

How Much More

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Unashamed - A Study of Romans / Romans 5:15–21

Adam gave us a mess. Christ gives us "much more." In this week's sermon, we conclude Romans, chapter 5. Here, Paul puts Adam and Christ side by side. Not to compare them evenly, but to show that grace wins, and wins big. One man's disobedience brought condemnation and death. One man's obedience brings justification and life. And no matter how much sin piles up, grace outpaces it every time.

Introduction

- Christmas morning, 2022. Sun Prairie, Wisconsin.
 - It's not yet seven o'clock.
 - Callie Blue is three hours into a shift nobody else wanted.
 - And as you can imagine, the dining room is nearly empty.
 - Coffee. Hash browns.
 - The quiet of a town still mostly asleep.
- A man named Michael Johnson, who runs the Boys & Girls Clubs of Dane County, came into the restaurant.
 - She thought that it was just a random encounter. But it was much more than that.
 - Johnson and his organization raise money all year.
 - Then, at Christmas, they give it away to people who work hard and rarely get noticed for it.
 - And Johnson had gotten word about Callie.
- He ordered a Christmas breakfast and watched how Callie treated people before he decided anything.
 - He chatted with her for a long time - she was warm and unhurried.

- That was enough for him.
- He decided she'd get the biggest tip of the day.
- He paid his bill. Seventeen dollars.
 - He walked out. It was only later, when Callie went to clear the check, that she found what he'd left.
 - A thousand dollars. On a seventeen-dollar tab.
 - She thought it had to be a mistake.
- It wasn't a mistake. It was the plan all along.
- That points us toward what Paul is doing in [Romans 5:15–21](#).
 - But before we make the connection, we need to be clear about where the comparison breaks down.
 - Callie was nominated because someone had noticed her.
 - Johnson watched how she treated people, saw something admirable in her, and then decided to give her the largest tip of the day.
- That is not why God gives us grace.
 - God did not watch us from a distance, discover something admirable, and decide that we deserved his favor.
 - Paul has already told us exactly what God saw when he came for us: we were weak. Ungodly. Sinners. Enemies.
- Callie received an unexpectedly generous reward.
 - In Christ, guilty people receive an entirely undeserved rescue.
 - God himself bore its cost by giving his Son, and the Son gave himself for us.
- So the thousand-dollar tip gives us only a glimpse of Paul's point: the gift went far beyond anything ordinary fairness required.
 - But God's grace is infinitely greater.

- Adam's trespass brought condemnation.
- Christ's obedience brings justification and life to all who receives his gift.
- Again and again, Paul describes it with two words: "much more."
- And that is where we are headed this morning. Let's turn our attention to [Romans 5](#).

Scripture Reading

Romans 5:15–21 ESV

¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the trespass. 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.

¹⁶ And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.

¹⁷ For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

²⁰ Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- When we look back at where this chapter has brought us, we remember that it opened with peace.

- Access into grace.
- Hope that doesn't put us to shame.
- We stood in grace — we didn't grovel for it.
- Then Paul went further back.
 - He told us when Christ died for us.
 - Not after we cleaned up. Not once we deserved it.
 - While we were still weak. Still ungodly. Still sinners. Still enemies.
- Then Paul went further back still. He asked a harder question. Why did we need saving in the first place?
 - And he took us all the way to the beginning.
 - One man. One trespass.
 - Death, spreading to everyone, reigning over the whole human race — even before there was a law to break.
- So here's where we are.
 - We've seen the peace grace brings.
 - We've seen the timing of grace.
 - We've seen the problem grace has to solve.
- Now Paul does something bigger than all of that.
 - He steps back and puts two men on the stage at the same time.
 - Adam. And Christ.
 - One brought death. One brings life.
 - And Paul wants you to see that these two men are not equal and opposite.
 - It's not a fair fight.
 - It was never supposed to be one.

- Like a thousand dollar tip on a \$17 tab, what Jesus offers is far greater than what Adam took away. That is because...

The Gift is Much More Than the Trespass (vv. 10, 15–17)

- If you go back to v. 10, and then look in v. 15 and 17, you'll see that the Apostle Paul uses a refrain, a simple two-word statement that carries a LOT of weight...much more.
- In v. 10, Paul says: [Romans 5:10](#) “10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.”
 - If you remember from a couple of weeks ago, God did the hard thing for us while we were still enemies.
 - He reconciled us to himself before we could contribute anything to that transaction.
 - He moved the needle while we were still actively trying to hold the needle steady.
 - If God reconciled us when we were his enemies, how much more certain is it that he will bring his reconciled people safely to the end through the risen life of his Son?
 - We will certainly still struggle with sin.
 - We will continually do battle with our flesh.
 - But our disposition toward the LORD is very different now that we are reconciled rather than being at enmity with God.
- In v. 15, Paul said: [Romans 5:15](#) “15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. 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.”
 - One man sinned. That's all it took.
 - Adam's trespass didn't stay Adam's problem.

