

“Grace Abounded Much More”

Romans 5:12-21

January 19th, 2020

There was a pastor who had a 5-year-old daughter. The girl noticed that every time her dad stood behind the pulpit, and was getting ready to preach, he would bow his head for a moment before he preached. The pastor’s daughter noticed that he did this every time. So one day after the service the girl asked her dad, “Why do you bow your head right before you preach your sermon, Daddy?”

“Well, honey,” he answered, “I’m asking the Lord to help me preach a good sermon.” The little girl looked up at her father and asked, “Then why doesn’t He do it?”

Preaching a good sermon begins, continues, and ends with the Word of Almighty God as contained in the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments. These Scriptures are the only rule to direct how we may glorify and enjoy God. So, if a sermon is to be good, it must be based upon and rooted in the Holy Bible.

Preparing a sermon is often difficult, and always time-consuming work, especially so when the Scripture text is hard to grasp. Today’s passage, **Romans 5:12-21**, is such an example.

Presbyterian pastor, author, and theologian, James Montgomery Boice, wrote of this passage, “This is a difficult section of the letter, possibly the most difficult in all the Bible.” (Boice, 553)

World renowned Scottish New Testament scholar William Barclay said of these verses, “No passage (of the New Testament) is more difficult for a modern mind to understand.” (Barclay, 78)

What makes this passage difficult for us to understand is its emphasis on corporate representation. In the last half of **Romans Chapter 5**, the Apostle Paul teaches that God deals with the human race under a system known as “federalism.” The word ‘federal’ comes from the Latin word *foedus*, which means “covenant.” Simply put, federalism has to do with representation, with one person acting on behalf of another. The verses before us this morning teach that God’s plan includes two federal heads. The first one represents us all; the second one represents God’s children.

Romans 5:12-21:

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— ¹³(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. ¹⁵But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. ¹⁶And the gift is not like *that which came* through the one who sinned. For the judgment *which came* from one *offense resulted* in condemnation, but the free gift *which came* from many offenses *resulted* in justification. ¹⁷For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who

receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)

¹⁸Therefore, as through one man's offense *judgment came* to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act *the free gift came* to all men, resulting in justification of life. ¹⁹For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

²⁰Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, ²¹so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

God has appointed two federal representatives in history: Adam and Jesus. Adam, whose name means "mankind," is first mentioned in verse 12. After God created Adam and Eve, he entered into a covenant with them; a covenant theologians call the "covenant of works." As I discussed with the kids a few moments ago, God promised to reward Adam with life if he obeyed God; God threatened to punish Adam with death if he disobeyed. Unfortunately for all of us, and our ancestors, Adam did not represent humanity well; he disobeyed God. As a result, all of his descendants are born with an inclination to sin, and they all share in his guilt and suffer the same penalty he received—death. This is what Paul means when he says in verse 12 that "all sinned."

To make his point, Paul argues that there was death before the giving of the law of God. The giving of the law referred to here is God's giving the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai (**Exodus Chapter 20**). Lots of time is covered between **Genesis Chapter 3**, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and **Exodus Chapter 20**.

Yes, sin was in the world before the law, as Paul acknowledges in verse 13, and yes, the law was present in the sense that it was written on all men's heart (**Romans 2:15**). Nevertheless, the fact that the law had not yet been given meant that those then living could not sin as verse 14 teaches, "according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam." That is, by violating an expressly revealed law of God.

Adam violated his one "law"—that he not eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But those who followed Adam had no specific law until God gave His commandments at Mt. Sinai. And yet, death was as pervasive then as now. *Why?*

Adam was the God-appointed representative for all humanity. God counted Adam's sin as our sin and imposed on us the guilt and penalty Adam incurred. *The Westminster Shorter Catechism* question we recited earlier puts this clearly. Question 16 asks, "*Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression?*" The answer – "The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression."

At the end of verse 14, Paul says Adam was “a type of Him who was to come,” namely, Jesus. In some way, Adam’s life and work were a pattern for Jesus’. **The second federal head**, sometimes referred to as the Second Adam, is Jesus Christ.

