

Abounding Grace

By David Harrell

Romans 5:12-21

Will you join me this morning by taking your Bibles? Turn to Paul's epistle to the Romans. We are in our ninth and final Sunday in chapter five where we have examined the glorious benefits of our justification, the invasion of sin and this morning the grace that abounds to everyone who has placed their faith in Christ.

Follow along as I read the text this morning beginning in Romans chapter five 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—for until the Law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. For 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. So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.¹

Over the course of the years when I was in graduate school and post graduate studies, I had to take courses in philosophy. And I am sure many of you have been there. You know what that is like. And often in that study of philosophy you would have to study a major segment of philosophy known as metaphysics and within the branchy of metaphysics you would have to study ontology. And ontology is basically the study of existence, the study of being, the nature of being. And, inevitably, these classes would end up in a debate over the existence of God.

They would seek to answer in ontology: What is existence? What does it mean to be? Well, that sounds profound. Wouldn't you like to know? Where did we come from? What is the meaning of life? Where am I going? Why am I here? And as a Christian it

¹ Romans 5:12-21.

Abounding Grace

By David Harrell

Romans 5:12-21

was always terribly frustrating when I was in those classes with secular professors to study men who were brilliant intellectually, but who were spiritually and morally dead.

And almost without exception, as you study philosophy, you will quickly learn that they begin with some very important presuppositions. And it goes something like this.

Number one, there is no God. Therefore, number two, there is no absolute truth. Therefore, we exist only unto ourselves. Therefore, let's try to figure out why we are here.

The apostle Paul has described this kind of insanity in his letter to the Romans. You will recall in chapter one beginning at verse 18 he said:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools.²

Time and time again in those classes I would shake my head and think, "Oh, God, if they would only humble themselves before your Word."

And even here in the book of Romans in an economy of words, the Holy Spirit answers the questions of the philosophers while, at the same time, exposing the foolish error of their ways, their rebellion, their self serving presuppositions and theories. It is amazing when you think about it, the billions of dollars over the course of history that have been spent on figuring these things out. All of the wasted hours of study and debate, the wasted money spent on education, the wasted lives devoted to lies, the wasted books filled with foolishness when all of the answers are found right here in the Word of God that he has revealed to us.

All of the answers with respect to the nature of our being, our relationship to the Creator, it is all there. And, beloved, I pray that as we look into the Word this morning, once again, that you will cherish this Word, that you will see it for what it is. This is the transcendent, glorious, infallible record revealed to us from the living God.

All Scripture is inspired by God we are told in 2 Timothy 3:16. It is breathed out by God. And it is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. And God tells us that this Word will equip you. That is why we are here today, not only to worship, but to be equipped.

² Romans 1:18-22.

Abounding Grace

By David Harrell

Romans 5:12-21

Ephesians 4:12, to be equipped “for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God.”³

You see, our Creator has not abandoned us here in this life on this planet. He has not said to us, “Figure it out on your own.” But rather he had given us, shall we say, a manual. He has given us a manual. In fact, Peter tells us in 2 Peter 1:3, “...that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.”⁴

The psalmist tells us in Psalm 19 verses seven through nine that the Word of God restores the soul. In other words, it is that which gives life to our dead souls. It makes wise the simple. In other words, it gives understanding to those who lack a proper understanding of ontology.

He goes on to say that it rejoices the heart. It enlightens the eyes. It endures forever. It is righteous altogether.

Now I would hasten to add: If you have not placed your faith in Christ, the Word of God will be foolishness to you. You will not be able to understand it. Not because you don't have the intellectual capacity, but because you are spiritually dead. And until the Spirit of God resides within you, it will never make any sense to you. It will be pure foolishness to you.

