

Romans

Romans Chapter Five

Romans 5:12-21

February 21, 2010

This is lesson number **29** in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

Title: “Superabundant Grace”

Our text for today is Romans 5:20-21.

20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, **21** so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Apostle began this most important passage {12-21} with a “Therefore,” which I believe refers mainly to verse 10.

You might think that Paul has covered the subject of sin and grace to a sufficient degree, but there is yet more to be said – “Moreover...”

“Therefore” {12}, “Moreover” {20}. “...the law entered that...”

When we began this series of messages on verses 12-21, I said we would examine several issues raised by this passage. And so far we have discussed the relevance of of this most important passage of God’s Word as to:

1. **Doctrine of Representation - Adam and Christ.**
2. **Creation and The Historicity of Genesis.**
3. **Original Sin.**
4. **Sin and The problem of evil.**
5. **Infants and Imbeciles.**
6. The **Intent** and the **Extent** of the atonement of Christ.

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This morning we will examine **two realms of power**:

The **reign of sin** and the **reign of grace**.

R-E-I-G-N not R-A-I-N

And to do so we will look at two more issues raised by this passage:

7. The **purpose of the law**. A means to be saved; or to aggravate sin?
8. The superiority of **grace over sin**.

We saw that because of the **one sin of the one man**, death reigned.

Death and sin and grace are personified {spoken of as persons} and said to “reign.” To reign is to have dominion and power.

As sin reigned in death, even so, grace reigns in righteousness.

Because “all sinned” in Adam, and before the law was given to Moses, men died who had not sinned against a specific command, even infants, who had not personally sinned, but who were justly charged with the sin of Adam, died. And so sin was in the world before there was written law and sin and death reigned. Men sinned, but that sin was “not recorded in the ledger,” not imputed {13}. What men did was still sin and God dealt with it as such, but there was no written law. And so the sin “was not recorded in the record.”

But over against the awful tyranny of the **reign of sin** - the sin of Adam and the sin of every one of Adam’s race - there is the grace of God - the **reign of grace**.

The free gift of grace by the Last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Jesus of Nazareth, who is the Christ, offered His blood on the cross as the **only** propitiation of the wrath of God, He represented a **particular people**, those given to Him by The Father before the foundation of the world. He represented all those who were “in Christ” - those who had died in faith before the cross event and for those who would yet come to faith. Those particular people are called, regenerated to new life by The Holy Spirit, justified by God, and will surely be glorified.

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Issue # 7: The purpose of the law?

Remember that there were Jewish Christians, not unbelieving Jews, but Jews who trusted in Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah, the One Isaiah wrote about in Chapter 53, and the One David prophesied about in Psalm 22; Jews who may not yet understand why the law was given.

These Jews that Paul is pastoring are not the only ones who do not know why the law was given. There are a great number of theologians who do not understand why the law was given. Some teach that God gave the law as a means to save the Jews. Like the Jews of Paul's time, they actually believe that a man could be justified by keeping the law in some fashion. Some teach that God sent His Son to the Jews to be their king, but that the Jews rejected Him as their king. Then God had to go to "Plan B," as it were, and suspend prophecy for a time until Jesus returns when the church will be "raptured," taken out of the world, and then the Jewish kingdom in all its former glory will be established and the Jews and the church remain separate forever. They derive these false teachings by using the Old Testament to interpret the New Testament. They carry over prophecy from the Old Testament that has either already been fulfilled or is being fulfilled in the church and extend that prophecy to a yet future kingdom of Jews.

But the law was never meant as a means of being justified with God.

And so the Apostle will tell us why the law was given. The law here includes the moral law {Ten Commandments} as well as the civil and ceremonial law - the law in its totality that was given to Moses.

Before discussing why the law **was** given let's be sure that that we understand why the law was **not** given.

1. The law was not given as a means to be just before God.

Paul has made it clear to those who trusted in the law that the law could not save them. He says this in 3:20:

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

No one ever has nor ever will be saved by any system of law-keeping or "deeds of the law."

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2. The law was not given even as the means of condemnation.

