Romans 5:12-21

Grace on Crutches!

1. **Slide#1 Intro:**
   A. **Pre-prayer:** It broke my heart talking to my neighbor once, how heartbroken he was that his church refused him communion because of his divorce 20 yrs earlier.

   1. It reminds me of the man who was *excommunicated & forbidden entry* into his church. He cried out to God, “They won’t let me in, Lord, because I’m a sinner.” “What are you complaining about?” said God. “They won’t let Me in either.”

   2. **Slide#2** Often hobbling through our church doors on Sunday morning comes *grace on crutches* - sinners still unable to throw away their false supports & stand upright in the freedom of the children of God. Yet, their mere presence in the church on Sunday morning is a *flickering candle* representing a desire to maintain contact w/ God. To douse the flame is to plunge them into a world of spiritual darkness.\(^1\)

   B. I hope when you come to CM you can leave your white hat at home & admit you’ve failed.

   1. Thus, I **don’t** need to apply *spiritual cosmetics* to make myself *presentable* to Him.

   2. God not only **loves** me as I am, but **knows** me as I am. **Pray!**

   C. If Jesus appeared at your dining room table tonight w/knowledge of everything you are & are not, total comprehension of your life story & every skeleton hidden in your closet; if He had laid out your real state of your present discipleship w/the hidden agenda, the mixed motives, & the dark desires buried in your psyche, you would feel His **acceptance & forgiveness.**\(^2\)


   2. **What is Christianity to you? Is it:** Do it yourself spirituality? Is your emphasis on what you do rather than on what **God is doing**? Are you a self-made man/woman?

   3. You are not ready to accept **true biblical Christianity** until you accept your **inadequacy & insufficiency.** Until your security is shattered & your bootstraps are cut. Until you realize you cannot **add** even a single inch to your spiritual stature.

      a) **Slide#3** Often folks approach to the Christian life is as absurd as the enthusiastic young man who had just received his **plumbers license** & was taken to see **Niagara Falls.** He studied it for a minute & then said, “I think I can fix this.”\(^3\)

   4. **Slide#4,5** Jesus invited **sinners** & not the **self-righteous** to is table.

      a) Mt.9:13 says, For I did not come to **call** the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.

      b) **Call** in Greek is Kalein & has the sense of **inviting an honored guest** to dinner.

   5. Morton Kelsey, **The church is not a museum for saints but a hospital for sinners.**

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\(^1\) Brennan Manning, Ragamuffin Gospel, pg.31.

\(^2\) Ibid, pg.63.

\(^3\) Anthony De Mello, Taking Flight: A Book of Story Meditations.
D. Can we get honest & admit we are a bundle of paradoxes?
   1. I believe & I doubt, I hope & I get discouraged, I love & I hate, I feel bad about feeling good, I feel guilty about not feeling guilty. I am trusting & suspicious. I am honest & I still play games. (Brennan Manning, pg.25)

E. The Good News of the gospel of grace cries out: We are all, equally, privileged but unentitled beggars at the door of God’s mercy!
   1. Jesus comes not for the super-spiritual but for the wobbly & the weak-knee’d who know they don’t have it all together, & who are not too proud to accept the handout of amazin’ grace!

F. In ch.4, Paul went all the way back to Abraham & David to explain how God justifies sinners…now he goes all the way back to Adam!

G. How would you like the title “the sinful father of all people”? (i.e. Adam)
   1. But in contrast we also hear of Jesus, “the sinless Savior of all people”.

II. Slide#6,7 ADAM TO MOSES! (12-14)
   A. (12) Through one man sin entered…death spread - Like the man who on a ship went down into his birth & started cutting a whole into the side of the ship. When yelled at to stop he said, “What does it matter to you? The hole I’ve made is under my own berth.”
      1. Adam affected all by cutting a whole in the side of life’s ship, in that, we’re all on the same boat!
   B. Sin entered the world…and thus death spread to all men.
      1. Entered = means that sin went in the world’s front door (by means of Adam’s sin).
      2. Spread = literally “passed or went through” or “spread through.” Death penetrated the entire human race, like a vapor permeating all of a house’s rooms.
         a) Noah probably understood this truth better than any. Looking out his boat at all the floating carcasses. Or, maybe...
         b) Abraham looking at the ashes of Sodom & Gomorrah. Or, maybe...
         c) Moses who watched the earth open up & swallow Korah, Dathan, & Abiram.

III. Slide#8,9 ADAM & JESUS! (15-19)
   A. 5 parallels. (1st 3 contrasts; last 2 comparisons)
      1. (15) Adam’s trespass vs. free gift of God’s grace in Jesus.
      2. (16) Adam brought condemnation vs. Jesus, justification.
IV. Slide#10 SIN & GRACE! (20-21)

A. (20a) The Law makes wrong doing all the worse.
   1. It was never intended to provide salvation, but to convince people of their need for it!
   2. A stick really looks crooked when you hold it next to a straight one.
   3. God’s law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were.
      a) But where sin increased…Grace “superabounded”, “surpassed by far”, “exceeded immeasurably”, “overflowed beyond”.
      (1) God lavished His grace upon us beyond all measure!

B. Slide#11,12 Remember in the game of Monopoly it has one card that when someone lands on Chance, it reads "Return to 'Go'-collect $200." - The irony of the directive is that in one respect it seems to penalize, but in another it rewards.
   1. Go back & start over,…but start over again richer!
   2. Salvation is the same, Go back & start over,…but start over again richer!
      a) Richer in His Peace; richer because access is granted; richer in love, Grace, mercy, hope, glory.
   3. Slide#13,14 But I also liked these 2 “chance” cards I found (Keynote pics).
      a) You find out you actually died 18 turns ago. Float your token above the board & make “ooo” noises for the rest of the game.
      b) You have angered your God. This card can’t help you now!

