

# Romans 5:16-17 Commentary

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[Romans Overview Chart](#) - Charles Swindoll

Source: Dr David Cooper  
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- R **Ruin** (Romans 1:17 – 3:20) – The utter sinfulness of humanity
- O **Offer** (Romans 3:21-31) – God’s offer of justification by grace
- M **Model** (Romans 4:1-25) – Abraham as a model for saving faith
- A **Access** (Romans 5:1-11) – The benefits of justification
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## ROMANS ROAD to RIGHTEOUSNESS

| Romans 1:18-3:20         | Romans 3:21-5:21       | Romans 6:1-8:39         | Romans 9:1-11:36         | Romans 12:1-16:27          |
|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| SIN                      | SALVATION              | SANCTIFICATION          | SOVEREIGNTY              | SERVICE                    |
| NEED<br>FOR<br>SALVATION | WAY<br>OF<br>SALVATION | LIFE<br>OF<br>SALVATION | SCOPE<br>OF<br>SALVATION | SERVICE<br>OF<br>SALVATION |

|  |  |   |  |  |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| God's Holiness<br>In<br>Condemning<br>Sin    | God's Grace<br>In<br>Justifying<br>Sinners | God's Power<br>In<br>Sanctifying<br>Believers | God's Sovereignty<br>In<br>Saving<br>Jew and Gentile | God's Glory<br>The<br>Object of<br>Service |
| Deadliness<br>of Sin                         | Design<br>of Grace                         | Demonstration of Salvation                    |  |  |
|  |  | Power Given                                   | Promises Fulfilled                                   | Paths Pursued                              |
| Righteousness<br>Needed                      | Righteousness<br>Credited                  | Righteousness<br>Demonstrated                 | Righteousness<br>Restored to Israel                  | Righteousness<br>Applied                   |
| God's Righteousness<br>IN LAW                | God's Righteousness<br>IMPUTED             | God's Righteousness<br>OBEYED                 | God's Righteousness<br>IN ELECTION                   | God's Righteousness<br>DISPLAYED           |
| Slaves to Sin                                | Slaves to God                              |   |  | Slaves Serving God                         |
| Doctrine                                     |  |   |  | Duty                                       |
| Life by Faith                                |  |   |  | Service by Faith                           |
| Modified from Irving L. Jensen's chart above |  |   |  |  |

**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** transgression **resulting in condemnation**, but on the **other hand** the **free gift** arose from **many transgressions resulting in justification**. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [kai ouch os di' enos hamarthsantos \(AAPMSG\) to dorema: to men gar krima ex enos eis katakrima, to de charisma ek pollon paraptomaton eis dikaioma.](#)

**Amplified:** Nor is the free gift at all to be compared to the effect of that one [man's] sin. For the sentence [following the trespass] of one [man] brought condemnation, whereas the free gift [following] many transgressions brings justification (an act of righteousness). ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**NLT:** And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but we have the free gift of being accepted by God, even though we are guilty of many sins. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** Nor is the effect of God's gift the same as the effect of that one man's sin. For in the one case one man's sin brought its inevitable judgment, and the result was condemnation. But, in the other, countless men's sins are met with the free gift of grace, and the result is justification before God. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** And not as through one who sinned, was the gift, for the judgment, on the one hand, was out of one transgression as a source, resulting in condemnation. But the gratuitous gift, on the other hand, was out of many transgressions as a source, resulting in justification. ([Eerdmans](#))

**Young's Literal:** and not as through one who did sin is the free gift, for the judgment indeed is of one to condemnation, but the gift is of many offences to a declaration of 'Righteous,'

**AND THE GIFT IS NOT LIKE THAT WHICH CAME THROUGH THE ONE WHO SINNED FOR ON THE ONE HAND THE JUDGMENT AROSE FROM ONE TRANSGRESSION RESULTING IN CONDEMNATION: kai ouch os di enos hamartasantos (AAPMSG) to dorema to men gar krima ex enos eis katakrima:**

- Ge 3:6-19; Gal 3:10; Ja 2:10
- [Romans 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**S Lewis Johnson** in light of some deep doctrinal teaching which might lose us, reiterates that...The master-thought of the section is the unity of the many in the one. In Adam's case it is the unity of the many in a representative who fell. In Christ's case it is the unity of the many in a representative who overcame, including in His victory all who are in Him. ([Romans 5:15-21](#))

**J Vernon McGee** adds this thought...Now I recognize that this is a difficult section, and this is one of the most difficult passages. To simplify it, all this section means is this: one transgression plunged the race into sin; and one act of obedience and the death of

Christ upon the cross makes it possible for lost man to be saved. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

Recall that there are **3 major contrasts** in verses Romans 5:15, 16 and 17...

(Romans 5:15) Adam's Transgression versus Christ's Free Gift.

(Romans 5:16) Adam's Sin Brought Judgment and the verdict rendered was "Condemned". Christ's Death Brought Justification - the contrast then is condemnation in Adam and justification in Christ. When Adam sinned, he was declared unrighteous and condemned. When a sinner trusts Christ, he is justified—declared righteous in Christ.

(Romans 5:17) Because of Adam's Sin, Death reigned. Those Who Receive Christ Reign in Life.

**Romans 5:16** explains how **Adam** and **Christ** are not alike demonstrating that there is no comparison between the grace of God in Christ and the offense of Adam and its sinister consequences. In Romans 5:16 we see 4 contrasts as shown in the table below.

| <b>CONTRASTS<br/>IN ROMANS 5:16</b>               |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| <b>Adam</b>                                       | <b>Jesus Christ</b>        |
| <i>That which came through the one who sinned</i> | <b>The Gift</b>            |
| <b>The Judgment</b>                               | <b>The Free Gift</b>       |
| <b>One Transgression</b>                          | <b>Many Transgressions</b> |
| <b>Condemnation</b>                               | <b>Justification</b>       |

**The (free) gift** - Paul extends his first statement about **the free gift** that was just mentioned in the first clause of Romans 5:15 (note). What is the **free gift**? From the **context** it equates with the **gift of righteousness** (see note Romans 5:17 "*the gift of righteousness will reign*") in and through Jesus Christ. Adam's sin had consequences (his "gift") for the entire human race in that many died. Jesus provides a **gift** that also has consequences for the entire human race, but there is a difference.

**Ironside** explains that...There is a difference as to the offense and the gift however. Adam's one offense involved his race in the consequences of his fall. Christ, having satisfied divine justice, offers the gift of life by grace to all who will believe and so it abounds to many.

