. And that not only hurts them, it hurts the gospel. Lloyd Jones writes, "It is only when you and I who are a part of the Christian church are rejoicing in this abounding grace as we ought to be,

that we shall begin to attract the people who are outside of the church.” As you and I understand what we have in Christ, as we live in the reality of the super-abounding grace of God, we put the gospel on display. It becomes truly attractive to the people around us who live under sin and death. May God help us to live in that way. Let’s pray together.

Father, we thank You for this crucial passage. Thank You for its depth, its profundity. Lord, help us to get it, help us to grasp its truth, and help us, O God, to live in the light of it. For those of us in Christ, help us to understand what we have in Him, how “much more” is ours in Christ, and in so doing, put the gospel on display.

Father, I also pray for those here this morning who are still in Adam, who still live under the slavery of sin, the threat of death, and eternal death in the lake of fire. Father, I pray that today You would bring them to the place where they’re willing to let go of their sin, they’re willing to repent and turn to You and receive from You the free gift that Christ earned for them. Father, may this be the day. We pray in Jesus’ name, amen.