



**Understanding Righteousness
The Reign of Grace Explained
Part 2
Romans 5:15 – 21**

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Last time together we began to examine the topic of grace. God wants us to experience the beauty and joy of following and serving Him as we follow the Holy Spirit's guiding and leading in our lives. All made possible by Jesus Christ and His death on the cross paying for our sin and then His resurrection showing us that the reign of death, for those who believe, is over. We are in the reign of grace now. Our lives should reflect that. But if that is the case, why do I still feel obligated, and guilt ridden at times? That



would be Satan, not the Lord and yes, there are indeed those who will jump on that and try to draw you astray into religion and works.

John 8:31–36

“So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’” Jesus answered them, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”** (ESV)

You and I struggle with that idea of being set free since we live in a world of terms and conditions. T&C’s was always one of our prime negotiation points at work.

We are comfortable with a world of rules and regulations and have been trained by our parents to be good citizens by being compliant with the T&Cs of our society as well as our culture. But when we come to Christ, many of those T&Cs are not longer valid and we did not just exchange them either. And what about our relationship with the Lord?

The temptation to legalism and religion is rather strong and there are those cults, such as the Mormons or Jehovah’s Witnesses, as well as some denominations, that prey on new believers intentionally playing to the “rules” aspect. Do not let them.

Our salvation is a grace gift from the Father. It is all based on His grace. And per Pastor Chuck Smith, “God never made out a long contract that says, ‘Abide by all my terms and I will love you and bless you; but if you violate even the smallest provision, it’s all null and void and you are out of My kingdom!” Christians are not bound by any heavy contract to God.” Only love constrains us. (Smith 2018, 6)

We are obedient to His word because of our love for Him. Not for any other reason. I like how the Net Bible translates this in 2 Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 5:14–17

“For the love of Christ controls us, since we have concluded this, that Christ died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised. **So then from now on we acknowledge no one from an outward human point of view. Even though we have known Christ from such a human point of view, now we do not know him in that way any longer. So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; what is old has passed away—look, what is new has come!”** (NET 2nd ed.)

As we discussed last time, when we believe, coming to Christ in faith, He changes us. We are justified, made righteous as the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to our account replacing the sin that had been in that account before then, sending it away to never be seen again (Psalm 103:12). The Holy Spirit comes inside of us at the same moment, never to leave by the way (John 14:16), and He begins to clean house (2 Corinthians 5:17).

If God has imputed the righteousness of Christ to us because we have believed, then it is folly for us to try to improve on that righteousness by doing works. We can’t improve on God’s righteousness. There is no way we can improve on the right standing that He has imputed to us. We are righteous. That is God’s accounting of our life because we believe and trust in the work of Jesus Christ. (Smith 2018, 21)

We discussed the three tenses of salvation. Justification, I am saved (Romans 3:28, Romans 8:30). Sanctification, I am being saved (Romans 8:30, Titus 3:5), being made more like Jesus, and then the end



point we are all looking forward too, glorification, I am saved and incapable of sin in a glorified body like Jesus (Romans 8:30).

Romans 8:28–30

“And **we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God**, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, **He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.**” (NASB 2020)

When Christ died on the cross, He died for the entire world knowing that not all would take up the offer of grace. Jesus hinted at this while addressing the church at Sardis.

That is the church that had it all together theologically. Right doctrine, right reputation, and totally and completely spiritually dead. Something about not availing themselves of the grace of God that they were spending so much time arguing about. This is a picture of the reformed church. But there is hope.

Revelation 3:4–5

“But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. The one who overcomes will be clothed the same way, in white garments; **and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.**” (NASB 2020)

But didn't you teach last week that if someone has truly accepted Jesus, they can't lose their salvation? Yes, I did. But what is this erasing thing then? Is this someone losing their salvation? No, it is someone who died without Christ ending forever the opportunity for them to become a follower of Jesus. There is no such thing as purgatory. When we study passages about the Book of Life in the Bible, we discover this. “Everyone who was ever born has his name in the Book of Life. If they are saved, they have their names retained in the Book of Life; if they die unsaved, then their names are blotted out. The blotting out is of those names of people who were never saved, and died in an unsaved condition. It is not of those who were saved and lost their salvation. (Fruchtenbaum 1983, 30)

We discover in Psalm 139:16, every person who has ever been conceived, has their name in the book of life. The born and the unborn alike. One more reason why we object to Molech worship in the 21st century which manifests as abortion.

