

Grace is Greater Than, Rom.5:12-21

#11 Pax Romana

◆ One way to see something better is to see it alongside something like it but different. Take cars for example. No offense intended, but ask your average girl what kind of car I drive and she will tell you its “a blue car.” Well two of my sons also drive a “blue car”. If we would take two of them and set them next to each other we’d start to see some similarities: they’re both blue, they’re both Mazdas, they both have 4 wheels, not 5 unless you count the steering wheel; they both have black seats. So they are like each other, in fact they are only one year apart. Running down the road even a guy might have to look twice to tell what model it is. But put them side by side and you begin to notice more things. One is longer and larger. One has a moon-roof, the other doesn’t. One has painted calipers, the other’s are rusty. One has black leatherette seats while the other has black cloth seats. One has 60 series tires and the other has low profile 40 series. One is a Mazda 3, while the other is a Mazda 6. But in the end it remains true, as every woman knows, that both are in fact “blue cars” after all. One is a type of the other.

◆ This is what Paul is doing in our text. He is comparing two similar, but differing people that both have far-reaching effects and consequences on all of humanity, world history, and also the cosmos. Adam is one, who is a “type” (tupos) of the one to come, namely, Christ. Let’s remember where we’ve been. Paul started out announcing the gospel (good news) that is “the

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power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (1:16). Next from chapter 1:18-3:20 he illustrates the extent of sin & evil within all people, pagan and Israelite alike, religious and non-religious. Conclusion? Every one of us is hopelessly lost and destined for judgement. Then from 3:21-5:21, which includes our text, Paul is showing that there is a righteousness provided by God, a way out of the evil nature down deep inside every human. That right standing with the God of the universe comes as a gift through the sacrificial death of Jesus. We receive it by faith in him, not by somehow amassing enough good to outweigh our bad, which is impossible anyway. Now he is giving us assurance. He is teaching us to rejoice in just how deep and wide, and long and high is the love of Christ! As he says in another letter...

◆ *"And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." Ephesians 3:17-19, NIV.*

◆ That's what our text is after.

◆ **1. Christ is the one universal solution to mankind's universal problem of evil.** We need to understand that there are basically only two universal figures in history to be lined up on the topic of righteousness before God. And one of them is not the Roman Caesar, which the Romans considered a god. No.

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One is the first man, Adam, in whom all of us sinned as a race. And the only other universal figure is Jesus, through whom everyone who hopes to be made right before God must go. Let's look at each.

◆**A.** What exactly was the consequence of Adam's actions on all who are in Adam?

◆v15 *"the many died by the trespass of the one man."*

◆Now you might have missed that so Paul repeats himself...

◆v16 *"The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation"*

◆v17 *"by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man"*

◆v18 *"the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men,*

◆v19 *"through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners."*

◆Hopefully now we haven't missed it. John Piper puts it, "the deepest problem is that behind all our depravity and all our guilt and all our sinning, there is a deep mysterious connection with Adam whose sin became our sin and whose judgment became our judgment." We looked at this "original sin" last time.

◆Now, because the problem is connected all the way back to our very first parent, it has universal significance. We cannot claim that a solution to this sin problem, (Roman's message: the gospel of God, the fact that we can be justified before God

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through faith in the obedience of Christ for us, apart from any goodness of our own) – we cannot claim that this is just a solution_for some people but not others, or that it’s a Western notion, or a 15th Century concept or merely European. No, sin is an all humanity problem because it started with the first human, Adam. Adam is the father of the French. He is the father of the Japanese. The North Koreans come from Adam. The Mongolian people come from Adam. Adam’s line includes Indians, ancient Mayan civilizations and Aussie folks down-under, and everybody up-over as well. And the solution is also a humanity-wide solution through the second Adam, Christ.

◆**B.** Now for the comparison. Jesus gift. What is the gift and what does it mean? The gift is The doctrine of justification by faith and it is not limited to any one people group, or any one place, or any one time in history. No, it is relevant to all people in all times everywhere. It is the only remedy for the damage that all people everywhere have experienced. Now, if you were heard to pray in public for the salvation of a muslim or a jew, it is likely somebody would stomp their feet and tell you that that’s intolerant, and offensive, and that respecting someone’s right to religion also means you must allow that everyone can be right at the same time, though they have mutually exclusive beliefs. I know it’s nonsensical, but it is certainly the mantra of our day.

◆The fact remains however, and Paul is showing us that Jesus Christ is not the Christian god alongside the Muslim god and the

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Hindu god and the Jewish god. He is the universal Lord and Savior, for everything we got from Adam, and there is no other. This is a central theme of Romans, by the way, that Jesus is Lord over all, and Caesar is not, and neither is any other supposed god or ruler. (the tweet of the day in Rome in the First Century went literally like this: "Caesar is Lord, there is no other.")

◆ Now, I must warn you, to believe that Jesus is the Lord, the one true God will not go well on a sinful planet. Fox News reported Mar 5 "If you've ever wished someone a "Merry Christmas" or said "God bless you" when someone sneezes, you've committed an act of "Islamomistic microaggressions," according to college librarians at a Massachusetts college. They have published The Anti-Oppression Library Guide at Simmons College in Boston which argues "people who follow Christianity have institutionalized power," or "Christian privilege," which is demonstrated when they "expect to have time off work to celebrate religious holidays" or worship without fear of violence or threats. The guide also argues that Christians suffer from "Christian fragility" and may become angry, hostile, or defensive during conversations about religion because Christians lack the skills for constructive engagement with other religions.