**MacDonald** adds a note on this difference writing that...The **free gift** of Christ dealt effectively with many offenses, not just one, and resulted in the verdict "Acquitted." Paul highlights the differences between Adam's sin and Christ's gift, between the terrible havoc wrought by one sin and the tremendous deliverance wrought from many sins, and finally between the verdict of condemnation and the verdict of justification. ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Vine** says that...This second contrast is one of quality. Condemnation was passed as a result of one trespass; justification is declared in regard to many trespasses. ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

**S Lewis Johnson** explains it this way...The **gift** of God cannot be compared with the sin of Adam, Paul says. In the case of Adam there were many offences, and they led to judgment and condemnation. In the case of Christ there is the free gift of righteousness that has come from any offences and their satisfaction by the sacrificial blood of the Redeemer. The judgment came from one deed, but God's gift is His answer to a multitude of misdeeds, the accumulated sins of the centuries since Adam. ([Romans 5:15-21](#))

**John Murray** notes that...The one trespass demanded nothing less than the **condemnation** of all. But the **free gift** unto **justification** is of such a character that it must take the many trespasses into its reckoning; it could not be the free gift of justification unless it blotted out the many trespasses. Consequently, the free gift is conditioned as to its nature and effect by the many trespasses just as the judgment was conditioned as to its nature and effect by the one trespass alone" (The Epistle to the Romans Eerdmans, 1965)

**Ray Pritchard** adds a helpful note...Think of it this way. How many sins did Adam have to commit in order to bring condemnation to the world? Only one. That's all it took. One sin and the world was plunged into darkness. One man, one sin, condemnation comes to the whole world. On the other side of the ledger, how many sins were forgiven in the death of Christ? Paul says "many trespasses." He doesn't mean "many versus all" but "many versus one." Which is greater? What Jesus did is far greater because His deed was "provoked" by many sins. What Adam did was his own fault, yet it affected the whole world. What Jesus did paid the price not just for Adam's sin but for the sins of the entire human race—from the time of Adam till the end of the world. Thus the power of Jesus' death is far greater than the power of Adam's single, solitary sin. (Read his full message - [Paradise Regained](#))

**Ray Stedman**...Adam's single trespass brought in judgment, i.e., death. Adam trespassed once and brought death to all that were in him. Christ died once and, despite thousands of trespasses, brought justification to all that are in Him. That is the contrast. Adam trespassed once and brought death to all. Jesus died once and brought life -- despite thousands of trespasses. What Paul is saying here is amplified before this in the repeated forgiveness of sin. One trespass brought death; the death of Jesus brought forgiveness for thousands of trespasses. All your life, as many times as you sin, you cannot out-sin the grace of God. No matter how many trespasses are involved in your record, there is freedom in Christ and forgiveness for all of them. (Read his full sermon [Romans 5:11-21 Rejoicing In God](#) )

**Albert Barnes**...This is the second point in which the effects of the work of Christ differ from the sin of Adam. The first part (see note Romans 5:15) was, that the evil consequences flowed from the sin of one MAN, Adam; and that the benefits flowed from the work of one MAN, Jesus Christ. The point in this verse is, that the evil consequences flowed from one CRIME, one act of guilt; but that the favours had respect to MANY ACTS of guilt. The effects of Adam's sin, whatever they were, pertained to the one sin; the effects of the work of Christ to many sins. (Barnes NT Commentary)

**Gift (1434)** (**dorema** from **dorea** = free gift with emphasis on gratuitous nature + **-ma** = the result of giving [dosis]) is the thing given or that which is granted. Dorema is used only in one other passage...

Every good thing bestowed and every perfect **gift** (dorema) is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow. (James 1:17+)

**The one who sinned** - Adam. One sin by this one man brought God's judgment and condemnation.

**Sinned (264)** (**hamartano**) means to miss the mark and so to miss God's will and purpose for one's life. Theorist tense means that at one point in time Adam sinned. Adam's one transgression brought death. Jesus' death brought forgiveness for thousands of transgressions. Clearly, Jesus' work is far superior.

**Morris** comments that...Sin is not the last word, for the **gift** alters the sinner's entire situation. It points to the freeness of salvation; the believer is not required to strive heroically against Adam's legacy as the price of acceptance with God. ([Morris, L. The Epistle to the Romans. W. B. Eerdmans: Inter-Varsity Press](#))

**Judgment (2917)** (**krima** from **krino** = to judge; suffix **-ma** indicates result of judging) denotes the result of the action signified by verb **krino** and thus is a judicial sentence from the magistrate. It is the sentence pronounced, the verdict, the act of judging. **Krima** signifies judgment carried out.

**Barnes** writes that **krima** means...The sentence; the declared penalty. The word expresses, properly, the sentence which is passed by a judge. Here it means the sentence which God passed, as a judge, on Adam for the one offence, involving himself and his posterity in ruin, Ge 2:17; Ge 3:17-19. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

**One transgression** - Transgression is added by the translators.

**Condemnation (2631)** (**katakrima** from **katá** = against, down + **krino** = basic meaning was "to separate" from which the idea of discriminate, distinguish, and then to judge or pronounce sentence against) literally is **judgment coming down on someone**. **Katakrima** means to judge someone as definitely guilty and thus subject to punishment, which accounts for the literal translation of "*adverse judgment and resultant punishment*". It is a legal technical term for the **result of** judging, including both the sentence and the execution or the sentence followed by a suggested punishment (The suffix **-ma** makes it the result of judgment). **Katakrima** is always an adverse verdict. Stated another way, **katakrima** (condemnation) relates to the sentencing for a crime, but its primary focus is not so much on the verdict as on the penalty that the verdict demands.

The divine guilty verdict is the polar opposite of justification. The verdict refers to God's sentence. The word for condemnation involves the ideas of "punishment" and "doom." So we ask: Condemned to what? The answer is, to divine punishment and doom. The seriousness of this condemnation cannot be overstated.

Regarding **condemnation MacDonald** reminds us that...Man is condemned on three grounds: He has a sinful nature, Adam's sin is imputed to him, and he is a sinner by practice. But his crowning guilt is his rejection of the provision which God has made for his salvation (John 3:18, 19, 36). ([MacDonald, W., & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

**BUT ON THE OTHER HAND THE FREE GIFT AROSE FROM MANY TRANSGRESSIONS RESULTING IN JUSTIFICATION: to de charisma ek pollon paraptomaton eis dikaioma:**

- Isa 1:18; 43:25; 44:22; Lu 7:47-50; Acts 13:38,39; 1Co 6:9-11; 1Ti 1:13-16
- [Romans 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**But on the other hand** - The UBS Handbook rightly observes that "At this point the analogy with Adam breaks down. After his one sin came the judgment of "Guilty"; but after so many sins comes the undeserved gift of "Not guilty!" In this way Paul demonstrates the superiority of God's grace over Adam's sin. Grace had a much more difficult road to travel than sin had. To use an illustration from everyday life, it is much easier for an infection to spread than it is to cure the infection once it has spread throughout the body." ([Ref](#))

**Free gift** (grace gift) ([5486](#)) (**charisma** [see word study] from **charis** [see word study on charis] = grace + the ending **--ma** which indicates the result of something, in this case the result of grace) is a gift of grace or an undeserved benefit. It refers something given by God completely apart from human merit. Note that God is the Giver in 16/17 NT uses **charisma**

In Romans, Paul uses **charisma** in reference to the gift of salvation (Romans 5:15-16; note on Ro 6:23), the blessings of God (**notes** on Romans 1:1, Romans 11:29), and divine enablements for ministry (**note** on [Romans 12:6](#)). Every other use of the word by Paul, and the one by Peter (see **note 1** Peter 4:10-13), relates it to the divine enablements for believers to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Vine** writes that **charisma** is...a gift of grace, a gift involving grace (charis) on the part of God as the donor, is used of His free bestowments upon sinners ([Ro 5:15-16](#); [Ro 6:23](#); [Ro 11:29](#))

**Many transgressions** - This does not refer to the sins of Adam but to the sins of those who lived after Adam. As Morris says that Paul "*sets the **one** sin over against **many** trespasses. The **one** sin was the direct cause of the judgment; it led to disaster. The **many** trespasses (transgressions) were not the direct cause of the blessing, but simply the occasion that called forth the divine mercy*" (Ibid)

**Lightfoot** writes that...The starting-point was not **one** act extending to **many**; but conversely **many** acts leading to **one**.