But, oh, dear friends, for those of us who know and love Christ, those of us who have been born again by his grace, we have eyes to see. We have ears to hear. And, oh, what a blessed thing it is to have his Word and to read it, to study it, to meditate upon it, to preach it, to defend it and ultimately to live it. And how I pray this is the passion of your soul. And if it is, if this Word is truly all that I have just said, then, indeed, your greatest satisfaction, your greatest joy, your greatest delight will be in the God who has revealed this Word to us.

“How blessed are those who observe his testimonies,”⁵ the psalmist says in Psalm 119 verse two, “Who seek Him with all their heart.”⁶

So I trust that you can join me this morning in seeking him with all you heart.

We are going to answer the philosopher's questions as we look at the text this morning, but let me give you, once again, a bit of the big picture of what God has said in his Word. God has made it clear that he has created man to bring glory to him. That is the goal of our existence. That is why we are here. That is where we have come from. And we also

³ Ephesians 4:12-13.

⁴ 2 Peter 1:3.

⁵ Psalm 119:2.

⁶ Ibid.

Abounding Grace

By David Harrell

Romans 5:12-21

can look in the Word of God and see that God in his infinite wisdom has ordained Satan as well as sin to enter into his perfect universe through the voluntary choices of moral creatures. And he did this for a purpose. He did this so that he could dramatically display his glory, especially through the attributes of his holiness, his wrath, his mercy, his grace, his love and power.

And in Romans chapter five, as we have just read in verse 12, we are told that “through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”⁷

In other words, when Adam sinned, sin took possession of him and it entered into the realm of humanity. In some inscrutable sense beyond our capacity to understand, the Word of God tells us that all men—save the Lord Jesus Christ—actually sinned in Adam. We all actually took part in Adam’s sin. And his sin was, therefore, imputed to each person ever born thereafter. Thus, every person is born with a sin nature. Every person is born guilty and condemned before a holy God. That is the bad news which sets up the good news of the gospel, that we can be reconciled to a holy God because of his grace, because of his Son the Lord Jesus Christ when we place our faith in him.

So when we look at the Word of God we see that man is condemned in Adam. But, likewise, we see that he can be justified, he can be declared righteous in Christ. And here in Romans five verses 12 through 21, the apostle Paul compares and contrasts what he has described so far in his epistle. Remember, he has been teaching on the doctrines of condemnation as well as that of justification. And so he is now going to compare and contrast Adam with Christ to help us further understand these marvelous doctrines.

Notice at the end of verse 14, where we left off last week, the apostle tells us that Adam is a type of Christ.

Now, again, bear in mind the word “type” speaks of an example, of a pattern. In other words, God intended for Adam to correspond to and resemble Christ in some way. Adam is what we would call the type and Christ would be the antitype. And, as we study biblical typology, we quickly learn that the antitype is always greater and far superior to the type. So Christ is going to be far greater than Adam. There is an increase, there is a heightening, there is an escalation here. Christ is far superior to Adam. And this is at the heart, now, of Paul’s argument.

To summarize it, we could say that even as Adam was imputed to all men, because he is our representative and therefore other result is death, so, too, Christ’s righteousness is imputed to all men who believe in him because he represents all believers in righteousness. And that results in life.

⁷ Romans 5:12.

Abounding Grace

By David Harrell

Romans 5:12-21

Now earlier the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth and in 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 22 he gave them the same analogy. He says, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.”⁸

And now he expands on this more in great detail, in verses 12 through 21 in Romans chapter five, as he gives us these astounding blessings that belong to all who were once in Adam, but who are now in Christ.

And this morning we are going to look at four contrasts. We are going to see the contrast between Adam and Christ, the contrast between the transgression of Adam and the free gift that we have of Christ. And then we are going to see the contrast of the reign of death versus the reign of life and all that that means. And, finally, we are going to see the contrast of law and grace.