◆ Christianity is not politically correct in contemporary American culture. Neither was it in Roman culture in Paul's

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day as we have seen previously. Their micro aggressions got them crucified and fed to wild animals for sport. Still they faced even death not out of aggression but out of a joyful faith that Jesus was the saving God. And it is clear they did not hide the joy of their faith from the Roman citizens around them! I encourage every Christian here to be the same. God has shown us our universal solution to man's depravity: himself. If it's true, it needs to be shared. We need to share it.

◆ **C.** One more piece of this. The righteousness from God that comes by faith is in fact universal, but not universalism. That is, everyone needs the righteousness from God by faith in Jesus no matter who you are. But the righteousness from God that comes by faith in Jesus Christ is not universal in the sense that everyone gets it no matter what, or that the religion of Jesus is the same thing as all other religions as well. Everybody is right. Everybody goes to heaven, or eternal bliss. It's all automatic. Some might be tempted to conclude this based on our text and the parallel of Adam and Christ. Verse 18 sounds that way.

◆ "Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men."
Romans 5:18, NIV.

◆ Isn't it an exact parallel? Not at all. Many of Paul's writings and the rest of the Scriptures preclude such. We must read "all men"

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as all men without distinction, not without exception. That is, all types, all nationalities, all ages, men, women, boys and girls. In that same way, Christ's righteousness is imputed to "all men/people" without distinction of tribe, nation, or tongue. Now it is also true Adam affected "all men" without exception, for all men are connected to Adam. Likewise, all that are connected to Christ and only those who are connected to Christ (or "in Christ") receive his gift of righteousness.

◆ "For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will *those who receive* God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ." Romans 5:17, NIV.

◆ It's also clear in the parallel text:

◆ "For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him." 1 Corinthians 15:21-23, NIV.

◆ **D.** Application: This is a glorious truth to be shared, friends.

There is another Adam who can affect all of humanity. He can forgive your sinning nature, and stop its power. Through faith in him, you can receive the gift of life, here and in eternity! Your neighbor needs to know this good news. Your coworker has no other option either. Jesus is the Second Adam. He can give you new life. Come to him! Share him.

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◆ **2. God's gift is far greater than my trespass.** While Paul shows similarities between Adam and Christ, he also demonstrates how they differ. Look.

◆ One deed was done for self (Adam and Eve wanted to be like God and so disobeyed in the Garden), the other was self-sacrificing (Christ obeyed all the way to death.)

◆ One resulted in death, the other in life v15

◆ One resulted in condemnation for all, the other in justification 16,

◆ One made us slaves, the other made us kings 17

◆ One broke the law, the other was an act of righteousness, v18

◆ In summary, (v20b lit. where sin "increased", grace "uber-super-abounded" upeper-perisseuw. Not the same word!) God's gift of life to sinners is so much more than, greater than, more powerful than, more hopeful than, more everything than our sin, great as it seems at times! God kept his promise in Genesis, but he did not just pull the Adam problem up out of the valley and set him back where he was before. No, he put Adam's family up on a mountain peak!

◆ Before, death was on the throne (14). Now believers are on the throne (17)!

◆ Before sin was the ruler (21), but now Grace is the ruler (21)!

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◆**A.** And what was the Adam problem? The sin of Adam led to cursed earth (adamah), the brokenness of the cosmos. It led to pain in families, childbearing, husband-wife relationships. The Adam problem is huge. But God's grace is "HUGER"! Recall Isaiah's prophecies: deserts will bloom again. Creek beds will fill. Lions will lie peacefully with lambs. No more harm, tears, pain. We shall run and not be weary...

◆**B.** Sometimes we just don't believe it. We play the fool and then feel ashamed and want to hide, and are sure nobody in the world would love us if they knew. Sin seems everywhere and with every news story we get more depressed. Grace might be out there. Some Christians think there is maybe just about an even balance out there in life. There is gross behavior out there, teachers who abuse little kids, students that shoot each other, leaders that lie, tragedy and pain -and well, there is God's grace that can just about match it, hopefully! There will probably be a few good days coming somewhere, sometime. Maybe grace can grab on to evil and drag it to a stop! No, bad theology. Not Paul's for sure. NT Wright put it, "It is not the case that God and Satan are equal and opposite. Satan is a trivial being in God's world. He fools human beings into thinking he's more powerful than he is." Christ's work doesn't just halt Adam's, it completely reverses and overwhelms it. It covers our condemnation, and it uplifts our life to a higher level. If Adam's sin affected our nature as well as Planet Earth itself, what do you expect Jesus' gift of justification

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is doing and will do to us and nature as well? We are on the way to turning out like Jesus!

◆What is Jesus like? Well, resurrected for one! Was dead, now can't die. Talks to wind and waves and trees and they do what he says. Walks on water. Doesn't need doors. Still enjoys a meal. Command angels. Heals diseases. This is where we are going in Christ. This is good news. This is the hope of glory (v2). We need to tell people. We need to tell ourselves. We need to sing it, remember it.

◆**Conclusion:** Like we compared two blue cars at the beginning, Paul is comparing two Adams. But the contrast is far greater than that of the cars. If Adam was one Mazda, Christ is a Lamborghini the size of Texas. If Adam was the base model, Christ is the Grand Touring edition. Christ is everything you and I were intended to be and he intends to finish that in us! So be gone discouragement. Be gone frustration. Be gone depression. Be gone temptations. We rebuke you, for our God is greater. And even if we die, we win!