

The Grace of God

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[0 : 00] Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your Word, which points us to your Son and the hope and grace and life that come through him.

Father, we ask now that as we look at this passage from Romans chapter 5, that you would help us to understand what you are saying through it, that we may be encouraged and keep living for you who gave your Son for us.

And Father, we pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, the power of one person to impact many people has been seen over and over again in history.

So for example, on the next slide, this man, Albert Einstein, his work in science has impacted generations to come. I'll take the next slide.

Here is Steve Jobs, the bladed Steve Jobs, who created the company we know as Apple, such that even my parents know what an iPhone is now, which is a statement in itself.

[1 : 04] Of course, even some rock bands have impacted millions, like this next one, the Beatles.

And who could forget this next man, Billy Ray Cyrus, who gave us achy, breaky heart.

Or maybe that just impacted me negatively. Of course, there are many other more serious people who have impacted many, like Aristotle or Mahatma Gandhi or Thomas Edison, to name a few.

But no one person has impacted the world as much as the one man, Adam, and even more so, the one man, Jesus. And as Paul shows us today, they have actually impacted not a group of people, not even a country or even a generation, but they have impacted the entire human race.

Now, before we see how, let me firstly show you the big picture, because Paul begins in verse 12 with the word, therefore. And as the old saying goes, when you see the word, therefore, you need to ask what it's there for.

And I think it's there for two reasons. First, to summarize what Paul has said in Romans so far. He has said so far that we are all sinners facing judgment.

[2 : 18] But we can be forgiven and made right with God by believing in Jesus. And in today's passage, he will summarize this by saying that, put it differently, we either stand with that first Adam or we stand with Jesus.

We either stand with that first Adam and not to be confused with our friend Adam, who's out there doing the morning tea. But we either stand with that first Adam as sinners facing judgment or we stand with Jesus forgiven facing eternal life.

And so that's how we will summarize the message of Romans so far. But the word, therefore, is also there, I think, to show us that all we have in Christ is certain, because as we'll see, it is based on God's grace.

The word grace just means his generosity that we do not deserve. You see, last week, Paul reminded us that we have been justified or made right with God by believing in Jesus.

And being made right with God comes with great blessings like peace with God, a restored relationship. It comes with unrestricted access to the grace of God we saw, which helps us in our time of need.

[3 : 27] And it comes with the hope of sharing in the glory of God, which will be unimaginably glorious indeed. But it all comes through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And yet the Jews thought that only the Old Testament law could do all this. But Paul's gospel says it's all through this one man, Jesus. So the question then becomes, how can we be certain God can do so much for so many through just this one man?

And his answer, because by this one man, Jesus, comes God's abundant grace, which is greater than the sin that came by the one man, Adam.

Now, to show all this, Paul compares and contrasts Jesus with Adam. But when he begins to compare, he actually gets sidetracked. So if you look in your Bibles at verse 12, at the end of verse 12 there, there's a dash.

Do you see that? In your Bibles, there's a dash at the end of verse 12. And because he starts off the comparison, you know, just as sin entered the world through one man, Adam. And you expect him to say, well, so grace and life entered through Jesus.

[4 : 31] But he kind of gets sidetracked and stops halfway through the comparison. Instead, what he ends up doing in verses 12 to 14 is to show Adam's disastrous impact, which is where we're up to in point one and verse 12.

So let me read it to you. He says, therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin. And in this way, death came to all people because all sinned.

What Paul is saying here is what we heard in Genesis chapter 3. That is, through this one man, Adam, sin entered the world and death came with it.

Remember, Eve took the fruit, although it's called Adam's sin. Adam is held responsible, which I think has something to say about his role as head of the family. But because Adam disobeyed God, the consequence was death.

Do you remember? However, both spiritual death symbolized by them having to leave the garden and being separated from God. But then physical death, which came later. But Paul's point in verse 12 is that sin and death entered the world through one man.

[5 : 35] And through this one man, Adam, sin spread like the plague, infecting everyone and with it causing death to everyone. And so later on in verse 15, he says, many died by the trespass of one man.

