

New 'In Christ'

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 April 2022

Preacher: David Calderwood

[0 : 00] So it's Romans 5, 12 to 21. But the free gift is not like the trespass.

For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin.

For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation. But the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience, the many will be made righteous.

Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness, leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[1 : 48] Well, I hope that over the last eight weeks that we've been looking at Romans, you've actually been swept up with Paul's excitement and more than that, confidence in God's gospel.

You know, doing some revision. God's gospel is both God's powerful initiative to save rebellious, unrighteous people. And at the same time, it's an awesome display of God's righteous character. God, knowing the guilty failure of his rebellious people, both unwilling and unable to live in the light of his glory. God provided a different pathway to glory, a different pathway to righteousness, at enormous cost to himself, Romans chapter 3.

And in the death of Jesus, which is at the heart of the gospel, both God's anger and the guilt of his people have been addressed and dealt with.

And the term used for that is that God's taken the initiative to justify or put unrighteous people back into full righteousness relationship with himself.

[3 : 09] And all of that, chapter 4 of Romans, is offered as an incredible gift to be received through faith, which is just taking God at his word.

Simple trust that God's promise is true, that God has done for us in Jesus that which we could never, ever do for ourselves. That is, make ourselves acceptable to God.

But there's even more reason for excitement and confidence. Justification, Paul wants us to understand, is final and irreversible. Get those two words.

Justification is final and irreversible. Why? Because it's initiated by God. Because it's secured through the death of the Lord Jesus on our behalf.

It's all about what God has done for us. And chapter 5, verse 1, then, Paul starts to work through the implications of the gospel or being justified by faith.

[4 : 22] Both in terms of our legal status or how God views us legally now, and in terms of our own experience as justified people. And again, every part of it, as we work through chapter 5, is about God's initiative, God's action.

And from that, our security, our confidence. Justification is the opposite of condemnation, we see in chapter 5.

Instead of hostility and judgment, there is now peace. Instead of falling short of God's glory or righteousness, there's now certainty of being with God and being like God. Instead of estrangement, uncertainty, and fear, there's now limitless grace.

There's total acceptance as God pours his love into us, into our hearts daily. Instead of suffering in judgment, there is joy in suffering, knowing that God will use our suffering to make us more like him.

Instead of wondering about God's love and commitment to us in our ongoing failures, there is proof beyond doubt that having been reconciled while we're enemies of God, then certainly God will do the easy task of keeping us as friends until we go home to be with him forever in heaven.

[5 : 43] Friends, as we got to, we're coming up to verse 12 now. As we work through chapter 5, there can be absolutely no doubt of Paul's total confidence that believers, those who are new in Christ, are guaranteed salvation.

But the lingering question then becomes, the one that we're going to address this morning, is Paul's confidence well-founded? Is justification by faith in Christ's work too good to be true?

How can one man's sacrifice bring such incredible blessings to so many? How can one man do something that makes so many newly and completely acceptable to God?

That's Paul's consideration in verses 12 through to 21. Paul anticipates and addresses this question. And he does so by taking the jewel of justification and turning it one more time.

So the sparkle of the brilliance of God's gospel is seen again in these verses. Justification from a slightly different perspective.

[7 : 11] And Paul's confidence is in perspective. And Paul's point here is that gospel results happen the same way as did sin's results.

Now, what Paul's doing here is giving a perspective by comparing Adam and Jesus. No doubt in Paul's mind, these were the two most influential people in history.

His intention here is to show how these two men, and if you're following the outline in the back of your bulletin, you'll see it, how these two men, their two actions, and the consequences of their actions, affected profoundly and eternally all those associated with him.

Adam's impact was disastrous for all who were associated with or followed him. By contrast, Paul's point here is that Jesus' impact was incredibly beneficial for all who followed him in history.

And that comes down to you and me here this morning. So let's try and dig into the text now and see if we can sort out this, which at first glance I think looks very complicated.

