

Counseling God's Way

IV. Foundational Truths for Counseling

Lesson 13 - In Adam or in Christ

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[Matthew 10:8](#)

Let's pray,

Lord, for those of us gathered here, those of us who study with us by video and audio, we just ask You to bless the plunging in together of the Word of God. Lord, as we come to this strategic part of our course, foundational truths for counseling God's way, as we look into the heart of the New Testament in Romans 5, 6, 7 and 8, enlighten us, illuminate our hearts and minds. Touch us, feed us, build us up, counsel us, equip us, warn us, do all the things You want to do that we might be instruments in Your hands. And we lean on You now. We ask You to give the understanding we could never get. And also to work in us to will and to do of Your good pleasure. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Foundational Truths for Counseling

We now come to another section of our course. The major sections of Counseling God's Way study so far have been: First, "What Counseling Is," then second, "God's Way in Counseling," His means that He uses; third, "Counselors and Their Equipping. That is, who is to do counseling and how they get equipped in the body of Christ. And now our fourth major area of five sections in this course is "Foundational Truths for Counseling God's Way."

This really is the heart of the Counseling God's Way study. I love to liken Romans 5, 6, 7 and 8 to a heavenly gold mine of truth. It is truth concerning salvation, discipleship, sanctification—the Christian life in general and enormously powerful central truths for counseling God's way.

There are two vital passages, very much keys to orienting our minds to these studies on foundational truths for counseling God's way are John 8:31. We've touched on this before, so just a light touch to remind us of the implications of it.

John 8:31-32; 36,

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.' [Then verse 36] Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

Real disciples live in the Word of God. They feed on it. They stand on it. They make decisions by it. They have their lives guided by it. And living in the Word of God they get to know the truth of the Word of God. And the truth of the Word of God makes them free. It sets them free from confusion and bondage and bad thinking, bad habits, and bad relating. Then you add to that verse 36, "If the Son makes you free you shall be free indeed." I mean, really free. All of the truth of the Word of God is liberating power. The ultimate truth is the truth about Jesus, the One who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). And we're going to look at a lot of passages that just anchor right into the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He who is the Truth Incarnate! And if truth makes us free, if the Son makes you free you are free indeed. You are really liberated spiritually.

Lives are too often so bound, so trapped, so restricted by lies, by confusion, by misconceptions, by religious tradition, and it goes on and on with the human philosophy and philosophical systems, the psychological systems of man. People desperately need the truth that is found in Jesus Christ. And these passages we'll look at, hit at the heart of the truth of God's Word.

Colossians 2:9-10, by way of introduction,

For in Him [in Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him.

In Christ all the fullness dwells. To say it another way—everything God has for human lives is found in Jesus Christ, all the fullness. And in Him you, you and I, every believer, has been made complete. It's put here in verse 10, “and you are complete in Him.” We are complete, already accomplished, ongoing, spiritual reality. We are complete right now.

In Christ all of us have a full life, a complete life. There are no pieces or parts of spiritual reality missing. They are all there in the life of Christ and we are in Him where the fullness dwells. In Him we are complete.

We need that completeness because lives on their own are basically empty, so often broken, lacking, so aware of or trying to hide their own inadequacy. And it is all related to self-trust, self-hope, self-centeredness all the way around. And our need is to know of the wholeness that is available to us in Jesus Christ.

Now such matter as this—the Son setting us free and the fullness of life in Christ that is our completeness—these are gloriously revealed in Romans 5, 6, 7 and 8. The truths that we're going to look at are foundational to the Christian life and therefore to counseling God's way. They're the heart of what discipling is all about, which means they should be the heart of what counseling is all about. Remember, counseling is not one thing and discipling another. Counseling is one way God disciplines us, of the many ways. Counseling is discipling related to an issue, a need, a problem, a decision, something someone is sensing they must find answers to. And God wants to use that to disciple us. Christian life is all about discipleship. What's discipleship? It is learning to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. It is saying no to self, death to self, taking up our cross and following Jesus.