**Transgressions** ([3900](#)) (**paraptoma** from **parapipto** = fall aside from **para** = aside + **pipto** = fall) (see use in Romans 4:25) means a falling beside, deviation from a path or departing from the norm. By extension, it carries the idea of going where one should not go, and therefore is sometimes translated "trespass". Here the trespass is eating "from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" Genesis 2:17. The picture is that of one who stumbles or falls. The idea conveyed by transgression is that one has crossed a line, challenging God's boundary, whereas the idea behind **sins** (hamartia [266](#)) is missing a mark, specifically God's perfect, holy standard.

Now the contrast turns to condemnation in Adam and justification in Christ. Not only is our guilt derived from one man's sin, but it is derived from only one sin of that man. It is not the sins of Adam's lifetime that have been imputed to us, but only his original sin. That one sin brought condemnation. However, the righteousness which is imputed to us by Christ, through the free gift of God's grace, covers not just that one offense but many offenses.

**Justification** ([1345](#)) (**dikaioma** from **dikaióo** = to justify <> **dikaiois** = just, righteous <> **dike** = right) refers to what God has declared to be right and here referring to His decree of retribution which has the force of law. **Dikaioma** is used elsewhere in this Epistle with its other meaning of "**righteousness**" (see table below). Strictly speaking **dikaioma** is what God establishes as just. **Dikaioma** is used in this verse to signify the clearing of one of a violation as an act of justification and equates with the removal of guilt or granting of an acquittal.

Adam brought upon all men the condemnation for only one offense—his willful act of disobedience. Christ, however, delivers the elect from the condemnation of many offenses.

**Morris** comments that...The one sin of Adam had as its end result **condemnation** for all the race, but Christ's act of **justification** was also far-reaching. It was concerned with more than the one sin of Adam. The believer finds pardon not only for the one sin he shares in Adam, but for all his other sins as well. (Ibid)

**William Newell** explains that **Romans 5:16**...tells us that out of Adam's one trespass came judgment, but that out of many trespasses laid upon Christ came not judgment, but a righteous act (**dikaioma**). In short, all men acted, -sinned in Adam's act of sin. ([Romans 5](#))

**John MacArthur** adds that Romans 5:16 has two very practical truths...The first is that God hates sin so much that it took only one sin to condemn the entire human race and separate them from Him. It was not that Adam's first sin was worse than others he committed or worse than men have committed since. It was simply that his first sin was sin. At the time, eating the forbidden fruit was the only sin that Adam and Eve could have committed, because God had placed but one restriction on them. But had it been

possible, any other sin would have had the same effect. In the same way, any sin that any man has ever committed would be sufficient to damn the whole human race, just as Adam's one sin did. A sobering thought, indeed. The other truth in verse 16 is still more amazing and incomprehensible, and is as heartening as the first is sobering. Greater even than God's hatred of sin is His love for the sinner. Despite the fact that God hates sin so much that any one sin could damn the human race, His loving grace toward man is so great that He provides not only for the redemption of one man from one sin but for the redemption of all men from all sins. Jesus Christ took upon Himself the sins of the whole world. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them" (2 Cor. 5:19). ([MacArthur, J: Romans 1-8. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**John Piper** has a pragmatic comment on **Romans 5:16**...

First the minor point: Notice, in the last half of the verse, that the "free gift," which is the "gift of righteousness," according to verse 17, "results in justification." "The free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification." This is crucial because it shows that there is a foundation for justification, namely, "the gift of the righteousness" of Christ, or, as verse 18 calls it, "the one act of righteousness," or, as verse 19 calls it, "the obedience of the One." Justification is not merely a new relationship with God, or a new status before God, hanging in the air. It is a new legal standing on the basis of Christ's righteousness, or Christ's obedience. That is the minor point in verse 16 – a huge minor point – "the free gift results in justification." "The free gift" is not itself justification; it is the foundation of justification. We are declared righteous on the basis of the free gift of righteousness – Christ's "righteousness" (verse 18), Christ's "obedience" (verse 19).

When you read the gospels and you see your Lord living out a perfect life of righteousness, rejoice that he not only is giving you an example of how to live, but he is also laying the foundation for your acceptance with God by grace through faith alone.

#### **God's Grace Triumphs Over Many Transgressions, Not Just One**

Now what is the major point of verse 16? What is the contrast that Paul sees between the work of Christ and the sin of Adam? He says, "The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned." So we know he is still talking about how Adam and Christ are not alike. The next clause gives us the explanation:

"For on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification."

Here's the contrast: One transgression (of Adam) leading to condemnation versus many transgressions (of all of us) leading to justification. What's the point? The point is again to display the greatness of grace far outstripping the display of judgment. How?

Well, condemnation is a natural and fitting response to transgression. But justification is not a natural or fitting response to a transgression, let alone many transgressions. So there are at least two things that grace has to overcome for justification to exist: One is that transgression calls for condemnation; and the other is that many transgressions call for great condemnation. What makes God's grace shine in this verse is that it triumphs over both obstacles. How? By providing a substitute righteousness. Because Christ was righteous for us, God can now justify us in spite of many transgressions.

So be mightily encouraged here. Paul is trying to strengthen your faith here. He is not just talking. You are to think something here and feel something here. Think the truth about the greatness of the grace of God and the free gift of righteousness that Christ provides for all who trust him. Then feel the sweetness of God himself reminding us in these words that the great number of our past sins is no obstacle for God to justify us. Because there is a "free gift" that "results in justification" – the gift of Christ's righteousness.

That's the major point of verse 16: God's grace triumphs over many transgressions – not just one – because He provides a substitute righteousness for us in Christ. (Read or listen to the full sermon [Romans 5:12-21 Adam, Christ...Part 3](#))

**Romans 5:17** For **if** by the **transgression** of the **one**, **death reigned through** the **one**, **much more those** who **receive** the **abundance** of **grace** and of the **gift** of **righteousness** will **reign** in **life through** the **One, Jesus Christ**. (**NASB: Lockman**)

**Greek:** [ei gar to tou enos paraptomati o thanatos ebasilousen](#) (3SAAI) [dia tou enos, pollo mallon o ten perisseian tes charitos kai tes](#) [doreas tes dikaiosunes lambanontes](#) (PAPMPN) [en zoe basileusousin](#) (3PFAI) [dia tou enos Iesou Christou.](#)

**Amplified:** For if because of one man's trespass (lapse, offense) death reigned through that one, much more surely will those who receive [God's] overflowing grace (unmerited favor) and the free gift of righteousness [putting them into right standing with Himself] reign as kings in life through the one Man Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One). ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**NLT:** The sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over us, but all who receive God's wonderful, gracious gift of righteousness will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** For if one man's offence meant that men should be slaves to death all their lives, it is a far greater thing that through another man, Jesus Christ, men by their acceptance of his more than sufficient grace and righteousness, should live all their lives like kings! ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** For in view of the fact that by means of the transgression of the one death reigned as king through that one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, in life will reign as kings through the One, Jesus Christ

**Young's Literal:** for if by the offence of the one the death did reign through the one, much more those, who the abundance of the grace and of the free gift of the righteousness are receiving, in life shall reign through the one -- Jesus Christ.

**FOR IF BY THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE ONE, DEATH REIGNED THROUGH THE ONE: ei gar to tou enos paraptomati o thanatos ebasileusen (3SAI) dia tou enos:**

- Ro 5:12; Ge 3:6,19; 1Cor 15:21,22,49) (Ro 5:20; Jn 10:10; 1Ti 1:14
- [Romans 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**For (gar)** - introduces an explanation.

