



TRI-PARISH MAIL MINISTRY

Grace
Valentine

Peace
Mission

St. Paul's
White River

Lent 5

April 6, 2025

Pre-Service Meditation: Psalm 43

Hymns: 143:1-5; 144; 723

Scripture Readings: Psalm 130
Luke 18:9-14

Sermon Topic: Bible History; Grace; Sanctification

In Jesus' Name!

Text: Romans 5:17-6:4 NKJV

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. 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. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. 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. What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

In Christ Jesus, who lived that we might never die and who died that we might ever live, dear fellow redeemed:

Abuse! We hear quite a bit about "abuse" in our day, do we not? Child-abuse and spousal-abuse are certainly major concerns within our society and rightfully so. Abuse can take many forms—physical, verbal, emotional, and mental. Abuse is not a pleasant topic, but sad to say it occurs all too frequently within our society even among those who claim to be Christians.

This morning I would like to talk to you about a form of abuse, about which you will find nothing in the papers, nor are you likely to hear it mentioned in casual conversation. It is certainly not included in any social worker's case book. The abuse I am talking about is our abuse of God. "Our abuse of God?" you ask. "How can we abuse God?" Oh, we can and do abuse God in many ways. We abuse God anytime we abuse one another, for Jesus tells us that whatever we do to our brethren, we do to Him...whether that be good or bad (cf. Mt. 25:40, 45). We abuse God when we use His name lightly or thoughtlessly with expressions like, "Oh, my God," or when we use His name to damn someone or something. We abuse God when we receive abundant blessings from Him and then fail to thank Him, assuming that everything we have received is the result of our own intelligence and strength. We abuse God every time we take Him for granted and assume, as we often do during good times, that God is something like a winter jacket that we can hang in a closet until the next winter storm arises and we have need of Him.

But there is no greater way that we can abuse God than to abuse His grace! We abuse God's grace whenever we treat sin lightly! Such an attitude is portrayed in our text when Paul, anticipating the argument of such grace-abusers, asks: "*Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?*" His answer, as it properly should be, is: "*Certainly not!*" He then goes on to ask: "*How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*" Yet, how often are not we, who are to die to sin by faith in Jesus, tempted to assume that we can go ahead and sin, for after all God will surely forgive us? How often are we not tempted to think that certain sins are not that bad, or because everyone else is sinning,

we certainly can also go on sinning. Dear friends, such thoughts are satanic deceptions! Sin is always to be avoided! Sin is always to be rejected! Why? Because sin has devastating consequences and is Satan's tool used to destroy our faith and separate us from our Savior! Anyone who thinks lightly of sin is a fool! **LET US NOT ABUSE THE GRACE OF GOD!** Dear friends, we **can avoid such abuse if we**, first, **learn from history**; and, second, **if we live with Christ!**

I.

Yes, let us **learn from history!** Paul teaches us about two important historical figures, whose significance for our lives we must understand if we are to avoid abusing the grace of God. Paul writes: *"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. 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. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous."*

Who are the one hundred most important people in all of world history? The names on such a list would no doubt vary depending upon who creates the list. There are two names, however, that ought appear on any of our lists—Adam and Jesus Christ. Adam, the first man created by God, had a negative impact on us all when he chose disobedience over obedience in the Garden of Eden. When Adam chose to defy God and to sin, death not only entered this world, it began its reign in this world. Genesis 5 punctuates the biographies of Adam's descendants before the flood with the phrase, *"and he died...and he died...and he died!"* Death is a fact of life for all of us, and it is so because of sin. Sin is a fact of life for all of us, because Adam passed his sinful nature down through every generation to the present day. Condemnation is a reality of sin, for our righteous God must and does respond to sin...all sin with His wrath and judgment! Sin is not child's play. It is not something about which to smile or joke. Sin is deadly!

It is interesting to note that the first sin was not murder, or rape, or armed robbery. It was taking a piece of forbidden fruit. Is it not ironic that the sin which introduced death to the world would be viewed by many, if not most people in our world today, as something so insignificant that it would be unworthy of comment—something probably ignored and forgotten by most students of history. But sin, any sin, ought not be viewed lightly, lest such an attitude lead to an abuse of God's grace!