These truths are not available in psychological theory. That's why we have been warning about that field of input for counseling, not just in the world. We don't want the world's counsel anyway. But even trying to bring it in the church and baptize it, Christianize it, dress it up. Psychology is all about self. Christian counseling is all about Christ. That's the major difference. Psychology is man's guesses from his own best wisdom. Biblical counseling, counseling God's way is God's absolute certain revelation of the problems we have the remedies He offers. There's no comparison between the two. There's no mixing of the two.

I think that you'll see as we go through Romans 5, 6, 7 and 8 that what God offers in these chapters is so infinitely beyond what Sigmund Freud could come up with or Carl Jung, or Abraham Maslow, or Carl Rogers or Alfred Adler or Eric Fromm or any of these guys. Brilliant in the realm of human thinking, but minor league compared to God. Not only minor league, off base. Not only low in ability, but not even knowing what it is all about. And this is where we want to anchor our lives and our counseling ministries.

Years ago God laid on my heart, after I had been counseling years as a pastor, the Lord laid on my heart to counsel more with foundational truths and less with peripheral superstructure truths. There is nothing wrong with any peripheral truth in the Word of God. It is God's Word. It is true. It's there for a reason, but not every verse in the Bible is central to what the whole plan of salvation and discipleship and life in Christ is about.

A verse that always seems to come to mind in the seminars is the proverb that says it's better to live on the corner of a rooftop than in a house with a nagging woman. Now I know that's the truth. Why?—because the Word of God says that. But that's not a central foundational truth. It is peripheral. Now I'm sure in some people's lives, at some time that's a critical verse, either for the husband explaining why he's on the rooftop or the woman convicted that there need to be some changes in the house. But next month, it will be thirty years of marriage with my precious wife and partner and praise God I've never had to even consider that verse once! It has had no part in our lives. And I praise God for that. But I know that it's important and true in certain times and places. But it's not central. I mean, you know the Billy Graham counselors, you know the Greg Laurie Harvest Crusade counselors don't take those new converts quickly into the counseling arena right after they're saved and say, "Now here's the verse that your whole Christian life will hinge on. 'It's better to live on the corner of a rooftop than in the house with a nagging wife.'" Why don't they don't share that verse first of all? Because it's not foundational. It is not central.

I tell you brothers, sisters, the verses we're going to look at these next two weeks are absolutely bulls-eye central, and bedrock foundational. If we only share peripheral issues with people we're dealing with one issue one at a time and most people are dealing with hundreds of issues. Not that we can't help on individual matters. But the Lord showed me years ago there's a more effective and profound and deeper way and it can progress on all fronts at once. And that is share foundational truths. Not if this doesn't work, try that or when this, do that. Not that that is wrong if it's in the Word of God, but be looking for more than that. Look for truths that somebody can receive and stand on like a foundation and have it work up through their lives in every single issue of life because it is changing who they are. That's what we are looking at in this series of studies called "Foundational Truths for Counseling God's Way."

That's all introductory for our entry into Romans chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. Romans chapter 5 has to do with being "in Adam" or "in Christ."

Early in Romans 5 there is a word about being "in Adam," which is by the way, where all of man's problems source. That's even what makes them vulnerable to the work of the enemy. They start out in Adam. In Adam, Romans 5 and I'll just pick out some so we can spend more time on them and leave the rest there for your own reading and meditation. They just emphasize whatever we're going to say further.

Romans 5:12, in Adam,

Therefore just as through one man sin entered the world and death through sin,
and thus, death spread to all men because all sinned.

Through one man, Adam, sin entered the world. Rebellion against God became part of the experience of the family of man and death through sin. Because of sin, death came. Certainly physical death, though that didn't strike immediately, but the certainty of it did. That didn't come for hundreds of years later. But the worst kind of death happened the day Adam sinned. "The soul that sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). And he could no longer relate spiritually to God. He was alienated from God in condemnation and separation. And then death spread to all. Generation to generation to everyone only born once in Adam, sin and death became their portion.