**Vine** says that here Paul...confirms verse 16, (and) introduces a third contrast, not as previously between one and many, but between the legal effects of the one trespass and the effect of the abundance of grace in the future destiny of the justified. ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

**If** is first class conditional which means this declaration is assumed to be true, fulfilled or factual - "if as is the case by the transgression...". Paul once again argues from the "lesser" ("**transgression of the one**" Adam) to the "greater" (**the One Jesus Christ**), as he continues the reasoning of the preceding verse.

**Transgression** ([3900](#)) (**paraptoma** from **parapipto** = fall aside from **para** = aside + **pipto** = fall) (see use in Romans 4:25) means a falling beside, deviation from a path or departing from the norm. Adam fell aside when he ate "from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:17) and thus began the Fall of man.

**Death reigned** - Paul has noted this earlier writing...

Nevertheless **death reigned** from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. (See **note** Romans 5:14)

**Death** ([2288](#)) (**thanatos**) is the opposite of life and the absence of life and in the NT is the consequence and punishment (wages) of sin. **Death** speaks of separation, physically of the soul from the body and spiritually of the soul from God. Note however that **death** does not signify either annihilation or extinction. Here in Romans 5 Paul personifies **death** as a sovereign tyrant ruling over mankind as testified to by a world filled with cemeteries! No one escapes the rule of death, which is like the proverbial sword of Damocles, suspended over every person's head at every moment!

And **Morris** reminds us that Paul...is not saying that **death reigned** over us all because we all sinned. He is saying that **death reigned** over us all because Adam sinned. (Ibid) (**Comment:** This is the not too popular doctrine of original sin, a doctrine which our basic sin nature resists with all its fallen might. If you are wrestling with this doctrine go back and study the notes on Romans 5:12).

If you aren't convinced that **death reigned** then read Genesis 5 and note the solemn repetition of the key phrase **and he died** (8 times in chapter 5)...

So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, **and he died**. (Genesis 5:5)

**Vine** adds that **thanatos** in Romans 5 is primarily a reference...to the (physical) **death of the body**, as is indicated in verse 14. The term may, however, have a more general sense, as including death **spiritual** and **eternal**; for these are the penal consequences of sin, and the whole argument points to death as a penalty thereof. Moreover, the life which is brought to the believer through Christ is set in contrast to death (see note Romans 5:17) and this eternal life is more than simply antithetic to physical death. [Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Reigned** (936) (**basileuo** from **basileús** = a king) means to rule as a king, with implication of complete authority and right to control in an absolute manner. It speaks of the dominating quality of **death**. This Death reigned as an absolute monarch over all humanity, exhibiting undisputed, rightful sway. In America, this picture might lose some of its impact. But to those who were raised in a country ruled by monarchy, the picture of a King whose decrees cannot be questioned is very real. So it was with "King Death".

**Vincent** commenting on **death reigned** writes that this is...The emphatic point of the comparison. The effect of the second Adam cannot fall behind that of the first. If death reigned, there must be a reign of life. ([Greek Word Studies](#))

Adam's sin brought universal death, exactly opposite the result he had been duped to expect by Satan, the Deceiver, who promised

"You will be like God" (Genesis 3:5+).

On the other hand, Christ's sacrifice brought salvation to those who believe.

Adam transgressed God's commandment that he must not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17). This command was a test of man's obedience to God. With the coming of sin into man's experience, death also came. Death became king. It reigned supreme. Adam's action brought the reign of death.

As the representative head of the human race, Adam's offense dethroned him as the ruler of God's creation. Consequently, death became the ruler of nature. Adam became the representative of a death-destined society. Every individual born into that society, shares that destiny of death as well. The "Last Adam", Jesus Christ, is also the representative of a society. Since all men and women are born into the society of death, the only way to enter Christ's society, in which men are born unto justification of life, is to be born again (which is implied by the verb **receive**; i.e., **those who receive** implies some won't receive - see discussion of **receive** below). By the new birth experience we pass from our old relationship to Adam into a new and living relationship with Christ.

**Ray Pritchard** explains Romans 5:17...

Don't let that complicated verse trip you up. Just focus on two words: Death and Life. Death reigned. That's our heritage from Adam. Death reigns on the earth because of Adam's sin. That's why the newspapers never have to reprint an obituary column. Why? Because new people die every day. Every day there is a new list because people are always dying.

What keeps the mortuaries in business? What keeps the undertakers going? Why do cemeteries stay in business? Why is it that they never run out of customers? The answer is simple: Death reigns. That's our heritage from our spiritual father Adam. He sinned and as a result death now reigns on the earth.

Last Monday I took Pastor Sergei Nikolaev from St. Petersburg out to the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College. We made several stops where he met with several people who might provide Russian-language literature for his new seminary. As we were driving away from Wheaton and toward O'Hare Airport, we stopped at a red light. While we were there, a funeral procession came down the street—bright lights flashing, followed by the hearse, followed by a long line of cars. Pastor Nikolaev said, "What is it?" When I told him it was a funeral procession, he said, "Must have been someone important."

**The Hearse Will Come For You** - It doesn't matter whether you are important or not. Someday you will die. Someday your family and friends will follow the hearse that will lead to your grave. It happens to all of us sooner or later. It doesn't matter whether you are rich or not. Someday you will die. It doesn't matter whether you are a peasant or a potentate. Someday you will die. In this world, as a direct result of Adam's sin, death reigns. Someday we'll have your funeral to prove the point.

The next time you see a hearse, remember "Death reigns."

The next time you drive past a mortuary, remember "Death reigns."

The next time you pass a cemetery, remember "Death reigns."

Ah, but that's only one part of the story. There is a way out. There is a way to reverse what Adam did. There is a way to overcome the reign of death. It comes, Paul says, to those who **receive** God's abundant provision of grace and the **gift of righteousness**. That, by the way, is the whole doctrine of justification in three words.



Justification means that when we receive Christ by faith, we also receive the "gift of righteousness." It's not earned in any way. It's a free gift.

But notice the result of receiving the **gift of righteousness**. Those who receive this free gift now **reign in life**. On one hand, death reigns; on the other hand, those who know Jesus Christ as Savior **reign** as kings right now, in this life and in the life to come. We live in a dying world, but in this realm of death, we may through Jesus Christ reign as kings. And in the life to come, we shall reign forever, rising from the dead, clothed with immortality.

Only God could take a slave and transform him into a king. But that is what God has done through Jesus Christ.

**So what Jesus did is far greater than what Adam did.**

**Greater in its nature.**

**Greater in its power.**

**Greater in its effect.**

**MUCH MORE THOSE WHO RECEIVE THE ABUNDANCE OF GRACE AND OF THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS: pollo mallon oi ten perisseian tes charitos kai tes doreas tes dikaiosunes lambanontes (PAPMPN):**

- Romans 6:23; Isa 61:10; Philippians 3:9
- [Romans 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **THE MUCH MORES OF ROMANS 5**

Romans 5:9 **Much more** then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

Romans 5:10 For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, **much more**, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Romans 5:15 But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression 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, abound to the many.

Romans 5:17 For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, **much more** those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:20 And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the **more** (KJV "did **much more** abound")

**Much more** - This introduces the work of grace. On one hand sin got its just reward -- death. Grace doesn't work that way and it cannot be measured out in terms of strict equivalence. As Morris says "Grace is superlative generosity. Grace is overflowing abundance."

**J Vernon McGee** comments on **much more** in Romans 5:12-21 writing that...what Paul is (saying is) that we have **much more** in Christ than we lost in Adam...Today we are looking forward to something more wonderful than the Garden of Eden.

