

**Reading:** Romans 5:12-21

**Theme:** Abounding Grace!

When I worked at Crosby Doors in Swindon, I was sent on a sales course. I remember some of it, mainly the John Cleese training videos! There were also some really old American training films. One of the sales techniques involve comparing products and then showing the plus points of your product and how it was superior. I do not think for one moment that Paul watched these videos, but in 5:12-21 he uses the same process and demonstrates the gloriousness and wonder of all we have and are in the Lord Jesus compared to all we had and were in Adam! This evening I want to draw out some matters from v15 as we begin to see the contrasts, the glorious differences between our relationship to Adam and to the Lord Jesus. Let's see 3 things:

### **1. "How Much More".**

In this passage there are likenesses, comparisons, parallels between Adam and the Lord Jesus Christ. In v14 we are told Adam is a pattern, type of the One to come i.e. the Lord Jesus. As with any type or pattern we expect there to be similarities. We saw some of these last week concerning Adam and Christ as our federal heads, our representatives in our covenant relationship to God. Ted Donnelly in book Heaven and Hell p.87-88 wrote *"One of the most brilliant illustrations of covenant theology is that used by the Puritan divine Thomas Goodwin. In his exposition entitled Christ Set Forth, he explains that 'Adam was reckoned as a common public person, not standing singly or alone for himself, but as representing all mankind to come of him'. In this he was a type of Christ, who is also a representative figure. This is why the apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:47, speaks of Adam and Christ as 'the first man' and 'the second Man' respectively. 'He speaks of them', says Goodwin, 'as if there had never been any more men in the world, nor were ever to be for time to come, except these two. And why? but because these two between them had all the rest of the sons of men hanging at their girdle.'*

*Can you visualize the picture which Goodwin draws for us? He imagines two great giants, one called Adam and the other Christ. Each*

*is wearing an enormous leather 'girdle' or belt with millions of little hooks on it. You and I, and all humanity, are hanging either at Adam's belt or at Christ's belt. There is no third option, no other place for us. And God deals with us only through Adam or through Christ. If you are hanging at Adam's belt, you share in the experience of sinful, fallen Adam, and your entire relationship with God is through him. But if you are hanging at Christ's belt, all God's dealings with you are through Christ. When you received Jesus as your Saviour, you were involved in a massive and momentous transfer. The Almighty himself unhooked you from Adam's belt and hooked you on to Christ's. So, you now have a different Head, a different Mediator, a new Representative. You have passed from Adam into Christ, and whereas God formerly dealt with you only through Adam, he now deals with you only through his Son. You are in Christ unchangeably and for ever."* Yet with any type, pattern there is not only the likeness, a parallel, but the anti-type, the real which surpasses it and is therefore dissimilar and unlike it. This is what Paul begins to draw out here - similar, but gloriously different and Paul uses the words "*how much more*".

Paul says quite clearly the gift is not like the trespass and so we know we are in an area of contrast. There are these contrasts, differences, dissimilarities and the term "*how much more*" carries in it the whole gospel hope and the gospel standing that we, who are believers, have. We are those who have the "*how much mores*" of the gospel in the Lord Jesus.

In Adam our relationship to him was a natural, biological, physical connection. We are descendants of his and in condemnation through our connection with him. In Christ our union is so much more wonderful and incredible with our head. For in Christ, our relationship to Him is unnatural because it is supernatural, not physical, is not of descent or natural factors at all. It is spiritual and all of God's love, grace and mercy. This above all else is a glorious "*how much more*" of the gospel. It is so easy for us to forget that and to so often lose the sense of wonder at it. Yet to be in Christ is something so wonderfully supernatural that it should cause us to be lost in wonder, love and praise.

If we do not learn anything else this evening, may we all fix that in our hearts and minds and thank God for it every day.

Paul gives us more “*how much more*” contrasts. He uses the word translated offence, trespass or transgression in contrast to the word free gift, gift - the word used is one we are familiar with in today’s Christian scene - *χαρισμα* charisma = grace gift, free gift, spiritual gift, gift.

When we think of Adam’s original sin, which is the offence, the trespass. He fell into sin, disobeyed God’s command and law - even with all his amazing privileges there in Eden. Adam sinned and he was warned beforehand that if he disobeyed God’s command, he would surely die. Sin is always repaid - the wages of sin is death. We saw something of this last week when we saw that death was introduced by sin and death comes to all men. The offence, the trespass brought guilt and deserved punishment. We saw that in Adam “*all sinned*” - all die as all are involved in sin’s guilt and its penal consequences.