Now, we must back up. Why is this so important? Why would the Spirit of God spend so much time here? What is driving the apostle here? Well, the answer is quite simple. He wants to establish in the heart of every believer, an absolute certainty of their salvation. He wants to anchor within us the assurance that these staggering benefits of our justification are, indeed, ours forever. You are not going to lose them. He wants to keep us lost in the wonder of God’s abounding grace. He wants us to be consumed, to be caught up in it, to be thrilled with these glorious truths, that we might be able to say with Charles Wesley.

Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in thee I find.

Might I ask you before we look at the text closely: Are you absolutely certain that you are a recipient of God’s grace? Are you certain of that? Do you live with an undisturbed enjoyment of this grace? Are you thrilled with the anticipation of glory? Are you manifesting in your life the wonderful truths of God’s grace? Does your life scream, “I am a child of the king”?

I hope it does. If not, dear Christian, this text will help you to do so. And, if so, this text will help you to do more so.

So, first, let’s notice the contrast of Adam and Christ. Indeed at the end of verse 14, Adam, he says, who is a type of a Christ.

The contrast here is between the physical and the spiritual. As the father of the human race, we have all descended from Adam. We were all created in him. And so, therefore, there is a physical relationship. But our relationship with the lord Jesus Christ is not physical. It is spiritual. We have been born again. We are twice born saints here. We are now in Christ. There is a union that we have with him that is spiritual.

⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:22.

Abounding Grace

By David Harrell

Romans 5:12-21

Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17 beginning at verse 22, “And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity.”⁹

The apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter six and verse 17, “But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.”¹⁰

We were all created in Adam and, therefore, united to him in physical death. But when we come to a saving knowledge of Christ, we become a new creation in Christ. We are united to him spiritually and his life becomes ours.

In Galatians chapter two and verse 20 we read that the apostle Paul says, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.”¹¹

Now remember this amazing contrast as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15 verse 22, as I said earlier.

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”¹²

Again, the antitype is far greater, vastly superior to the type. Adam was disobedient and it resulted in death. Christ was obedient and it resulted in life, eternal life.

Well, let us also, secondly, look at the contract in verse 15 between the transgression of Adam and the free gift of Christ.

Notice in verse 15 he says, “But the free gift...”¹³

Now let’s stop there a moment. The *carisma* (khar’-is-mah), in the original language, referring to that supreme act of grace whereby the Lord Jesus Christ was obedient to the Father and purchased our redemption on the cross. That is the free gift.

So he says, “But the free gift is not like the transgression.”¹⁴

The term “transgression” is translating the noun *paraptwma* (par-ap’-to-mah) and it is really the idea here of a going astray, of a going off course, of deviating from a path. It is the idea of going where we are not supposed to go. And sometimes it would be translated “trespass” just like we would see a sign out in a field that says, “No trespassing.”

⁹ John 17:22-23.

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 6:17.

¹¹ Galatians 2:20.

¹² 1 Corinthians 15:22.

¹³ Romans 5:15.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Abounding Grace

By David Harrell

Romans 5:12-21

Well, Adam, we know, deviated from what God commanded him to do when he sinned. Therefore he allowed sin to invade him and all his posterity resulting in the reign of death in all mankind.

Now I must pause for a moment. This is utterly astounding when you think about it. To think that sin is so utterly abhorrent to our holy God that it only took one single sin to ignite his wrath and to condemn the entire human race and to curse his perfect creation.

Beloved, may I remind you that the holiness of God exceeds our ability to even fathom. Therefore, our sin is far more egregious than we could ever imagine. Therefore, grace is more glorious than we could ever imagine.

Now, what is Paul saying here? Again, verse 15.

“But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died [I love this], much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.”¹⁵

Beloved, my soul is captured with the notion of abounding grace. It is much more. It is abounding. This is staggering.

Remember now, Paul is ecstatic about the benefits of justification that he has just discussed in chapter five and he wants to make sure that every believer is absolutely certain that these blessings will be ours, that they are secure. You are not going to lose your salvation as some would claim.

