

Grace Abounding Over Sin

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: Romans 5:20

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Open your Bibles with me to the book of Romans, again, chapter five this time. And I was blessed, greatly blessed by the reading of God's Word, Joel. You read so well and it just preaches while you read, doesn't it, that fourth chapter.

I thought, while he was reading, when he finished, "That is a sermon in itself. It just preaches itself, God's Word. It won't return unto him void. It shall accomplish that whereunto he hath sent it in that which pleaseth him."

Let me read another verse here in Romans five, verse 20. "Moreover, the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, where sin abounded, where sin just overflowed, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the great abundance of sin, the whole world of sin, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, much more, thank God."

In our Bible classes this week we have been studying three little booklets written and printed by a pastor in North Carolina and they are very good. They are excellent. On Monday morning we spent two hours in the adult Bible class in the study of God. That's the little book that was entitled, *God*. His perfections, his glory, God, his holiness, his sovereignty in all things from creation to salvation, his righteousness, both his essential righteousness and that which he has prepared and purposed and purchased through his blood for us and his goodness. And what an enlightening experience it was, what a joyful time and brother Coffee and Sandy and Doris and some of the teachers are staying in that book all week with their young people. Just such a refreshing experience, to study the Word of God about our God, our God.

The child of God can never hear enough about his Father. The child of God can never praise the Father too much. He never gets weary of hearing about his glory and his perfections and his mercies and his grace. I never weary of hearing about the Lord God.

And then Tuesday morning we entered the second book, little booklet. And the title of this booklet was *Man and Sin*. We studied Monday for two hours about God and his beauties and glory. And then Tuesday morning I got up here before my class and I opened the book entitled *Man and Sin*. The creation of man in the image of God by the hand of God, by the Word of God. Man's state before the fall, we talked about that a little bit. And then we talked about the fall and the results of that fall and the condition of all men in Adam. And for nearly two hours we talked about the exceeding sinfulness of

sin. And while I taught Monday morning about the glory of God it just seemed like the presence of God was here and it was just like Jacob's ladder had an opening to the throne.

But then we got into this subject of sin. It is a different atmosphere. It brings you into another feeling and experience. And we read Scripture after Scripture after Scripture concerning the nature of sin and the corruption of sin and the depravity of sin, I mean, the total depravity of human nature and the wickedness and sinfulness of human hearts. We just pried into the experience of sinners by nature and sinners according to the Word of God.

We did that Tuesday morning for almost two hours. And there is so much in the Word of God about sin. We didn't finish the book. We didn't get through. In fact, we didn't get half way through. So I went home Tuesday from Bible school, worked on a Sunday school lesson, the bulletin and then Tuesday night I began working on my class material for Wednesday morning. And I planned to go back into that book again on sin, sin and its guilt, sin and its results, sin and its vileness, sin and its corruption, sin and the condemnation of God upon it one more time Wednesday morning, this morning. I was going to open the human heart with the sword of the Word of God and take another peak in there, you know. And I was sitting there in my chair preparing the lesson and I got so depressed. I got so depressed, honestly, Joe, it just felt like a cloud descended over me. I was so depressed.

And I thought, "I can't go through another session on sin." That is exactly...I almost talked out loud. They say that is when he is dangerous, when you start talking to yourself. No. It is when you answer yourself.

And I thought, "I can't bear to go through another session talking about sin. I just can't put up with two more hours of this rottenness in human nature. I must get to Christ." That is the way I felt. "I must get to Christ in this study. I have got to get to some light instead of probing so much in the darkness. I have got to get to life instead of looking around among the tombs."

And, you know, when I sat there and thought about that I thought about our congregations and is it not possible that we preachers can overwork this subject of sin? You know, our people need to hear about Christ. I know they need to hear these other things and we give a proper attention to it. But someone said for every look that you take in the human heart, take 100 looks to the throne of grace, at least that many.

I must preach Christ. I must preach the hope and the rest and the peace that we have in him. Enough, I thought. Enough of sin. Enough...more, more about Jesus would I know. More of his love and grace to others show. Do you see what I am talking about?