[8 : 38] It might be not so much that it's complicated, it's just the argument isn't quite familiar to us, but we'll try and get into that. See, given our sense of individualism and autonomy, which is, we are by nature part of Australian culture, and it is driven by individualism and autonomy.

One of the outworkings of that is that we like to think that we're only responsible for ourselves, we're only responsible for our own actions. And so Paul's argument here probably isn't going to be immediately familiar to us.

It may not even be acceptable to us. However, I'm going to argue that the whole notion of solidarity or being a representative of a group is actually quite common in our culture.

We just don't necessarily recognise it. So a historical one, for example. In 1939, there was a radio announcement.

It was my melancholy duty to tell you, this is the British Prime Minister, it was my melancholy duty to inform you that Britain is at war with Germany. And as a consequence, Australia is also at war.

[10 : 00] We were an empire nation associated with, tied to Britain. What happens in England? We live with the consequences here. Or a little bit closer to home.

We're familiar with union leaders negotiating wages and conditions and benefits. They do so in a representative way. What they negotiate out there, all who are associated with the union get those benefits applied.

The union leaders are representatives of a group, those who are associated with the union. They act on their behalf. Now, that's essentially what's the argument that Paul's trying to use here.

Look at verse 12. Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all sinned.

Adam was not only the first man, he was also representative man. He was the head of the human race.

[11 : 15] He was the head of humankind. His interactions with God and his natural environment had direct impact on all those associated with him down through the generations.

What do we know about Adam? Well, as we're told here, Adam acted in disobedience to God. He did so as he deliberately chose to assert autonomy from God, aspiring to create his life in his own image, create himself in his own image, rather than be God's image bearer, living under God.

That's what autonomy is. The result of Adam's actions, verse 12, death. Both physical death and also spiritual death, which physical death pictures.

Spiritual death is separation from God. Or verse 16. Talks there, the language of verse 16 is that judgment and condemnation. Adam, Adam's action.

Verse 17, the consequence. The consequence applied both to Adam and all those associated with him down through history.

[12:43] All those he represented, all of humanity who followed him in history. Verse 17, if because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life.

Consequence of Adam's actions, not only death for himself, but death for all the generations following Adam. Since death, or since Adam, sorry, since Adam, death has reigned supreme. That is, everybody dies as a consequence, a direct consequence of Adam's rebellion. Again, that's verse 18 and 19. Then we say, well, but why? We instinctively think that this doesn't sound right. Well, the answer is in verses 13 through to 17. Everybody dies because everybody is guilty of sin or rebellion against God, including those who died long before the time of Moses and disobedience to God's written law.

Let's read those verses again. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

[14:17] But the free gift is not like the trespass, for if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for many.

Everybody dies because, as I say, everybody is guilty of sin.

Not necessarily guilty in the same way. Those who were before the written law weren't guilty of breaking the law, but they were guilty of autonomy. They joined Adam, as it were, in his actions of autonomy.

The principle? It's a solidarity principle. All who were associated with Adam share the responsibility for and the consequences of his action.

Not only that, they showed themselves to be like Adam in also failing to treat God as he deserves and failing to do right. So, friends, in different words, this is the same argument that we've already been through in chapter 1, verse 18, through to chapter 3, verse 20.

[15:35] It's the same argument viewed from a different angle. And it's so unflattering to us. But it clearly explains the way we are, the human condition.

It is our nature to seek autonomy. And autonomy brings God's condemnation.

You see, we've got a double problem with sin which comes out of these verses. We're born with a bad heart towards God.

That's something we've inherited at where? Down through the generations from Adam. We've inherited the family nature which links us, as I say, all the way back to Adam. It's a natural disposition to ignore or rebel against God.

That's one problem. But then we get a second problem because this bad heart overflows in bad actions, in actions of sin. People in every culture, in every generation, choose individually like Adam to disobey or ignore God.

[16:48] And so the rightness of God's conclusion is proven here in that all people are guilty because all demonstrate they have inherited Adam's corrupted nature.

That's half of Paul's argument as he deals with Adam. The other half, then, turns the focus on Jesus because Jesus is also a representative man.

