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Romans

Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, Romans 5:20

The previous verses concerned Adam's trespass in contrast to Christ's obedience. Paul demonstrated the superiority of Christ's work in all ways concerning the two and the glory of what He accomplished. Now Paul returns to the thought in verse 5:13, "For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law."

Sin was in the world and death reigned even though the law had not yet been introduced. However, or as Paul says it today "Moreover..." The "moreover" is intended to highlight the incomprehensible nature of God's grace. The contrast between Adam and Christ is striking - "All hail the work of Christ!"... And yet there is more. "Moreover, the law entered that the offense might abound."

One sin committed by Adam in innocence (meaning prior to the knowledge of good and evil). Brought about death to all people. How much more will a body of law comprised of 10 major commandments and 613 total commandments bring in offense! The law was introduced as a tool to show to us "that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful." Romans 7:13

We can look at death in the world and we can rely on our conscience, even apart from the law, to know our fallen state. How much more do we see it when our

actions are compared to God's standard as outlined in the Law of Moses. And the law didn't come without warning. There are promised blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. When Israel failed to be obedient, they could only expect punishment and exile. The law was such an immense demonstration of our inability to meet its standards that the people in Jeremiah's time cried out -

“That is hopeless! So we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one obey the dictates of his evil heart.” Jeremiah 18:12

What they had failed to see is that the law wasn't an end in and of itself, but that it was a tool to get them to rely on God's grace and mercy. Even under the Old Covenant this was shown to be true. But the people normally took one of two avenues -

- 1) Living out the law as a means to an end which brought about feelings of self-righteousness and contempt for others and even God or,
- 2) Simply disregarding the law because it could never be met anyway.

They failed to see that even under the law, God's grace was available and evident, such as in the Day of Atonement feast. If they could, like David, understand this precept, then they would have seen that "where sin abounded, grace abounded much more." This is what Paul is saying. The immensity of the guilt because of the introduction of the law allowed an even greater demonstration of God's grace. This could not have been evident without the law. Unfortunately, too few realized the scope of God's grace until the introduction of the ultimate example of it, Jesus.

With the coming of Christ Jesus came One who could fulfill the law; and He did. After accomplishing this glorious deed, He gave His life as a Substitute for those who could never meet it. As Paul says in Galatians 3:24, "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

The law was our tutor to grab us by the spiritual hand and walk us directly to the cross where the eternal fount of God's grace pours forth. It is the place where grace abounds in all its fullness.

Life application: Nothing changes, those under the law rejected the premise that only faith could save them and they looked to law as a means to an end. In the church today are those with the same mentality, "I will prevail by my deeds." Neither satisfies because both are based on a faulty premise. We can't do anything to please God in and of ourselves. We can only look to Him for the righteousness which comes by grace through faith. Put away your deeds of self and cling to the cross and all its glory.

...so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 5:21

The amazing words of chapter 5 conclude with this verse. This chapter has been an astonishing array of theological truths centered on the work of Jesus Christ and His glory. The chapter finishes with the continuation of the thought seen in verse 5:20.

"So that as sin reigned in death" tells us that the consequences of Adam's sin found their throne in the death of humanity. When he sinned, death reigned over all of Adam's fallen kingdom. But "even so" - despite this being true, a truth which is undeniable, Paul will complete the contrast and show the glory of God's grace.

Every baby born has one guarantee in its new life - that is to die. And this death is a result of its spiritually dead state. Even so "grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life." When all seemed lost for the human race, God revealed His promise; a promise which came 4000 years after Adam's fall. In stepped Jesus. John tells us the marvel of what he personally witnessed -

"And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace." John 1:16

The law was introduced to show us the utterly sinful nature of sin; transgression heaped upon transgression. But through this demonstration of our fallen nature came the superabundance of God's grace in the coming of Christ. Because of His work, grace reigns in righteousness, even unto eternal life. The kingdom of Christ is one of righteousness and life, a complete contrast to Adam's kingdom of sin and death. Just as the newborn baby has the guarantee of death, the born again believer in Christ has the guarantee of eternal life. What a marvelous trade! What a glorious Savior!

Life application: The Bible is God's word in a physical, tangible form which has been given to us to search out His will and intent for us. Pick it up, read it, and be built up in your faith and in your security. A security found in Jesus Christ the Lord!

