



# Kings to God: Grace Reigns through Righteousness!

By Andrew V. Ste. Marie

If I asked you, “What is the message of the book of Romans?” what would you say? My guess is most people would answer, “We are saved by grace through faith, not of works.”

Let me ask another question: in Revelation 1:6 and 5:10, we are told that Jesus Christ has made the saints “kings and priests” to God. What does it mean that Jesus made us kings? I would guess that most people would say “we are going to reign on Earth with Jesus during the millennium.”

I am not saying that these answers are completely wrong, but I do believe that there are deeper, more significant answers to these questions. In addition, I believe the book of Romans gives valuable insight into what Revelation means when it says that Jesus “has made us kings.”

Let us go back to the typical answer for the first question. It is true that we are born again by grace by means of faith, not by doing the works of the Mosaic law (Ep. 2:8,9), but what does it mean to be saved “by grace”? What does grace do to save us?

Let us examine Romans 5:12-21:

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: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the of-

fence, 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. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

What can we learn from this passage? First, we notice that sin and death once reigned over the entire human race. Who was king of my life before I was born again? Sin and death had co-regency over me. Sin reigned over me, forcing me to do its will. Death reigned over me, so that whenever my spirit rebelled against the sin I found in me, death held fast onto me so that I would not have the strength (life) to be able to carry on warfare against sin. Together, they made a powerful tyrannical government that would have dragged me right to hell.

We often talk about the “gospel,” and many people know that the word gospel means “good news.” What is the “good news” for people ruled by the cruel tyrants sin and death? It is found in verse 17: “For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall *reign in life* by one, Jesus Christ!”

This is the Gospel in a nutshell! Sin and death can be defeated! When I realize that I can by no means overthrow these terrible despots by my own strength (remember, I am dead, after all), but Jesus Christ can overthrow them, then I can receive (by means of faith) “abundance of grace,” the free gift of God apart from which I cannot be saved. How wonderful! Not just a little bit of grace, not just some grace, not a whole lot, not an enormous amount, but *abundance!* Praise God! Strong’s Concordance defines this word as “surplusage, i.e. superabundance ... superfluity.” He gives us so much grace, it is “surplusage,” more than we need!

Not only do we receive the “abundance of grace,” but we also receive “the gift of righteousness.” Grace overcomes death, reviving and resurrecting our spirits. (Did you ever wonder why being saved is called being “born again”?) The gift of righteousness overcomes sin! What is the best way to overcome fire? Usually, with water. What is the best way to overcome sin? With righteousness! In order to dethrone the tyrant sin, God gives us righteousness!

This passage mentions “justification” several times. Many people think justification means to be “declared righteous by God” (sometimes expressed as “just-as-if-I’d never sinned”). Actually, justification means “*made* (i.e., actually, truly transformed) from an unjust person into a righteous person by God.” The way God gives us the gift of righteousness to overthrow sin is through *justification of life*, the actual transforming of our dead, sinful lives into righteous ones, made alive by God’s Spirit! Notice that verse 19 tells us that by the obedience of Jesus “shall many be made righteous.” We will be transformed into righteous, holy people!

Once the co-regency of sin and death has been overthrown, who reigns now? Again, it is a co-regency. First of all, Jesus Christ is the Head of the church (Ep. 5:23) and should have supreme rule over our lives. If you like to think of it this way, Jesus is the Emperor, but He has appointed a co-regency of two lesser kings to reign over the lives of each believer. Who is the first of these two kings? The first is grace! Verse 21 says, “That as sin hath reigned unto death [sin used to be king ...], even so might grace reign [now grace is king!] through righteousness [grace rules our lives through the instrumentality of righteousness and holiness] unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord!” Praise the LORD!

Who is the other king? As surprising as it may seem (it surprised me), *the regenerated* [i.e., made alive again] *believer is king!* You may be thinking, “What?!? I rule my own life?” No, not your fleshly, sinful nature, but the real you—the part of you which was made alive when Jesus saved you—now reigns. Yes, Jesus has ordained that the regenerated spirit of the believer is supposed to reign!

Over whom is the believer supposed to reign? Sin! The government of the believer has turned upside down—now I am ruling over sin instead of sin ruling over me. Read verse 17 again: “For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ”! Did you catch that? “They” who have received God’s grace and righteousness will reign, and not just reign, but reign *in life!* Brothers and sisters, we do not have to wait until the second coming of Christ to start reigning! Through Jesus Christ, we *reign in this life!*

**When grace comes in, it reigns in righteousness and makes us reign in life as well over our former tyrant, sin!**

Do you now catch a glimpse of how grace saves us? Surely, I do not claim to have plumbed the depths of this glorious mystery—certainly not in this brief article. Nevertheless, I think our short little theological statements about being “saved by grace” have missed something—something extremely significant and exciting! They have missed the glorious truth that when grace comes in, it reigns in righteousness and—ah, the solving of the mystery of being made a king—makes us reign in life as well over our former tyrant, sin! This reigning is not “sinless perfection” where the believer never stumbles or makes a mistake again, but it is a life of victory over sin!

Hallelujah! Brothers and sisters, are you ready to sing with the saints in heaven?

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. Re. 5:9-10

Are you reigning? If you are not reigning, you are not a king! If you find that you are not a king, put grace on the throne of your life today!

The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold,

the kingdom of God is within you. ~

(Luke 17:20b-21)

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