**Wiersbe** explains **much more** in this passage this way...In Adam we lost our kingship, but in Jesus Christ we reign as kings. And we reign **much more**! Our spiritual reign is far greater than Adam's earthly reign, for we share **abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness** ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#))

I like the way **Haldane** explains **much more** in this verse...Here the abounding of the gift over the evil is specified. Those redeemed by the death of Christ are not merely recovered from the fall, but made to reign through Jesus Christ, to which they had no title in Adam's communion. The saved are described as receiving abundance of grace, or the superabundance,—that is, the grace that abounds over the loss. This applies to all the redeemed. They all receive the superabundance of grace; they all receive more than was lost. They are also said to receive the super abounding of the gift of righteousness. This refers to the superior righteousness possessed by the redeemed, which is better than that which in innocence was possessed by Adam; for theirs is the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness of Him who is God. To this the righteousness of Adam and of angels cannot be compared. ([Haldane, R.](#)

**Matthew Henry** adds that...By Adam's sin **death reigned**; but by (through) Christ's righteousness there is not only a period put to the reign of death, but believers are preferred to **reign of life**. In and by the righteousness of Christ we have not only a charter of pardon, but a patent of honour, are not only freed from our chains, but, like Joseph, advanced to the second chariot, and made unto our God kings and priests-not only pardoned, but preferred. See this observed, see notes [Revelation 1:5; 1:6; 5:9, 5:10](#). We are by (through) Christ and his righteousness entitled to, and instated in, more and greater privileges than we lost by the offence of Adam. The plaster is wider than the wound, and more healing than the wound is killing.

**Godet** has an interesting comment on **much more** writing that...The meaning of **much more**, is, as in Romans 5:15, purely logical: **much more** certainly. Unquestionably there is no doubt that there is a greater abundance of life in Christ than there was of death-power in Adam. But this is not what the apostle says here. He is not aiming to establish either a contrast of quality (between life and death) or a contrast of quantity (more of life than of death). It is a **higher degree of certainty** which he enunciates and demonstrates. Justified, we shall reign still **more certainly** in Christ, than as condemned we are dead in Adam. Our future glory is **more certain** even than our death; for a more powerful cause, and one individually assimilated, will make us live still **more certainly** than the weak unappropriated cause could make us die. ([Godet, F L: Commentary on Romans. Kregel. 1998](#))

**Receive** (more literally "are receiving" present tense) ([2983](#)) (**lambano**) means means to take or grasp. It can indicate reaching out to take hold of.

**Vine** writes that...The word **receive** bears stress. The limitation has a bearing on what follows. On the one hand sin and death are universal, on the other hand life is bestowed only upon those who **receive** grace. ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

**S Lewis Johnson** commenting on **those who receive** writes that...In the words there is a hint of how the work becomes the possession of those for whom it was intended. They are to **receive** it. In other words, it becomes theirs by the appropriation of faith... (cf. Eph 2:8-9, Php 1:29 - see **notes** Ephesians 2:8; 2:9; Philippians 1:29, etc.). Incidentally, the expression, **the gift of righteousness**, makes it quite clear that justification is something that becomes ours by grace. It is not the product of works (cf. Ro 4:5+) ([Romans 5:15-21](#))

**William Newell** offers a convicting comment on **those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness** writing...

Note what it is that believing ones **receive**: First, **abundance of grace**: The Cross having met righteously all the claims of the Divine being, and the Divine throne, against sinners, God has now spoken to us as He is, in abounding grace, for "God is Love." Over and over are "abound", **abundance** used here to express God's attitude; and the free motion, since the Cross, of His infinitely loving heart toward sinners, in gracious kindness. Those who **receive** God's grace give Him the honor of His graciousness.

Second, Those that **receive** this **abundance of grace** have therewith **the gift of righteousness**. What a gift! Apart from works, apart from the Law, apart from ordinances, apart from worthiness, an out and out gift of righteousness from God! Many times in teaching this passage to Bible classes I have asked them to repeat three times over each of these expressions: **The abundance of grace, the gift of righteousness**. We earnestly commend this to you, dear reader! Try it.

Alas, how few believers have the courage of faith! We have looked so long at our unworthiness that the very thought of pushing away from the shore-lines and launching out on the limitless, fathomless ocean of Divine grace makes us shrink and waver. When some saint here or there does begin to believe the facts and walk in shouting liberty, we say (perhaps secretly), "He must be an especially holy, consecrated man." No, he is just a poor sinner like you, who is believing in **the abundance of grace**! And if we hear some one praising God for **the gift of righteousness**, because he is now righteous in Christ before God, we are ready to accuse him of thinking too highly of himself. No, he is just a poor sinner like you and me, but one who has dared to believe that he has received an outright gift of righteousness, and is rejoicing in it. ([Romans 5](#))

**Abundance** ([4050](#)) (**perisseia** from **peri** = over and above from **peran** = beyond, over, on the other side) (see related noun in notes on Romans 5:15) is an exceeding measure, something above the ordinary and refers to a superabundance of anything. Here it refers to God's super abundant provision of grace and emphasizes the matchless, infinite generosity of His provision. He did not just give us a sample of His grace, but grace overflowing. Who can truly comprehend this statement! But oh how it should this foretaste cause us to break forth in heartfelt worship and humble thanksgiving for such an incomprehensible provision about which Paul speaks in his letter to the Ephesians declaring..

that in the ages to come He (God the Father) might show the **surpassing riches of His grace** in kindness

toward us in Christ Jesus. (see note Ephesians 2:7)

My grace is," not "was," and not "will be;" 'tis flowing  
Each hour and each moment my need to supply,  
The deeper I dip, still the deeper 'tis growing,  
No drought can diminish or dry;  
My heart from the future no trouble shall borrow;  
Eternal this present provision shall be,  
Assured for today and as sure for tomorrow,  
Such grace is sufficient for me.  
Annie Flint Johnson

**Grace** (5485) (**charis** from **chairō** = to rejoice, be glad) is God's generous favor to undeserving sinners and needy saints. The **grace of God** is undeserved, unsought, and unbought (except that it is made available by the precious blood of the Lamb of God).

**Spurgeon** has an interesting note on **grace** writing that...

Someone asked me once, "Why do you say **free grace**? Of course, if it is grace, it's free." "Oh, well!" I replied, "I do so to make assurance doubly sure." We will always call it, not only grace, but free grace, to make it clear that God gives his grace freely to sinners,—the undeserving and ungodly. He gives it without any condition. If, in one place, he says that he requires repentance, in another place he promises it; if he demands faith at one moment, he bestows it at another. So grace is always God's free gift, and that suits a man who has not a penny in his pocket.

