

## Series: The Reign of Grace

### Today's Message: Grace Will Reign Through Righteousness / Jeff Kennedy / Sept 25, 2022

Rom 5:2–5 We have also obtained access through him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. <sup>5</sup> This hope will not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

This passage tells us we have great hope in the world. But hope as opposed to what?

Introduction: What's wrong with the world? Depending on one's ideology or worldview, people will have different answers for that question. But not all of the answers can be right.

**Marxist Materialists** answer that question by critiquing the haves and have-nots. "Evil" they say, "stems from the existence of a free market and private property ownership" which creates inequities in society. So, their solution is a *communal* one—equal poverty for all. And of course history has already given us its verdict on this solution to the problem of "evil" as they see it. Every regime where personal property, freedom to exchange goods in a free market, the absence of free speech and the freedom to vote, every one of them is an abject failure.

**Materialist Atheism** answers this question (What's wrong with the world) by focusing on human progress and evolution. For the naturalist who only believes in a material world will protest two evils still left in the world: (1) whatever detracts from human flourishing and (2) religion. For them religion has done more harm than good. But of course, this worldview, to be fair, must admit that mass religious belief has at the very least conferred a survival benefit on humanity, and the protests against why there is "evil and suffering" cannot be answered on this worldview because this perspective simply does not have the resources to even define what objective evil is.

**Eastern Religious** views, such as the Baha'i, or Buddhism, see the issue of sin as entirely extrinsic—that is, there are these external forces and laws that can be followed or rejected. The goal, then, is to resist evil and therefore receive good karma. Because the world requires the yin and the yang, good and evil are equal but opposing forces where one cannot exist apart from the other.

**The Judeo-Christian Faith:** Is really the only belief system with a robust hamartiology—that is a doctrine of universal sin going back to the first human beings. This sin is the fundamental problem that all people face. Charles Hodge wrote, "This great question comes under the consideration of the Christian theologian with certain limitations. He assumes the existence of a

personal God of infinite perfection, and he assumes the responsibility of man. No theory of the nature or origin of sin which conflicts with either of these fundamental principles, can for him be true.” (Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 2*)<sup>1</sup>

**Both Adam and Christ committed actions that have lasting consequences on humanity.**

**Paul began this chapter to tell us that we have an enduring hope that cannot be defeated nor tarnished by the trials and suffering we experience. Quite the opposite, not only do they not tarnish our faith but they burnish it.**

Today Paul is going to contrast two legacies—Adam’s and Christ’s.

In the next chapter, we’re going to see that this hope and this grace triumphs over the **power of sin** (6:1–23).

In the chapter following that one we’ll discover that grace reigns and triumphs over the **powerlessness of the law** (7:1–8:17).

He’ll close out this section by once again reminding us of our **assurance of hope** (8:18–39).

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 130.

**1. The legacy of Adam was sin and death.** Vv. 12–14 is another summary of his case from 1:18–3:20. But now Paul is going to explain to us *why it is that there is no one righteous*, not even one—for all have sinned and fallen short of God’s glorious standard...

Rom 5:12–14 “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, **because all sinned**.<sup>13</sup> In fact, sin was in the world before the law, but sin is not charged to a person’s account when there is no law. <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam’s transgression. He is a type of the Coming One.”

- **Sin entered the world through Adam and death entered through sin (v.12a).** Adam and Eve were warned to avoid the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The penalty for transgression was death and toilsome labor—in the man’s vocation of working the ground and the women’s unique gift—the ability to bear children. From that moment onward, we see that people are at enmity increasingly with God and with each other and this is the wellspring of human depravity.
- **Death spread to all because all sinned (v.12b).** There has been a raging controversy over the centuries as to how this passage should be translated and what Paul means by this.

**Pelagius** took this to mean that Adam’s sin impacted only him, but that as his children we have merely imitated him.<sup>2</sup>

**Augustine** countered him translating the passage “in Adam” meaning that all human beings are guilty of Adam’s sin because, biologically, we were “in Adam.”

**John Calvin** corrected Augustine’s view by introducing an unstated element to the text—the idea of the sinful nature. That is to say that what Adam passed on to us was a sinful nature that is prone to sin.

And modern theologians, such as **Douglass Moo** have sought to further correct that view by pointing out that the text says nothing of a sinful nature, but instead paints the picture of our solidarity with Adam—that is since Adam is the Federal Head of all human beings, he represents us and his condemnation is ours because it is not just a judgment on Adam himself, but on Adam as the “man” or representative of mankind. This view introduces a kind of vicarious liability.

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<sup>2</sup> See Augustine, *Two Epistles of the Pelagians*, 4.4.7 (where he presents Pelagius’s view); Calvin, *Institutes* 2.1.5–8 (Calvin admits that the idea of a “sinful nature” is inferential and not explicit in the text); Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 327–28.

- **God's moral law was written on the heart before the giving of Torah Law to Moses (v.13).** The evidence of an unstated moral law written on the heart and instantiated in creation was that mankind sinned between Adam and Moses. If no law was present before Torah and the Tablets, then God could not justly have wiped out the human race in a flood for sin.
- **Death reigned from Adam to Moses (v.14).** Now, we have already said that the death Paul has in view here is three-fold: (1) it involves a spiritual death, that is the loss of a spiritual faculty to commune with God due to the darkening of the mind. (2) it includes social death—which is exile from the family and the garden of God's presence. (3) physical death—permanent cessation of biological life.

**Unless and until there is an intervening principle, death will reign in the human experience.** Men die and they always will. Men die and they stay dead and never live again.