The presence of sin in our world, mandated atonement for sin. Were dealing with sin left up to us human beings, we would all find ourselves in a hopeless situation, for man cannot remove sin or redeem his own soul from sin. God, however, in His grace and by His mercy determined to send Jesus to rescue us from sin. Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection we receive the *"gift of righteousness,"* which gives us the *"free gift"* of *"justification"* and *"life."* My dear friends, we cannot think lightly of sin, for sin cost our Savior His life. The righteousness we receive as a gift from God was not a gift purchased at the mall after a few hours of shopping—it was the result of our Savior's entire life of humble service and His innocent death on the cross. He obeyed, for we do not always obey. He did not vent His anger, for we so often do vent our anger. He was selfless, for we are selfish. He did not rebel against what our world would call the unfair treatment He received from His heavenly Father, while we rebel even in view of God's abundant grace and mercy. Yes, do not think lightly of sin, for to do so will inevitably lead to the abuse of God's grace. Learn from the history of Adam—learn that any sin even seemingly little sins have devastating consequences for ourselves and others. Learn from the history of Jesus Christ—learn that the tremendous burden of and punishment for our sins fell upon the innocent Son of God, who gave up His life for us. In view of that history can we consider sin lightly? Can we just keep on willfully sinning, assuming God's grace will always remove it? Certainly not! Such an attitude despises grace and deprives itself of grace! It is indeed an abuse of grace!

II.

Yes, **LET US NOT ABUSE THE GRACE OF GOD!** We can avoid such abuse, secondly, if

we live with Christ! Paul writes: *“Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”* Luther, in his explanation of baptism in the *Small Catechism*, uses this section of Scripture to answer the question, “What is the meaning of this baptism with water?” He writes: *“It means that the Old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance and die with all sins and evil desires. It also means that a new Man should daily appear and arise, who lives eternally before God in righteousness and purity.”*

To live with Christ means essentially two things, the first of which is that we are to deal with our sins on a daily basis through contrition and repentance. Contrition is genuine sorrow over sin—sorrow over the fact that we have offended our just and gracious God. Repentance is a change of heart—a sincere desire not to do that which is wrong ever again. The second thing involved with living with Christ is that we foster a sincere desire to grow in our faith and to live our lives in a godly manner on a daily basis. This can only be done as we stay close to and regularly study God’s Word.

My dear friends, each third Sunday of the month we celebrate the Lord’s Supper in our Tri-Parish with an opportunity to do so again on the fourth Sunday of the month. We invite all of our communicant members and those of our sister congregations in the Church of the Lutheran Confession to commune. How ought we all approach attendance at our Lord’s table as we seek to live with Christ? Our Lord urges us to *“examine”* ourselves, so that we do not receive the Lord’s Supper *“in an unworthy manner”* and thereby bring *“judgment”* rather than blessing upon ourselves as we participate (cf. 1 Cor. 11:28-29). How are we to examine ourselves? Luther provides excellent advice, once again from the *Small Catechism*, when he writes in his section on Confession: *“Examine your place in life according to the Ten Commandments. Have you been faithful as a father, mother, son, daughter, employer or employee? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you injured anyone by what you have said or done? Have you stolen anything, neglected your duty, been careless, or damaged anything?”* My dear friends, to live with Christ means that you are willing to examine your inner thoughts and your outward words and actions and repent of those things you have thought, said, or done which go contrary to God’s will. Do not allow Satan to cause you to abuse God’s grace by thinking of 101 excuses for sin! Confess your sins. Pray that God would lead you to repent of your sins. Strive in the future, with the strength that only God can give you, to live in a godly manner to the glory of God and for the blessing of all others.

Will we...can we ever succeed in never abusing God’s grace? If we mean by that, will we ever live a perfect life and never sin, the answer is, “No, not in this lifetime.” Sin will unfortunately be a part of our lives as long as we have sinful flesh clinging to us. While such a thought should never become an excuse for sin, it is a reality with which we must deal. Paul provides us with just the proper comfort when he writes: *“The law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.”* When we compare our lives to God’s law, sin becomes very apparent. I still recall the first adult I ever had the privilege of instructing in the Christian faith. When we finished three lessons on the Ten Commandments, her only comment was, “I never knew I was so sinful.” The law reveals our sin—its full extent! “BUT...,” Paul writes, *“BUT...where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.”* The comfort that the sincere child of God has is that God’s grace is always sufficient to cover up, to remove, to cleanse us from every sin. Satan, who will always tempt us to abuse God’s grace, will also tempt us to despair of God’s grace. He wants us to believe that somehow we are too great of sinners to be saved. Satan’s real goal is to cause us to lose God’s grace! Remember always, dear friends, that Paul writes: *“Through one Man’s righteous act (that Man being Jesus Christ) the free gift came to all men!”* That is grace—God’s undeserved love for all sinners—His undeserved love for you and for me! Cling to that grace! Rejoice in that grace! Let us only never abuse God’s grace! Amen.

Prepared by Pastor Paul D. Nolting
To God alone be the glory!

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