So notice the contrast here. He says to us that there is a difference here between what Adam has done with his transgression, the result of that, and what Christ has done.

Now let me ask you. What proves that we are in Adam? What proof do we have that we are in Adam? The answer is: We all die. Death. That is the answer. He says, “The many die.” And that corresponds to the, quote, “all” in verse 12. All men without exception are under the divine curse of death. But Christ’s one act brought life and he says, much more, much more did this act abound to the many.

Think about it. The result of the one act on the cross is infinitely more certain to bring about the reality of the free gift. The key to understanding this is found in the expression “much more.”

If I could put it a little bit different way, even as death is inescapable in Adam, how much more is eternal life inescapable in Christ?

Furthermore, Christ’s one act of salvation has an infinitely greater impact on believers than Adam’s one act of damnation.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Abounding Grace

By David Harrell

Romans 5:12-21

If God's justice led to the punishment of physical, spiritual and eternal death, how much more will his mercy, his grace and his life lead to spiritual blessing and eternal life?

Yes, and I can hear it now.

Well, I just don't believe anyone can have assurance of salvation, because what if a man falls from grace?

Beloved, there are so many ways to refute that idea. But as we look at this text, we could refute it this way. We could say to that dear friend, "My friend, are you confident that you are going to die? Do you have assurance of that? Is there anything that you can do to prevent that?"

Well, the answer is no. Therefore, if the answer is no, you should be even more confident that you are going to live eternally if you have placed your faith in Christ.

If I can put it differently, the certainty, the assurance of death pictures the absolute certainty and assurance of life.

Can I put it another way for you? My friend, you can do no more to fall from grace than you can to fall from death. Does that make sense? I mean, again, look at verse 17.

"For 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."¹⁶

Moreover, we must understand here that the reign of death brought upon us by Adam's sin, literally paled in comparison to the reign of grace in eternal life that Christ has brought to us. This is the heart of Paul's argument.

Now, let's think even more deeply about this amazing comparison. You will remember in the book of Genesis God revealed to us that Satan tempted Adam and Eve. They were told not to eat of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but Satan tempted them to do so saying, basically, "If you do that, you are going to become more like God. God is holding out on you," is kind of the assumption.

By the way, I might add that all temptations appeal to the desires of our flesh and deceive us into thinking that God is holding out on us and that we can somehow find more satisfaction by doing our thing than God's thing.

"There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death."¹⁷

¹⁶ Romans 5:17.

¹⁷ Proverbs 14:12; 16:25.

Abounding Grace

By David Harrell

Romans 5:12-21

So Adam followed Satan rather than God. But what happened? Did he become more like God? No. He became separated from God, just the opposite occurred. He suddenly found himself in the realm of separated from the sweet communion of his Creator.

That is why in verse 15 Paul says, "...by the transgression of the one the many died."¹⁸

Now let's think about the staggering implications of death. Death is the result of God's curse on man, a curse that has resulted in untold suffering and pain. Some of you within the sound of my voice right now are suffering because of some sickness or some disease. Others of you are struggling, living with an abusive spouse. Others of you are struggling with financial stress or, perhaps, wayward children that are breaking your heart. You live in constant fear. Some of you are lonely. Some who listen to this pulpit are living in areas that are in the midst of great wars, terrorism, famine, natural disasters. Dear friends, all of these things are the implications of death. They are terrifying. They are catastrophic. In fact, Paul tells us in Romans eight that all of creation is groaning under the curse.

But, again, death is far more than something that is physical. It is also spiritual. It is moral. Unbelievers have no capacity to honor God. They walk through this life in utter darkness and we endure their wickedness.

Then there is the inconceivable suffering of eternal death for those who perish in their sins. But think about it. What Paul is saying is this. The impact of Christ's one act of obedience far exceeds the impact of Adam's one act of sin. You add up all of the cumulative horrors that man has and will experience as a result of his sin, the horrors on earth as well as that of eternal hell. And Paul is saying that they all pale in comparison to the cumulative blessings of the gift by the grace of the one man Jesus Christ. This is the much more, dear friends. This is what abounds to the many.