In any case Paul wants to tell us that Adam is the wellspring and the representative of humanity—thereby condemning all to his fate.

**2. The legacy of Christ is grace and life.** Paul now contrasts Adam’s legacy with Christ’s. And in that sense, Jesus is rightly said to be the “Second Adam” or the “New Humanity.”

Rom 5:15–16 “But **the gift is not like** the trespass. For if by the one man’s trespass the many died, how much more have the grace of God and the gift which comes through the grace of the one man Jesus Christ overflowed to the many. <sup>16</sup> And **the gift is not like the one man’s sin**, because from one sin came the judgment, resulting in condemnation, but from many trespasses came the gift, resulting in justification.

Paul tells us that the gift is not like the trespass. How is it different? How are they contrasted? They are different in their source, in scope, in their effects and in their outcomes.

- The grace of Christ overflows to all who are born again. Now, admittedly when you first read this passage you may think, “the gift is *like* the trespass” because if you read it quickly Paul seems to be saying that the trespass damned all men so the gift of grace now saves all men, automatically. But Paul doesn’t say that the gift is *like the trespass* but that the gift is *not like the trespass*. Through the sin of Adam the many (all born into Adam) sinned and died. But the through the gift of Christ the “many” (all who are born again in Christ) have life.

- Rom 5:1–2 “Therefore, since **we have been justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup> We have also **obtained access through him by faith** into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God.”

- John 20:31 “But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that **by believing** you may have life in his name.”

- John 3:3 “Truly I tell you, unless someone is **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

- 1 Peter 1:3 “Because of his great mercy he has given us **new birth** into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”

- Titus 3:5 “He saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy—through the washing of **regeneration** and **renewal** by the Holy Spirit.”

The grace is not like the trespass in that it does not automatically transfer to all. It must be received by faith. Jesus must be believed upon, and the person who is dead in their transgressions must be born anew by the Holy Spirit.

**And lest one thinks I am importing a context foreign to Paul's here in Rom 5, look at verse 17...**

- Rom 5:17 "If by the one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who **receive the overflow** of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ."

**Illus. In the case of the United States vs. Wilson—defendant George Wilson was convicted of robbing the US Mail, threatening the life of a postal carrier.** He was found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging (this 1883). He had an influential friend who was also friends with Andrew Jackson and so the president issued Wilson a pardon for his crimes on one condition that the pardon only extended to this crime and no others.

***Wilson refused the presidential pardon.***

It went all the way to the Supreme Court and they ruled that a prisoner does not have to accept a pardon. A rejected pardon is of no effect. They stated, "A pardon is a deed, to the validity of which delivery is essential, and delivery is not complete without acceptance. It may be rejected by the person to whom it is tendered; and if it is rejected, we have discovered no power in this court to force it upon him" Supreme Court Ruling; 32 U.S. (7 Pet.) 150 (1833).

**The unbeliever must also receive the full pardon that is offered by grace.**

Paul is not, in this passage, teaching that the gift is *like the trespass*. He is here teaching that the gift is *not like the trespass*. We inherited Adam's condemnation for sin, being born in his line. But we do not automatically, as sons of Adam, experience an immediate transfusion of grace apart from believing in Christ and receiving so great a salvation by faith.

- **The born-again believer now experiences the reign of grace resulting in life.** Rom 5:20–21 "The law came along to multiply the trespass. But where sin multiplied, grace multiplied even more <sup>21</sup> so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace will reign through righteousness, resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." So in place of spiritual, social, and physical death—the born again believer now has life. This is what grace does. It inaugurates a reign of God's kingdom in us, resulting in new life where there once was death.

*And we experience the transforming power of new life in Christ.*

**Illustration: Donald G. Barnhouse, radio pioneer and pastor of the Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia once told the story about visiting the battlefields of Belgium,** after the Armistice of WWI. He described the scene where the Germans had hastily abandoned their artillery, tanks, trucks—many blown up or left in ruins. He recalled that as he walked along examining the German war machines, he noticed that leaves were falling from the great trees that arched above the road as if it were late

fall. He brushed at a leaf that had blown against his uniform and it disintegrated. More leaves began to fall all around him and curiously he noted that it was spring not fall. There was no wind to blow them off their branches.

These were the leaves that had outlived the winds of autumn and the frosts of winter.

He writes, now they were falling, seemingly without cause. Then I realized that the most potent force of all was causing them to fall. It was spring; the sap was beginning to run, coursing through the branches; the buds were beginning to push up from within. From down beneath the dark and scorched earth, from beneath the wreckage of war and the blood-soaked ground—the roots of the trees were drawing upon a source of life unseen, sending that life upward through the trunk and the branches until that life expelled every bit of deadness that remained from the previous year. It was, to quote a great Scottish preacher, “the expulsive power of new affections.”

And in the same way this is what the believer experiences. Outwardly we may be still scarred by the death we’ve inherited from Adam, surrounded by the wreckage of sin and a culture that has become a battlefield. But inwardly, the Christian draws upon the life of God’s unseen Holy Spirit—having received pardon from sin’s penalty—new life in place of death.

**Next week we’re going to talk about how this new life begins to work itself out to replace the old life that was under the reign of sin and death.**

### **Communion**

Luke 22-We celebrate this symbolic meal that reminds us of Christ’s new covenant in his blood. We are reminded that Jesus has conquered death, and in its place brought the reign of grace and new life in Christ.

1 Corinthians 11 eat and drink worthily—meaning that we examine our hearts to see if we are dividing the body of Christ through gossip, factionalism, divisive.