Look at verse 14 again. Death ran from Adam to Moses even over those whose sinning was not like the transgressions of Adam who was a type of the one who was to come.

Adam's called a type of Christ. How so? Well, they're similar in that as with Adam's actions, so Christ's actions as a representative of man affect those who are associated with him, those who follow after him in history.

and we're told in here that Christ's actions not only reversed the effects of Adam's sin but did much more.

[18:02] Verses 18 and 19. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness led to justification and life for all men.

for as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Christ's obedience was willing, was his willing total self-sacrifice to deal with the sin of his people.

to two men so far Adam and Christ two actions disobedience obedience self-sacrifice and the result of Christ's actions verse 16 justification or restored relationship with God.

Verse 17 freedom from the reign of the power of sin to new life under the reign of grace or under the control of grace as God saved people.

[19 : 19] But even that doesn't exhaust what Christ's death did. He did far more than simply reversing the effect of Adam's sin. Verse 15 again, we've read it before, Jesus acted in grace as an undeserved gift and favor.

Jesus' death not only secured the removal of condemnation due to our inherited corrupt nature but also secures total forgiveness complete restoration renewal of relationship with God all those things that we've really looked at in the early verses of chapter 5 and chapter 3 and 4 as well.

So, two men, two actions, two results. Not only a reversal of condemnation but a restoration to be in the image bearer that God created us to be.

To be in relationship with God as he created us to be. To see the glory of God as he created us for. For what a wonderful thing Christ has done.

He's wiped clean completely the bad track record we have due to our own sin. Even better, he's acted to renew our bad heart.

[20 : 44] The heart we've inherited from Adam. He's poured his love into our renewed heart through the Holy Spirit. Guaranteeing justification. Guaranteeing life.

Guaranteeing for every relationship with him. Why? Because of the solidarity principle. Because we're associated with Christ. Because we're in Christ. And that brings me to the second point then. God now views his people according to their solidarity. So, God views every single person who's ever been born or ever will be born as naturally in solidarity with Adam.

That's what this point is. Because Adam was a head of a great humanity. But friends, God also views Jesus as the head of a great new humanity.

The many of verse 15. Who are the many? The many are those we've already come across in the early chapters of Romans. They are the ones who recognizing they could never be righteous in themselves, gladly take God's righteousness as a gift.

[22 : 03] That righteousness offered in Christ, in and through the death of Christ, they take it as a gift. Totally undeserved gift. And in doing that, they move from being viewed by God as being in solidarity with Adam to being viewed by God as being solidarity with Christ.

And as Christ receives life, then everyone in solidarity with Christ is guaranteed life. That is the confidence Paul has in the gospel.

So Jesus in a sense is the last, well he's not in a sense, Jesus is the last Adam.

There will be no more repeats. The first Adam macked things up and every person who has ever lived will feel the effects of that. The last Adam, Jesus, has fixed things up, restored them to what they were meant to be, and guarantees that all in solidarity with him will enjoy the blessing of relationship with God forever.

Now friends, I just want to finish up by asking what do we do practically with this notion of solidarity? It's a strange idea for us, I think, but it's a very powerful one.

[23 : 31] We'll see more about it next week as we move into chapter six, this idea of union with Christ or solidarity with Christ comes up again. But what do we do practically? Well, I think it's a very good thing.

We need to own both Adam and Jesus. Now, the problem is we don't find it easy to own Adam. And I think the reason we don't find it easy to own Adam is because we know he is too representative of us.

That is, we look at Adam and we see his autonomy, and we know jolly well that's exactly what we're like in our heart of hearts. We find it hard to own our bad heart and our natural disposition to autonomy.

We find it hard to admit that we actually want to be God. We want to just push God to the side and take over control and set our own destiny and set our own life. But as Christians at the same time, we want to identify with Jesus.

We want to be in solidarity with him. We want to be sure of being forgiven and of getting to heaven, no matter what personal sins we fall into in the future.

[24 : 49] So, there's a dilemma. The solution is to own both men. And here's how it works. As I own Adam for myself and in myself, then it pushes me to Christ for the very thing I so desperately

need and the very thing that only he can supply, righteousness or acceptance before God.