I have walked—as I dare—say some of you have—by the goldsmiths' and jewellers' shops in the Palais Royal at Paris, and seen the vast amount of wealth that is exhibited there; and many of you have gone along the great streets of our city, and seen perfect mines of wealth displayed, and you have said to yourself, "Ah! I cannot purchase any of these things, because there is a little ticket hanging down below with certain pounds marked on it, and I cannot afford to buy them. It is all I can do to get bread and cheese for those who are at home, so I must leave these luxuries to others." But if I should ever pass by a goldsmith's shop, and see a ticket bearing the words, "Free gift!" I should be willing to take a few things at that price. I am glad that you smile at that expression, because those are my Master's terms. He has treasures worth more than the most glorious jeweller's shop ever contained, and they are all free gifts to all who trust him. I dare not laugh at you, but I shall have to blame and condemn you, if eternal life be God's free gift, and yet you will not say, "I will take it, and have it for ever." You would like to take jewellery for nothing, but you will not accept everlasting life mad pardon for nothing by simply trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Wuest** says that **grace** "refers to that favor which God did at Calvary when He stepped down from His judgment throne to take upon Himself the guilt and penalty of human sin. In the case of the Greek, the favor was done to a friend, never an enemy. In the case of God it was an enemy, the sinner, bitter in his hatred of God, for whom the favor was done. God has no strings tied to the salvation He procured for man at the Cross. Salvation is given the believing sinner out of the pure generosity of God's heart. The Greek word referred to an action that was beyond the ordinary course of what might be expected, and was therefore commendable. What a description of that which took place at the Cross! (Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans)

'Twas grace that wrote my name  
In life's eternal book;  
'Twas grace that gave me to the Lamb,  
Who all my sorrows took. - Toplady

**Gift of righteousness** - If it is a gift, it is not something that we can earn. We could never have earned righteousness (right standing before God).

**D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones** explains that...It is not only that we are forgiven, but over and above being forgiven, the righteousness of Jesus Christ is put to our account, is put upon us. ... Unfallen Adam was righteous, but it was his own righteousness as a created being, it was the righteousness of a man. Adam never had the righteousness of Jesus Christ upon him. What he lost was his own righteousness. But you and I are not merely given back a human righteousness, the righteousness that Adam had before he fell—we are given the righteousness of Jesus Christ. "Much more"—abundance, superabundance—give full weight to it! We receive this abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness. (Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 5, Assurance Zondervan, 1972)

**Gift** (1431) (**dorea** from **didomi** = to give) refers to a free gift and emphasizes the gratuitous character of the gift. **Dorea** describes that which is given or transferred freely by one person to another, without price or compensation. Whereas **dorea** (gift) emphasizes

freeness, **charisma** (free gift) highlights the gracious aspect of what God has done.

**Denny** has a comment that speaks to our eternal security writing that...The abundance of the grace and of the gift which consists in righteousness has to be received by faith. But when by faith a connection is formed with Christ, the consequences of that connection, as more agreeable to what we know of God's nature, can be more surely counted upon than the consequences of our natural connection with Adam. (Nicoll, W Robertson, Editor: Expositors Greek Testament: 5 Volumes. Out of print. Search Google)

**Righteousness** (1343) (**dikaioσune** from **dikaioσ** = being proper or right in the sense of being fully justified being or in accordance with what God requires) is the quality of being upright. In its simplest sense **dikaioσune** conveys the idea of conformity to a standard or norm. In this sense **righteousness** is the opposite of hamartia (sin), which is defined as missing of the mark set by God. In this sense **righteousness** is the opposite of hamartia (sin), which is defined as missing of the mark set by God.

**Dikaioσune** is rightness of character before God and rightness of actions before men. (Click here to read Pastor Ray Pritchard's interesting analysis of **righteousness** in the Gospel of Matthew).

The English word **righteousness** comes from a root word that means "straightness." It refers to a state that conforms to an authoritative standard. Righteousness is a moral concept. God's character is the definition and source of all righteousness. God is totally righteous because He is totally as He should be. The righteousness of God is all that God is, all that He commands, all that He demands, all that He approves, all that He provides through Christ the Righteous One.

Jesus Thy Blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
'Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head. ([Play](#))

This is the righteousness bestowed by God on the basis of faith (see **notes** Romans 1:17; 3:21, 22, 26; 5:17, 21; 9:30; 10:3). Christ gives to man far more than man lost in Adam—more indeed than Adam ever had! The blessing that comes from Christ is infinitely greater.

**Barnhouse** notes that...Spanish coins before 1492 show the Strait of Gibraltar with the Latin inscription *Ne plus ultra*—no more beyond. But when Columbus returned from his voyages of discovery, they issued a new coinage, and the inscription read *Plus ultra*—more beyond. When the Lord Jesus Christ passed through the gates of death, men who saw Him go may have thought He had reached the end. But when He came back from the dead, He brought us abundance of grace and of the gift of the righteousness of God. Now we say, "*There is everything here, and more beyond.*" Abundantly more. (Barnhouse, D. G. God's Grace: Romans 5:12-21. Grand Rapids, MI.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company)

**Adam Clarke** writes that...the grace of God in the Gospel abounds beyond, or very far exceeds, the mere reversing of the sufferings brought upon mankind by Adam's one offence; as it bestows a vast surplus of blessings which have no relation to that offence, but to the many offences which mankind have committed, and to the exuberance of the Divine grace.

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**MUCH MORE** - A statement I heard at an Easter service stays with me: "More has been gained in the resurrection of Jesus than was lost in the fall." More gained than lost? Can it be true?

Each day we experience the damage caused by sin entering our world. Greed, injustice, and cruelty all trace their origins back to Adam and Eve's decision to follow their own path rather than God's (Gen. 3). The legacy of their disobedience is passed down to every generation. Without God's intervention, we would be in a hopeless situation. But Jesus overpowered sin through His cross and conquered death through His resurrection.

The victory of Christ is celebrated in Romans 5, often called the "much more" chapter of the New Testament, where Paul contrasts the devastation caused by sin with the restoring power of God's grace. In every case, grace overpowers the consequences of sin. In a grand conclusion, Paul says: "Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Ro 5:20, 21).

No matter how much we have personally lost because of sin, we have gained far more through the resurrection victory of Christ. — David C. McCasland ([Much More! - Our Daily Bread](#))

Sin and despair, like the sea-waves cold,  
Threaten the soul with infinite loss;  
Grace that is greater—yes, grace untold—  
Points to the refuge, the mighty cross. —Johnston  
© Renewal 1939 Hope Publishing.

**WILL REIGN IN LIFE THROUGH THE ONE JESUS CHRIST: en zoe basileusousin (3PFAI) dia tou enos iesou christou**

- Ro 8:39+; Mt 25:34; 1Cor 4:8; 2 Ti 2:12+; Jas 2:5+; 1 Peter 2:9+; Revelation 1:6+; Revelation 3:21+; Revelation 5:9; 5:10+; Revelation 20:4;20:6+ Rev 22:5+
- [Romans 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Will reign in life** - This phrase has been understood two ways. Some commentators (Newell, Vine, F B Meyer, MacDonald, Constable, Wiersbe) see this reign as beginning in this present life and culminating in the believers reign as kings with Christ in His Millennial kingdom and forever. Others (Cranfield, S Lewis Johnson, John Piper) take the future tense of **reign** as referring not to our reigning in this present life but **only** referring to our reign in the future life. I favor the former interpretation. Some quote Paul's statement to the Corinthians ("you have become kings without us" 1Cor 4:8) as evidence to support the fact that believers don't reign in this life, but in that passage Paul was clearly using that phrase in biting irony. I would counter the Corinthians passage with the fact that Paul clearly states that God has "raised us up with Him (Christ) and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus". (see note Ephesians 2:6)

**John MacArthur** writes that...They **reign in** that righteous **life** with their Lord and Savior. They possess the very righteous, glorious, and eternal **life** of God Himself.