This is repeated a bit in the early part of verse 17. "For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one...." This is why lives are so bound and so broken. It is not because of personal circumstance or mere human behavior. And that's what everybody seems to concentrate on,

especially in the world's counseling system. Hey, change your circumstance or somehow try to modify your behavior. That is not even near deep enough! It is so surface. Lives are bound and broken because of sin and death and separation from God and because death is reigning over people.

As our representative leader—some theologians would use the term the federal head of the human race, just as Christ is the federal head of the new creation—as our representative leader. Some theologians would use the term “the federal head of the human race,” just as Christ is federal head of the new creation. As our representative leader, that is where one person acts and affects all that are related to that one person. As our representative leader, Adam led us into, or you could say sired a race of (if you'll excuse the expression) dysfunctional people. Yes, I will go wash out my mouth. I was kind of half kidding there. Dysfunctional isn't near strong enough. The problem with the human race isn't that it just can't quite function the way it wants to. Or others didn't quite function toward me the way I wanted them to. It's far deeper than that. Adam sired a race of sinners. All of us! We are not sinners because we sin, but sinners who are unable to not sin. It is far more serious than it looks on the surface.

See, in Adam, man's nature became the problem. By nature we are sinners, Ephesians 2:3, “...by nature children of wrath.” The problem is not just that we sinned now and then, but that we were sinners. In other words, that was our very character.

Behavior alone is not the problem with man. Again, that's why behavior modification will always be inadequate. And that's the big rage of the world. Sure, man can affect behavior modification in animals and humans. So what? It doesn't change the heart.

Way back when my kids would say, “Daddy, did they have this back when you were alive.” Well, back when I was alive, really before I became alive, back when I was dead, they had the Ed Sullivan Show. I remember seeing a dog on there that some man taught to say “hello.” And I thought, it was very interesting, kind of fascinating. And you know a dog, “Hello.” Wow! But I noticed no one, including the trainer, sat down and had a conversation with that dog who was still a dog. He was just given a little outward behavior modification.

And you can even modify the behavior of human beings. I mean, if you were to beat them over the head enough or bribed them enough or some combination thereof, sure you can affect external behavior modification. But what about the heart, it's not even touched by that?

That's why man's theories of counseling or so anemic and I marvel that the church of Jesus Christ has just gone crazy over people like B.F. Skinner, it is almost like they're apostles! “Yea, but he's got these are ideas that can change people's behavior!” Just answer one question. Does he have anything that can change the human heart? Well no, be serious. Well then I'm not interested. It's a distraction. It's a false hope. It's an interjection right in front of what God wants to do.

What man needed was a change in his parentage, a change in his life source. He needed a way to get a new nature or a new resource to draw on. So the problems come from being in Adam, the remedies come from being in Christ. And there are some verses there to look at. But let's just continue in verse Romans 5:17. It's so packed and catches the heart of all these verses. We read:

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.

Now we're talking about being in Christ. The problems are in Adam and his offense and us being born as his seed, and him passing on to us his spiritual heritage, which was guilt, deadness, alienation and spiritual lifelessness.

Why is the world in such a mess? I mean if you're short on your prayer list and can't even figure out what to pray about, watch one national newscast. You'll have a week of prayer right there. I mean, the world is just in a shambles. Why? It is because death is reigning over every one of Adam's children.

Why do individual lives get so broken, so bound, so lacking the image and likeness of God who created them? It's because death is reigning over them. There's a cruel, tyrant dictator, here called death. Behind that name, of course is the prince of darkness, the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). He is dominating people, robbing, killing and destroying life after life. That's why the world's in such a chaotic shambles and lives get broken and bound and empty. Death is reigning.

