

# A GIFT HAS BEEN GIVEN

## *The Gift That Changes Everything*

Romans Series  
PBC 2025

Text: Romans 5:12-21

*Romans 5:12-21 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— <sup>13</sup> for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. <sup>14</sup> Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.*

*<sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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.*

*<sup>18</sup> Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, <sup>21</sup> so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

### Introduction:

If you could select one passage in the entire NT to master that would most affirm and explain your faith, provide the context for how you experience your faith, and strengthen your faith so that the trials and storms of life don't shake or destroy it – choose to master the truths found in this passage! If Romans is the Mt Everest of the NT, then Romans 5:12-21 is the foundational bedrock supporting the entire mountain! When you make the climb and stand at the peak, this passage is the explanation for the stunning spiritual vista you see from the top!

***1. This passage is essential to the Christian faith because it explains how we receive eternal life!***

- Doctrinally, it explains the core of salvation—how a man is rescued from the wrath of God and delivered from the penalty of sin.
- Theologically, it explains how we personally relate to the core aspects of our salvation – sin, condemnation, justification, salvation, sanctification, adoption, and glorification.

***2. This passage is essential to the Christian life because it shows us how to fully experience new life in Christ.***

- Personally, it explains our security and growth in our faith—how we know we are eternally saved from God's wrath and how we can grow in His grace.
- Relationally, it describes how we experience and find joy in our faith.
- Experientially, it affirms and confirms that we are forgiven and free because of Christ and that we reign over sin and death because we are now “in Christ.”

***3. This passage is crucial to the Christian mission because it explains what we should do with our lives.***

- Missionally, it guides and empowers us to live and share our faith in an attractive and effective way.

***4. This passage is foundational to our relationship with God because it reveals His heart for us and connects us to His grace in powerful, unshakeable ways.***

- If you want to know God’s righteous character, look at the penalty He had to impose on Adam and his race on account of just one trespass.
- But If you want to know God’s gracious heart, look at the gift He gave to Adam and his race despite a multitude of trespasses!
- It is true that God is righteous and just . . . but that is not all that He is. He is much more! He is abundantly merciful, amazingly gracious, and astonishingly generous – and nothing displays these three realities more than the gift He gave the sinning sons of Adam.

Receiving a gift from someone who knows you well speaks volumes about the heart of the “giver” of the gift. The fact they gave you a gift reminds of you’re their affection for you. The nature of the gift reveals their generosity toward you. But the purpose and intent of the gift speaks to their knowledge of you as well as their desire for you.

**Illustration:** When you know you have to give a gift to someone, and you don’t know what to give, there are go-to gifts that require little thought and minimal investment that you can wrap up and put under the tree!

- Gift cards – (Starbucks, Amazon, Prepaid Visa, or DoorDash)
- Lovely Gourmet Food baskets or a tin of Christmas snacks
- Sox or a Santa Christmas tie
- Picture frame
- The dreaded Christmas fruit cake that one of your relatives sends you every year!
- Or some other fairly useless item that at least lets the person know they made your gift list this year.

We’ve all received gifts like this at Christmas. However, we also know what it’s like to get a gift from someone who put thought and effort into choosing something that wasn’t just practical but also enjoyable and meaningful! When you receive a gift like that, something stirs in your heart toward the giver, even if just for a moment.

Five times in these three verses, Paul describes a gift that God gave us through Christ. Paul is not doing this merely to add more information to our theological knowledge base. He aims to reveal something about the Giver of the gift so that we may love Him more and enjoy the abundant life the gift is meant to provide—one that goes beyond forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

To help us understand the immensity of God’s love for us, I want to focus on five observations Paul makes in this text and on one application that emerges from them.

## **I. The Description of the Gift (v. 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.*

In the three verses that precede our section, Paul explains how sin and death entered the world and became the common experience of all men.

He also reminds us that sin is more than an action we commit and death is more than an event we experience. They are hostile ruling powers that reign over us and hold us in harsh bondage. In chapter six, Paul tells describes every sinner as under the domain and dominion of death (6:9, 23a) and living as slaves to a brutal master, Sin (6:16-23b).

And the devastating reign of sin and the brutal dominion of death began with one single act committed by one specific individual – Adam (5:12).

The term Paul uses to describe and define that act in verse 15 is “trespass.” Earlier, he described that act as “sin” (v. 12) because it failed to meet God’s moral expectations, and as “transgression” (v. 14) because it crossed a clear boundary set by God. Here, he refers to this act as a “trespass” or false step because it was foolish and unwise – not because Adam lacked intelligence, but because he intentionally set aside the Word of God and rejected the Wisdom of God expressed in that Word!

