

## 14. Man of guilt vs. Man of Grace

July 13, 2008

It happened too fast. One minute a death row inmate was in his cell playing tic-tac-toe on the dirt walls, and the next he was outside squinting his eyes at the bright sun.

"You're free to go," the prison guard blurted out with a disgust in his voice. The just-released-former-death-row-inmate scratches his beard. "What?" "You're free. The governor is going to execute someone else instead of you." He murdered a man, and started a major riot in the city, yet out of blue he became a free man and someone else is going to die for him. It is too good to be true.

It was true for Barabbas and for the entire humanity that including you and me.

Barabbas who was released right before his own crucifixion has often been compared to humanity, and rightly so. In many ways he stands for us: a prisoner who was freed because someone he had never seen took his place.

As far as we know, he took his sudden freedom for what it was, an undeserved gift. Someone tossed him a life preserver and he grabbed it, no questions asked. You couldn't imagine him pulling some of our stunts. We look at our spiritual eternal free gift and try to earn it or diagnose it or pay for it instead of simply saying "thank you" to God in heaven and accepting it.

Why do we do that? The only reason I can figure is PRIDE. To accept grace of God means to accept its necessity, and most people don't like to do that. To accept God's grace also means that one realizes his or her despair and sins, and most people aren't too keen on doing that either.

Barabbas, however, knew better. Maybe he didn't understand mercy and surely he didn't deserve it, but he wasn't about to refuse it. We might do well to realize that our spiritual situation isn't too different than that of Barabbas'. We, too, were death row prisoners with no chance for appeal. But why some prefer to stay in prison while the cell door has been unlocked is simply beyond me.

### A. DOOMED FROM THE BEGINNING

*Romans 5:12-14 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all 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 those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.*

The apostle Paul's inspired teaching in Romans 5:12-21 gives us a very clear choice: the way of the man of guilt or the way of the Man of grace. Which one do we choose?

Paul explains the effects of the rebellion committed by the first man, Adam. Through him, Paul reveals, sin and death entered the human race and spread to all people.

It is important to understand that the Adam and Eve account is not an optional passage to be accepted or rejected, or allegorized away. You can't take away Genesis 3 without taking away principles that lay the foundation for our salvation.

It also is important for us to know that Adam is responsible for the fall, not Eve. Eve was deceived when she sinned but Adam sinned with full knowledge. Because of disobedience and pride in the heart of Adam and Eve, death entered the world and spread to all men.

In short, this section is a contrast of Adam and Christ. Adam was given dominion over the old creation, he sinned, and he lost his kingdom. Because of Adam's sin, all mankind is under condemnation and death. Christ came as the King over a new creation. By His obedience on the cross, He brought in righteousness and justification. Christ not only undid all the damage that Adam's sin effected, but He accomplished "much more" by making us the very sons of God.

Then, obviously some skeptics will demand an answer for this question: "Was it fair for God to condemn the whole world for one man's disobedience?" The answer, of course, is that it was not only fair, but it was also wise and gracious. Let me explain, if God had tested each human being individually, the result would have been the same: all of us would have flunked with disobedience. But even more important, by condemning the human race through one man – Adam, God was then able to save the human race through one Man – Jesus Christ.

There are also some misconceptions about the race of Adam as well as Jesus. Let's make it clear here. Adam and Jesus were not gringos. They didn't have blonde hair and blue eyes like some people would like to think. Many biblical scholars believe that the Garden of Eden was located in the region of modern day Iraq, not in Southern California. That means that Adam had a facial feature of the Middle Eastern. And Jesus was born in the home of a Jewish family. I know I totally blew the bubble of the blonde hair Jesus from some of you. It is a good thing Jesus was not a blonde surfer dude.

All of us are genetically connected with Adam and his deed affects us. Some people would insist that they are not connected with Adam and have nothing to do with his sin. The principle of death was introduced into the world when Adam sinned and it has reigned on earth ever since. Every grave is mute evidence to the spread and reign of sin since the time of Adam.

*Genesis 2:17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

Let me give you a simple logic. Since death and sin are connected, we can know that all men are sinners – because we all are subject to death – even the smallest baby – it proves that the entire mankind sinned in Adam. Humans are subject to death before he or she individually sins in Adam's sin.

## **B. THE PERFECT GIFT FROM HEAVEN ABOVE**

*Romans 5:15-17 But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. 16 And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. 17 For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)*

Everyone who is born dies – the mortality rate is 100%. No one survives. When a baby is born, it isn't a question of whether the baby will live or die – they will most certainly die. The only question is when. We think of this world as the land of the living, but it is really the land of the dying, and the billions of human bodies cast into the earth over the centuries proves this. But apostle Paul says that the believer's reign in life through Jesus is more certain than death or taxes!

### **C. A BEAUTIFUL EXAMPLE OF GRACE**

In 2 Samuel 9, we come to one of Scripture's richest illustrations of grace in the Bible. Patterning his heart after God's by extending acceptance and mercy, king David showers a shriveled soul with a refreshing rain of grace.

In those days, an incoming king would hunt down and kill the deposed monarch's family to eliminate the possibility of retaliation or battle for the throne. David, however, vowed that he would spare Saul's son Jonathan and his family, showing them God's kindness.

