



**BETHEL**  
PRESBYTERIAN

## **MINISTRY OF THE WORD**

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### **Christ: The Savior of His People, 2**

Romans 5:12-21

From 1973 to 1978 a television program, *The Six Million Dollar Man*, was about an astronaut who had been in a plane crash. Because the technology was there to “rebuild him,” he was fitted with bionics. He had a bionic arm, bionic legs, and a bionic eye. And from the tragedy of an airplane crash emerged this superior man:

- He could run seventy miles per hour.
- He could lift thousands of pounds with his bionic arm.

- He could see for miles; he even had night vision!

As a child I dreamed of myself being bionic! As such, I was drawn to this program where I vicariously enjoyed the life of a superior, bionic man!

But then my oldest brother ruined it. In one episode, the Six Million Dollar Man was shown lifting a pallet of bricks (which weighs over a ton) with his bionic arm. I was so inspired, until my oldest brother watching behind me said, *“That is so stupid! The man’s back and shoulder couldn’t support that amount of weight, much less his spine! He’d need a complete bionic body!”*



Talk about dashing ones dreams, for I knew he was right and realized that there could never be such thing a superior man!

And yet, looking at Romans 5, I was wrong. There is such a thing as a superior man... which is Paul’s point in this second digression in which he makes another comparison, speaking of Adam, Paul wrote: *“...who is a type of Him who was to come.”* (Romans 5:14) From this we see that just as Adam was the Federal Head of mankind so also Christ was and is a Federal Head (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:22). Christ truly was and is a Second Adam!

So also it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living soul.’ The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. 1 Corinthians 5:14

Now lest this mislead the Romans in thinking that Christ was *JUST* another Adam — a frail, weak, individual who like Adam was prone to sinning — Paul here sets out to demonstrate the superiority of Christ by comparing the two heads. He began looking at what they as Federal Heads Secured. Notice...

## Adam Brought Death

But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died... Romans 5:15a

The significant thing about Adam was his one trespass and its consequence which was death, *“...the many died.”*<sup>1</sup> Think about this for a moment. Adam was created with so much promise — a perfect man in a perfect world with the glorious call to co-reign with God. What would be the result of this co-regency had Adam NOT failed? The abundance of life as he tended the garden, a world flourishing like it will be someday in glory!

Yet in his rebellion against God, what did Adam give both to his children as well as this world? Death — Spiritual, Moral, Physical, and Eternal death which also radically changed the world in which we dwell (cf. Romans 8:19-21)

I do not think we appreciate what this really means. During World War II, Adolf Hitler was responsible for killing over twelve million people in his prison camps. He is remembered as a monster. During this same time, Stalin killed over twenty million of his own people. At this time, the world population was a little less than two and one half billion. That means Stalin killed 8/1,000 of the world's population! Well get this: Adam's sin just didn't bring death to just some of the world, it brought death to all the world! Adam is the greatest killer in the history of mankind!

What a horrible legacy! So, the next time you are tempted to blame God for something, let us be mature in our thinking. It is Adam who is to blame, NOT God. God is in the process of correcting his massive mistake — which brings us to the next comparison. In contrast...

### Christ's Work Brought about Forgiveness, v. 15b.

But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more... Romans 5:15b

This comparison introduces the work of Christ which was and is "far greater," "much greater," and in all other ways "far superior" to the work of Adam! How so? Paul continued:

Much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. Romans 5:15c

Notice the key word here, "grace." Clearly it is the focus as Paul speaks of it in relation both to God the Father and Christ:

- Much more did the grace of God...
- And the gift by the grace [more accurately, 'grace gift'] of the one Man, Jesus Christ...

So, Adam gave us death; Christ/God gave us "grace."

Now what is "grace"? Fundamentally "grace" refers to God's "unmerited favor." Yet in the Bible, it is much bigger than that. For example, it is used in reference to:

- Christ Himself- He is the grace of God in the flesh, Titus 2:11.

- The teaching of Christ, Acts 14:3; 20:32; Titus 2:12.
- A *Pou Sto*, 1 Peter 5:12; Romans 5:2.
- Divine aid- and so that which enables us to serve God, 1 Corinthians 15:10.

Of these five usages, that element of grace which Paul emphasizes here is the unmerited favor of God which comes as a deluge of love, kindness, and compassion from the heart of God by which the sinner/slave is made a son unconditionally- as in...

For by grace you have been saved through faith... Ephesians 2:8

What an incredible Savior! Adam was placed on this earth to harvest/cultivate the life therein. Yet he completely ruined the world and mankind! In contrast, Christ was born to die (Hebrews 2:9-18) and by doing so He reconciled God to man.

And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach. Colossians 1:21-22

That is the focus of his first comparison!

