

Series: **The Scandal of Grace** – week 4 of 11

CDOBC – beginning on 9/10/17

Today's Title: **"The Illogic of Grace"**

October 1, 2017 - Romans 5:20

OBJECTIVE: To help people know God's grace in Christ is the only way to salvation and godly living.

Opening Prayer

An idol worshiper... (Abram)

A world class liar and con-man... (Jacob)

A muscle-bound womanizer... (Samson)

An adulterer and a murderer... (David)

A prostitute... (Rahab)

A materialistic leader and polygamist... (Solomon)

A coward hiding in the hills... (Gideon)

An IRS worker, a bunch of fisherman, a doctor, and a zealot... (Disciples)

A passionate radical who arrested and killed Christians...
(Paul)

If this group walked into a church today, most churches would show them the door!

Most churches look for those who are look similar - who act in familiar ways - and they welcome these people with open arms.

But God often chooses those who society often overlooks.

The list I ran through at the beginning is a list of the primary people in the Bible that God did amazing things through them.

It's like God looks to the island of misfit toys (humans), to find the next man or woman He will use to change the world! He often chooses those the culture rejects.

The way God works - the people He chooses - it often seems very *illogical* - especially when it comes to His grace.

We understand God's judgment much better than His grace. We understand 'rules' and 'keeping the rules' much better than giving grace to those who break the rules.

It's logical when someone gets what they deserve, they get paid according to how many hours they work.

We don't understand when God gives someone what they don't deserve - getting paid a full-day's wage for working 1 hour (See Sermon #2 (9/17/17): "Grace is Unfair, Matt. 20:1-16).

Grace is illogical. Grace isn't human. Grace is divine in its origin - and God dispenses His grace with tremendous joy and love. ***Turn to Romans 5***

One area where grace is illogical is in the verse:

"where sin increased, grace abounded all the more..."

That runs against our logic.

Where sin increased, you would expect increased judgment from a Holy God. But we find the opposite is true of God...when sin increased, His grace increased!

Romans 5:20

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.”

This morning I want to explore the purpose of the Law - and the wonder - and illogic of God’s grace.

The Law was given to increase sin. vs. 20a

Talk about illogical!

This verse...and this entire section in Romans goes against what most Christians and most churches use as their guiding principle of Christian living.

Most of the time, Christians use the standard of the Law (*commands*) to measure how we’re progressing in our Christian life.

The problem with that is it’s an impossible standard - a standard where failure is the only possible outcome!

I realize what I’m saying may be shocking to some of you - you may be wondering if I’m dismissing holiness and righteousness. Let me assure you I’m not. Please be patient as follow what the Scripture says about Law and grace. Please stay with me as we work through this today.

A better translation & paraphrase to vs. 20a is:

“Now the law entered alongside human sin to increase and expose sin...”

In speaking of the Law, one commentator put it this way: “...it does not cause sin, but rather does something to it...it must mean that the law somehow brought out the true nature and magnitude of sin so that it could be seen for what it truly is.” (Romans, Vol. 2, “The Reign of Grace”, by James

Montgomery Boice, p. 611)

The Law of God was not given as an expectation for Christians, because it’s impossible for us to obey it! It’s an unrealistic expectation!

The Law was given to show us and prove to us that we cannot obey it - we cannot be holy on our own - we cannot live a righteous life in our own power.

If you had a 3-year old child, how many of you would tell them to paint the house, change the oil in the car, assemble the entertainment center from IKEA, do the dishes and cook dinner - and if they didn’t do all these things, you would be disappointed in them and tell them they needed to work harder next time and discipline themselves more.

Of course...none of us would do that!

But that’s exactly what we’re doing if we expect people to measure their Christian maturity by their obedience to the Law. Obedience is one of the standards we should use, but it’s not the primary standard by which we determine Christian growth and maturity.

The Law does not save, it condemns.