*2 Samuel 9:1-13 Now David said, "Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" 2 And there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba. So when they had called him to David, the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" And he said, "At your service!" 3 Then the king said, "Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, to whom I may show the kindness of God?" And Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan who is lame in his feet." 4 So the king said to him, "Where is he?" And Ziba said to the king, "Indeed he is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, in Lo Debar." 5 Then King David sent and brought him out of the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo Debar. 6 Now when Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, had come to David, he fell on his face and prostrated himself. Then David said, "Mephibosheth?" And he answered, "Here is your servant!" 7 So David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat bread at my table continually." 8 Then he bowed himself, and said, "What is your servant, that you should look upon such a dead dog as I?" 9 And the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "I have given to your master's son all that belonged to Saul and to all his house. 10 You therefore, and your sons and your servants, shall work the land for him, and you shall bring in the harvest, that your master's son may have food to eat. But Mephibosheth your master's son shall eat bread at my table always." Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. 11 Then Ziba said to the king, "According to all that my lord the king has commanded his servant, so will your servant do." "As for Mephibosheth," said the king, "he shall eat at my table like one of the king's sons." 12 Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Micha. And all who dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants of Mephibosheth. 13 So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem, for he ate continually at the king's table. And he was lame in both his feet.*

We can find nine analogies connect David's grace to Mephibosheth with God's grace to us:

1. Once Mephibosheth had enjoyed fellowship with his father.

So Adam had enjoyed intimate relationship with God in the Garden of Eden.

2. When disaster struck, fear came, and Mephibosheth suffered a fall that crippled him for the rest of his life.  
When sin came, humanity suffered a fall, which has forever left us spiritually crippled.
3. Out of unconditional love for his friend Jonathan, David sought anyone to whom he might extend his grace.  
God, because of His unconditional love for His Son and acceptance of His Son's death on the cross, continues to seek anyone to whom He might extend His grace.
4. The crippled man was destitute and undeserving. All he could do was accept the king's favor.  
We sinners are undeserving of God's mercy and without hope. In no way are we worthy of our King's favor. All we can do is humbly and gratefully accept it.
5. The king took the crippled Mephibosheth from a barren wasted land and seated him at the royal banquet table in the palace.  
God, our Father, has rescued us from a moral wasteland and seated us in a place of spiritual nourishment and intimacy with Him.
6. David adopted Mephibosheth into his royal family, providing him with every blessing within the palace.  
We also have been adopted into a family – God's family. And He gives us full privileges within His household.
7. Mephibosheth's limp was a constant reminder of David's grace.  
Our moral feebleness keeps us from ever forgetting that where sin abounds, grace abounds that much more.
8. David said nothing about Mephibosheth's lame feet.  
God forgets our sin because it is blotted out by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the only way God can forgive our sins.
9. When Mephibosheth sat at the king's table he was treated with the same respect as David's own sons. The king's tablecloth covered his lame feet.  
When we one day attend the great wedding feast of the Lamb, the same will be true for us. We will sit with prophets and priests, apostles and evangelists, pastors and missionaries. We will dine with everyone from the apostle Peter to Billy Graham. And we will be there with them because that same tablecloth of grace covers all our feet.

#### **D. THE FIRST MAN'S OFFENSE AND THE SECOND MAN'S RIGHTEOUSNESS**

*Romans 5:18-19 Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.*

All of us and every single human being in history can identify with either Adam or Jesus. Even though we are born identified with Adam physically and morally, we may be born again into identification with Jesus.

I asked you to underline "the free gift came to all men". Does this mean that apostle Paul believes that everyone will be saved without making a personal choice as the damnable universalism teaches? Not at all. He clearly teaches throughout the NT that all are not saved.

Whether you or I like this fact or not, it remains as truth. We can deny the truth all we want until it blows in our face. The truth doesn't care about individual opinion. Opinion is nothing more than opinion. All these know-it-all newspaper columnists, TV journalists, philosophers, scholars, educators and professors with many degrees deny the truth of God and they insist that their opinions are right, but they still die with their opinions. God's grace through Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation, period.

### **E. GRACE ABOUNDS**

*Romans 5:20-21 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, 21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

As we've learned before, the law of God makes all of our sins as sins clearly known to us. Without the law, we would come up with excuses of ignorance. Actually, we cannot even do that really according to chapter 1.

We might have expected that where sin abounded, God's anger or judgment would have abounded much more. But God's love is so amazing that grace abounded much more where we might have expected wrath. We can't sin more than God can forgive, but we can reject His grace and forgiveness.

Many legalists have the idea that where grace reigns, there will be a disregard for righteousness, and a casual attitude towards sin. But that isn't the case at all. Because God's grace reigns through righteousness, and grace teaches righteousness. The person who truly received God's grace would not cheapen it by abusing its limit for the sake of the love for God and thankfulness to Him.

### **F. APPLICATIONS**

1) Jesus came to pay a debt He did not owe, because we owe a debt we could not pay.

2) The person who truly received God's grace would not cheapen it by abusing its limit for the sake of the love for God and thankfulness to Him.