This is contrasted with the gift “*But the gift is not like the trespass.*” A gift is not earned, nor worked for – else it is then wages! This is a gift; - a ‘free gift’ is how it is translated in most versions except NIV! Imagine we are in a big store and someone was to offer us a “free gift”, adding that we were the 1 millionth customer at the store and they were offering us xxx... and at that point we would try to say “*No, not yet!*” Give me time to work for you, I’ll do this, that and the other. Then the storeowners try to stress that it’s free; no price, all we need to do is to take it as it has been paid for and provided by the store and here it is - it’s amazing, wonderful! I think we would be considered very strange if we did not accept it!

Sadly, people cannot grasp that the gospel is the totally free gift of God - that it is offered to the likes of us freely. It’s not a cheap free gift, for it cost God His own dear Son, He is heaven’s best and it is the highest priced way of salvation because it is exclusive and it is exclusively offered to all whosoever will believe. Why then do people ignore and reject this gift of God? The gift of God is eternal life and that is not just

living for ever, for all people will do that in either heaven or hell! Eternal life is about the highest quality-of-life with God in heaven and not the pain of suffering eternal hell. There could be someone here who has not received this gift, then why not?

We all deserve death and hell for our guilt and sin upon us, but wonderfully God provides the free gift of eternal life. This is an amazing contrast and it is for us, is ours if we are a believer in Christ. We are to remember this and consider how it can be ours, for it can be ours because of:

## **2. Grace Abounding.**

In a sense Paul carries on his comparison and contrast, so we're still in the area of "*how much more*", but this is worth a separate heading. God's justice demanded, brought forth the judgement on Adam and all his descendants. Sin deserved and demanded punishment, but the gospel is not of merit or deserving, for it is of the grace of God. Paul is amazed at this - the offence of one man caused many to die, how much more did God's grace... overflow, abound to the many. Here is an unbelievable contrast and also similarities exist. In Adam we will die; in Christ we shall be saved. Death, physical death is certain, but how much more gloriously certain is eternal life in Christ.

If God's justice and righteousness led to punishment of the trespass, the offence, then how much more will God's grace lead to salvation. As the one is certain, so the other is much more certain. Because of the "*how much more*" of God's abounding grace, there is a certain and glorious contrast between the state of those in Adam and those in Christ.

One writer says this: "*God delights in His love even more than He delights in His justice. Love is His very nature; His nature and being are love. So, we are entitled to bring in the 'much more' in this way. If we can say (as we can) that God's essential and eternal justice lead to man's punishment and death, oh how much more infinitely certain and sure can we be - and especially having seen it all displayed in a living*

*manner in Christ - that His love is really going to do for us that which He has said He will do, namely, give us life.*" [MLJ]

Paul is here in the realm of the grace of God. God's grace = **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**. God gives favour to those who not only do not deserve it, but deserve His wrath and punishment. No wonder John Newton wrote of '*Amazing Grace*' and Philip Doddridge wrote '*Grace 'tis a charming sound*'. We need this grace that overflows, abounds to us in Christ (v15). We who deserve nothing except condemnation and punishment from God, yet have the "*how much more*" of God's grace, John Bunyan's autobiography is '*Grace abounding to the Chief of sinners*' and shows "*the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!*"

Paul is not content to have a basic level of "*how much more*" but he goes on and cranks it up higher and higher until all we seem to be able to do at this view of how much more grace abounding, is to stand open mouthed in amazement in silent adoration, for we see God's grace to us far outweighs any consequence brought on us in Adam's offence, trespass.

That is why we need to remember, recognise even and underline that salvation is a free gift of God's grace from beginning to end. It is not what we do or do not do, what we feel or do not feel, experience or do not experience. Salvation is from the Lord completely and is of His abounding, overflowing grace and it is free to all, whosoever will believe. This grace of God abounds and it has no measure or limit, it overflows. At one time God's dealings were largely, almost exclusively restricted to a nation, but not in the gospel era - it is to all, to the many, to all who will believe, "*But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.*" (v20 AV) - roll-on v20 - what a theme to preach on! God's grace has no limit for our day by day lives.

God's grace achieves great and glorious things in us. It achieves not only pardon and forgiveness, it makes us righteous, clean, pure, spotless; it gives us Jesus' righteousness and puts us in union with Him

and His life; it makes us God's sons and daughters; it gives us the certainty of a home in heaven. Grace does, as we sang a couple of weeks ago, give us *"more blessings than their father lost"*. There was Adam in his pre-fall privileged position - in his innocence, walking with his Creator, still having no sin, but with an absence of positive righteousness, still having to achieve immortality, still under the situation of do and live.