- It reached forward and brought the whole human race represented by Adam under sin and death.
- Death spread. Not because we each individually earned it on our own.
- Because we were all connected to the one who brought it.
- That's the bad news. Here's the "much more."
 - If one man's failure was enough to bring death to many, how much more is one man's gift enough to bring grace to many?
 - Adam had one trespass.
 - Jesus Christ had one act of perfect obedience.
 - And Paul says the grace flowing from that one act doesn't just cover the damage.
 - It abounds. It overflows.
 - The math isn't even. It was never supposed to be.
- When you get to v. 16, the comparison gets much sharper.
 - Adam's one act of transgression brought about the fall.
 - And the judgment that followed was total.
 - Condemnation for everyone connected to him.
- But look at what Christ's gift had to overcome.
 - Not one trespass. Many trespasses.
 - An uncountable multitude of trespasses.
 - The accumulated guilt of everyone Christ justifies.
 - And the free gift doesn't just cancel out one.
 - It reaches past all of them and brings justification.
- One sin was all it took for judgment to hand down condemnation.
 - But grace doesn't play by that math.

- It doesn't matter how many trespasses pile up — the free gift doesn't just outweigh them.
- It overrules the whole verdict and hands down justification instead.
- But then we get to the third “much more” in v. 17 [Romans 5:17](#) "For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ."
 - This is the one that should stop you.
 - Because of one man, death reigned.
 - Not just existed. Not just visited. Reigned.
 - Sat on a throne.
 - Ruled over the whole human race in Adam, with no human power capable of escaping it.
 - That's what we spent last Sunday talking about.
- But now Paul says: much more.
 - If death could reign through one man's failure, how much more will those who receive grace reign through one man's righteousness?
 - Notice what changes.
 - We're not just rescued from death's reign.
 - We're given a reign of our own. Not death ruling over us.
 - Life, ruling through us, because of what Christ did.
- Death didn't just visit the human race because of Adam.
 - It ruled it.
 - Everyone represented by Adam came under that reign, with no power to deliver themselves from it.
- Christ's one act of obedience doesn't just end that.

- Paul says something more specific: those who receive grace will reign in life.
- Not just survive it. Not just escape death's rule.
- Reign — the same word Paul just used for death itself.
- Through Christ, we have already been delivered from death's dominion, and we already possess eternal life.
- But Paul's promise reaches its fullness into the future: when Christ renews creation, those united to him will reign with him.
- What exactly does that mean, though? To "reign in life"?
 - This is a promise that runs all through Scripture.
 - Revelation pictures it explicitly — the redeemed will "reign forever and ever" in the new creation.
 - Paul tells Timothy the same thing: "if we endure, we will also reign with him."
 - Paul is giving us a preview of something he will develop more fully in [Romans 8](#).
 - It's describing what it actually means to be a co-heir with Christ.
- Think about what an heir inherits.
 - Not just a gift, sitting off to the side. A share in everything that belongs to the one who gave it.
 - If Christ reigns — and he does, right now, seated at the right hand of the Father — then those who belong to him don't just watch that reign from a distance.
 - They share in it. That's what "co-heir" means in [Romans 8](#).
 - Not spectators. Participants.
- So when Paul says we will reign in life, he's not handing out a vague promotion.

- He's telling you that the future God has planned for you is not a diminished existence — floating around, disembodied, waiting on eternity.
- It's an exalted one.
- A restored creation, where the corruption and decay that came in through Adam are undone completely, and those who belong to Christ don't just survive that new world.
- They reign in it, under Christ, the way humanity was always meant to.
- That's the answer to Adam's failure. Adam was given dominion over creation in the beginning — [Genesis 1](#), "have dominion" — and he lost it.
 - He handed the reign over to sin and death instead. Christ doesn't just forgive that failure.
 - He restores what was lost and gives it back, in full, to everyone united to him.
 - Reigning in life is dominion regained.
 - It's Eden's original purpose for humanity, finally realized, because the one man who never lost it shares it with everyone who's his.
- That's how much more Christ accomplished over what Adam took away.
- So what do you do with that this morning?
 - Some of you walked in here carrying something specific.
 - A failure you've never told anyone.
 - A sin you're sure disqualifies you more than the ordinary ones.
 - You've done the math in your head a hundred times, and you keep coming up condemned.
- Here's what verse 16 already told you.
 - Grace was never sized to cover only the respectable sins.