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

Romans 6:1

We now enter into chapter 6, a chapter divided by two questions Paul asks in order to set the tone for his explanations. Both questions are answered with "Certainly not!" In other words, Paul is asking the most outlandish possible question in order to give the most logical refutation of the thought. He is standing as a debater in an argument and entering into the debate by giving a false premise and then arguing against it.

The first question is Romans 6:1. Based on his comments at the end of chapter 5, he asks "What shall we say then?" This is Paul's - "How far can we go with God's grace?" And then he floats the question, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"

This question is given in response to 5:20 - "Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more..." The thought is, "Ok, if grace abounds through the committing of sin, then can we continue to commit sin so that God's grace shines all the more brightly?"

The answer should be obvious and evaluating it against the perfectly holy standard which necessitated Jesus' cross in the first place make the question all the more preposterous. One man's sin brought about judgment and condemnation to all humanity. Were it not for Jesus, there would be no hope. If the cross was necessary to rectify this one act, then how could we presume to add to our guilt under a misdirected notion? All the more so, how could we even consider this after we have been cleared of the guilt we once bore?

Despite the obviously outlandish nature of the question, Paul submits it because he knows the wickedness of the human heart, even of the soul saved from past sins. In our moments of weakness, we will go through steps in our mind to justify why the wrong thing we are doing is really ok. In essence we are attempting to excuse the sin we wish to continue in. Paul knows this is the logical pattern of those weak in faith and weaker in deed. His argumentation will reflect this.

Life application: The Bible is as much an instruction manual as it is a love letter. God demonstrates and displays His love for us in its pages and in the process He instructs us in how to keep safe, healthy, honoring of Him, etc. The love directs the instruction and so when you read a passage which seems confining or restrictive, don't forget to evaluate it from that perspective. The restrictions are given because God loves you. Don't we treat the children we love in the same manner?

Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Romans 6:2

This verse is given in response to 6:1 - "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" Paul's answer is translated variously as "God forbid!", "By no means!", "Of course not!", "May it never be!", "Absolutely not!", "That's unthinkable!", "Far be the thought!", "No indeed!", "Let it not be!", etc. As you can see, it is a thought which translators revel in being unique about because of its superlative nature. The Greek term is *me genoito*, "not (or never) may it come into being (or be)."

Paul's answer is one which completely disregards even the possibility of the thought being entertained. And why? His answer is clear and concise, "How shall we who died to sin live in it any longer?" The soul saved by Christ has moved from the death of sin to death to sin. The Bible presents death in three specific contexts - all of which involve a separation:

The first is spiritual death. This is what Adam and Eve experienced the moment they disobeyed God. Spiritual death is separation from the life found in God. There is no longer the eternal source of life available to the person. This has been transmitted from Adam to every human since creation with the exception of Jesus who was born of God and a woman.

The second is a result of the first; it is physical death. Man is a soul/body unity. This is technically known as anthropological hylomorphism - the duality of man. Physical death is a result of spiritual death and it occurs when the soul departs (is separated from) the body. The Bible shows us that the soul without a body is naked (2 Corinthians 5:3) and therefore this is an unnatural state. The natural state of man is to be a soul/body unity. But this doesn't necessarily mean man is complete. Because of spiritual death, a soul/body unity is in a state of fault. This fault is corrected when one comes to Christ.

The third is explained by Paul and noted in Romans 6:2; it is death to sin. This is the separation of a person who has moved to Christ from the power of sin; they are born again to new life. The fault is removed and man has been regenerated to his complete and originally intended state. He is a soul/body unity with the surety of eternal life - both spiritual and physical. This is the state which Paul argues for here.

We have "died to sin." Because this is so, how can we continue to live in it. Sin is something which is contrary to our very nature and therefore it is something we are to live without. A good comparison to consider would be taking a dead body and putting it on a ventilator. What is the point? It would serve no purpose at all. Likewise, being dead to sin has removed from us the very sin nature we possessed. Therefore, to live in sin is contrary to the state we are now in.

Life application: Christ died for us. When we receive Him, we move from death to life. As this is spiritual renewal, then we should live out our new spiritual lives in a manner worthy of the change which has taken place. Let us move from sin to holiness.