Verse 18 says, one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people. Verse 19, by the disobedience of the one man, Adam, many were made sinners.

This is what Paul has said in the first three chapters of this letter. But the question is, how does this one man sin impact us all? Well, in verse 12, where it says, because all sinned, you can actually translate it as in whom all sinned.

That is, we all sinned in Adam. How does that work? Well, it works because Adam is the head of the human race. And we all come from him. That is, we are united to him as humans.

He is our representative who acted on our behalf. And so we share in his sin. It's kind of like when Australia wins a gold medal at the Olympics. When that happens, we often say, we won a gold medal, don't we?

[6 : 45] Of course, we didn't win anything, did we? I mean, we were all sitting on the couch watching TV. So why do we speak as though we won? Well, because we are united as Australians.

The Olympians are our representatives who won on our behalf. And so that we can share in their achievements. So that we can say, we won. Because of this connection we have.

Or negatively, the Australian cricket team recently lost the Ashes in dismal form, despite their last performance. And because we are united to them as Australians, because they are our representatives, then even though we didn't play cricket, we still share in their failure.

Such that my British friends have said to me, you lost. Even though I didn't play a single match. It's like that with Adam, you see. We are all united to him, not as Australians, but as humans.

He is our representative, which means we share in his failure. When he sinned, we have to say, we sinned. Now, it may not seem fair. After all, it's Adam who, you know, did the wrong thing and broke God's command.

[7 : 53] But the question is, would we have really done any different? We'd like to think so. But we're made of the same stuff. What's more, because we are humans, because we are related to Adam, we inherit his sinful nature.

We share the same sinful DNA such that we actually sin ourselves. You see, not only do we inherit Adam's privilege of being made in God's image and being precious to God, but we also inherit Adam's sinful nature, which makes us sinners, verse 19 says.

Some years ago, a supermodel from America wrote to Albert Einstein in Germany and suggested that they should marry and have children because, she said, they will get your brains and my looks. Einstein wrote back and said, no, because they might get your brains and my looks. We all inherit different traits from our parents, don't we?

But we've all inherited the same trait from Adam. Sinful natures. We share in his DNA. And so people are born sinners.

[9 : 02] The world says that people are basically good, but God says, no, no, it's the opposite. Oh, yes, people can do good things. Yes, they can do good things. But at our core is selfishness.

I mean, do you ever have to teach children to be naughty? Or does it just come naturally? And if you read the rest of Genesis, we see how sin spread and with it, death.

And that's how we know that people are sinful because death existed. There may not have been any laws around for people to break and to show themselves sinful, but people still died.

And that showed sin still reigned. See verse 13? To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given. But sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. Or does that mean there was no sin?

Well, no, nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses when the law was given. Even those who did not sin by breaking command, as did Adam. Who was a pattern of the one to come.

[10 : 04] You see, behind death is sin. And so even if there is no law to show us that we are sinners, there was still death that showed us. For if death reigns, then we know sin is still reigning behind it.

And of course, if someone defeats death, say for example, by, I don't know, rising from the dead, then it shows sin no longer reigns. But the point of these verses is to show how this one man Adam, the first Adam, had a huge impact on the entire human race.

For through this one man, sin entered the world, infecting everyone. And with it came death, both spiritual, dead to God, and later physical. A friend of mine once taught me a really big word for this. He called it disaster multiplicationization. It's on the next slide here. There you are. One man multiplied to many, multiplied, multiplied, and the word's not down there in the bottom.

Is it? No, it's not. It's gone. Disaster multiplicationization. It's not a real word. But that's what it means.

[11 : 12] Through Adam came sin and it impacted everyone. But Adam, we're told, verse 14, is also a pattern or a type of another one who would impact many people.

And this other person who would impact many people, his impact is quite the opposite. And here Paul contrasts the impact of Adam now with the impact of Jesus. Do you see point two, verse 15? But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many?

Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin. The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation. But the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if by the trespass of the one man death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ?

[12 : 15] Here it's quite wordy and it's a bit hard to follow. And so I've kind of outlined on your notices, actually. I'm sorry, on your outlines, if you pick up your piece of paper at point two there.