Christ is superior to Adam for instead of death, Christ brought forgiveness! That brings us to the second comparison revolving around what they each provided.

### Adam Provided Condemnation, v. 16a.

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... Romans 5:16a

In light of a single transgression, Adam could only bow to the resulting judgement and condemnation. That is why he “fled from the presence of God” (Genesis 3:8, 10)!

Notice the two words:

- Judgment: κρίμα (*krima*); the word refers to the “declaration of guilty” that all will receive at their death or at the Last Day when God judges the world. Think of...

Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’ Matthew 7:22-23

Such is the legacy of Adam! All who stand before God represented by this man will be judged! And yet, it does NOT end there. Notice secondly what Adam provided His posterity.

- Condemnation: κατάκριμα (*katakrima*); this is a stronger term than judgment. “Judgment” refers to the declaration of guilty; “condemnation” involves this BUT also includes punishment- as in...

Following the Last Judgment we read,

And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:15

And so, “judgment and condemnation” came on account of “ONE transgression.” What a horrible legacy! Through just one act of rebellion, Adam brought an eternity of misery and death to this world!! In contrast, what does Christ Provide as the Second Adam?

### Christ Provides Justification, v. 16b.

But on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. Romans 5:16b

The verse is intended to shock us. When Christ came into the world, He did NOT face the *relatively simple* task of NOT doing just one thing — like Adam, “Don’t eat!” RATHER, when Christ came to this world he was faced with billions upon billions of transgressions against the holiness and providence of God (His person and work). Yet unlike Adam who fled, Christ took it ALL upon Himself.

Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried... Isaiah 53:4  
And what was the result? Justification! Let’s talk about this important word...

- Justification: δικαίωμα (*dikaiōma*); justification is a forensic or legal term which was used when a defendant was declared by a judge that he was righteous, not guilty, or innocent of the charge in question. From this perspective we note that justification is an objective forensic declaration about the innocence of an accused criminal. It does NOT in any way change the character, morality, or mind of the accused. It is a legal term used in reference to the decision of a judge. And so...
- Deuteronomy 25:1 speaks of a judge who “justifies” someone. Here the judge did not make the person righteous, he simply declared that in relation to a crime, the accused was NOT guilty.

- Job 32:2 speaks of Job “justifying himself before God.” This does NOT mean that Job made himself righteous. RATHER, it simply means that he declared his innocence before God.
- Luke 7:29 we read of people “justifying God.” Now, this does NOT mean that these people changed something about God. RATHER, it means that they said, “God is right or just.”

So, “justification” is the provision of the sentence of “Not Guilty” when it comes to violating God’s law.

Now, on what basis is this declaration given to the sinner in Scripture? The answer is NOT “On account of our faith” - i.e., because I believe. In Scripture, faith is never the ground or the cause of justification. RATHER, the basis or ground is Christ’s life given in exchange for our life via the cross.,<sup>2</sup>

- Romans 3:24 says that we are “...justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”
- Romans 5:9 later Paul wrote, “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood [that is, ‘on account of His death’] we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.”

And so, in contrast to the condemnation that Adam brought upon mankind, the work of Christ provides for the acquittal of God’s people. Accordingly, on account of the work of Christ, the child of God is NOT guilty of violating the law; he stands before God in the righteousness of Christ! This was Paul’s glory.

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith. Philippians 3:8-9

May this be our glory! That brings us to Paul’s final comparison.

### [Adam Imparted the Despotic Reign of Death, v. 17a.](#)

For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one... Romans 5:17a

This is the same word which we saw in v. 14. To say that death “reigned” is to say that death ruled(s) as a despot over mankind: brutally, ruthlessly, and completely! And so, on account of Adam, men are NOT ONLY dead in their trespasses and sins, BUT they live in death:

- Their bodies are decaying.
- Their world around them is subject to the law of entropy- order to disorder.
- Their affections gravitate toward corruption.
- They are bound by decay.
- Their ultimate expectation is the grave.

This is what Adam Imparted to his descendants! Against this backdrop, notice what Paul says about Christ.

### Christ Imparts a Reign in Life, v. 17b.

For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more... Romans 5:17b

Once again, we have another dramatic contrast. It took Adam one sin to enslave mankind unto death! In contrast, Christ’s work was “much more” than anything Adam did or could do for his descendants...

Much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Roman 5:17c

What a contrast! With Adam we have zombies, dead people living in death. Yet if you are in Christ, you reign this day in life! Look at the next expression.