And the death comes out in all kinds of symptoms: anger and fear and covetousness and selfishness, brutality and prejudice and unfaithfulness, wars and striving. People striving to get ahead of people, people using people, people devouring people, the symptoms of death and its reign comes out in so many ways. Virtually all of them could probably be tracked to self-exaltation. That's how the enemy fell. He wanted to take the throne of God for himself. And he's been enticing people ever since. Come on and enthrone yourself. Of course, behind it all, he's in charge when self thinks it's in charge. It's all death reigning over people.

What's the remedy? "Much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17).

It's astounding how this one verse narrows the options of man down to two. Every human being is either in Adam or in Christ, there are no other options. In Adam there is sin and death and separation, alienation, problems, difficulties. In Christ there is life, peace, joy, resource, wholeness, fellowship with God. Everyone in Adam has death reigning over them. Everyone in Christ has the opportunity to be learning to reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. And the death reigning and learning to reign in life, they both come through another person that it occurs. One through Adam, death reigning. Or it is by learning to reign in life, through relationship with Jesus Christ.

Only those who have been born a second time, therefore they are in Christ and in the family of God, can be learning to reign in life. We'll see next week even for those born a second time, born again by the Spirit of God from above through faith in Jesus Christ, even those people still face a choice, and many of them are practically letting death reign over them. Why? It is because they are walking according to the flesh, not according to the Spirit. They are still drawing on the same resource the world is drawing on. It is with Adam's resources and natural humanity, man's wisdom, man's strength, man's zeal, man's resolve, man's will power. They are not living by the mind of Christ, the life of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Can you not see the enormous implications of such truths to virtually every counseling situation? What it so often boils down to is this person having death reign over them because, one, they don't know Christ at all. They only have Adam's resource and Adam's death. Or maybe are they born again but walking totally by human ingenuity, like a real Jacob in the modern era. Striving, manipulating, and scheming. They are not drawing on the resources of Christ, but the resources they receive from natural humanity. These are major implications for counseling ministry. Let's

us sort out our own Christian walk and see how to grow and what gets in the way of growth. And then minister to others, help them in their struggles or their quest to know God by sorting out the same issues.

I love to watch for an opportunity in a counseling situation to shift from the smaller issue of what I'm troubled with right now or what I'm yearning after right now, to the bigger issue of what are the options and what are the resources anyway. And it is either, Adam and what he provided, or it is Christ and what He provides now. Those are the only two real choices.

It's not as complicated as the psychotherapist theoreticians want to make it. They've got 47,000 options depending on who came up with what idea. God's laid it out for us so simply. There are two: the resources of Adam or the resources of Christ. What do you want to draw upon? What do you want to live by? One is death, eternally if that's all you know. Even if you're a Christian and only draw on natural resources, it's spiritual deadness now. Not reigning in life, but rather it is kind of life reigning over you.

Reigning in life is not living under the circumstances. Maybe you heard that conversation between two Christians. One said to the other, "Hey, how're you doing?" The second said, "Well, pretty well, under the circumstances." And the first one said, "Well, what are you doing living under there? I thought you were seated in heavenly places in Christ!" This kind of truth lets us reign in life instead of circumstantial life dominating over us. It changes everything.

So many people, even Christians, they're just trying to change circumstance or modify their behavior. The Lord wants to show them a whole new resource to live by, whatever the circumstances are. And let that eventually become a Christ-like behavior. Not change from the outside in, but change from the heart out.

What is it that lets a person progress in the path of reigning in life? Well, there are two things mentioned here: "...much more, those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life" (Romans 5:17).

Every true Christian knows of one of these two realities or they're not a Christian. Too many other Christians know almost nothing of the second reality. And I believe Biblically that's why there are so many defeated Christians, instead of those who are learning to reign in life.

What is it that every Christian knows of? The gift of righteousness! If a person does not have righteousness from God as a gift, they're not a Christian. How do you stand before a holy, righteous God? You've got to have the gift of righteousness. We're talking justification, being declared innocent. Not guilty but righteous by a holy God. The only way to stand before a holy God is having the gift of righteousness freely given to us by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Christ's righteousness imputed to us, made ours through faith in Jesus Christ. There's no other way to stand before a holy God.

