“The Abundant Grace of God”

April 22, 2018

II Corinthians 4:5-15

Please find with me the 5th chapter of Romans. In a moment we will read a few verses from it.

What would you say is your greatest need? Health? Job? Income? To have a specific problem removed? To see a specific answers to a specific prayer? To control your thoughts. Some might even say “a really good attitude.” One woman said “our greatest need is love.”

And those are great needs, for sure. But what really is greater than all these? Now, it may surprise you to discover that your greatest need is the exact same thing everyone else needs. And it’s presented to us by the Holy Spirit through Paul right here in this fifth chapter of Romans.

So, I’d like to begin today by reading a section of the chapter. We’ll start at verse eleven. Now, see if you can determine what it is that each of you; each of us here needs. Romans 5:11 *“And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. (12) Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*

*(13) (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law). (14) Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude [likeness] of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him [Jesus] that was to come.*

*(15) But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.”*

The one thing everyone really needs is found in this fifteenth verse. Romans 5:15*“But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more* ***the grace of God, and the gift by grace****, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.”*

Here it is. We need the grace of God. We need a personal experience of His grace. And, as you can see in the verse, with His grace comes a gift by grace. And it comes to us by one man. And that man is Jesus Christ. And it abounds to many.

So, I’ve titled today’s sermon “The Abundant Grace of God.” Shall we pray?

Now, why would I refer to it as abundant grace? Here’s why. II Corinthians 4:15 *“For all things are for your sakes, that* ***the abundant grace*** *might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.”*

When it comes to the story of “The Abundant Grace of God,” you will need to imagine a wall-to-wall mural which depicts the history of mankind. And on that mural you find Adam and Eve on your left, your far left. And that scene, although it begins very brightly, is quite dark with very little sunlight. And what are Adam and Eve doing? You see them committing the first sin. Next, you see the history of the world with all of its pain, its crime, its war, destruction, disease, death, and failure.

And into that scene come Ten Huge Commands. We call them the “Ten Commandments.” And with this ten sentence law, we discover that people can’t be good by their own efforts. Try though they may, the history of mankind shows us that none of us, no not one of us, is able of himself, to obey these Ten Huge Commands. The entire world falls short.

Yes, we see there are times of great good on the mural. There are some bright times, some, lighter scenes. But the main scene that is so obvious is that of man rejecting his Creator.

Then, on the far right of the mural you will find a Perfec-tly Sinless Man, Someone Who is fully and completely human and fully and completely God; the Son of God, being crucified for all of the sins of all of mankind throughout his entire history. You see Christ dying on a Cross. You see Him being buried and then He rises again on the Third Day. And at the far right of your mural, the brilliant yellow sunlight revealing the effects of the LORD’s death, burial, and resurrection in the lives of those who believe it.

And you call your mural “The Abundant Grace of God.”

You see, to understand abundant grace, you’ll need see the story of mankind, the true picture as God sees it. And that’s what we find here in Romans five.

If there is one theme that permeates the entire Bible, it’s the grace of God. Adam and Eve received it when they were removed from the Garden. They again received it when God promised them that a descendant; the Onete fivees of those who believe it would come Who would crush the head of Satan. And they received more grace when Eve brought their son Seth into the world.

And Cain received grace. That grace came even after he had taken the life of his brother Abel. Then we find Noah receiving it. Genesis 6:8 *“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”* And on throughout the history of the world the grace of God is abundant.

Now, you might think that you are on your own day after day and year after year. But every day His grace is on your life. You just might not know it. And you may not be appreciating it.

Think about the measure of health God has blessed you with. Think about the next breath you are about to take. Think about the fact that you can think and function and relate to people. Why does your heart beat 115,000 times a day? Why does it keep you alive while you sleep? Everywhere you are, every day of your life, His grace is upon you. Prac-tically speaking, you live inside a world of grace.

Here’s how Jesus describes it. Matthew 5:44 *“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; (45) That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for* ***he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust****.”*

Daily God extends to us two types of grace. There’s His Common Grace and there’s His Saving Grace. Common Grace is what He showers upon everyone. Everything in the universe is touched by that grace. It’s common because everyone shares in it. It’s like air. Everyone breathes. It’s abundant. It’s unstoppable. It’s everywhere.

He makes His sun to rise on the Hitlers and on the Mother Theresas, both the evil and the good. And He sends His rain on both. There is nowhere you can go that the grace of God is not plentiful and evident, notwithstanding that so many of us are unaware of it.