So, it's as I am honest in owning Adam that I see the beauty of what's offered me in Christ. Christ. And indeed, the more I own Adam, the more brilliant the gospel is, which is what Paul's point as he's trying to develop through this letter here.

The gospel is absolutely brilliant at every point because it's about what God does for us, knowing that we can't do it for ourselves.

As I own Adam more, as I recognize more my natural disposition before I came to Christ, then I appreciate more that I'm no longer hanging from the buckle of Adam, the belt of Adam.

I'm now hanging securely from the belt of Jesus because he's my only hope. So, we own Adam to see Jesus as our champion.

[26 : 27] and don't we long for a champion. We do know that concept, don't we? We long for someone to represent us faithfully.

We long for someone who will fight for us. We long for someone who will value and love us enough never to give up on us. We long for someone to be strong for us when we can't be strong for ourselves.

We long for someone to succeed where we know we only turn up failure repeatedly. And we know when we own Adam that he's taken us down a disastrous path.

We've crashed and burned. And against that darkness then we have Jesus our champion. God the picture I like here is that it's like me when I take my grandkids for a walk.

I hang on to their hands. I mean their hands are just lost in my hand. And they can trip and fall over and then they swing from my arm.

[27 : 37] Sometimes in their silliness they want to pull away from me because they don't want to go where I think they need to go. But I hold them firmly. That's the picture of Jesus our champion.

Knowing that when I trip up, when I deliberately try to pull away, when I in anger think he's taken me in the wrong direction, he's got me. He holds me firm. And that's why my friends, in solidarity with Christ, in union with Christ, you can have confidence in spite of your day-to-day, moment-to-moment, failures, and discipline, you can have confidence because you're in solidarity with Christ that you are secure eternally.

So hear that. See, your confidence is not because somehow you suddenly become perfect and no longer sin. that would just be totally unrealistic, wouldn't it?

It's not because your confidence isn't because somehow as a Christian you've developed the ability now to produce your own righteousness and top up your righteousness by your own effort every time you do make a mistake.

That would be crazy too, wouldn't it? That would be against what we know. our confidence is that God views us in Christ and the benefits that Christ has secured, life and resurrection, being with the Father in heaven forever, are ours.

[29 : 23] Irreversibly. my friends, it's not perfection he's looking for in you. It's looking for total dependence on Jesus' forgiveness and righteousness.

It's looking to your association with Jesus. It's looking, he wants you to be saying, Jesus is my champion. I'm not any longer desiring to be associated with Adam.

I want to be and I am associated with Jesus and he is my champion, he is my security. Even as you continue to fail to do what is right.

So friends, the final question here is just simply a very personal question. Is Jesus your man? Is Jesus your man?

everyone here this morning, to use the phrase of a Puritan, hangs from the belt of either Adam or Jesus.

[30 : 38] To be in solidarity with Adam is easy. Just do nothing. You were born with Adam's natural disposition and your future is shaped therefore by the prospect of God's judgment and condemnation.

But to be in solidarity with Jesus is also easy. Just come to Jesus, acknowledging your total inability to earn God's favor or deal with your guilt, to deal with your bad heart, bad track record.

Trust him alone to deal with your sin, to change you from the inside out, to secure a place in heaven for you. When you do all this, God guarantees, absolutely guarantees that you're absolutely safe and secure in Christ.

With your future shaped and defined by peace, life, privileged forever relationship with God. God's love for you.

So who is your man? I know you're who are going to be to be with you. I know you're not immediately familiar to us. I pray that your spirit might cut through all the words that are written in the page and are spoken here this morning and use them, Lord, reassemble them as needed so that your people might benefit from this wonderful reassurance this wonderful confidence knowing that we are justified and therefore no longer viewed by you as in solidarity with Adam but now seen to be in total solidarity with Christ knowing that his actions and the consequences of his actions are ours also life and righteousness and forever relationship with you help us Lord to be confident in that in Jesus name, Amen