Look at this verse again that I have selected for a text. It says, "Where sin abounded..." And it did. It did. And I know this. I have read some of the old writers and the old puritans and I know these things are so where there is no need there will be no healing. I know that. I know a man must be lost to be saved, well lost. I know that a man has to b

naked to want to be clothed. And he has got to realize his sinfulness to seek forgiveness. Our Lord said that the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. And he said when the Pharisees complained about his association with sinners, he said, "The well don't need a doctor. The people are sick. I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Go learn what that means."

And I know he said, "To whom much is forgiven, he will love much."

Oh, to grace how great a debtor I am daily constrained to be. Let thy goodness like a fetter bind my wandering heart to thee.

And I know what Mr. Spurgeon said. A whole...a man's whole system, a man's whole system of theology is determined by what he understands about the fall, a man's whole system of theology. If he starts wrong he will be wrong at the end. That's just good sense.

And Paul continually talked about his guilt. He kept saying that what you quoted yesterday, John, "Oh wretched man that I am, oh wretched man. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And he said he was the chief of sinners. But regarding all of that, knowing all that, experiencing all that, being constantly aware of all that, thank God there is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins and sinners, real, genuine, bonafide sinners plunged beneath that blood lose all their guilty stains, lose all their guilt stains. The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day. There may I...I know, vile as he, but wash all my sins away. Ever since by faith I saw that stream, his flowing wounds supply, redeeming love...is that our theme? Redeeming love has been my theme, not just the condition of sinners, not just the depravity of the heart, not just the results of the fall, redeeming love has been my theme and will be till I die. Thank God the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.

One of my dear beloved brothers brought a message at a conference not long ago on consider. That was the title. Good message. Consider. And he brought out this message, consider thyself. And then the second thought was "consider Christ Jesus."

Let's don't spend near as much time considering ourselves as we do Christ Jesus. You are not worth the attention. He is. It is more important to consider the remedy than the disease. It is a whole lot... you know if a man comes in to the doctor's office and the doctor spends 45 minutes talking about what is wrong with him, but he says, "I know what is wrong with me. I need help. Tell me what you can do for me."

And we get sinners in the congregation and do we spend more time talking about what is wrong with them than who can make it right. Does that make sense? I think we do sometimes. We spend more time talking about what is wrong than who can make it right, talking about the disease rather than the cure. Thank God you who were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Thank God he, of God, is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Thank God he who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the holiness of God in him.

David said, "There is a river." Yeah, there is a stain, but there is a river. There is a famine, but there is a river, Charlie. There is a drought, but there is a river. There...thank God there is a river. Let's talk about the river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most high.

Where sin abounded...you can never deny that. I can't as long as I live. I can't as long as I am who I am. I can't as long as I am what I am. I can't deny that. But thank God grace did much more abound.

Let me give you four or five illustrations of that. Look at Adam. Look at Adam in the garden. A noble creature. I thought quite a bit about what Adam must have been like when God himself, God the great artist, God the great architect of the universe, God the great creator, God the builder of the universe, God made Adam personally. God made him out of the dust of the earth. And he made him to be supreme among the creatures. And all his creatures, he waited to create this one until last in the image of God. And the [?] crouch at his feet. The king of jungle lies at the feet of Adam like a tame house cat. And the tigers sport about with him and jump among the trees and the rocks and run in front of him as he walks in the garden. And the beautiful doves, so shy and timid, circle down and light on his shoulders and he gives them something to eat. Adam.

And all the animals come at his call and he stands naked and unashamed in strength, in beauty and holiness, perfect health, perfect heart and perfect happiness. And that is something. Have you ever thought about that? You ought to because you are going to be made one of these days even greater than that in the image of Christ forever.

But sin enters this garden and enters this man willfully, willfully, on purpose. He was not deceived. And he fell. And now look at him. I am his descendant. Look at me. Tired and old and wrinkled and dying and decaying and frail and weak and ignorant. Even all of creation turns on him. Dogs barked at him. Birds fly from him. Lions tear him apart.