Now I had to think on this for a time. Does the law condemn? Yes, but it only adds the record of our transgressions; to our guilt and condemnation through Adam. Sin was in the world before the law was given to Moses and men were guilty and condemned because of the one sin of the one man, Adam. That has been carefully explained in verses 12-19.

Romans 5:18

Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in **condemnation . . .**

So what then is the purpose of the law?

Read 20a. We are building on that question but we first need to understand the words used by the Apostle.

There is an important distinction of words used in verse 12 and in verse 20.

In verse 12, “sin entered” and the word is “entered.”

In verse 20, “the law entered” but the word is “entered along side of.”

The prefix “para” means “along side of.”

E.g., a paralegal is not a lawyer, but one who works “along side of” a lawyer. A paramedic is not a doctor but one who works “along side of” a doctor.

The apostle adds the prefix “para” to the word for “entered” and so the law entered “along side of” something that was already there.

That something is “sin.”

The law comes in “along side of” the sin of Adam and “along side of” all of the sins of men that were not “recorded in the ledger” {13}.

The fact that the law comes in “along side of” something that was already present means that the law is not **fundamental**.

Sin is fundamental and **grace is fundamental**, but the law is not **fundamental**. We are condemned by sin and justified by grace, but the law has another purpose.

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Sin was in the world but there was grace before there was sin in the world.

Christ is the “Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.” That means that before Satan tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden, and before Adam joined his deceived bride in her sin, and before the human race was condemned by the sin of Adam - grace was there before sin and before law.

It is not law and grace - it is sin and grace. What that means is that we have to deal with sin - not the law. **Grace “superabounded” over sin.**

Here is another distinction of words: sin **abounded**,
but grace **superabounded** {20}.

We sing “Grace, grace, God’s grace, grace that is greater than all our sin.”

But where sin abounded, **grace abounded much more**,

If then the law comes in “along side of” sin, but law was not given as a means to be justified, nor was law given in order to condemn,
what good is it?

The apostle asked a similar question in verse 3:1. {law and circumcision}

Knowing the purpose of the law is basic to your knowledge of the Gospel. No one can be saved by the law because that is not its purpose:

Galatians 3:19-25

19 **What purpose then does the law serve?** It was added because of **transgressions**, till the **Seed** should come to whom the **promise** was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. 20 Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. 21 Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. 22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. 24 Therefore the law was our **tutor** to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

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So to answer the question, “What is the purpose of the law?”, we will first discuss the “reign of sin.”

1. One purpose of law is to **define sin**.
You know that we can sin in ignorance.

Verse 3:20:

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the **knowledge** of sin.

And also Romans 7:7-12

7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, **I would not have known sin except through the law**. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." 8 But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. 9 I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. 10 And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. 11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. 12 Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

The word “transgression” and the word “sin” have a distinction in this way.

A man may sin and not know what he does is sin.
It is still sin, but he is ignorant.

Then the law says, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet you neighbor’s wife, not his manservant, not his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.” {Ex 20:17}

So a man has a desire for something that belongs to someone else. He doesn’t think that desire is sin. It is sin but he doesn’t know it. Now he has the knowledge of the law: “You shall not covet....” “The law came!”
Now his sin is “transgression” and it is “recorded in the ledger.”

So it is in this way that the law defines sin.

2. Another purpose of the law which is closely related to the law defining sin is that the law teaches me just how **sinful sin is**. A man does not really understand the depth of sin, the foulness of sin, the real nature of sin, the exceeding sinfulness of sin until the law begins to work in him.

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A man does not realize the **reign of sin** in his life until the law reveals the extent of his separation from the holiness that God demands. The law will show me the deceitfulness of sin. I can be deceived by the reign of sin into thinking what I am doing will be excused by God. I can be allowed to think that my situation is special and that God will overlook my sin. People will say, "I know this is wrong, but God will understand." He understands, but God does not give us a "free pass" to sin.

One of the greatest failings of the church today is that so few preachers are preaching the law. The preachers of the great awakening and other times of evidential work of the Holy Spirit, preached the law. It is the law applied by the Holy Spirit that convinces a man that he has sinned against God.