**MacDonald** comments...What grace this is! We are not only delivered from death's reign as a tyrant over us, but we reign as kings, enjoying life now and eternally. Do we really understand and appreciate this? Do we live as the royalty of heaven, or do we grovel among the muckheaps of this world? ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Constable** comment that will reign in life...implies the believer's resurrection and participation in Jesus Christ's reign as well as our reigning in this life. ([Romans 5 Expository Notes](#))

**Morris** notes that...Paul does not explain the meaning of **reigning in life**, but (with Lloyd-Jones, pp. 263ff.) we may think of the fact that sin has no dominion over the believer (see note Romans 6:14), believers are "more than conquerors" (see note Romans 8:37), and they can do all things through Christ (see note Philippians 4:13). And, of course, they look forward to a more complete reign (Matt. 25:34; see notes [Revelation 1:6](#); [Revelation 3:21](#)). Adam's sin brought condemnation, but grace reverses this. And not only does it reverse it, but it does much more. ([Morris, L. The Epistle to the Romans. W. B. Eerdmans: Inter-Varsity Press](#))

**F Godet** comments that **reign in life** is...Contrasted...to this: **reign of death**, (and thus) the expression denotes the mode or nature of the reign of believers. A new, holy, inexhaustible, and victorious vitality will pervade those receivers of righteousness, and make them so many kings. If the collective condemnation could make each of them a subject of death, the conclusion therefrom should be that their individual justification will make each of them a king in life. ([Godet, F L: Commentary on Romans. Kregel. 1998](#))

The **UBS Handbook** writes that **will rule in life**...should not be translated in such a way as to imply that these persons will have power over other individuals as earthly rulers. Rather they will have spiritual strength, and this is sometimes expressed as "they will be strong in their lives," "they will live with strength," or "they will live overcoming." ([The United Bible Societies' New Testament Handbook Series](#))

**Reign** (936) ([basileuo](#) from [basileús](#) = a king) means to rule as a king, with implication of complete authority and right to control in an absolute manner.

Unlike Adam's act, Christ's act has, accomplished (and will complete) exactly what He intended for ...

He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. (see **note** Philippians 1:6)

To reign in life through Christ is also to have power over sin. Later in this letter Paul says,

Thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness (see **note** Romans 6:17, 6:18).

**D. Stuart Briscoe** has an interesting discussion of what it means to reign in life writing that this phrase...

speaks of the quality of life which redeemed individuals are to demonstrate. Godet remarks, "Death reigns; it is a tyrant. But life does not reign; it has not subjects; it makes kings."

A chilling but fascinating story in the first chapter of Judges offers insight into our discussion. After Joshua's leadership there was some confusion as to who should deal with the troublesome Canaanites, and the Lord settled the problem by sending the tribe of Judah. Along with Simeon, Judah routed the people of Bezek, captured Adoni-Bezek, and cut off his big toes and his thumbs. He was remarkably philosophical about his mutilation saying: "Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off have picked up scraps under my table. Now God has paid me back for what I did to them" (see note Judges 1:7).

Big toes give balance and thumbs provide grip. Without either a king cannot walk or grasp his sword. He must wobble about through life unarmed and unrespected. If, in addition to this, he must beg for scraps of food from another's table, he is a king in name only. The possibility of those who have been placed under the reign of grace not reigning in life is always before God's people. For them to hobble through life rather than stride in triumph and to grovel under a tyrant's table rather than feed sumptuously from the table prepared for them is a tragedy of major proportions. Should they be unable to lay hold of the sword given to them and to get a grip on the situations they encounter, their state occasions great concern. This is what is meant by not reigning in life. There are three relevant expressions that clearly state the means whereby God's people reign in life. First, they receive "the gift of righteousness"; second, they receive "abundance of grace"; and third, they reign in life "through Jesus Christ." ([Briscoe, D. S., & Ogilvie, L. J. The Preacher's Commentary Series. New Testament. 2003. Thomas Nelson](#))

**Through the one** (Adam)...**through the One** (Christ) - These parallel phrases give added emphasis to the one real point of comparison between Adam and Christ, namely, the fact that each man's action is determinative for the life of the many to whom they are related.

**Life** (2222) (**zoe**) describes the state of one who is possessed of vitality or is animate. It means the absolute fullness of life, both essential and ethical, which alone belongs to God the Giver of life. In the Greek writings of Homer **zoe** meant 'living' referring to 'substance or property', without which there would not be life. After Homer it means existence as opposed to death.

Truly meaningful life, life on the "highest plane", life that really is worthwhile is found only in "the promise of life in Christ Jesus" (see note 2 Timothy 1:1) Who came so that we might have life and might have it abundantly ([Jn 10:10](#)). This life is "in Christ Jesus" and therefore is a life that is eternal, for He is eternal and our union with Him conveys eternity (right now...in this present age! - see Newell's comments below regarding the believer's **reign in life**).

**Vine** comments that...The precise contrast to **death reigned** would have been **life shall reign**, but the contrast is far greater than this. It is not that life reigns instead of death, but that those who receive grace will themselves reign in life. That we are to reign in life involves much more than participation in eternal life; it indicates the activity of life in fellowship with Christ in His kingdom. ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Jesus** said

this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. (Jn 17:3)

**Note:** He is the one who has overcome death and said, "Because I live, you shall live also"

This new quality of life then is the present possession of the believer because of his or her relationship with the Lamb Who takes away the sins of the world and it is also our future hope when we will receive our glorified bodies, have every tear wiped away and be forever free from sin, sickness, sorrow, suffering, and death (see **notes** Philipians 3:20; 21).

**Wayne Barber** adds...To **reign in life** is the much more effect that Jesus has had for you and me. It goes back to the first part of the chapter. Now I am able to bear up under. Now I am able to deal with all the tribulation and suffering and sorrow in this world (see **note** Romans 5:3). Do you understand the effect God has had on your life? Maybe you don't understand the life that is within you. That doesn't mean that it is not going to be difficult on the outside, but the victory is on the inside! Did you know that victory for the Christian is not a goal? We don't work toward victory! We come from it! It's already been won in Jesus Christ. We rule and reign in His life. In other words, the moment I surrender to Him, the moment I surrender to His word, then His life in me begins to strengthen me to be and to do what I never could do before! How many Christians even understand that? We forget that in the life, He gives us power over the sin that used to afflict us when we were in Adam. (See **sermon** Romans 5:15-17 Are You in Adam or in Christ?)

As believers, we know from experience as well as from Scripture that we are still affected by sin, still clothed in the sinful rags of the old self (see Chart contrasting in the flesh vs in the Spirit) But **sin** is no longer the dominant nature or the overbearing master of a believer. In Christ we are no longer victims of sin but victors over **sin** and we can exclaim...

thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor 15:57)

**William Newell** expounds on the saint's **reign in life** writing that...

God now uses the words **much more** applying them to those who accept the **abundance of His grace** and of His **gift of righteousness**, saying these shall **reign** as kings **in life through the One Jesus Christ**.

Look now at this expression, **reign** as kings **in life**. I am writing this during the week of the coronation of George VI of England, and have heard of the splendors with which the ceremony was attended; and we do thank God for the British Empire, and honor, with her subjects, her monarch. But, ah, believer, look closely at these words of Paul, **reign in life**. Here is a kingdom before which all of earth is dust. And who are the kings here? Believers! Those whose humble faith has **received the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness** -- these shall **reign** as kings **through Jesus Christ**.

God has "the ages to come" in which to manifest fully this mighty reigning! But it is already begun for those in Christ. Gideon, speaking of certain Israelites, asked the kings of Midian, "What manner of men were they?" "As thou art, so were they," they answered; "each one resembled the children of a king." (see **note** Judges 8:18) **They shall reign forever and ever** is God's description of the saints of the New Jerusalem (see **note** [Revelation 22:5](#); see also the [Millennial Reign of the Saints](#)).

