

XXXVI. Romans in Biblical Perspective  
*The Gospel of God*  
“The Law and The Gospel”  
Romans 5:12-21  
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III  
June 19, 2022 • Sunday Morning Sermon

This is God’s Word that is inerrant and infallible. Romans 5:18-21 says [18] *Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. [19] For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. [20] Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, [21] so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

One of the great blessings I have enjoyed in my life is having Godly mentors/pastors who have guided me in the call to ministry and in doing ministry. One of the very first ones as I was coming into ministry was Reverend Al Martin. This week I was personally reminded of a question that I asked Al early on in the ministry. I said to him ‘Al, a man plans his way but God directs his steps so it’s appropriate for us made in the image of God to plan our way. So I have developed a habit of laying out a calendar of a preaching schedule for the year.’ He said ‘I think that’s a great idea.’ I said ‘So here’s my questions, if in my preparation I get to the point where I don’t think my schedule was properly laid out and think I need to change it somewhat, it is okay for me to do that but remember the Holy Spirit led me to lay out that calendar, so is it okay if I think the Holy Spirit is leading me to modify the calendar?’

Al said ‘I’m going to tell you three things. One, is pray about it. Two, get some counsel from Godly people. Then three, if you’re convinced the Holy Spirit is leading you go ahead and change your calendar for what you had will still be there, and if what you put in there wasn’t right He can always change it and put you back on track.’ I said ‘Ok, what if it doesn’t happen until the very week I’m preparing for that sermon on the calendar?’ He said ‘My advice hasn’t changed. Just go with it and let the Spirit of God lead you in this.’ That is exactly what happened this past week.

I had planned to be in Romans 6 after two studies in Romans 5:12-21 and I so wanted to get to Romans 6 because I think it’s a microcosm of the whole epistle of Romans which is an exposition of the Gospel of God which is a Trinitarian Gospel the way Paul refers to it. It is a Gospel where the Father has authored our salvation, the Son has accomplished it and the Holy Spirit has applied it. So, I can’t wait to get to Romans 6 but the Lord has worked on my heart so we won’t get to Romans 6 until the next study and we’re back in Romans 5.

I want to give you some reasons why we’re staying here in Romans 5. One of the reasons was even though I covered Romans 5:18-21 in the last study, they needed better treatment and I became uncomfortable with how it was covered due to it needing more than I was able to give during the time allotted. Secondly, you really can’t understand Romans 6 without understanding Romans 5:18-21. We are about to face a question in Romans 6 that says shall we sin so that grace may abound and that question is built upon what is stated but what is misused by some in Romans 5:18-21. There is a glorious truth of the abounding grace of God,

greater than our sin that Paul is affirming but some would misuse that in order to encourage sin to say that Paul actually opened the door for them to sin. Thirdly, in this passage there is an amazing statement that on the face of it seems extraordinarily complex and even baffling. The statement is in Romans 5:20 that says [20] *Now the law came in to increase the trespass...* Why would we want sin to increase? More precisely, why would God send His law for the purpose of sin increasing? What is this actually saying to us?

Paul loves to put the word ‘therefore’ in his writings and he does so in this text of Scripture. This means that Romans 5:18-21 is built upon what comes before it, and so you can’t understand this text until you understand what has come before it which is what we have already looked at. We know from Romans 1:16-17 that the Gospel is two things – the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes and the righteousness of God which is revealed from faith to faith. It is a growing relationship by the power of God based upon, not our righteousness but His righteousness. That Gospel reveals the power of God’s grace to save us. So, I want to explain to you why this is so important.

Paul goes on to reveal the wrath of God against the pagan Gentile in Romans 1:18 to the end of the chapter. Then we see the wrath of God against the religious Gentile beginning in Romans 2. Then we see the wrath of God revealed against the Jew and Paul sums it up in Romans 3:23 which says [23] *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* All of us are born helpless, hopeless, unwilling and unable to repent of our sin and give glory to God, and unable to come to Him, dead in our sins. There is none who seek Him, no not one and all have turned aside to their own way (Romans 3:10-12). We are dead in our sins facing physical and everlasting death under the condemnation of those sins but God has the solution which begins to be unfolded in Romans 4:5 and that solution brings all kinds of Gospel blessings.