Psalm 139:16

“**Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.**” (NKJV)

David knew this as a truth since he had a child die at a very young age, and due to his sin no less. From him though we learn that children go to the be with the Lord. The Bible is silent about what age that is. “Until a child understands that certain things he is doing are a violation of commands of God and will ultimately be punished by God, he is not accountable to God for these things. Once he does reach this understanding, he is then accountable to God in the sense that he is liable for the eternal penalty deserved by his sins. (Cottrell 2002, 192)

And for some who have been born with certain genetic disorders, they may never reach that age. David though understood this.



2 Samuel 12:23

“But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.” (ESV)

But as we saw in Revelation 3:5, those who believe have their names retained in the book, those who do not believe, have their names **erased**. We also see that in Psalm 69.

Psalm 69:28

“**Let them be blotted out of the book of the living**, And not be written with the righteous.” (NKJV)

This book is one of those source documents of evidence to be used at the Great White Throne Judgment to determine if the one before the judge should indeed be there. At the time it is referred to, the names of all of those who never came to Christ, have been removed from the book showing they are unsaved and deserve judgment.

Revelation 20:12

“And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. **Then another book was opened, which is the book of life**. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.” (ESV)

Revelation 20:15 “**And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**” (ESV)

Let me summarize, as it pertains to the Book of Life, everyone on the planet is, at one point in their lives, in it. Those who are conceived are in the book and they will remain in the book forever if they come to Jesus or happen to die as children, but for those who do not come to Christ, the name is erased.

We also saw this back in Psalm 69:28, their name is not only erased from one book, the Book of Life, but it has never been entered into another book, the Book of the Righteous. We also see this book referred to later in the Bible in Revelation 13.

Revelation 13:8

“and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the **book of life of the Lamb** who was slain.” (ESV)

This book speaks to the omnipotence and omniscience of God, that He indeed knows everything. If you are saved, there is a book, dating to before creation, with your name in it as redeemed. We see it here as well.

Before the world was ever created, there were two books in existence. One which would have the name of everyone to be conceived on the planet. That book has the ability for names to be erased from it as humanity exercises their free will and either reaccepts the gift of grace or rejects it.

Then there is another book, and the names in it cannot be erased. It is God in His omniscience listing out the names of those who would decide in favor of grace.

Revelation 17:8

“The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And **the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast**, because it was and is not and is to come.” (ESV)



When the Beast rises to power, there are those there, in the Great Tribulation, who refuse to worship the beast and most will die. But then there are those who will worship the Beast. Not only are these earth dwellers, a term used in Revelation to let us know they are not saved, but we also learn their names were never written in that book.

And with that introduction, let's look again to our text as we learn even more about the reign of grace.

Romans 5:15–21

"But the gracious gift is not like the offense. **For if by the offense of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many.** The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one offense, resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the gracious gift arose from many offenses, resulting in justification. For if by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. **So then, as through one offense the result was condemnation to all mankind, so also through one act of righteousness the result was justification of life to all mankind. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.** The Law came in so that the offense would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, **as sin reigned in death, so also grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**" (NASB 2020)

We see that there are contrasts being provided to us in verses 15-17. The contrast is between the problem and the solution to the problem.

We have been talking about the first of those contrasts for some time now. The grace gift of salvation versus the offense, the sin that was the reason why redemption was required.

The second contrast is that the sin resulted in death and the contrast is the gift of grace, salvation which cancels death for those who accept the gift and provides for eternal life.

What has sin produced in the life of all of us prior to coming to Christ? Condemnation.

Why is it, before we come to Jesus, that we feel like things are not quite the way they should be? There is this sense of guilt that is there.