And their reign has already, in this life, begun; because they are in Christ the mighty Victor! Satan would fain keep from your ears this news, believer, that you stand in **the abundance of God's grace**; that you have received the **gift of righteousness** in Christ; and that you are to **reign** as a king **in life** now and forever, **through the One Jesus Christ**.

### **May God awaken us to the facts!**

(**Note**: 'When Israel inquired of the Lord about Saul, the son of Kish, who had been anointed as their King (for they could not find him), the Lord answered, you remember' "Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff." "And they ran and fetched him thence" (1Sa 10:22-23). How sad if some of us who have received the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, and whom God desires to be reigning in life in Christ, have gotten ourselves hidden "among the stuff," -of earthly goods, and ambitions, "religious" traditions, and the literature of this world!)

Satan is deathly jealous of the Church of God, which is already in the heavenlies, from which he is soon to be cast out (see **notes** [Revelation 12:7](#); [12:8](#); [12:9](#)). He knows that the Church will share Christ's throne and soon reign with Him in indescribable glory (see **notes** [Revelation 5:10](#); [Revelation 20:4](#); [20:5](#); [20:6](#) ). Therefore he will blind you, if he can, to your present place of royal power of life in Christ (cp notes Colossians 3:4; Ephesians 2:6).

It will, we are sure, be a matter of fathomless regret to many Christians, at Christ's coming, that their lives on earth were characterized by doubt, defeat and depression; rather than by victorious reigning in life in Christ. God has no favorites. Each one who is in Christ has a complete Christ (see **note** Colossians 2:10). The exhortations of the Epistles are addressed alike to all.

David Livingstone early wrote in his diary,

"I have found that I have no unusual endowments of intellect, but I this day resolved that I would be an uncommon Christian."

Concerning such it is written,

"Considering the issue of their manner of life, imitate their faith" (see **note** Hebrews 13:7).

**Let us refuse** to be content with a Christian existence that cannot finally be summed up as "He reigned in life through Jesus Christ," --- over sin, Satan, the world, difficulties, adverse surroundings and circumstances.

**Let us remember** the apostles, the martyrs. Reformers, godly Puritans, the holy [Wesleys](#), and [Whitefields](#), the [Havergals](#) and [Crosbys](#); and the humble saints we know, whose existence is described by Paul's glorious phrase **reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ** ([Romans 5](#))

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**F B Meyer (Our Daily Homily)** comments on **They which receive abundance of grace ... shall reign in life-**

**All God's dealings with us are on the same principle** As we received Christ Jesus the Lord, so we must walk in Him. Whether it be justification or sanctification; whether reconciliation or reigning in life that is under consideration — the same mighty principles underlie and control the Divine gifts and our participation in them. We receive reconciliation as a gift at the beginning of our Christian

life, and we have to receive all else by the same medium to the end. For ever and for ever we have just to wait till God fill us, as the flower-cups that are now filled with sunshine and now with dew or rain.

**You have already received the reconciliation** (Romans 5:11). — Unable to earn it by your own endeavors, you were at last content to receive it as a free gift placed into your open hand; now you have to maintain the same position with respect to all the spiritual gifts that you need for the maintenance of a godly life, and to enable you to reign. Faith — simple, open-handed, heaven-regarding faith — is the one unchanging law of the holy life.

“Trusting Jesus, that is all.”

**This reigning in life is not to be relegated to the unseen and future** — It is meant to be our present experience. He hath made us kings to God, even the Father. We are called to the royalty of men, the abundance, the freedom, the consciousness of power and victory, which we are wont to associate with those who reign. To reign in the ordinary life of the home, the shop, the counting-house — such is our high calling in Christ Jesus. And it may be ours if we receive “abundance of grace” of the one Man, Jesus Christ.

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**F B Meyer (Our Daily Walk) - REIGNING IN LIFE** - IT WOULD take a lifetime--nay, it will demand eternity--to explore the treasures of this paragraph from which our text is taken. Let us not, however, stand gazing into heaven, but avail ourselves of the privilege offered us during our earthly life of reigning through the One, even Jesus Christ. Do not postpone the fulfilment of this promise! We may have to wait for the future life to unfold depths of meaning which now transcend our thought; but any fair reading of this radiant verse compels us to appropriate it for here and now.

But, "how can these things be?" He, a master in Israel asked that question of Christ! This blessed life of victory is only possible to those who have been born from above. By nature we were born from below into the first Adam, who was "a living soul." We must be born from above, into the second Adam, who becomes to all who trust in Him a Life-giving spirit (1Co 15:45). That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and cannot of itself rise into the Spirit; the Holy Spirit must stoop to lift it into union with Himself. But He will do this for you, if only you will lift your heart to Christ in simple faith and surrender.

The difference it will make! Each life has been planned by God with the intention of training it for high service here and beyond; and whatever happens in life, there is always an abundance of grace awaiting our use. But how often we are as blind to it as Balaam was to the Angel that stood on the wayside! We make our plans! We lie awake half the night in a fever of anxiety! We go to this friend or that! But we do not claim that abundance of grace which is intended to meet the need of the hour. It is only as we receive it by a childlike faith that we can reign in life. That word "abundance" in its Latin original speaks of ocean-waves. Stand on the shore and look out on that infinite expanse, and do not be content with Scooping up enough to fill an oyster-shell!

What will result? A royal life! If a throne means power--we are strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. If it means victory--we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. If it means largess--we have always all sufficiency in all things, and abound to every good work.

**PRAYER:** Heavenly Father, I thank Thee for the trials and pains that are ever working for my good, and making me a partaker of Thy holiness. May I receive the abundance of Thy grace, and reign in life here and hereafter. AMEN.

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**F B Meyer (Our Daily Walk) - LIFE ABUNDANT: GRACE ABOUNDING** - NOTICE THAT word **Receive!** We first receive forgiveness, or reconciliation, then abundance of grace (Ro 5:11-17). We cannot merit or earn either one or the other; all that we have to do is to take what God offers, by an act of the will which accepts and appropriates. If men are lost, it is because they refuse to receive the grace and love of God, secured to us, in spite of our failure and sin, through the second Adam. We must believe that we have received, even when we are not conscious of any new experience (John 1:12). It is a blessed thing, when our emotional life is at a low ebb, and we feel out of sorts, to receive, to inbreathe, to drink in the **abundance of grace**, and to know that He is working in us in power.

There is no limit to the **abundance** of God's supply--it abounds! The Apostle keeps using that word, which really means "*running over*" (see notes Romans 5:15, 5:17, 5:20). And the result of receiving more and more out of God's fullness, is that we reign, not in the future life, but in this. Ours becomes a royal, a regnant, a triumphant life.

This glorious life in which we are daily victorious over sin, daily using and scattering the unsearchable riches of Christ, daily helping others up to the throne-life, is within the reach of every reader of these words. God wants you to enter upon it; He has made every provision for it, and is at this moment urging you to enter upon it. The only thing for you to do is to receive the abundance of His grace and of the gift of righteousness. Open your heart and life and He will fill it; dare to believe that He has filled it, even though you don't feel it; and go forth to live a royal life, distributing the largess of His royal bounty!

But we must pour out as God pours in! Only so will He be able to trust us with His fullness. Our love to others, our willingness to



help them, our forgivingness and patience must go to the point of self-exhaustion, if we would know the abundant life and the grace that flows over.

**PRAYER:** For souls redeemed, for sins forgiven; For means of grace, and hopes of heaven, Father, what can to Thee be given, Who givest all? AMEN.