John Calvin put it this way, quote, "Christ is much more powerful to save than Adam was to destroy," end quote.

John MacArthur adds this thought. Quote, "God's grace is greater than man's sin. Not only is it greater than the one original sin of Adam that brought death to all men, but it is greater than all of the accumulated sins that men have ever or will ever commit," end quote.

Beloved, words escape me here. This is incomprehensible. How can you express the inexpressible? The reality is, yes, we all fell in Adam and the result is death. We all died in Adam, but our Lord Jesus has done far more than merely restore us to that original position and the splendors of Eden. He has done far more than that. His grace has done much more.

Isaac Watts had it right he penned these words in that great hymn *Jesus Shall Reign*. In one of the lines he said this. Quote:

¹⁸ Romans 5:15.

Abounding Grace

By David Harrell

Romans 5:12-21

Where he displays his healing power,
Death and the curse are known no more.
In him the tribes of Adam boast [now catch this]
More blessings than their father lost.

Indeed, dear friends, we enjoy much more than what Adam lost. We are not merely going to be restored back to the way Adam was before the fall in the garden. The grace that God is going to give us far exceeds that, as glorious as that was. This is the great contrast that thrilled the soul of the apostle. This is what animates his soul to praise. This is what he is passionately desiring for every believer to understand.

But may I add yet another observation here? Yes, indeed, Christ broke the yoke of sin when he conquered sin and Satan and death on the cross. In fact, Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:10, "...our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."¹⁹

So, indeed, condemnation, we might say, is reversible because of the gospel. But, dear friends, the converse is not true. Just like physical death, salvation is irreversible. That is the point. In Romans eight we are told that there is absolutely nothing that can separate us from the love of God, nothing.

You see, justification is permanent. There is no such thing in the Word of God as being unjustified. There is no such thing of being declared righteous on one day, but then because of your sin or because of what you choose to do, God now reverses that decision and now declares you unrighteous. There is nothing in Scripture that speaks of that. There is no reversal of being born again. There is no reverse of regeneration. You don't become a new man and then decide later on that you want to go back and be an old man again, referring to being under the curse.

You are not a new creation one day by the power of the Spirit through regeneration, and then you decide later on because of your sin, because you want to apostatize that you want to be back, once again, as the old creature. You see Jesus will never say, "Father, you know, those that you gave to me, remember John 17? Some of those that you gave to me decided they didn't want to be a part of this deal so they backed out."

Friends, you don't see that. If I can put it this way, God does not submit his will to the will of man. That is the point.

We were once united to Adam, but now as believers we are forever united to Christ. And it is this glorious union that secures our complete identification with Christ in this work of redemption.

¹⁹ 2 Timothy 1:10.

Abounding Grace

By David Harrell

Romans 5:12-21

Oh, what a marvelous supernatural union that God has authored. In fact, Jesus has said in John 14:23, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We [the triune godhead] will come to him, and make Our abode with him.”²⁰

What an incredible statement.

So when Paul says in Romans five 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,”²¹ dear friends, this includes this glorious union that we have now in Christ. We are not united to Adam in death anymore. We are united with Christ.

We read this all through Scripture. 2 Corinthians 5:21 we now have “the righteousness of God in Him.”²²

Romans 8:1. We now therefore have no condemnation in Christ.

Galatians 2:20. We “have been crucified with Christ.”²³

Colossians 2:20. We “have died with Christ.”²⁴

Romans 6:4. We are buried with him.

Ephesians 2:6. We are going to be raised up together in Christ. And also we are seated together in heavenly places in Christ.

Colossians 3:3. We are hid with Christ in God.

Colossians 2:10. We are complete in him.