Romans 5 begins to list all those blessings. We have peace with God because of Christ when we’re in Christ. Secondly, we have access to God. Thirdly, we can rejoice in our sufferings for God. Fourthly, we can rejoice in the glory of God and fifthly, we are signed, sealed and secured by the Spirit of God. Then Paul answers the question that is in our mind of why every person in this world is born a sinner, sins and all die. There are no exceptions apart from Divine intervention. Secondly, why are we assured that all who are in Christ have everlasting life and all that the Father gives the Son, He loses not one. This question is also answered in Romans 5. Hebrews 9:27 says [27] *And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.*

This is all because of federalism – where one acts for the many. This is a theological term. We are familiar with this term based on how our nation was founded but our nation is not perfect by any means. We see this when there is a representative in an election that represents the people that elect him – so when he has voted, they have voted with him. Federalism was so important to understand there was something called the Federalists Papers and this was drawn right out of this theological concept – the one for the many so when the one acts, the many have acted through the one. Federalism is all over the Bible.

The Bible tells us that not through our election or desires but by Divine appointment God has appointed the One for the many. When Adam sinned we sinned and when Adam disobeyed God we disobeyed God. Adam’s sin is now imputed to us so we are born as sinners. Adam is our federal head but then the amazing statement that is found in Romans 5 is that the reason Adam is the federal head is because he is a type of the One to come who is greater – the Second Adam who is Jesus Christ. When Christ died the atoning death for all the sins of all of His

people for all of eternity, it's because the One died for the many. Through the disobedience of the one the many died – all died. Through the obedience of the One the all are made alive.

We also found out there are two Adams and two alls. There is the first Adam and his all which is humanity. Then there is Christ and His all which are those whom the Father has given to Him. Romans 8:33-34 says [33] *Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. [34] Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*

Just as we studied it says in Romans 5:12-17 [12] *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man (Adam), and death through sin, and so **death spread to all men because all sinned**— [13]for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. [14] Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the One who was to come.*

*[15] But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. [16] And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. [17] For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.*

Our sins were reckoned to His account as He paid for them on the cross, before the Father under Divine judgment and the unmixed wrath of God for all of our sins. Then His righteousness is appointed to us thus in Adam the gates of hell are shut because He has paid the penalty in full when He said 'It is finished' from the cross. Now the gates of heaven are open because we are accepted in the beloved for Christ's perfect righteousness has been given to us and every time God looks at us, He sees the perfect righteousness of Christ. We have the ownership of an alien righteousness that doesn't come from us but takes us all the way to glory in Christ. We have the righteousness of God Himself (Romans 1:17) and thus we stand innocent and forgiven before the bar of God's justice.

Original sin does not refer to the first sin. The term original sin refers to why you sinned – it refers to the origin of sin which is the disobedience of Adam. Understanding the origin of sin in Adam and the origin of saving grace in the Second Adam, Christ, we are confronted with the statement in Romans 5:20 – the law came in...

Romans 5:18-21 says [18] *Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. [19] For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. [20] Now **the law came in** to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, [21] so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The law here is referring to the Pentateuch, particularly Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. He is referring to God's ceremonial law given through the authorship of Moses. This ceremonial law governs the worship of God's people. It has the offerings, the sacrifices, the days they take place, the feasts, the fasts and everything in it that governs the worship of a covenant people before their God. In it God is saying something in His law.

Then there is the civil law which is the governing law that restrains sin and promotes righteousness among God's covenant people. There is only one time that God has any one

nation as His covenant people and that was Israel. Now His people in the New Covenant are coming from all the nations and thus we have no theocratic nation – we have God’s Kingdom from all the nations and the embassy of the Kingdom His Church which has been given its mission, message and ministry to carry forth into this world.