So every Christian, if they're really a Christian, they have this gift of righteousness. But see, that doesn't automatically cause you to reign in life. Haven't you had times as a Christian, having the gift of righteousness, justified, able to come boldly before the throne of grace, that you're still walking in defeat? Don't you have Christian family, friends, relatives, neighbors and those you love? You know they know the Lord. You've heard it in their testimony and you've seen some fruit. And yet very characteristic of their life is defeat, not reigning in life. Just having the gift of righteousness does not automatically mean a person will be reigning in life, as they walk the pilgrim path to heaven.

That's why this other issue is mentioned here. There is another matter along with the gift of righteousness. And it's called here, "the abundance of grace." See those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, they are the ones who reign in life.

Really now we are touching on the theme that the entire class on "Growing in the Grace of God" is all about. This is the heart of it. That gift of righteousness is part of the grace of God. It is by God's grace that we are declared righteous in Christ Jesus. But this is talking about receiving an abundance of grace. Too many of us have too often thought that the grace of God for forgiveness and justification was what the grace of God was all about and that there was no other aspect of the grace of God but forgiveness and justification. Oh, the Scriptures declare quite the contrary! If God's grace is not at work in our lives after forgiveness and justification we will not grow. We will not mature. We will not be fruitful. We will not abound in good works. We'll just have dead religious striving or just straight immaturity and no growth.

There is an abundance of grace to be received. There is grace to learn, grace to be transformed, and praise God for the ongoing grace of forgiveness. We need it and thank God it's available. But there's more to grace than just being forgiven. God's grace is not only His willingness to forgive. It's also His resource of life to change us.

And many times folks coming to us for help, wanting a word of counsel, they need a chance to think these things through with God. Number one, do they have the gift of righteousness? If they do, are they receiving an abundance of grace? If they aren't they won't be learning to reign in life. If they are or are they willing to humble themselves before God to live by the grace of God, then they will begin to reign in life through the One, Christ Jesus.

Again, so much of the counsel of the world is self-sufficiency counsel. "You can do it! You know you can! Come on, try harder. Come on, cut yourself some slack. You're better than you think you are. Come on, love yourself. Esteem yourself." You know what all of that is doing? It's making people candidates for God to be opposed to them because God is opposed to the proud. He only gives grace to the humble. Boy, in that little positioning of the hand of God the whole story is told. He is opposed to the proud; He gives grace to the humble (James 4:6).

There's a counseling ministry right there. Just help people see the two options they have with the hand of God. He's opposed to the proud. But He gives grace to the humble. And help people go from self-sufficient pride, which God must oppose, to humble, needy, trusting, dependent children, that His hand might hold out His grace to them. What a counseling ministry that would be, just right there!

Those who receive an abundance of grace, God's undeserved enablement, as well as forgiveness, they will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Through the One, Jesus Christ, on the basis of who Jesus is and what He did and what He provides and what He promises and what He can do. That is reigning in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Those people reign in life, in the realm of life, the sphere of life. As contrasted with Adam's death. Adamic human existence is spiritual death. Christians can learn to reign in life, in the sphere of spiritual vitality and aliveness and relating and responding to God.

In other words, Christians, by the grace of God and drawing upon it, can learn to live not out of the bondage and brokenness of Adam's race, but rather, by the liberty and wholeness that is in Christ alone. People drawing on natural human resource, they're going to show bondage and

brokenness all the time because death is reigning over them. Those who receive the abundance of grace, along with that gift of righteousness, can learn to reign in life, to draw on the liberty and wholeness that is found in Jesus Christ alone and reign in life. They can be a spiritual, royal priesthood, Christ-like overcomers. To reign in life, that's a kind of royal term. Reign. It is for royalty and we're children of the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Now we don't reign by some of these false kinds of word-of-faith, presumptive, name it, claim it, speak it forth, you make your own reality. That is another way to keep yourself in charge, instead of humbling ourselves before God, we are kind of almost giving God His marching orders. Not that kind of proud, "I'm the King's kid and I can get what I want." That sounds very presumptuous and proud. It sounds like something that God is going to oppose.