The problem with the Law is God never intended the Law to be the means of salvation - the means of spiritual encouragement. In fact, God gave the Law for the exact opposite reason!

We already read in **5:20** how the Law increases sin. In **Romans 3:19-20**, we see how the Law condemns us.

“Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in His sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.”

Don't get the wrong idea...the Law is not a bad thing...it's a very, very good thing!

Psalm 19:7-9

“The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;

8 the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes...”

The Law does a number of things affecting our relationship to sin.

Romans 7:5

“...our sinful passions, aroused by the law...”

vs. 7

“Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’”

Vs. 8

“But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead.”

Vs. 9

“...but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.”

- The Law of God increases our knowledge of sin.
- It defines sin so we know what it is.
- It reveals the evil nature of sin.
- It reveals the power of sin by our inability to obey the Law.
- It reveals the deceitful nature of sin - makes you think it's no big deal, only to find out later how devastating it actually is.
- It convicts us of sin.

But the Law does not save! It never was intended to save.

Isn't it ironic (or better, sad), that so many Christians have flipped this truth upside down. So many Christians have made the Law - or their own version of the Law - the standard for salvation - or the *only* standard for determining Christian growth.

If someone lives their life according to the rules - or according to the rules the group has made up - then they are OK.

Law is objective...we can measure and quantify someone's obedience to the Law of God.

But using the measuring stick of the Law belittles and discourages the believer.

The power of the Law is not in freedom and joy - or even in righteousness. The power of the Law is in sin and death.

“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.”

1 Corinthians 15:56

Human logic loves the objective nature of the Law.

You get what you deserve!

But God intended the Law to show us our need for something more - our need for a Savior - our need for someone to help us in our helpless state.

The Law of God is Grace.

If we didn't have the Law, we wouldn't know about sin. Knowledge of our own sinfulness is the first step of faith - the essential first step of faith.

Without God's Law, you wouldn't know how sinful you are.

Without God's Law, you wouldn't know how far from God you are.

The self-knowledge the Law brings us is part of God's grace to us.

The Law shows us our inability to do right - our inability to live a life pleasing to God.

The Law is like a mirror which, when it's held up for us to see our reflection, we can see our helpless condition.

The Law is grace in that it pointed forward - to the Messiah.

When God gave the Law to Moses and the people of Israel, He also gave them the priesthood.

The Law includes not only the prohibitions - the commands of what to do and not to do, but it also includes the temporary remedy for the people of Israel when they broke the Law (*sinned*).

They were to take an animal to the priest - the animal would be killed - their blood shed - the priest would offer it on the altar - atoning for the sins of the people. The dark reality of the nature and price of sin is death.

“For the wages of sin is death...” - Rom. 6:23a

All the sacrifices in the Law pointed to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. As John said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (1:29)

The Law is impossible for us to keep - but without the Law, we wouldn't know how desperate our situation is! This is where grace comes in.

What the Law is unable to do, grace does in abundance! Where the Law falls short, grace excels!

Grace rescues us from the Law's success! vs. 20b

When the Law does its job, we have a problem!

The Law succeeds in securing our death. (1 Cor. 15:56)

The Law succeeds in confirming our condemnation.

We need to be rescued from the successful work of the Law!

Grace rescues us from the Law's success.

Video: "I Am Redeemed" <https://skitguys.com/videos/item/redeemed>

Romans 5:20b

"...but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more..."

This is the illogical nature of grace.

You would think a holy, righteous and just God would increase judgment when sin increases.

This is how most people think and feel about God's reaction to their own sin.

Even if they want to be saved, some people are hesitant to come to God because they think their sin is too much - too evil - too immense - too abundant for God to forgive.

They think that since their sin has increased, their hope of forgiveness and grace is gone - that God's judgment overpowers His grace.

But that's human thinking...not biblical teaching.

The details of the Greek are helpful to know in this verse.