However, when Paul goes to describe the gift (5x in these verses) that came through the 2<sup>nd</sup> Adam (Christ), the first thing he wants us to know is that it is not at all like the 1<sup>st</sup> Adam’s trespass.

### ***A. Free Gift is Sourced in God’s Wisdom that leads to Life***

- Adam’s trespass resulted in an abundance of death because of one man’s willful disobedience by rejecting God’s wisdom found in His Word.
- God’s gift resulted in an abundance of grace and mercy because of one man’s willing obedience to God’s wisdom found in His Word.

### ***B. Free Gift is expressed in Selfless Sacrifice that leads to Freedom.***

- Adam's trespass came as an expression of selfish satisfaction that destroyed many.
- God's gift came as an expression of selfless sacrifice that rescued and restored many.
- Think about how often we make foolish choices that lead us into the bondage and destruction of sin. Sometimes those choices are made unwittingly or thoughtlessly. However, more often than not, we sin knowingly. We intentionally cross God's line. We willfully reject the wisdom found in God's Word. Every time we do, we repeat Adam's false step (trespass). Think about the hundreds and thousands of such steps we've taken over the years. Consider the damage that has entered our lives, relationships, physical bodies, minds, and souls year after year.
- God would be completely just to give us what we deserve for the multitude of trespasses we've piled up against Him. But . . . if we look under the tree of Calvary, there is a gift with our name on it!
- And when we open the gift, it is nothing like the trespass Adam committed or the mountain of trespasses we have committed following Adam's footsteps!

## II. The Source of the Gift (v. 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.*

- The gift under Calvary's tree with your name on it has a tag that identifies the Giver!
- Moreover, the gift is not meager – what it provides is not limited to just me or you. Whatever is in the gift God put under that brutal tree abounds for many!
- God, the giver of the gift is described in two ways in this text:

### A. **God the Father: Described as graciously giving a Free Gift**

*much more have the grace of God and (even) the free gift*

- Whatever the gift under the cross is, it is sourced in the stunning, amazing grace of God.
- Grace here refers to the side of God that springs out of His immense, immeasurable love for the world He created (John 3:16 – for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son).
- The penalty for sin is sourced in the justice of God. This gift is sourced in God’s love and grace toward sinners in that while we were yet sinning, God sent His Son to die for us! (Rom 5:8).
- Moreover, the gift is “free” which isn’t just a reference to the price God paid for the gift. It has reference to the abundant nature of the gift. It isn’t a meager gift that does just enough to let us know that God is kind and good – it is a gift that causes God’s goodness, kindness, and mercy to flood over us like a river in full flood!
- But how did God manifest this gracious gift?

***B. God the Son: Described as obtaining that gift on the grounds of His gracious obedience as a Son.***

*by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ*

- God so loved the world means “God loved the world in this way” – He sent His only begotten (unique, chosen, appointed) Son!
- Which is why the rest of this world describes God’s grace as being manifested to sinners by the gracious work of One Man, Jesus Christ – the Son God sent into the world, not to condemn it but that through Him, the world might be saved (John 3:17).
- To what does the phrase “by the grace of that one man” refer?
- It refers to two things: a) the active, willing obedience of Christ that God imputed to our account; and, b) the passive, willing obedience of Christ that embraced death on the cross in our place!
- You and I have never received a gift quite like this in our entire lives! Think about the best gift you ever received on any occasion, and it doesn’t even come close to this one. The reason is found in the incredible impact that gift has on us!

**III. The Effect of the Gift (v. 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.*

- So, Paul reminds us that the gift is not like the trespass in its nature.
- Adam's trespass was willful disregard for the Wisdom of God and intentional disobedience to the Word of God.
- Christ's sacrifice was guided by the Wisdom of God and offered out of willing, loving obedience to the Word of God.
- The Gift was not like the trespass in its nature. However, Paul also points out another difference between the trespass and the gift: their results.

**A. *The judgment that brought condemnation on all men came out of one trespass!*** *For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation,*

- Judgment = "krima" – it refers not just to the verdict but to the execution of the sentence (we would say "judgment was carried out; justice was served").
- Condemnation refers to the nature of the sentence imposed on the sinner – death! Physical death in a world full of suffering and pain, and spiritual death in a place of eternal conscious torment originally designed for the Devil and his angels.
- Paul wants us to feel the weight of our sin – it has devastating consequences in this life and disastrous ones in the life to come.
- And all of this is the just, righteous recompense that God forewarned Adam would come upon him for disobedience.
- No wonder Paul said, "*The wages of sin is death!*" (6:23a)
- But that isn't all that he said!! He went on to say, "***But the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord!***" (6:23b)

**B. *The gift that made justification available to all men came despite many trespasses!*** *but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.*

- Adam's one act of disobedience brought catastrophic consequences for all men!
- The effect of Christ's act of obedience provided generous, lavish, abundant, and completely free justification despite the multitude of trespasses we have each committed!