How about humbly coming and saying, "Lord, You're King. Thank You for making me Your child. Now work out Your will in my life. That's all that matters. I humbly bow before You. Work Your will, Your way and Your timing. Here I am, Lord. Do what You want and use me."

God pours out grace on that life and they learn to reign in life as a Christ-like overcomer, living in the life of Christ, displaying the life of Christ, showing forth His love, His joy, His peace, His meekness. And you know another thing? They also receive His victory over circumstance.

It hit me one day, praying, meditating on this verse, thinking of the life of Christ that we draw on, as Christ lives in us and we are in Him. Christ lived the only truly non-circumstantial life. See, it didn't matter whether they were lying about Him, spitting at Him, killing Him or whether He was walking on the water and raising the dead. It didn't matter. He had the same confession all the way. "I always do those things that please the heavenly Father" (John 8:29). Boy, you talk about non-circumstantial living. You know, give me a lake to walk on, give me a cross to hang on and doing both only in the pleasure of the Father. No one ever lived like that but Jesus Christ.

When we are drawing on that life we find in Him, we're freed from circumstances. We're not dictated to by our thinking and feeling and acting and deciding by circumstances, but by this resource of gracious life we find in Christ that lets us have love and peace and joy, sometimes in spite of the circumstances. That's part of reigning in life through the One, Christ Jesus.

The problems of humanity are found in Adam. And here we are told that they are fully remedied by the resources that are ours in Christ. Remember the resources that are ours in Christ?

Ephesians 1:3,

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us [past tense, already accomplished] with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ.

What a radical verse! What great truth! Oh, bless God! Why? It is because He has blessed us so greatly. How greatly? He has given us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

A man in one of our classes here some time ago said an interesting thing. He said, "Yeah, but I'm here in earthly places. I need the blessings here." Well, that's a good issue. But remember, heavenly places aren't way off there and earthly places way down here. Jesus said, "Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). You can reach out and touch it, it is that close. Why? It is because the King was there. Now where is the King? He is in us! How close are the heavenly places now? You know, I mean, that's pretty close. They're right there to access.

So often the Christian life looks and feels like, in our own walk or in others that we're down here and God is way off there. And we are screaming out for care packages. "Lord, please! That is, if You can even hear me. Please parachute a package." Well, He is often merciful and gracious and provides and you know, we think it dropped in from far out there somewhere. But He is right here in us. "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). And what He provides, He's already given it all to us anyway. He has blessed us, past tense, with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. All that heaven has to provide for man has been given to us because we are in Christ.

See, in Adam we had none of this. But being saved didn't just create a pipeline to heaven where the Lord could shoot down the conveyor belt every now and then a blessing package. It is quite the contrary. God took us out of Adam where there were no blessings of life and reality and plunged us into Christ where all the blessings reside and He says, "It's all yours in Christ." Sure we need to experience it more, understand it more. But it's already all ours in the Person who lives in us and in Whom we dwell.

The reality of it all is so much different than how it looks and feels much of the time. That's why we want to learn to walk by faith and not by sight. We have every spiritual blessing, so it's great for us to be praying Ephesians 1:18, "that the eyes of our understanding would be enlightened." Not, Lord, could You bless me? But Lord, could You just show me what You've already given me, so I'll stand on it, draw upon it, appropriate it, avail myself of it through faith in You and Your promises.

You know, these are the things that counselors should point to. These are the things that we need in our own lives, whether we are the counselor or the one seeking counsel; whether folks are coming to us for help or we're looking to someone else to give us insight from the Lord. These are the things that are needed. And ultimately it comes down in the kingdom of heaven to a matter of grace versus sin, our next heading. Grace versus sin. What has God provided to deal with the sin problem? Amazingly, it's grace. Grace!

