

Sermon Outline

HEADS OF STATES: A STUDY OF ROMANS 5:12-21

THE GRACE OF GOD (ROMANS 5:15-16)

I. Introduction

II. Grace! (Rom 5:15)

- A. Having explained death's entrance into the world, Paul gives the good news of the amazing, life-giving gift of God.
- B. There is a stark difference between Adam's trespass on the one hand, and God's gift of grace on the other: "But the free gift is not like the trespass" (v 15).
- C. The difference between Adam's trespass and God's grace: "For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many."
 - 1. Similarity: If Adam's sin leads to the death of many, the grace of God through Jesus Christ will abound for many.
 - 2. Dissimilarity: While the trespass brings death, the free gift brings blessing.
- D. When some of us read that we all became sinners by one man's sin, we may have felt that it was unfair. How could God make such an arrangement?
 - 1. God is God (cf. Ps 135:6).
 - 2. If we complain that God condemns us for one man's actions, are we going to complain when God justifies us on the basis of only one man's actions?

III. Justification! (Rom 5:16)

- A. "And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin" (v 16)
- B. How is the free gift different from the result of one man's sin? "For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification" (v 16).
- C. The results of the two federal heads are hugely different. Adam brought death. Christ brought blessing.

- D. Verse 16 explains the results of the two federal heads using courtroom language: Adam’s trespass brought condemnation. But the “free gift” brought justification.
- E. To be justified is to be declared righteous, pronounced innocent by God himself.
- F. Justification was mentioned earlier.
 - Romans 3:23-24: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ and are *justified* by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (vv 23-24).
 - Romans 5:1: “Therefore, since we have been *justified* by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- G. Justification is the central blessing we receive when we come to Christ for salvation.
 1. God declares us righteous...
 - not* on the basis of our works
 - not* on the basis of how well we have amended our ways
 - not* on the basis of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives
 - not* on the basis of any kind of improvement on our part
—but solely and purely on the basis of his grace and Christ’s righteousness.
 - Westminster Confession of Faith XI:1: “Those whom God effectually calls, He also freely justifies; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone; nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.”
 2. Just as Adam’s condemnation caused us to be declared sinners, Christ’s righteousness causes us to be declared righteous.
 3. Justification is the first phase of the believer’s return journey to God.

IV. The First Step Home

- A. Justification involves *forgiveness*.
 1. In any relationship, forgiveness precedes reconciliation.
 2. When God begins to bring his people back to himself, that’s the very first thing that he does.

- He pardons our sins.
- He forgives us our evil.
- He cancels our debt.

Every good thing that happens henceforth in the Christian life—even our growth in holiness—depends on this forgiveness.

3. The promise of the new covenant tells us: “And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer 31:34).
4. Every good that God does for us and in us is depends on his forgiveness.
5. This is vastly different from the way the world works.
 - a. In the worldly economy, you prove your worth before people can trust you (again).
 - b. In God’s economy, no one can become good or trustworthy until they have been forgiven and embraced by God himself.
 - c. God’s unmerited grace and steadfast love are the foundation of all facets of the Christian life.

B. But justification is not only forgiveness. It is also the *imputation* of the perfect righteousness of Christ to us.

1. We do not have to work anymore to earn our way to heaven is because Christ has already fulfilled the Law for us as our federal head.
2. In Christ, we have moved beyond square one into the very throne room of God himself.
 - Ephesians 2:4-6: “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,”

C. This is why justification is the first phase of the believer’s return journey to God.

1. Justification is the imputation of Christ’s perfect righteousness to us.
2. Justification ensures that the journey will end in the arms of our Abba Father.

D. Do you know that God sees you as his beloved child today? Will you help your fellow believer see him/herself as God’s beloved child?

V. A Shocking Grace (Rom 5:16)

- A. These is one more massive difference to consider between Adam and God/Christ—the sheer immensity of God’s grace as opposed to the weakness of Adam’s sin.
- B. Verse 16: “For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.”
- C. While all it took was one sin on the part of Adam to mess up the world, all it took was one act of God’s grace through Jesus Christ to undo that mess.
- D. Compared to the chaos unleashed by Adam, God’s grace is infinitely more powerful. It brings life where there is death, justification where there is condemnation.

VI. That His Grace Might Abound!

- A. We can begin to discern God’s purposes in allowing for the fall of mankind.
- B. If sin was not the monster that it was, God’s grace would not be seen for the awesome power that it is.
 1. God allowed sin into the world so that God would have an excuse to extend goodness to wicked, depraved people like you and me (cf. Rom 5:20).
 2. Evil exists to highlight God’s amazing goodness!
- C. Name the worst kinds of sins in the world. Name your worst sin. God allows these things to happen because he is seeking an opportunity to exalt his grace!
- D. God’s gracious love is greater than the darkest evil.
 - If evil is strong, God’s grace is stronger.
 - If evil is great, God’s grace is greater.
 - If evil is carpet bombing, God’s grace is a nuclear strike.
 - If evil takes over an entire age, God’s grace will bring a new creation.
 —The cross of Jesus Christ is ground zero where God’s grace slams into human history, forever altering the destiny of mankind, the way humanity lives, even time and space itself.

VII. People of Abounding Grace

- A. Is the church today known for such abounding and extreme grace?
 - Matthew 5:39: “But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.”
 - Matthew 18:21-22: “Then Peter came up and said to him, ‘Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as

seven times?’ ²²Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.’”

- B. Can the church afford not to be people of grace today?
 - 1. If our God is a God of grace, if our God is a God whose “anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime” (Ps 30:5), can we afford not to be such people?
 - 2. If our society is crying out for mercy, can we afford not to be such a people?
- C. A grace-empowered, grace-imparting church is God’s gift to a tired world that is awakening to the futility of life in a fallen world.

VIII. Under Grace

The way of grace is not commonsensical. It does not fit the logic of the world. It depends on a power and a logic outside normal experience. To be people of grace, we must first receive grace for ourselves. The only way to do that is for us to become like little children and simply let the Father love us. Grace is a gift. Gifts are not earned. They are received with trusting and open hands. Open your hands—and his grace will come flooding in.

Questions for Reflection

- 1. Was there anything in particular about today’s sermon that blessed and encouraged you?
- 2. Was there anything that you disagree with or found difficult to accept?
- 3. How is the result of Christ similar to Adam’s? How is it different?
- 4. What is justification? Is it only forgiveness?
- 5. What seems to be the Lord’s intention in allowing evil to rise? (see Rom 5:20)
- 6. Can the church afford not to abound with grace? Why is God’s grace the most precious gift the church can give the world?
- 7. How can you live in the light of God’s grace everyday? What small gestures or habits can you take up?
- 8. How can you help your brother/sister in Christ live in the reality of his/her justification?