- What we have done, even if only sin on our part, merits eternal condemnation in Hell!
- What Christ has done grants us justification regardless of the countless sins we have committed against God!
- This is why what John the Baptist said is so significant when he saw Jesus walking on the banks of the Jordan river – ***“Behold! The Lamb of God who bears away the sin of the world!”*** (John 1:29)
- Through Christ, God did not just reverse the effect of Adam’s sin and get us all back to the original starting point in Genesis 2 and 3. That would have been unbelievably gracious of God to give us a second chance; a restart; a theological and spiritual mulligan after the utter disaster we have made of our lives because of sin.
- But that isn’t what happened when God gave us this incredible gift through the gracious work of Christ on our behalf. It was so much more than a restart!!

#### IV. The Abundant Graciousness of the Gift (v. 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.*

- Notice how Paul describes this gift from God, given by His grace through His Son. It is called *“an abundance of grace”* (vs 17), which has a much greater (*“much more”*) impact and effect than Adam’s trespass. Earlier, he reminded us that this gracious gift *“abounded unto many”* (v. 15c).
- We tend to think that God is abundant in His condemnation and stingy with His grace – He takes pleasure in condemning the wicked and condemning them to eternal punishment, and He saves only those He is obligated to save because of the agreement He made with Christ and with them if they repent and believe.
- BUT that could not be farther from the truth – God has abundant grace and mercy that causes to abound to many! He takes no delight in the death of the wicked but exhorts them to repent and live



(Ezekiel 18:32; 33:11)! He is not willing for any to perish but desires that all come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9)!

- It is not his desire to punish – He will and does, but He takes no delight in doing so. He delights in saving sinners from His wrath – all of heaven shares His joy when one guilty sinner is pardoned, one condemned sinner is rescued, and one lost sinner is found.
- Which brings us to the final thing Paul wants us to know about this gift from God through Christ – its stunning power to transform and change everything about us.

## **V. The Power of the Gift – (v. 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.*

### **A. The power in this gift released us from slavery to the bondage of sin and the dominion of death.**

- In the first part of verse 17, we are reminded that because we were born “in Adam,” we were born into the realm he was initially appointed to rule over (Psalm 8). However, when he sinned, the kingdom given to him was taken over by a hostile enemy who ruthlessly reigned through sin and death. And we are reminded of this harsh reality every time we stand at a cemetery to bury our loved ones when they die.
- But two thousand years ago, someone arrived with a key that opened the door to the prison where we were held and unlocked the shackles that bound us—and that person was Jesus!
- But the key did more than unlock the prison door and remove the bonds that held us. It made us rulers as Adam and Eve were originally designed to be!!

### **B. The power in this gift gave us victory over the reign of sin and made us conquering rulers over the realm of death.**

- **Rom 8:35-37 speaks to our reign over the realm of sin**

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written, “For your sake we are being*

killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”<sup>37</sup> **No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.**

- **1 Cor 15:54-55 speaks to our reign over the dominion of death**

When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”<sup>55</sup> “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”<sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.<sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Which brings us to one big question:**

**Conclusion: What exactly is the gift Paul describes in this text?**

- At the foot of a tree in the kingdom of Eden, a gift was ruined and lost.
- At the foot of another tree outside Jerusalem's walls, that gift was restored. And the gift is identified in this text as “justification that makes us righteous in God’s sight!” (Note the terms “justification” and “righteousness” occur 6x in 5:15-21).
- What makes justification such a powerful gift? ***Please don’t be tempted to think of the gift of justification as a nice practical pair of theological socks we need from God if we want to go to heaven.***
- Illustration: Box and Key. The key (justification) opens the door to a storehouse of spiritual treasure that we don’t have to wait to experience until we get to heaven!
- This key unlocks the door that grants us peace with God, a permanent standing in His kingdom, unrestricted access to His grace, the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, salvation, sanctification, adoption as beloved sons and daughters, co-heirship with Christ, preservation, and ultimate glorification!
- **But God’s gift must be received and opened (15:17).** And Paul has told us how to receive this gift – repent and believe (1:16-17; 3:22-26).