There is also God’s apodictic, His ethical, His absolute law, based upon His character designed to tell us how we made in the image of God are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind and how we are to love our neighbor as ourself. That law was not thought up or discovered or developed but it came from God for it is a gift of God’s grace to us and it has a Divine purpose. Stop and think about that phrase from Romans 5:20 - ***the law came in...***

The book of Genesis informs us of how sin came in – original sin through Adam. The whole Old Testament is pointing us to a Messiah who will come because God so loves the world that He’ll give His only begotten Son which is why Paul tells Timothy in I Timothy 1:15, ***[15] The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. [21] She will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins*** (Matthew 1:21). Who are His people? They are sinners to be saved by the sovereign grace of God but before He comes in God sends the law. Why would that law come in?

The text tells us and there is something in the Greek called a purpose clause. This is a very interesting purpose clause because the purpose sets up another purpose. Romans 5:20-21 says ***[20] Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more [21] so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*** Why would God send the law so the sin might increase?

The law comes in as a gift of God’s grace that sin might increase and in the increasement of sin becomes the increasing testimony of the greatness of God’s grace. It’s not the law comes and sin increases and over here in response grace increases – wonder who is going to win? That is not what the text is saying. The text is very clear – reign, rule, triumph. God gives His law that the sin might be seen. The Pentateuch comes first – God’s law. The law is not the Gospel but the law is crucial for the Gospel to be heard amazing and responded to. You can’t get to good news until you understand the bad news. That’s why the law comes – the bad news is magnified, identified, brought before us and the law even incites it.

There were all these sacrifices, offerings, atonements and all on certain days and times for sin through a priest but the priest needs his own sacrifice. I need a priest who doesn’t need a sacrifice. The law says I need that priest and it says I need a sacrifice that does it once and for all. Bulls, goats, pigeons are used to teach us we need a sacrifice but they can’t do it and that’s why they are repeated and repeated and repeated. The gore and entrails as the Kidron brook brings blood, God’s law is telling you sin brings death upon death we see that sin costs, but God has His Son coming and when that day of atonement comes the cost will be God’s Son to save us from our sins.

That civil law is telling us we can restrain sin with the law but the law can’t save you from your sin for we have a heart problem. The not only shows us that sin but it shows us how sinful we are. Do you want someone to run a red light? Put one up. We not only rebel against God’s law we are ultimately rebelling against God Himself which is why His law incites us. We don’t want God to tell us what things are for we want to tell Him what they are. We don’t want God to tell us what a marriage is, for we will tell God what a marriage is. The sin is not only revealed but also the sin nature as its very presence incites to more and more sin before Him.

As this sin comes it is to show you grace is greater. In other words, the law that reveals sin and points to something greater, the solution in Christ alone – sin is revealed, grace is revealed and there is no contest. It's not a comparative. It's a superlative. God's grace is greater than our sin – where sin reigns God's grace does much more reign. There is more grace in Christ than sin in me. That alone is my hope.

Here is the takeaway. The law came in, the result sin comes out and increases. The law comes in as a gift of God's grace to point us to grace by pointing out our sin. The law shows us our sin and our sin nature for the very law that teaches us how to love the Lord with all our heart, soul and mind and our neighbor as ourself actually incites us to more self-absorption and idolatry and becomes the occasion of expressing our sin nature. All of that is there so that by God's grace we might flee to our Savior and be saved – to be saved from the power, penalty and practices of sin and one day from the presence of sin. God's law has been revealed to show us our sin, the sinfulness of sin and our sin nature and to point us to Christ. We are seeing that grace is more that is found in Christ and Christ then reigns by grace in our life unto His righteousness and unto eternal life.

In these days we are in a battle for this Gospel of saving grace in Christ. We in the evangelical church gladly hold onto those declarative blessings that God will save us in justification from the penalty, guilt and shame of sin so that we are forgiven and clothed with His righteousness. We gladly preach that He takes us from the position of sin and adopts us into His family so that we can call Him our Father but strangely missing today is the declaration and the promise. The same God who has a triumphant reigning grace to make sinners right with God, innocent, justified and part of the family of God, is the same grace that makes new creations out of sinners. You are born again with a new record, new heart, new family and if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away and the new has come (II Corinthians 5:17).