In “Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery,” the second stanza goes like this:

“Come behold the wondrous mystery, He, the perfect Son of Man.
In His living, in His suff’ring, never trace nor stain of sin.
See the true and better Adam come to save the hell-bound man.
Christ, the great and sure fulfillment of the law; in Him we stand.”

The free gift mentioned in verses 15 & 16 is eternal life. (15) “But the free gift *is* not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.” Just as the sin of Adam resulted in the death of many, so it is also true that many will have eternal life in Christ Jesus (16) “And the gift *is* not like *that which came* through the one who sinned. For the judgment *which came* from one *offense resulted* in condemnation, but the free gift *which came* from many offenses *resulted* in justification.”

In the next chapter, Paul will write that wonderful, familiar promise in **Romans 6:23**, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Now, we look at verse 17, “For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Before we received eternal life, death reigned in us; but through His abundant grace, Almighty God caused us to reign with Jesus!

And, that grace is the hope of Christians. Verses 20 and 21 point to the triumph of grace. “...The law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, ²¹ so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Dear ones, do you hear God’s Word in verse 20? Where sin reigned, grace reigned much more! Have you fallen into some great sin and you think God won’t forgive you? That smells like smoke and comes from the pit of hell! God will never diminish His grace to you because of your sin. It is in your sin that you will most find grace to be abundant. You cannot fall from grace if you are a true child of God in Christ. Even so, as a child of the King, you should also not presume upon God’s grace in excusing some sin in your life. Forsake the sin, and you will find an overflowing ocean of God’s grace to carry you through this life and the next.

As we prepare to close, you may find these comparisons helpful. “Adam was of the earth, made of dust, but Jesus is the Lord from heaven (**I Corinthians 15:47**). Adam was tested in a Garden, surrounded by beauty and love; Jesus was tempted in a wilderness, and He died on a cruel cross surrounded by hatred and ugliness. Adam was a thief, and was cast out of Paradise; but Jesus Christ turned to a thief and said, “Today, you will be with Me in Paradise” (**Luke 23:43**). The Old Testament is the “book of the generations of Adam” (**Genesis 5:1**) and it ends with a “curse”

(Malachi 4:6). The New Testament is “the book of the generations of Jesus Christ” **(Matthew 1:1)** and it ends with “no more curse” **(Revelation 22:3).**” (Wiersbe, 530)

Words put in varying formats can be helpful in understanding the message such words convey. I’d like to close with a poem late seminary professor and Bible commentator William Hendriksen includes in his commentary. Listen to this rendition of **Romans 5:12-21**:

“’Twas through one man that sin began
And also death through this one man.
In this one man did all men sin,
And through this sin did death begin.

Now, long before God’s law was given,
Sin filled the world and cried to heaven.
From Adam until Moses when
The writing of God’s law began,
Death ruled supreme on every hand,
Though breaking God’s express command,
As Adam did, that wicked deed
None could soon afterward repeat.
Now Adam, type of Christ was he,
Since each one mankind’s Head would be.

Far stronger than man’s sin is grace,
Far more effective in its place:
One fearful sin laid many low,
But grace made many overflow.
God’s judgment condemnation brought;
Christ’s blood justification bought.
One sin, and judgment came to stay,
But grace wiped all our sins away!
Now if the trespass of the one
Brought death to each and everyone,
Then how much more will they be blessed
On whom God’s grace and righteousness
Has been bestowed! Through him, the Door,
They’ll enter life forevermore.

Just as a single sin plunged all
Of Adam’s seed into the fall,
The condemnation, so one deed
Of righteousness fulfilled the need
Of the whole world. All who believe
Justification will receive.
As one man’s disobedience caused
The many to be counted lost,
So, too, One Man’s submissiveness
Will bring to many righteousness.

The law came in besides. 'Twas so
The sense of sin might keener grow.
But when that consciousness increased,
Grace topped it, and this never ceased.
Result was this: O'er death reigned Sin,
But all the while Grace ruled within
The heart, as Conqueror in the strife,
Bringing, through Christ, eternal life!"