The Greek word that we see translated condemnation in verse 16 is κατάκριμα (katakrima). "In this and the cognates that follow the use of the term 'condemnation' does not denote merely a pronouncement of guilt, but the adjudication of punishment." It means "a judicial pronouncement upon a guilty person, condemnation, punishment, penalty." (Arndt, et al. 2000, 518)

Jesus Christ did not come to condemn us; we were already condemned. We see that in our text. Jesus even explained that to Nicodemus.

John 3:17–18

"For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him. The one who believes in Him is not judged; **the one who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.**" (NASB 2020)

Justification, as we learned, is a legal term. So is condemnation.

Why is it that Paul will later have to make certain that believers understand more completely that as followers of Jesus, we are justified and declared righteous? Because when Satan loses the battle for our



soul, he then turns his attention to making us ineffective for the Lord and the best way to do so is to make us feel obligated, which will lead to legalism. But Satan does not stop there, he knows we all still have a sin nature, which he constantly is attacking us about and when we blow it, he is the one who makes us feel condemned.

If you find yourself feeling condemned, even after you have confessed you sin per 1 John 1:9. This is for you.

Romans 8:1–4

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” (ESV)

Therefore for the follower of Jesus, the believer in Jesus and one who has accepted the grace gift freely offered by the Father, there is now no judicial ruling of condemnation. It is gone forever. And we just need to understand that.

The third contrast we see here in Romans 5:15-17, the contrast between condemnation and justification.

The fourth contrast we see is from the one whose failure caused sin and death for many and the one whose faithfulness and obedience provides for the justification of those who believe.

We are indeed talking about the difference between sin and righteousness. Getting back to how Paul starts the whole contrast example, he tells us the grace gift God provides is not like the sin. Adam’s sin brought death, but God’s grace gift brings life and does so for many. The biggest contrast here, is between death and life.

When Adam sinned, what did God have to do to make sure Adam died as a result of his sin? Nothing.

Sin produces death, always will, and does so equally to all who sin. That would indeed be the entire human race since we are all born sinners. Without any intervention from God, we are all doomed because of a decision our ancestor made. If God does nothing, we die and we are eternally separated from the one who created us. That is the sin and what it produces, but the grace gift from God is not like that.

The grace gift tells us that in this case, God intervened. Paul clearly states what this intervention is and does in his letter to the church in Ephesus.

Ephesians 2:1–10

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (ESV)



All I can say to this is, glory to God in the highest! The glory goes to God; He intervened even though He didn't have to. Grace, it really is all about His grace.

Salvation is certain, because the work of God is a lasting thing, unlike our own weak achievements. It is because the work is of God. (Boice 1991-, 589)

Romans 8:38–39

“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (NASB 2020)

Romans 5:16

“The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one offense, resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the gracious gift arose from many offenses, resulting in justification.” (NASB 2020)

Adam committed the sin of eating something he was told, by the Lord, not to. That was a sin, a specific violation of God's very specific and direct command and as a result he and all of us have suffered the consequences for thousands of years. Even if that was the only sin he ever committed, it was still necessary for Jesus to come and rescue us from that original sin and the condemnation that arises from it.

If that was the only sin Jesus came to cover, that alone would be glorious. But praise the Lord, here we are told it is not. Paul says “many offenses.”

As a result of Adam's singular sin which brought the condemnation of a righteous God onto mankind turning man into sinners, mankind has engaged in billions, trillions of sins. Each one of us has had the opportunity in the past to add to that growing horrific legacy and even after coming to Christ, we still struggle with it. But grace.

Earlier, we heard Paul talk about the condition of the world as a result of Adam's sin.

Romans 1:28–32

“And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a depraved mind, to do those things that are not proper, people having been filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, and evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unfeeling, and unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also approve of those who practice them.” (NASB 2020)

Then we return to verse 16 and we too are as blown away by God's grace as Paul was. All that sin, yet Jesus willingly went to the cross dying in our place to cover all of it with His blood providing for us, God's grace gift of salvation freely available to all who believe.