And for this reason Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, “...the dead in Christ shall rise.”²⁵

Dear Christian, please don't miss this. All these truths anchor our assurance of salvation in the Gibraltar of what Paul says here. And that is, quote, “... the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ.”²⁶

That gift that abounds to the many.

But look closely at what Paul goes on to add in verse 16.

²⁰ John 14:23.

²¹ Romans 5:15.

²² 2 Corinthians 5:21.

²³ Galatians 2:20

²⁴ Colossians 2:20.

²⁵ 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

²⁶ Romans 5:15.

Abounding Grace

By David Harrell

Romans 5:12-21

He says, “And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification.”²⁷

See, again, here we are going to see the antitype is far superior than the type. God’s gift of grace not only redeemed Adam for his one sin, but you must understand that it is sufficient to cover the sins of all who trust in him, far beyond the one sin.

2 Corinthians 5:19 Paul says, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them.”²⁸

My, my, my. This is truly abounding grace, isn’t it? So the contrast between Adam and Christ is seen here. We have seen the contrast between the transgression of Adam and the free gift of Christ. And, oh, what a staggering contrast that is.

But, thirdly, Paul adds the contrast of the reign of death and the reign of life. Notice verse 17.

He says, “For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, [here it is again] much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness...”²⁹

In other words, those who trust in Christ as Savior, those who are justified by faith through him as Paul said in verse one of chapter five, these are the ones who “...will reign in life through other One, Jesus Christ.”³⁰

The point is, yes, we all experience death because of Adam’s sin, but notice he says, how “...much more belongs to those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness.”³¹

What is that? That is our justification whereby we have been declared righteous because of the imputed righteousness of Christ. These are the ones, he says, who “...will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.”³²

Now we have already discussed the horrors associated with death, the reign of death. But what does this mean, the reign of life? What would this include?

Well, we could discuss this literally for months, but let’s focus just on two categories found here in verse 17. First it includes the abundance of grace, Paul says. This is that

²⁷ Romans 5:16.

²⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:19.

²⁹ Romans 5:17.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

Abounding Grace

By David Harrell

Romans 5:12-21

abounding grace that knows no limits. You will recall in John chapter one in verse 16 we read, “For of His fulness we have all received, and grace upon grace.”³³

There is this superabundance of grace that God has lavished upon us. This is a grace that is going to increase. It is going to expand in, as we read here in John 1:16, “His fulness...”

So there is this never ending, unlimited expanding joy and blessing.

To make it very practical, dear friends, this is the grace that is sufficient for you today in the trials that you are experiencing. This is the grace available to us that sustains us in the midst of suffering. This is the grace that animates our hope and our life, especially when it is filled with pain and sorrow.

But you must understand that this unmerited favor that God has lavished upon us is going to continue and increase all through eternity. It is grace upon grace. It is abounding grace. This is the abundance of grace that is our present possession. And, my friends, this is what defines the reign of life that we have, that we possess right now, that we can enjoy right now.

And if you are not enjoying it, there are serious issues that you need to examine in your heart. Either your theology is wrong or your life is wrong.

In Ephesians chapter two verse six Paul says that even now he has... God has, quote, “...raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace.”³⁴

If I can put it this way without being sacrilegious, we could say in our vernacular, “folks, you ain't seen nothing yet.”

Where he says there in Ephesians 2:6 that he has “seated us” it is interesting. That is in the aorist tense in the Greek grammar. It means the past tense. And whenever that is used in a situation such as this, it underscores the absolute certainty of a promise. It is a promise that even though it hasn't been fully enacted, it hasn't fully come to fruition yet, it is so certain that it is as if it has already occurred. That is the point.

Well, what is he referring to here? Us being seated with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Paul states the same thing differently in Romans eight verse 30. He says, “...and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also [past tense] glorified.”³⁵

It is so certain. It is as if it has already occurred.

³³ John 1:16.

³⁴ Ephesians 2:6-7.

³⁵ Romans 8:30.