"In the first part of the verse, "Now the law came in to increase the trespass..." - the word translated "increase" in our bible is a Greek term which means *'to abound - to increase - to have more than enough'*.

In the 2nd part of the verse, he uses the same term when he says “but where sin increased...” - same Greek term.

But the last phrase is a different word.

“...grace abounded all the more...”

This is a Greek word which has the idea of *‘to abound - to overflow - have more than enough’*, but the word does not have to do with numbers so much as with “excess”. Then, as if that’s not enough, Paul adds the prefix *‘hyper’* which gives this word the sense of *‘superabundance’* or *‘abundant excess’*.”

(Romans, Vol. 2, “The Reign of Grace”, by James Montgomery Boice, p. 617-618)

The bottom line - no matter how much our sin increases, there is always an overabundance of grace to cover our sin! God doesn’t give us enough grace to merely cover our sin - He gives us more grace than our sin requires! *“God loves us...not because of who we are, but because of who He is.”* (What’s So Amazing About Grace, by Philip Yancey, p. 67)

God’s grace is greater than His Law vs. 21

I’m not saying His grace is better than His Law.

After all, we read earlier from:

Psalm 19:7-9

“The law of the LORD is perfect...”

8 the precepts of the LORD are right...the commandment of the LORD is pure...”

You can't get better than "perfect", but you can be greater!

In God's economy of salvation - His grace trumps the rigors and requirements of His Law.

21 so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The problem in so many churches...and with so many Christians...is they look to the Law (obedience to commands) as the power for Christian living.

But the greater power is through grace!

The Law of the Lord is perfect. This doesn't mean it saves us - we've clearly seen today it doesn't save us - but it's perfect in its reflection of the character and holiness of God - and it's perfect in its condemnation of each of us.

Therefore, the Law of God is connected to our sin - which leads to death. Paul here says that "as sin reigned in death" - not a good thing!

"reigned" has a sense of power - of ruling - of controlling destiny.

But Paul uses the same word "reign" in reference to grace - and the "reign" of grace is through the "righteousness" of Christ - and the reign of grace leads "to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Law - leads to sin - which leads to death.

Grace - leads to the righteousness of Christ - which leads to eternal life.

Which one do you think we should cling to the tightest?

Galatians 4:4-5

“God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”

God sending forth His Son is grace - and it was through His grace that He can “redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” (& daughters)

Apply it...

Which statement feels ‘right’ to you - which one seems ‘*logical*’ - like it makes the most sense.

Father tells his child:

“I will give you a car when you earn it.”

“I will give you a car, even though you haven’t earned it.”

What if I change the statement to this:

“I will give you a car when you earn it, even though you will never, ever be able to earn it.”

“I will give you a car, even though you haven’t earned it.”

How many of you have lived your Christian life - or thought about the Christian life through human logic - through the grid of ‘*getting what you deserve / what you earn*’?

This is a natural way to look at spiritual things - but it’s not a biblical way to look at them!

Grace is illogical - because it doesn't fit our human sense of work/reward.

Law awakens sin and condemns us.

This is a good thing! This is exactly what God intended His Law to do.

The first step in the salvation process is self-awareness of your sin.

The Law makes you aware of your sin!

"The law of the Lord is perfect."!

Grace rescues us from Law's verdict!

"Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more..."

Where sin reigned in death, grace reigned with more power through the righteousness and eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

The key to joyful and powerful Christian living is through grace - not through the standard of the Law.

The primary way you can know if you're growing in Christ is measured by the grace of God in your life.

Not just the grace you receive and understand...but by the grace you give others.

What we have to offer the world is not rules for living.

We have the grace of God in Christ Jesus - which is more powerful and liberating than any set of rules - even God's own rules!

Are you living in God's grace - or are you burdened by His Law?

Are you completely immersed in His grace - or are you trying to perform your way to perfection?

Instead, won't you celebrate His grace and share His grace - and give thanks for the perfect Law of God which led you to God's grace?

Close in prayer