C. (20) Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.
   1. Slide#15 (msg) sin didn’t, and doesn’t, have a chance in competition w/the aggressive forgiveness we call grace. When it’s sin versus grace, grace wins hands down.
   2. Our text might be freely translated, “where sin reached a high-water mark, grace completely flooded the world.”4
   3. Some words convey a multitude of ideas:
      a) Say the word world & the minds runs around the globe & sees continents, islands, seas, shores, mountains, valleys, cities.
      b) Say the word atom & you think of Hiroshima, or electrons, protons, neutrons, & other particle all whirling in order.
      c) But the word grace carries us beyond the universe into the heart of God.
         (1) As the scientist use the cyclotron & the betatron to penetrate the heart of the invisible atom so we use the word grace to penetrate the infinite heart of God

4 Donald Grey Barnhouse, Romans, pg.122
(2) By no other way can a creature come to the Creator; and By no other means can a sinner stand before a holy God.

4. Also, God never withholds grace because of sin.
   a) Slide#16 The fundamental idea here in our text is that no dam erected by sin can stop the flow of God's grace.
      (1) The great dams of the world, such as Aswan (Egypt), Hoover, Shasta, are used to arrest the flow of rivers or to divert the flow from their normal course. But nothing can arrest or divert the flow of the grace of God.

   b) Adam had not gone very far from the scene of his rebellion before the grace of God sought him, called him by name, pursued him in the obscurity of the grove where he was hiding.
      (1) If God had struck this guilty sinner & banished him to outer darkness forever, such action would have indicated that God worked by trial & error, & that this was one of his larger errors. But such was not the case!
      (2) Slide#17 Of course God knew what was going to happen, yet not responsible for his sin. He knew that it would occur, & He would use it as the backdrop against which to display the wonders of grace.
      (3) God did not withhold His grace because of Adam’s sin. Instead, He made great promises of grace. Announcing that the Messiah would come, the Deliverer, the Seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus Christ, who would destroy the destroyer & bring man back into fellowship with Himself.
         (a) Matter of fact, the first blood ever shed on this planet was shed by God Almighty to provide covering for the man & woman who believed His word about the redemption that would be provided.
      (4) Grace was not withheld because of sin; Grace was given in spite of sin.

D. Slide#18 (21) Two Queens (sin & grace reigning) - struggle between 2 queens.
   1. Sin reigning - Last week I stood on the lowest place on the planet, at the Dead Sea, 1,391’ below sea level. You could stand upon the highest elevation, Mount Everest (in Nepal), at 29,035’. We can both jump at the same time & try to reach the stars but neither of us will.
      a) And both of us, in our own righteousness can’t reach the righteousness that God demands.
         (1) Yet remember, this queen’s reign, as it were, is a reign in a cemetery, & her subjects are dead.
      b) Our God is “A God who demands everything & stops at nothing!” Just ask Jesus, He’ll tell His story again this Good Friday!...about a God who demanded everything & stopped at nothing...FOR YOU!
2. **Slide#19 Grace reigning** - both queens exercise dominion; both stand face to face; each recognize as her enemy the other; there is a constant struggle between them. Not only in the **wide** field of the world **but** in the **narrow** crevices of our hearts of each of us.

   a) On the other hand we have **grace & life**! - **Grace** that *superabounds*, *surpasses by far*, *exceeds immeasurably*, *overflows constantly*; **oh & Life** that is **Eternal**!

       (1) But as LKGNT says(Linguistic Key to the Greek N.T. pg.361) “**Eternal life** is not only related to the **future**, but is organically related to the **actual life lived** & is a **present possession** of the believer.”

E. **Slide#20,21** I pray you wont be like the frustrated ship's captain of 2,500 tons of garbage on a barge

1. This trashes story became a **16 year odyssey**, before returning to the U.S.

2. A prolonged sanitation strike left the city of **Philadelphia** without a local landfill to dump its trash. So in 1986 it was put on a ship and sent to sea. No other country would accept the trash - not the **Bahamas, Bermuda, Honduras or the Dominican Republic. Senegal, Cape Verde, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and the Philippines** also banned the barge.

3. At one point the ship's frustrated captain **dumped** most of the trash into the ocean. All except for **4,000 tons** that was re-christened as "fertilizer" and delivered to unsuspecting officials in **Haiti**. After 12 **years** of worldwide protests, the mountain of trash finally was shipped back to the U.S. - The federal government actually paid to have what was left on the beach in Haiti scooped up, put on another barge and taken to the state of Florida. But Florida didn't want it either. So where did it go? Back to **Philadelphia** in a County landfill, just about 100 miles from where it started the journey.  [An article from **ABC News**; July 16, A Long Haul To The Trash Dump] ^5

4. So many people carry around their garbage, their sin, for years. Not knowing where to dump it. How to get rid of it. Month after month, year after year.

   a) Then to find out the answer is right in their backyard, not even 100 miles away, but as far away as a whisper of **repentance**, at the invitation of **His grace**.

   b) **Slide#22,23** Jesus says, come dump **all** your **garbage** at the foot of my cross. **Bury it here!**

F. **Communion**:

1. Luke 19:5-7 (Jesus to Zacchaeus) “Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.” Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. But the people were **dissatisfied**. “He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,” they **grumbled**.

   a) Every communion, many that don’t understand grace, would still say the same.

   b) Jesus invited **sinners** & not the **self-righteous** to is table.

   c) By **grace** receive His body; by **grace** receive His blood.

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