- Christ's gift has already overcome the accumulated guilt of everyone he justifies.
- It is sufficient for yours too.
- You didn't surprise God with your sin. You haven't discovered the one trespass Christ cannot forgive.
 - If you belong to Christ, your sin is not greater than his grace.
 - But grace does not invite you to keep hiding it.
 - Grace gives you the freedom to bring it into the light—to confess it, turn from it, and, where necessary, seek help from another believer.
 - You can tell the truth about your sin because Christ has already answered the condemnation you fear.
- And some of you are just tired.
 - Worn down by a diagnosis, a job loss, a year (or a decade) that didn't go the way you planned.
 - Verse 17 has something for you too.
 - You are not just surviving your days until death finally gets its way.
 - If you belong to Christ, you are being prepared to reign.
 - That's not a phrase for a greeting card.
 - That should change how you carry a hard week.
 - You're not just spending your life.
 - God is preparing you for resurrection, restored creation, and life reigning with Christ.

Two Men, Two Very Different Outcomes (vv. 18–19)

- Everything Paul said in verses 15 through 17 was a "much more" argument.
 - Grace outweighs the trespass.

- Grace overwhelms it.
- Grace does more than Adam ever did.
- But now Paul stops arguing that grace is bigger.
 - He steps back and shows you something underneath the whole argument — the principle that made it possible in the first place.
 - [Romans 5:18](#) "Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men."
- Notice what Paul isn't doing here. He's not saying "much more" again.
 - He's saying "as this thing, so that thing."
 - That's not an escalation. That's a match.
 - A straight line drawn between two things.
- One trespass. One man.
 - And condemnation lands on everyone connected to him.
- One act of righteousness. One man.
 - And justification and life land on everyone connected to him.
- Same structure. Same mechanism.
 - Completely opposite outcome, because it's a completely different man standing at the head of it.
 - [Romans 5:19](#) "For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."
- Look closely at that word "made."
 - Paul isn't saying Adam set a bad example, and everybody since has followed his lead.
 - He's not saying Christ is a good influence, and if you watch him closely enough, some of that righteousness rubs off.

- That would make this whole passage about imitation.
- Paul says something much more specific.
 - Made. Constituted. Appointed a status.
 - Adam's one act of disobedience didn't just damage the world and leave the rest of us to sin our way into condemnation individually.
 - Adam's one act made us sinners — before you ever told your first lie, before you ever lost your temper, before you ever wanted something that wasn't yours.
 - You were born already standing in Adam.
- And then you spent your whole life proving it was true.
 - You didn't just inherit the condition.
 - You confirmed it, every time you sinned on your own.
 - Your sins did not create your solidarity with Adam, but they revealed it and made you personally guilty.
 - The inherited condition and the personal record agree: we are sinners by nature and by choice.
 - Paul already said it back in verse 12 — death spread to everyone, "because all sinned."
 - Not because Adam sinned and we got stuck holding the bag for something we'd never actually do ourselves.
 - Because Adam sinned, and every one of us since has proven, in our own choices, that we belong to him.
- That's not unfair. That's just honest.
 - Nobody can stand before God and say, "I was condemned for Adam's sin alone — I never did anything to deserve it myself."
 - You did. I did.

- But hold onto that for one more verse, because Paul is about to use the exact same logic to hand you the best news you've ever heard.
 - If Adam's one act can make many people sinners — without their vote, without their input, without their individual contribution — then Christ's one act of obedience can make many people righteous the same way.
 - Not because they were good enough.
 - Not because they earned it one careful choice at a time.
 - Because they're connected to him.
- This is the hinge the entire gospel swings on.
 - Your own record is real. It counts.
 - Every sin you've ever committed is genuinely yours, and it genuinely counts against you — Paul just spent a whole verse making sure you couldn't wriggle out of that.
- But your record was never the deciding factor in whose side of the ledger you land on.
 - That was decided by who you belong to.
 - Every person alive right now is standing under one of two men — Adam or Christ — and that connection is what determines whether your record, real as it is, gets answered with condemnation or covered by justification.
 - You didn't inherit your standing before God by accident, and you don't escape it by trying harder.
 - You escape it by being joined to a different head.
 - A different representative.
 - Someone whose one act of obedience is credited to you the same way Adam's one act of disobedience already is.
- What does that mean for you this week?

- First, stop building a case for yourself before God.
 - Standing in Adam, that case was already lost before you began—and your own sins have only confirmed the verdict.
 - Trying harder cannot turn condemnation into justification.
 - Set the case down. Your hope is not a better record of your own, but the righteousness of Christ received by faith.
- Second, and this one's harder.
 - Stop measuring yourself against the person who seems to have it more together than you.
 - The mom who seems calmer.
 - The coworker who seems more disciplined.
 - The guy in the pew ahead of you who seems like he's got a cleaner record than yours.
 - Nobody in this room is right with God because they outran Adam on their own effort.
 - Every person who's right with God is right with God for the exact same reason:
 - They are united to Christ by grace through faith.
- And how are sinners joined to Christ?
 - Not through merit or moral improvement, but by grace, through faith.
 - The Spirit unites us to Christ, so that his righteousness becomes our standing before God.
 - And in this union with Christ and our new standing before God, we can see that...