Abounding Grace

By David Harrell

Romans 5:12-21

We have been supernaturally delivered, dear friends, from the kingdom of darkness. We have been placed into this glorious kingdom of God. We have been delivered from the realm of death to the realm of eternal life. Why? In order that in the ages to come he might show the surpassing riches of his grace.

Again, beloved, right now we possess this grace. We have been given eternal life. And what awaits the redeemed is endless, limitless, ever increasing riches of his grace. Oh, child of God. I hope you rejoice in this. This is abounding grace. This is grace that abounds through eternity. It never reaches a stopping point. It never comes to a place and says, "That is all there is. We are going to stop here." It just keeps on going and abounding more and more.

May I make this real practical? Those of you right now today who are struggling with some sorrow in life, who are living in fear, perhaps you are struggling to survive some great calamity in life. Perhaps you are confused with some relational issue. Whatever it is, my friend, look to Christ and see this glorious truth of the reign of life, this abundance of grace that is yours in Christ. Beg God to experience more of it. Plead with him to reveal the presence of his grace, this peace, even that surpasses all comprehension, because it is yours right now and flows from a well, from a reservoir that will never run dry.

But notice, finally, this section not only does the reign of life include the abundance of grace, but also, secondly, the gift of righteousness, Paul says. And this is what makes it all possible, the righteousness of Christ. This is our justification whereby we are declared righteous.

Again, think about it, Paul's analogy here. In Adam we received unrighteousness and the exceedingly tragic consequences of sin, divine wrath. But in Christ we receive, he says here, the gift of righteousness. We possess the righteousness of Christ.

You will remember Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:21 that he made him, referring to Jesus, "who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."³⁶

And notice how Paul summarizes this theme of our righteousness in verse 18.

He says, "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners..."³⁷

³⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:21.

³⁷ Romans 5:18-19.

Abounding Grace

By David Harrell

Romans 5:12-21

Let me pause there for a moment. “Made,” *kayisthmi* (*kath-is’-tay-mee*) in the original language, it carries the basic sense of to set down or to put in place, to constitute something or to establish something.

Well, what was established here? Well, man’s sin nature. So he says, “For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners,”³⁸ he goes on to say, “...even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.”³⁹

Again, because of the obedience of Christ, all believers will be established in righteousness. Because of Christ’s one act of righteousness when he obediently went to the cross, consistent with his Father’s will and became our substitute, all men, referring to all who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, which Paul has made abundantly clear in this epistle, all men, all believers will be declared righteous. They will be treated as righteous and one day they will become totally righteous as a result of their justification.

Moreover, I can put it to you this way. This is going to be very practical. I hope you hear this. The very moment that we are born again, the righteousness of Christ is not only imputed to us, but it is also imparted to us, meaning our entire disposition changes if we are truly born again. We are new creatures in Christ. Remember, the old things pass away. The new things come. We begin to love what God loves and hate what he hates. Salvation, you must understand, is not merely addition. I am going to add Christ to my life.

No, no, no, no. It is transformation. Immediately the Holy Spirit indwells us. And immediately we are given an inward righteousness that begins to grow. And in the process of sanctification we become ever more conformed into the image of Christ. Our lives begin to bear the fruits of the Spirit. And, my friends, if that is not true for you, you need to examine your life because Jesus said that there is going to be far more who claim that they are believers who are not, than those who truly are. Matthew seven makes that abundantly clear.

But Paul says the many will be made righteousness.

My friend, if this is not the clear direction of your life, if you are not growing in the righteousness of Christ, if others cannot see a decreasing pattern of sin in your life, if you are not becoming more like Christ, then you have no reason to claim Christ as your Savior. There is something wrong there. You show me a man who is abusive to his wife, who is cruel to his wife and to his children, but calls himself a Christian, and I will show you a man who has never been declared righteous. If that is the pattern of his life, he is a hypocrite.