Now, how many here are fully appreciative of that grace? As you are about to see, there is one area of your life that needs it most of all. And that area is your moral life. Let me show you what I mean.

Look again at verse eleven. Romans 5:11 *“And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. (12) Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: …”*

Here’s that second type of grace. We might call it His Saving Grace. That’s what the Holy Spirit refers to here. Or, we could call it moral grace because you need it to deal with your own inner moral world, which, by the way, covers all the aspects of your life. Morally and spiritually is where our greatest need is when it comes to God’s grace.

So, what does “The Abundant Grace of God” look like?

First, the LORD provides you a Divine Joy through the work of Christ. Romans 5:11 *“And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.”*

Joy is quite prominent in the Bible. This word “joy,” though, is actually a verb. So it says “we also **rejoice** in God through our LORD Jesus Christ.” But it’s even more than that. It says “we are rejoicing” in God. In other words, there is in the heart of the child of God a well, an ongoing well, an experience of rejoicing.

The world defines joy as happiness. And you can’t fault people for that. There is this intense happiness you feel when you satisfy a desire of your heart. C. S. Lewis tells story of his coming to Christ in a book he titled “Surprised By Joy” (1956). In it he states *“I would tell how I passed from Atheism to Christianity.”* He adds *“True joy is an unsatisfied desire ─ a deep longing for God that never ends.”* [Found in “Shadow-lands and Songs of Light” by Kevin Ott, page 22 on https://broadstreetpublishing.com].

There is a lot to distinguish a Christian from a Heathen. But, of all the things that really distinguish a Christian from an Unbeliever, this is the most prominent. A Christian, in finding a relationship with God through Christ, finds true joy.

So, ask yourself a simple question from this eleventh verse. “Do I own this joy?” Because, if you don’t, then it’s certainly possible and also quite likely that you’ve not yet come to know the living LORD Jesus.

Like the old proverb goes *“If the shoe fits, then wear it.”*

And, it’s even better than good food. Romans 14:17 *“For the kingdom of God is not meat [food] and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”*

If this joy Paul speaks about is yours, then you have indeed come to know the LORD Jesus.

First, the LORD provides you a Divine Joy through the work of Christ.

Second, that joy comes through the Atonement.

Romans 5:11 *“And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.”*

Think with me about how God works. He, and He alone, connects your personal experience of rejoicing with His personal experience of atonement. Only God could join the atonement to your joy.

The atonement. Paul goes on to explain. Now, this is not the annual atonement made when the Jewish High Priest made a sacrificial offering on the day we now call Yom Kippur.

It’s much, much more. You see, on the Day of Atone-ment, (according to the Jewish calendar, this year will be celebrated on Tuesday, September 18th), something regarding to your personal sins is said to take place.

Yom Kippur is actually considered the holiest day of the year if you’re an Orthodox Jew. What will happen is this. At sundown on September 18th, the Jewish Rabbi at the syna-gogue will quote “make atonement.” And that atonement is for the personal sins of the people in his congregation throughout the past year.

But no true atonement can be made today because there is no Temple in Jerusalem since 70 A.D. And the atonement, as every good Jew knows, required a sacrifice, a blood sacrifice; a bull. According to Moses, a bull had to be sacrificed.

So here’s how the modern Jewish Rabbi handles it. Quote. *“Yom Kippur is the moment in Jewish time when we dedicate our mind, body, and soul to reconciliation with God, our fellow human beings, and ourselves. We are commanded to turn to those whom we have wronged first, acknowledging our sins and the pain we might have caused.*

*At the same time, we must be willing to forgive and to let go of certain offenses and the feelings of resentment they provoked in us. On this journey we are both seekers and givers of pardon. Only then can we turn to God and ask for forgiveness:  “And for all these, God of forgiveness, forgive us, pardon us, and grant us atonement.” [Found on* [*https://reformjudaism.org*](https://reformjudaism.org) *“Yom Kippur”].*

But, is that the atonement? Remember what the Apostle says. Romans 5:11 *“And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ,* ***by whom we have now received the atonement****.”*

The atonement is something we receive; not something we do. And the atonement is something we received through Christ.

The word atonement; what does it mean? It means “reconciliation,” like when two people who have been at odds come together and are reconciled to each other.

When was the last time you had full-blown disagreement; with someone close to you? Do you remember how much it hurt? Do you remember how sorry you were that you said what you said? Do you remember how much you blamed that other person?

Now, do you also remember going in humility and con-fession of your side of the wrong, asking for their forgive-ness? And when they said “You’re forgiven,” do you remember the broken relationship being restored? That’s what reconciliation means.