I'm not teaching perfectionism here for I'm fully aware of what the Bible says. It says in I John 1:8, *[8] If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* I know Christians have remaining sin but what we don't have is reigning sin in us for it's been broken. There is a new King, a new majesty, a new reign and it's Christ. Yes, I have sin living in me but I don't have to live in sin and the grace of God is not simply a therapeutic means of coping with sin in my life. We don't have a Gospel of cope but a Gospel of hope for He breaks the power of canceled sin – regeneration for you can be born again. When you are born again comes the glorious growth of grace whereby we begin to hunt down remaining sin to kill it because we love our Savior who saves us from it. We don't have a Gospel that allows us to manage remaining sin for we have a Gospel with the instruments to mortify and put to death remaining sin, from the roots up.

Recently, I was reading something where an individual said something about a particular addictive sin. This person has been a Christian for three decades but the needle hasn't moved in terms of that particular sin. If that person was in my congregation I would say to them 'if the needle hasn't moved there is one of three possibilities. One, you don't know how to read a moving needle for it has moved, you just don't think it's moved. Two, you don't understand the work of discipleship and full contact discipleship that begins to take the means of grace to go after that sin that the needle might move or three, you're not converted.'

The reality is the old passes away, the new comes and we'll get to this when we get to Romans 7 but before I'm converted is the evil I would do, after I'm converted I still have sin that I don't want to do. The wanter has been changed and I have the means of grace. I Corinthians 6:6-10 has a number of sins that were embedded in my life. Some of them the day I was

converted were instantly gone and some of them I've been battling by God's grace for 50 plus years. So, sometimes He microwaves some sins out of our lives and He crockpots others. I have a skin doctor who sometimes cuts out the bad places and other times he burns out the bad places by having me rub this stuff on it until it's gone and that is the way we deal with sin. Sin is not something we manage, it's something we declare war against in our life and this is not to be saved but we do it for our Savior and our hatred for our sin. We certainly don't identify with it. In that war against sin sometimes the Lord rips it out and other time you go to war against everyday until He brings you home and then the presence of sin will be gone.

You take the means of grace and if there is sin embedded in your life, get under regularly the faithful preaching of God's Word, fellowship, God-centered worship, intercessory prayer, right administration of the sacraments, those brothers and sisters who will disciple and shepherd you – get into the means of grace and watch God bring the power of the sin corrosive means of grace that is greater than your sin into your life. Don't lose heart. Stay fixed on Jesus. His grace is greater than all our sin. Don't sign any peace treaties with sin. Don't identify with your sin.

A morgue to me is Satan's trophy room for he was a murderer from the beginning but I have a Savior who empties not just morgues but graves and He raises the spiritual dead to life so that you can be born again. I Peter 1:3 says *[3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* It is that Gospel that we preach, hold to and proclaim. God's grace in Christ is gloriously triumphant over any and all sin in us. That is why He sent that law – to send me to Jesus so that the trophy room of sin will be emptied and the trophy room of God will be filled.

Ephesians 2:10 says *[10] For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* We were created by the grace of God, to the glory of God, praise His Name forever! Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. God, please speak to the hearts of Your people and perhaps to some seekers who may be reading this and want to find out how to deal with this culture of death for death is all around. Father, help them hear that it comes from sin and that Your grace is greater than all our sin. Help them come to Jesus, Lord. If you would like to pray with someone about your life in Christ or coming to Christ please call us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we would love to talk and pray with you concerning this. We invite you to Jesus. What a great Savior we have! Fairest Lord Jesus, beautiful Savior! Father, equip Your people to walk in the triumph of Christ knowing that when sin abounds Your grace does much more abound. Thank You for the perfect righteousness of Christ and thank You for the power to follow Christ, in Jesus' Name, Amen.