You show me a woman who finds her greatest joy in the things of the world and not in Christ, who really has no desire to be obedient to the Word of God, and I will show you a

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

Abounding Grace

By David Harrell

Romans 5:12-21

woman that has not been made righteous and knows nothing of this abounding grace. So this is very, very important.

Indeed, Paul says, “The many will be made righteous.”⁴⁰ What a staggering thought.

For this reason, God considers us to be like his beloved Son. He treats us as he would treat him because we are in Christ.

Romans 8:17. We are even fellow heirs with Christ.

Beloved, may I pause for a moment as we begin to wrap this up today and ask: Do you live as though you were a child of the king? Or do you walk around with a sullen, sour attitude, always whining and complaining and criticizing?

And I am not talking about just your public persona. We can all wear our Christianity, can't we? I am talking about what goes on in your heart. What about those who know you best? Are you in private a person that is rejoicing in abounding grace, that is rejoicing in this reign of life? If you are not, what kind of testimony do you have? Who would want your brand of Christianity? I wouldn't.

But what wonderful news here. Because of Christ we can enjoy this reign of life, not of death. And with this we close, with Paul's final contrast of law and grace, verses 20 and 21. He says, simply:

And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.⁴¹

This is real simple. God gave his law to Moses not as a means of salvation, but rather to give men a clear guide to righteous living, to reveal to man the divine standard of holiness and expose how woefully short we fall from living up to that standard. But also as we see here, the law served another purpose and that was to inflame our sin.

Isn't that interesting? He says, “That transgression my increase...”⁴²

Well, how so? Well, I think we all know. Is it not part of our rebellious nature to resent any kind of restriction placed upon us? We want to do our thing. The lusts of our flesh say, “Pursue what you want to do, not what God wants you to do.”

So, when we are told that God wants you to do this and not that, the lawless person will be quick to do just the opposite. It is our nature to rebel.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Romans 5:20-21.

⁴² Romans 5:20.

Abounding Grace

By David Harrell

Romans 5:12-21

Let me give you an example. You tell a child, “Dear child, you can play anywhere in this house except that room over there.” And as soon as you say that, that child will say in his heart, “I resent that command and one day I will have that room.”

That is how the law inflames our sin. God knew this.

However, you might also appreciate the fact that the law correlates both to the righteous as well as the unrighteous, because while it stimulates the unrighteous to rebellion, what does it do to the righteous? It stimulates us to obedience. We long to obey his law. Oh, do we struggle with it. That is what Paul said in Romans seven.

“The things I don’t want to do, I do and the things I do want to do, I don’t.”

Oh, he struggles with it.

But this is the longing of our heart. So Paul is saying, “Despite our rebellious predisposition stimulated by the law,” catch it now. Grace abounded all the more.

Grace not only exceeded Adam’s one sin, but all the sins of mankind. I can only imagine that at the close of chapter five when Paul wrote this, he was exhausted in his attempt to demonstrate the absolute certainty of our salvation.

I am exhausted after nine Sundays in chapter five and I am sure you are, too. But I hope you get it. What a reality this thrills our soul, abounding grace, my friend, the eternal reign of life, blessings that we can enjoy.

Abounding grace oh glorious thought,
Rejoice my soul in praise.
In Christ my life forever wrought,
What victory o’er the grave.

May we all celebrate these truths and make them the center of gravity around which our lives orbit for the glory of God.

Let’s pray together.

Father, we rejoice in what you have said in your Word. Oh, God, thank you for your abounding grace. May those who know nothing of it today be overwhelmed by their sin and come running to the cross that they might be saved, that they might be delivered from the reign of death and placed into the reign of life. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

We pray you have been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to pastor, Bible teacher and author David Harrell. For more information or to order additional tapes or CDs of pastor Harrell’s messages, please visit OliveTreeResources.org.

Abounding Grace

By David Harrell

Romans 5:12-21

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