Romans 5:20-21,

Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But 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.

Why the law? It is because of transgression that it might be seen and known. But where sin increased—as it was stirred out into the open by the law of God, grace abounded. And as sin reigned in death, now grace can reign through righteousness. Sin reigned in death, now grace can reign.

What is God's answer for sin? Grace! The natural thought is, law. No, law reveals sin. It doesn't remove one from the power of sin. And grace can reign through righteousness unto eternal life, both in quantity and quality of life with God, forever in a relationship with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

It's grace in Jesus Christ that overrules sin in Adam. Remember Romans 6:14? "For sin shall not have dominion over you." What is it that breaks the dominion or power of sin?—"For you are not

under law but under grace." See, grace both forgives, as well as transforms us, so we don't have to keep repeating the sins again and again.

It's being under grace that sets us free from the domination of sin. Under law, trying to relate to God by law, we are always guilty. Because the law says, be perfect, be holy, be just like God. We can't do it, so we're always condemned and alienated. But grace forgives the failure, the sin, the wrong, the rebellion. And the abundance of grace can change the very person we are, making us more and more like Christ, letting us walk more and more in practical righteousness.

Grace and what God wants to do with it. Titus 2:11-12 speaks of grace beyond forgiveness. Grace for shaping a new life. "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." We're talking about the same grace that saves us. But look now as it's written to Christians already saved. Verse 12, "...teaching us," the grace that offers salvation to everyone can also teach us, Christians. Teach us, train us, shape us "that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in the present age."

The same grace that brings salvation and offers it to all men can teach us. It can train us as Christians to deny ungodliness and to live godly. It is the grace of God that not only forgives us but begins to shape and change our lives. That is what Romans 5 makes very clear.

Now let's come back to Romans 5, under the heading of "Much More." In our seminar on Growing in the Grace of God, as well as the Bible college class by that title, we have a major section called, "The Much More Grace of God. Much." His grace is more than we've ever yet found and much more than we've ever known. It is much more than we'll ever need and much more than could ever be shown in time and space. That is why it's going to take an eternity according to Ephesians 2:7, for God to demonstrate His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Boy, does that make heaven exciting? For eternity, God is going to demonstrate His grace. How? It is by being kind to us in Christ Jesus. Man, I can hardly wait! What is He going to do on top of what He's already done? That's what grace is all about. It's too big! It's the much more grace of God.

But I didn't make up that phrase. "Much more" appears multiple times in Romans 5, tied into the grace of God. In Romans 5:15,

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.

There it is. The much more grace of God.

In verse 17,

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, Christ Jesus.

Then verse 20, "...where sin abounded, grace abounded much more." The grace of God really is the much more grace of God.

You know another interesting thing about this? It contrasts what we lost in Adam and what we get in Christ. If this happened to you in Adam, much more here is what happens to you in the grace of Jesus Christ.

It hit me one day, an exciting thought that in Christ and by His grace, God gave us much more than we lost in Adam in the Garden. Now if God, by His grace, would just restore us back to the Garden, hey, that would be great! But it is much more than that. We are seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That is not where Adam started out. But just in these verses, we know we get more in Christ than we lost in Adam. God is a big God. He's a gracious God. He does things “exceedingly abundantly beyond all you could ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20).

Here is the problem in Adam: God didn't match it and go one inch. “Here's the problem, here's the remedy.” Vroom! It is out of sight. See? “If by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those that receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life.” They reign in life much greater than the death they were bound in.

Oh, what a joy to sit with people seeking help and share these kinds of things with them! It's like a glimpse into heaven itself and how to walk with the Lord. Truly it's good, I think, to refer to these passages as a heavenly gold mine of spiritual reality. Next to it, I would contrast the psychological theories of man as a gravel pit of human wisdom. Let's counsel out of the gold mine. Not give people a bucket of gravel to take home and try to get rich in Christ by it.