Here we see three differences between Adam and Jesus. Between Adam's sin and Jesus's gift. In verse 15, it's a difference in basis.

You see, Adam's trespass of sin is based on justice and justice demands death. We saw that from Genesis 3. That's what sin deserves.

Separation from God. Death. That's justice. But Jesus and the gift of righteousness is based on God's grace. Undeserved generosity to us.

You see, in verse 15, the word grace is mentioned twice. And even the word overflow creates a picture of abundance or generosity. You see, Adam's trespass is based on justice and so demands death for many.

[13 : 17] But Jesus's gift is based on God's overflowing grace for many. That's the first difference. The second difference is result. One leads to condemnation.

The other to justification of being made right with God. In other words, one leads to judgment in hell and the other leads to being right with God in heaven. But even here, grace is still in the background.

For in verse 16, we read that judgment followed just one trespass, one sin. But the gift of righteousness followed many trespasses.

You see, despite a billion sins which make us undeserving, God still gives us the gift of being right with him. That's grace.

And in verse 17, there's a difference of reign or rule. Through the trespass of one man, death reigns. We see it all too often in this world. And we might expect then Paul to go on to say in verse 17 that through Jesus, life reigns.

[14:20] But do you notice? He says those who receive God's grace will reign in life. That is, those who believe in Jesus and receive God's grace will reign over creation and death rather than death reigning over us.

This is part of sharing in God's glory. It's a return to the purposes of God from Genesis. But do you see the huge contrast or difference there is between these two men?

It's a matter of life and death. It's chalk and cheese, isn't it? Steak and broccoli. I don't know if that works, but you know, it's different, right? Actually, it's a difference of heaven and hell.

But there's also a similarity between them, which brings us back to the comparison that Paul began in verse 12 and to point three. Remember in verse 12, he started off by comparing Adam with Jesus and he kind of broke off.

Well, here in verse 18, he returns to this comparison and he says, If you want to take home summary for this passage, it's those two verses.

[15:54] Just as Adam's one sin led to condemnation for many. So Jesus is one act of righteousness. That is his obedience to death on a cross. There to pay for our sin.

That one act has led us to being justified. That is made right with God. And with it, eternal life. And Paul's point here is to show that one man can impact many.

If Adam has done it, then so too can Jesus. I don't know about you, but people have said to me over time, how can one man who lived 2000 years ago and died on a cross impact me today?

I don't know if you've ever heard anyone say that. Paul's answer is, well, a man called Adam who lived thousands of years before Jesus has already impacted you today.

And if Adam has already impacted many in terms of sinful natures, then how much more so can Jesus, who is the greater one to come? Just as Adam has impacted all people, so also Christ can impact all people.

[17:04] Of course, where it says all people in verse 18 doesn't mean all people will automatically be made righteous and receive eternal life. No, verse 17 has already said only those who receive God's abundant grace.

That is, those who accept the gift like Ethan did in the kids talk. Those who believe in Jesus will be made right and given life eternal.

For the Jew, you might remember that they thought this way to be right with God was obeying the law rather than believe in Jesus. But Paul says, no, actually, the law only makes us more sinful.

You see verse 20?

It says, the law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more. So that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

You see, the law doesn't actually help us to be righteous. It actually just gives us more opportunities to be sinful. I mean, if you're walking down a path and you see a sign that says, keep off the grass, what's the first thing you want to do?

[18:15] Get on the grass. But if there was no sign, if there was no law in the first place, would you have ever thought of doing that? Of course not. Now, the law actually provokes us to break it, to sin more.

And so the law increases sin, he says. But the thing is, no matter how much sin increased, grace increased all the more. In fact, verse 20 literally says, where sin increased, grace super increased. God's grace is like a superhero who always beats the baddie. God's grace always trumps sin, always brings forgiveness. No matter how much we sin, God's grace or generosity will always give more, give more forgiveness.

The forgiveness we don't deserve. No wonder people have called it amazing grace. Well, I started this morning by saying that the word therefore summarizes Romans so far.

And it shows us that there are two options for us to choose from. We can either stand with Adam, where sin reigns in death and face condemnation.