Yet in Christ, by God's grace, all our sin is removed and we are credited with Christ's beautiful and glorious positive righteousness; we are secure in Him, we are now in Christ forever and have a place reserved for us in heaven; we are in a covenant of grace and not in a state of probation and liable to fall; one day we shall be glorified (Romans 8:29-30; 38-39). Ted Donnelly H & H p.91 *"Have you ever thought of that? You are in Christ for ever. You will always be where he is. His glory will be your glory. That is why he himself says, 'To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne' (Rev. 3:21). In Paul's words, we are 'heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ' (Rom. 8:17). The devil knew that he was lying when he promised Eve, 'You will be like God' (Gen. 3:5). But in fact, in one sense he spoke more truly than he could have imagined. The divide between creature and Creator will never be lessened. God will always be God and we will always be the work of his hands. Yet it is a fact that in Christ we are united to the second Person in the Godhead, raised to an astonishing intimacy with the Almighty.*

*That is why Augustine could dare to say of the disobedience of Adam and Eve, 'O happy sin!' He meant that in Christ the tribes of Adam boast more blessings than their father lost. Believers are raised to greater heights than if man had never sinned, for God has come down to earth, has become one of us and has taken us into himself.*

*Jesus Christ is at the heart of heaven's glory. We are only at the fringes of grasping what is involved in our being raised and exalted in him. But of this we can be sure: in heaven He will – and will remain – more close and more precious to us than ever."*

All this is “*through the one man, Jesus Christ*” - Paul is again centring his and our attention on Christ! For all of God’s grace and grace gifts come to us in and through Christ. Outside of Him not only are we still in Adam and therefore condemned in Adam, but we are strangers to God’s grace. We stand in Adam in need of God’s grace in the gift of grace that comes by the one-man Jesus Christ - emphasis here is on His humanity in the incarnation and His deity. We are not to be content until we are in Christ and know God’s grace abounding to us personally. Those of us who are believers, what a theme to dwell on and to take up in praise and prayer.

### **3. All and the Many.**

Paul uses the term “all” and “many” or more correctly “the many” in v12-21 a number of times. Sadly, some people come to this passage and say that everyone will be saved by what Jesus did. They quote v18 as a proof verse. This is called “universalism”. It is an idea that many like and push - God is love and it doesn’t matter how we live; His love will see us all aright in the end. You will meet such ones, so push them a little bit by asking questions about the mass murderers, the despots of history, those who peddle pornography, those who are child abusers, molesters and the like. Ask them about God’s justice, or ask about the fact that the One who warned the most about hell and judgement, was the Lord Jesus Himself.

When Paul is using these terms in this passage, he uses them in the context of what he has **already written** and we are to be most careful as a congregation, as hearers, as readers, as preachers and teachers of God’s word not to allow a verse, or part of a verse, to be taken and ripped out of context. Someone once said “*A text taken out of context only leaves us with a con*”!

Paul has been writing of those in Christ, of those who have received the gift of God’s abounding grace through the Lord Jesus, of those who are justified by faith and therefore at peace with God. Personally, I wish Paul had kept the word “all” for “*all mankind in Adam*” and the words

“the many” for “*the many who believe in the Lord Jesus and are therefore in Christ*”. Paul uses the terms interchangeably - causing this preacher and many others a headache to sort out who is who! It is clear - all in Adam are guilty before God, under God’s condemnation. These are many and innumerable. All of us are born in this state and condition and cannot do anything about it. Yes, life is wonderful, there many joys and blessings to be enjoyed, but if people are still in Adam, they have no hope of eternal life in their natural state.

Thankfully, God’s grace is abounding and overflowing to such ones and **all who believe** in the Lord Jesus as their Saviour are saved, justified, have peace with God and a certain home secure and reserved for them in heaven.

The terms “all” and “the many” refer to the one we are in connection with. All in Adam, the many in Adam are lost and face an angry God; all in Christ, the many who believe are safe and secure in Him and have a reconciled God and the how much mores of the passage and the gospel are theirs! Which are you this evening? The difference is so important for both time and eternity! The gospel offers freely to us all the ‘*how much mores*’ of God’s amazing grace. May we all know such and then as believers live it out with wondrous amazement and sweet delight.