Preaching the law will either drive a man to Christ or he will stop his ears and refuse to listen.

It is easy enough to preach against drunkenness and gambling and adultery and the merely moral man will nod his head in agreement and say "preach on brother." But the merely moral man does not believe that he himself is a sinner because he is not a drunkard, nor a gambler, nor an adulterer.

The merely moral man thinks, "I am not all that bad."

But ask the merely moral man if God has first place in his life. Ask him if he loves the Lord with all his heart, mind, soul, and spirit; and his neighbor as himself, and he will start to squirm.

The law can make even the merely moral man to know that he is a sinner.

The law teaches a man the exceeding sinfulness of sin!

3. Yet another thing that the law does is to actually **make us sin**.

Now listen carefully. God does not tempt, neither can He be tempted.

The Bible word is "concupiscence," or a "strong desire." Because of the what sin has done to me, because **sin reigns** over me, the very thing that the law tells me not to do is what I now want to do.

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You have heard the illustration of making an arbitrary law for a child, such as “do not open that door.” There is now a strong desire in the child to open the door because there is now a law against opening the door. This characteristic is not only true for children, it is even more true for adults.

4. There are so many ways to look at the purpose of the law and we have not nearly exhausted the subject.

Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones preached six sermons on verses 20-21.

There is one more thing that the law does that is the **main purpose** of law.

We read the text earlier to make another point, and we will look again at Galatians 3:24:

Therefore the law was our **tutor** to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

This word “tutor” is also translated “schoolmaster” and our English connotation of these words does not exactly explain what they mean.

paidagogos (pahee-dag-o-gos'); a boy-leader, i.e. a servant whose office it was to take the children to school; (by implication [figuratively] a tutor ["paedagogue"]):

This is mainly what the law was meant to do. Far from being designed to save us, it was given in order to show us that nothing and nobody can save us but the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so here it is. Romans 5:20-21:

20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, 21 so that as **sin reigned** in death, even so **grace might reign** through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Having looked at the reign of sin;
Let's talk about the “reign of grace.”**

Earlier I said that over against the awful tyranny of the **reign of sin** - the sin of Adam and the sin of every one of Adam's race - there is the grace of God; the **reign of grace**.

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Issue # 8: The superiority of grace over sin.

The **reign of grace** has no earthly beginning as does the reign of sin; as I have said, God does not have a “Plan B.”

From eternity past: Revelation 13:8

All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the **Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**

When sin entered the world: The Lord said to the Serpent:
Genesis 3:15

And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.

Cain and Abel: Genesis 4:2-6
Jude calls it “the way of Cain.”

3 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. 4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, 5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

Noah: Genesis 6:5-8

5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7 So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."

8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

Abraham: Genesis 12:1-3

2:1 Now the LORD had said to Abram:
"Get out of your country,
From your family
And from your father's house,
To a land that I will show you.
2 I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you and make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.

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3 I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and on down through the ages.

Study the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew and Luke.
There are great sinners in those lists, Rahab the harlot, David the adulterer and murderer, Solomon the idolater and wicked kings until: UNTIL!

Galatians 4:4-5

4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

John 1:1-2

1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.

John 1:14

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

It is the greatest privilege for any man to preach to you the message of the **reign of grace!**

The free gift of grace by the One Man, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:20-21

20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, **grace abounded much more**, 21 so that as sin reigned in death, **even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

The hope of every believer in Jesus Christ is that: **grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

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The reign of sin and the reign of grace.

The Gospel is not offered to dead sinners with the proposition that the sinner himself has any ability to come to Jesus. If you do not have the assurance of trusting only in Jesus Christ, the assurance that Paul has presented in Romans Five - Has the law worked in your heart and convinced you of your guilt and condemnation and is the desire of your heart to trust Jesus Christ; then the law is your schoolmaster and is leading you to Christ. Can you trust the righteousness of Jesus alone?

By God's grace we will begin Chapter Six next week.