[19 : 24] Or we can stand with Christ, where grace reigns through righteousness and face eternal life. And so can I ask you this morning, where do you stand?

Who is your representative? Who is your captain? Who is the one you are united with? Who you trust in? Who you follow? Who? Because as we've seen, there's an eternity of difference between the two.

Jesus comes with abundant grace, more than enough to forgive and make you right with God and give you what you need to make it home to heaven. But with that first Adam comes the consequence of sin, death, eternal death in hell.

So do you trust in Jesus or are you still standing with Adam? For those of us who have trusted in the Lord Jesus, then the question becomes for us then, is this how we see the people around us? Do we see them in these kind of categories? Either standing with that first Adam, facing judgment, or standing with Christ, facing life. As I mentioned before, the world likes to say that people are basically good.

[20 : 38] But that's not God's assessment. When the chips are down, you know, when I want to watch what I want to watch on TV, I grab that remote control for my wife. Do we see people in these two camps?

I'm sure people can do good things and many people do, but they've inherited Adam's sinful DNA and so are sinners themselves. They are facing condemnation, but Jesus offers grace to bring them righteousness with God, make them right with God and bring them eternal life.

So the question is, are we praying for people who are still standing with Adam? Are we taking opportunities to share with people the grace that they can have in Jesus? Last week, I was really encouraged by someone in Michelle's Bible study group, actually, who recognized this truth, that all of humanity either stand with Adam or Jesus.

And when she recognized this, her prayer point was that she might look for more chances to talk to others about Jesus. She just kind of offered that. She also admitted that she thinks she always says the wrong thing, but hey, don't we all?

Of course, God is big enough to use our weak words. But despite her fears, she was genuinely keen to share Jesus with others. Because God has shared his grace with her.

[21 : 58] Because she knew others needed. What about you? I know it's hard, but keep praying for SRI in schools that has just been taken out.

Pray for those who were at the play group yesterday and had conversations with non-Christians. Pray that those conversations might lead to fruit. Pray for our link missionaries, for Paul Barker and others who are training and teaching and sharing the message of Jesus.

Because people need it. Because they either stand with Jesus or they stand with Adam. And the difference is eternity. But I also started with the word therefore to say that I think it shows this passage that all we have in Christ, all that we heard last week is certain.

Our hope of glory is certain. Our peace with God is certain. You see, the question I asked was, how can we be certain God can do all of this for so many through just one man, Jesus?

And Paul's answer is because this one man, Jesus, comes with God's super grace. Which reigns supreme, verse 21, in righteousness. That is, God's great generosity has made us unworthy sinners.

[23 : 09] Has made us right in God's sight so that we can have eternal life. An old preacher who had a way with words said this of God's grace.

Since grace lifts up the beggar from the dung heap and sits them among princes. That's what grace has done. Us who don't deserve it lifted us up and made us heirs with Christ.

Fellow princes right in God's sight. And if we are right with God now as fellow princes, then we have nothing to fear later on judgment day. As someone once said to me that God's grace means that the moment we believe in Jesus, we cannot be more right with God than we are now.

Do you get that? The moment you believe in Jesus, you cannot be more right with God than you are right now. Jesus has done it all. Perfect righteousness with God.

And if we are perfectly right with God now, then what do we have to fear later on judgment day?

Nothing. You see, God's grace gives us motivation to keep serving.

[24 : 21] It frees us from fear. And it ought to fill us with joy and move us to thanks. Indeed, it ought to motivate us to teach it to our children. Share it with others.

Remind ourselves that although we don't deserve it, God in his generosity gave his only son to die for us. And then gave us Christ's righteousness. Jesus was credited with our sin. He got our sin and we got his righteousness so we can have eternal life. That's amazing grace. May God's grace continue to amaze us.

Let's pray. Now, Heavenly Father, we do thank you for this reminder this morning that we are all stand either with Adam or with Christ.

And Father, we thank you that Christ comes with super grace. Grace that always forgives. And grace that will bring us home to heaven. And Father, we pray that you would help us to live in light of these truths we pray.

[25 : 20] In Jesus' name. Amen.