Grace Reigns (vv. 20–21)

- [Romans 5:20](#): “Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.”

- Here's a question worth asking.
 - If grace is this much bigger than sin, why did God give the law? Wouldn't the law just get in the way?
 - Paul says the law "came in."
 - It entered a story that was already unfolding.
 - Sin was already present and active before Moses ever climbed the mountain.
 - The law did not create the problem. It exposed it.
- But Paul says something even stronger: the law came in "to increase the trespass."
 - Not to reduce it. Not to cure it. To increase it.
 - The law took sin that was already present and identified it as direct transgression against God's command.
 - It dragged sin into the light.
 - It gave sin a name and made our accountability unmistakable.
- That should sound familiar.
 - We encountered this earlier in [Romans 3](#).
 - Through the law comes the knowledge of sin.
 - The law shuts every mouth and holds the whole world accountable to God.
- The law was never given as a ladder by which sinners could climb into justification.
 - The law is holy and good, but when its holy command meets fallen human hearts, sin becomes identifiable transgression.
 - Our guilt is exposed, our accountability increases, and our rebellion is even provoked.
- The problem is not the law. The problem is the sin within us.

- The law diagnoses and exposes what it cannot cure.
- So when the law exposes and even aggravates the trespass, where does that leave guilty people like us?
- Paul's answer is the whole reason this passage exists:
- "But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more."
- Look at the word Paul uses here.
 - It is not the same word he used back in verse 15. There, grace "abounded."
 - Here, Paul uses a stronger word.
 - It means something closer to "super-abounded."
 - Grace did not merely keep pace with sin. It flooded past it.
- The law brings sin into the light.
 - It exposes the depth of our guilt and shows us how far the problem reaches.
 - But wherever sin increases, grace arrives already greater.
- Sin increases. Grace super-increases.
 - That does not mean grace automatically saves everyone regardless of whether they are united to Christ.
 - It means that for everyone who receives God's gift in Christ, sin can never become greater than the grace that saves them.
- There is no sin so deep that Christ's grace cannot reach it.
 - There is no record so long that his righteousness cannot answer it.
 - There is no condemnation remaining for the person who is united to Jesus Christ.
- That leads to Paul's final word in this chapter.

- [Romans 5:21](#): “So that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
- Sin reigned in death.
- A throne. A king.
- Absolute rule over the whole human race in Adam, with no human power capable of overthrowing it.
- But now Paul uses that same word for something else.
 - Grace also reigns.
 - Not “grace helps.” Not “grace offers advice.” Grace reigns.
 - It reigns through righteousness.
 - It leads to eternal life.
 - And it comes entirely through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- Grace reigns through righteousness because Christ’s righteousness stands behind it.
 - God does not ignore sin or pretend that guilt does not matter.
 - Sin has been answered through the righteous obedience and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.
- And the life grace gives is eternal.
 - It is not a temporary reprieve.
 - It is not probation.
 - It is life that begins now and will be brought to completion in the resurrection.
- All of it flows through the finished work of Jesus Christ—not through anything we contribute.

Invitation

- So here's where [Romans 5](#) leaves us.
- Every person in this room is connected to one of two men.
 - By birth, you were joined to Adam, and his one act made you a sinner before you ever did anything yourself.
 - You didn't choose it...you were born into it.
- But that's not where the story ends.
 - There's another man.
 - His one act of obedience is offered to you the same way Adam's disobedience already reached you — not earned one careful choice at a time, but received.
- Grace reigns.
 - Grace does not wait for you to make yourself worthy.
 - It does not demand that you repair your record before coming to Christ.
 - It comes as a gift, and that gift is received by faith.
 - For everyone united to Christ, grace is already greater than every sin it has come to forgive.
- So the question this morning isn't whether your sin is too big for grace.
 - It isn't.
 - The question is which man you're standing under.
- If you've never turned to Christ, hear this.
 - You are, right now, standing under Adam — not because of a technicality, but because you've lived it out yourself, in ways you know better than anyone else in this room.
 - Turn from trying to fix your own standing before God.
 - Trust the one man whose obedience is enough to move you from condemnation to justification.

- And if you are already in Christ, let this morning do more than inform you.
 - Death no longer has the final word over you.
 - Sin's dominion has been broken.
 - You possess eternal life now, and when Christ renews creation, you will reign in life with him.
 - Walk out of this room like someone who belongs to that King.
- Sin once reigned over you in death.
 - But if you are in Christ, grace reigns over you now—and grace will bring you all the way to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.