II Corinthian 5:17 *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (18) And all things are of* ***God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ*** *…”*

You see, this is not something we do for ourselves nor can be done for us by a Rabbi on the Day of Atonement. God reconciles us to Himself by Jesus.

And imagine this. The world has always been at war. And, of course, each country believes they’re right when it comes to war. But what if the leaders of both of those warring nations were to come to Christ and be reconciled to God?

Here’s what would happen. They would seek to be reconciled with their enemy.

The Book of Ephesians has a lot to say about reconcili-ation and especially reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles. For example, Ephesians 2:14 *“For he [Jesus] is our peace, who hath made both [Jew and Gentile] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; (15) Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain [two] one new man, so making peace;*

*(16) And* ***that he might reconcile*** *both [Jew and Gentile] unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: (17) and came and preached peace to you which were afar off [Gentiles], and to them that were nigh [Jews]. (19) For through him we both [Jew and Gentile] have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”*

And here’s Colossians 1:19 *“For it pleased the Father that in him [Christ] should all fulness dwell; (20) and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.*

*(21) And you, that were sometime [formerly] alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works,* ***yet now hath he reconciled*** *(22) in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblame-able and unreproveable in his sight: …”*

Can you see the LORD’s purpose in the atonement, the reconciliation? So that you and I could be presented to Him unblameable and unreproveable; yes, sinless. That’s why we could never atone for *our* sins. Only God is able to do it.

What does God’s abundant grace mean? It means

First, the LORD provides you a Divine Joy through the work of Christ.

Second, that joy comes through the Atonement.

Third, it means we are personally provided with saving grace; verse twelve. Romans 5:12 *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (13) (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law).*

*(14) Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude [likeness] of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come [Jesus]. (15) But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.”*

Now you can see why you painted that beautiful mural covering the history of mankind? In order to understand the abundant grace of God, you need to see God at work providing a remedy for the sin and death that Adam and Eve brought into the human race.

The whole story of God’s grace is found in the inter-section of two lives; Adam and Christ. But, folks, remember this, it’s not just the two lives of Adam and Christ that intersect.

Now, what did we get from Adam, the first human being?

One, by one man sin entered into the world.

Two, by this same man, death entered into the world.

If you’ve ever wondered where sin came from, here it is. If you’ve ever wondered where death came from, here it is.

And folks, the mural we painted today isn’t just the history of the world or even the intersection of the two lives of Adam and Christ. It’s actually just two specific actions; two events, one act of complete disobedience; one act of complete obedience. One act resulted in sin permeating every part of creation. Every heart ever born has been affected by this one act of disobedience by Adam.

From Adam onward to this very moment death reigns; verse fourteen. Romans 5:14 *“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude [likeness] of Adam's transgression …”*

No, you might not have done exactly the same thing Adam did, but your father, Adam, the first person, made a choice and that choice plunged the entire human race into the depths of moral and spiritual chaos. Today people love darkness rather than light. We live in a sin-filled, crime-ridden, immoral society no matter what language we speak and no matter where we go to sleep each night. And Adam introduced us not only to sin, but death. Nevertheless, death *reigned* from Adam to Moses even if people didn’t sin in exactly the same way Adam did.

And why bring Moses into the story? Because with Moses comes the Ten Commandments. And why the Ten Commandments? So that we would see clearly that we are sinners in need of atonement.

The Second Man, Jesus, like Adam, by one single act, dealt with sin and death for eternity. Romans 5:15 *“…For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.”*

Folks, God’s grace is abundant. You can only be saved by grace, apart from good works because those who rely upon their good works boast in those works and they want God to see in them something good.

But His grace is free, undeserved, unequal, and unmerited. By grace you can be saved.

So, what will you do with the message of Romans five and the abundant grace of God? Will you receive it?

Hebrews 9:11 *“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; (12) Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

*(13) For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: (14) How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”*

The only Atonement that is effective for you and me is the one accomplished by the shedding of the blood of Christ. And the moment you put your faith in that atonement, you have entered into the abundant grace of God.

So, I’ll remind you again today. If this message resonates with you, take it someone this week. As you’ve heard me say. “This news is not for you to keep. It’s Good News beyond all the good news anyone will ever hear. So, take the truth of God’s abundant grace to someone this week. Open your mouth and let God fill it – with the message of God’s grace.”

Shall we pray?

Closing hymn # 349 “Oh, How He Loves You And Me”