Somebody said God's creatures took up God's arguments with man. Man walks down the street and even that little old Fido dogs bark at him. Everything, every creature despises him. He is an enemy, dead and dying. Sin has permeated the whole world because of that man.

Well, has sin the full and final victory? It looks like it, doesn't it? Oh, it sure looks like it. But that is where this verse applies now, but where sin did overflow and where sin abounded, where sin came in and conquered, this great creation and this special man and all of nature grace did much more abound. My Lord in the midst of all that darkness shown this mighty ray of light, the seed of woman shall bruise the serpent's head one of these days. Where sin abounded, it looked like sin won the full victory and the final victory. Our Lord said, "The final victory is mine."

One day even death shall be conquered. There will be no more death. There will be no more tears. There will be no more pain. There will be no more sorrow. One day God is going to make a new heaven and a new earth because of that man Christ Jesus.

The second type I would give you is something over here in Romans 5:12 if you care to look, Adam, our representative. And do you know the thing about this man Adam in the garden, when he fell he didn't fall alone. No, sir. When he fell, he took billions with him, billions. You see, when Adam stood, he stood the representative and federal head of the whole human race, male, female, Jew, Gentile, white and black, old and young. He is every man's representative. It says here in verse 12, "Wherefore as by one man, one solitary single man sin entered into this world and death, disease, destruction, by sin so that death passed on all men, you, too. Me, too." That sin just came in imputed, imparted, in nature and spirit, in will and personality and emotions within and without. Nothing about us not contaminated. For when he sinned we sinned.

Not only death came, but look at verse 18. "Therefore by the offense of one judgment came." Judgment, wrath, condemnation. We don't have an alibi, an argument or an excuse. We don't have an appeal nor a day in court. Jim, the trial is over. Man is not on probation.

You know, a lot of people think man is born into this world on probation. I beg your pardon. We are born condemned. Christ said, "I didn't come to the world to condemn the world. It was already condemned." When Adam fell this whole world was brought unto judgment, the wrath and judgment and condemnation of a holy God. And not only that, verse 19 says by that one man's disobedience, I was made a sinner. I do what I do because he did what he did. Adam was the only man that became a sinner by what he did. What I do is because I am a sinner.

Well, has sin won the final victory? It looks that way. But wait. There is another Adam. Did you know that? There is another Adam. Let's quit talking about that first bird that failed. And let's talk about the one that didn't fail. Turn to 1 Corinthians 15. Here is the good news. Bless God, thank God there is another Adam. We got another shot at it.

You know, you go out. Some of these fellows in here play golf. And you go out there and you got your...you are chipped up on the green and you are lying two and you are putting for a birdie and the ball is laying about eight feet from the cup, Paul, you appreciate this. You have done this a lot of times. The ball is about eight feet from the cup and you get ready and you putt and you miss it. And then you stand back and lay it there and putt again and it drops every time. That second ball always falls in the hole.

You say, "Well, why can't I do the second time what I did the first?"

You can't do it. That first Adam fell, totally missed the mark. But I want to tell you that second Adam, that second Adam did not fail. Listen to this. It says in verse 21 of 1 Corinthians 15. "For since by man came death, by man came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

That first Adam plunged us into death. That second Adam gave us life. Verse 22 says, “As in that first Adam we die, died the death of sin, died the death of death, spiritual death, eternal death. But thank God in Christ shall all who are in Christ be made alive.”

But that is not all. Look at verse 47. The first man, you see, is of the earth, earthy. The first man is of the earth, earthy. Dust thou art. To dust shalt thou return. The second Adam, the second man who is he? He is the Lord from heaven. He can't fail. As is the earthy such are they that are earthy. That's us by birth and by nature. But, oh thank God, as is the heavenly such are they that have been born again, that have been made righteous in Christ.