Romans 5:17

“For if by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.” (NASB 2020)

Before the intervention we were all subject to the reign of death.



As we see here in verse 17, because of Jesus, we now can reign in life and do so through Jesus. Why is that? Because as we believe, we receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness. As followers of Jesus Christ, you and I stand before God and are accepted by Him as His people only because of Jesus Christ and only due to the grace of God. Once again, there is absolutely nothing we could ever do to make that happen for us. God did everything to make it happen for us. Cranfield says the following.

The effectiveness and the unspeakable generosity of the divine grace are such that it will not merely bring about the replacement of the reign of death by the reign of life, but it will actually make those who receive its riches to become kings themselves, that is, to live 'the true kingly life' purposed by God for man. (Cranfield 2004, 288)

Romans 5:18–21

“So then, as through one offense the result was condemnation to all mankind, so also through one act of righteousness the result was justification of life to all mankind. For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. The Law came in so that the offense would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, so also grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (NASB 2020)

Paul is once again making reference to imputation; Christ’s righteousness being reckoned to our account.

When we say impute or discuss imputation, what is being said from a financial perspective is this, “whatever he owes you, erase it from his account and put it on mine.” Thus the use of the word tetelesti, it is finished or paid in full as the last words from Jesus before yielding up His spirit.

Dr. Fruchtenbaum says that when we begin to consider this doctrine, we need to realize that there are actually three imputations which need to be accounted for. I never thought about it this way before, but he is indeed correct.

First, the sin of Adam was imputed to all of mankind.

When Jesus Christ went to the cross, we see the second facet of imputation as “God took the sins of the world and placed them upon Him; humanity’s sin was imputed to the Messiah’s account.” (Fruchtenbaum, The Messianic Bible Study Collection 1983, 22)

Isaiah 53:4–6

“But he lifted up our illnesses, he carried our pain; even though we thought he was being punished, attacked by God, and afflicted for something he had done. **He was wounded because of our rebellious deeds, crushed because of our sins; he endured punishment that made us well; because of his wounds we have been healed. All of us had wandered off like sheep; each of us had strayed off on his own path, but the LORD caused the sin of all of us to attack him.**” (NET 2nd ed.)

2 Corinthians 5:21

“God made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we would become the righteousness of God.” (NET 2nd ed.)

And here in 2 Corinthians we see the taking of our sin onto Himself for us and the placing of His righteousness onto us.

This is grace, this is our sin being imputed to our Savior on the cross and in return, His righteousness being imputed to us.



Paul then restates what he has already made clear, we are all sinners because of Adam. But because of Jesus Christ and the work that He engaged in on the cross for us, His death and resurrection, it is now possible for God to declare righteous the sinner who believes.

Romans 5:20–21

“The Law came in so that the offense would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, so also grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (NASB 2020)

God provided the Law and the entire sacrificial system. We will learn later in Romans 7 that the Law was never given to make us do the right. What we will learn is that where the Law is, we realize we sin even more than we thought. As we consider that our flock is now getting smaller and smaller as we try and deal with our sin problem, we realize that we truly are unable to do so.

The result is, we desire and need the grace of God. We are truly broken as we realize there is not a thing we can do for ourselves to remove the guilt. But grace steps in and the love of God knowing we cannot do this for ourselves.

Where we read “grace abounded the more,” we are dealing with a translation decision to limit this to a few words. ““Super-increased” is a possibility, or “super-abounded.” It pictures unending, overflowing grace—a grace that knows no bounds. Grace is always more abundant than sin.” (Hughes 1991, 181)

Verse 21 sums up all of this for us. Why is this grace, the grace which we have been talking about and the grace so freely given to us by our Lord here? What is the purpose?

Romans 5:21

“so that, as **sin reigned in death, so also grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**” (NASB 2020)

Are you reigning in grace today? Our rescue from the reign of death has already been accomplished and if you want to make certain your name does not get erased out of the Book of Life, then join those of us who have admitted we are sinners in need of a savior.

Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

ABC’s of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.



C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.

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