- Much more those who receive the abundance of grace: this emphasizes the generosity of God’s provision. In v. 15, we addressed the concept of grace. Here we see that in the life of the child of God, grace is poured out upon them as a torrent. As Paul himself discovered this:

Even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor... [yet] the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are *found* in Christ Jesus. 1 Timothy 1:13a, 14b

In Jesus Christ, the believer is provided with the unmerited blessing of God that is NOT watered down BUT again is poured out upon us! Now this combined with our justification — or as stated here, “the gift of righteousness” — results in this amazing end.

- Much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. This is quite significant. Notice Paul here does NOT say that life will reign (as he said that death reigned in Adam), BUT that WE will reign in life- which ultimately alludes to our enjoying and participating in the fullness of life granted through Jesus Christ- a life that begins in this age!...

And this is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.”- recall the definition of “eternal life” in the Greek. The expression is τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον (*tēn zōēn tēn aiōnios*), literally “life age” or “life pertaining to the age [to come]. 1 John 2:25

When a person comes to a saving relationship with Christ, they NOT only receive forgiveness, BUT they begin living the life they will enjoy the rest of eternity! Paul wrote:

So also it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living soul.’ The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. 1 Corinthians 15:45

Do you understand what this means? Everything associated with Christ is life, no death! Accordingly, if in your walk as a child of God you find yourself reaping death-like elements- as in bitterness, anger, fear, jealousy, and the like- then you can be sure that at those moments you are NOT living according to your identity OR the character of God! And so:

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear... 1 John 4:18a

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. John 14:27

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control... Galatians 5:22-23a”

See, the moment a sinner believes, Christ brings them into the realm of life in which He now has:

- Power over sin, Galatians 5:1; Romans 6:17-18.
- Fellowship with God, 1 John 1:3ff.
- Righteousness, peace, and joy, Romans 14:17.
- All things are his, 1 Corinthians 3:21.
- He stands in the strength of the Lord, Ephesians 6:10-18.
- He lives victoriously and so triumphantly, 1 John 5:4; Hebrews 10:39.



Now if you in your salvation you find that your life is NOT characterized by these things, it is NOT that you lack anything. Recall the words of Peter:

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. 2 Peter 1:3

When you became a Christian, God opened the storehouse and rained EVERYTHING you need in order to be a man or woman of God! Paul put it this way:

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ. Ephesians 1:3

So again, it is NOT that on account of our performance we have forfeited God's blessing or somehow have become second tier Christians. If we find ourselves NOT enjoying the blessings and benefits of the Lord it RATHER is that we either have forgotten or are undervaluing God, His grace, the love of Christ, and the forgiveness that He has granted you. After giving a list of godly characteristics, Peter said this:

For he who lacks these *qualities* is blind *or* short-sighted [which would lead you to undervalue all that you have received in Christ...], having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins. 2 Peter 1:9

Do you see? Any and all failure to enjoy the life granted us in Christ is NOT because we aren't performing the right religious activities or have been so bad that God has changed His mind. RATHER, it is because we have lost sight of the beauty, glory, and grandeur of God and His love for us. Recall how Paul put it:

But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18

It is as God "shows us His glory" (Exodus 33:18) as we come to a fuller understanding of who He is and what He has done for us- that we grow in our walks with Christ.

We see this in our passage, those things which set Christ apart from Adam are here arranged progressively, with the first leading to the second leading to the third. It begins by understanding the Nature of the Forgiveness we have in Christ and the nature of God's grace! It then transitions into an understanding of the Glorious Gift of Justification. When these two blessings are appreciated, valued, and loved, it is then that we truly will Enjoy the Life Granted us in Christ!

Jeremy Lin

At one point in his career, professional basketball player and Christian, Jeremy Lin, was

having a bad year. In the midst of a horrible slump, he posted on the internet, “I am in the fight of my life for joy... Only when I focus on who God is ... and how much He loves me, am I able to live with joy and freedom.” Lin got it! He took his focus off his performance (which decreased its value to him) and placed it on God (valuing God’s kind thoughts toward him over how the world saw him). And so, when he read critical sports headlines (which at the time were voluminous), he was able to read them in light of God’s approval and affection which would remain long after his critics were gone. God’s grace relived him of this burden!

## End Note(s)

<sup>1</sup> Paul here is using a Hebraism. In the Old Testament, “many” often referred NOT to “many in contrast to all”- which is equivalent to saying “some”- BUT to “many in contrast to one”- which is equivalent to saying “all.”

<sup>2</sup> Scripture teaches that we are justified (1) In Christ, Isaiah 45:24-25; Acts 13:39; Romans 8:1; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Galatians 2:17; Phil. 3:9, (2) By Christ’s death work, Romans 3:24-25; 5:9; 8:33-34, (3) Not by our own but by the righteousness of God, Is. 61:10; Romans 1:17; 3:21-22; 10:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9, and (4) By the righteousness and obedience of Christ, Romans 5:17-19.