And verse 49 says, “As we are born in the image of Adam, the earthy, by his grace we are going to bear the image of the heavenly.” That's... “Where sin abounded grace...where sin through Adam abounded and overflowed and took everything in its path, thank God the grace of Christ did much more abound.”

Here is the third illustration. Look at...go back to Romans five and I saw something here that...that I think is important, verse 20 of Romans five. It says, “Moreover the law entered.” You see that? Look at it. “Moreover the law, the law of God, entered that the offense, the guilt, the shame the sin might abound.”

What does that mean? What does that mean? Well, you all have children. And you know if you give your child no commandments, if you give your child no instructions, if you give your child no rules, none at all, he can't disobey you. Don't tell him anything to do and he won't disobey you. Don't give him any rules, any regulations or any commands. He won't disobey you.

But as soon as you give him a command, as soon as you give him an order, his natural inclination is revealed. He is a rebel. You didn't find it out until you told him to do something. Do you see what I am talking about? And like a little child, you all just get along so well as long as you don't tell him to do anything, as long as you don't tell him to shut his mouth or as long as you don't tell him to pick up the toys. Let him throw them around. Don't say...just sit there like a dummy and don't say anything.

Now tell him, “Pick up the toys.”

He turns into a monster. That sweet little thing turns into a monster. All you did was tell him to pick up the toys. The law entered and sin abounded. That is what that means, Joe. You told him to do something. You told him not to do something. And the more you learn of God's commands, the more you learn of God's law, the more you learn of God's truth the bigger sinner you become.

It is just the opposite of what some folks think. The more I read God's law the better I am. No, sir. The more you read God's law the wickeder you are. That's right because the law comes in there and exposes.

Paul said, "I didn't know sin until the law came. I didn't know what it was. I didn't know what sin was until I ran into God. And then I found out what it is."

A policeman comes with a subpoena. You see, the law is like a policeman. And it comes with a warrant and says, "I am looking for a criminal."

You say, "No criminal lives here. I am a good boy."

The policeman says, "I think there is a criminal here." So he searches you inwardly. And do you know what you find out? You are the one he is looking for. Yeah, you are the one he is looking for. The law has found you. When it comes in sin abounds. That is what it says. Moreover the law entered. Oh, my soul. Some preacher comes along and faithfully preaches the Word of God and people get lost. You see, the Word faithfully preached gets people lost before it gets them saved. It exposes the criminal.

Well, will sin triumph? The law comes in. Will sin triumph? Oh, no. Will I be led away? Will the policeman take me in, lead me away to get my just desserts? Oh, no, wait a minute, policeman. Hold it right there, law.

See, yonder on that cross, there is my substitute and he is bearing all my guilt and all my shame and all my evil and all my corruption and the law has got him. You got to let me go. The law arrested him and tried him and found him guilty and nailed him to a cross and I have got to be set free because where sin abounded his grace did much more abound.

Payment God's justice cannot twice demand, first at my bleeding surety's hand, then, again, at mine.

Here is the fourth illustration. I take you there in the garden. And there stands our blessed redeemer with his disciples and here comes those palace policemen and those chief priests and the Sadducees and Pharisees and the temple guards and they got swords and spears and they got torches and they are led by a traitor called Judas and they come there in that garden and our Lord steps out to meet them and says, "Whom seek ye?"

The say, "We seek Jesus of Nazareth."

And he says, "I am he."

And they arrest him and they bind his hands and they take him down there to the Sanhedrin. He sits all night surrounded by those hypocritical ecclesiastical rulers and orthodox legalists and moralists who hate God in their hearts. And they try him and they mock him and they bring false witnesses against him and they pronounce him worthy of death and then they turn him over to the soldiers and the soldiers mock him and beat him and scourge him and then he is brought before Pilate and Pilate sits down on the judgment seat and faces the people. He says, "I turn him over to you to be crucified."

And they put his own cross on his shoulders to add to his shame. And he drags it out yonder towards Golgotha's hill and there they nail him to a cross and there the blood drips upon the ground and you can tell his bones and his visage is marred so that he doesn't look like a man. And not only have the forces of hell attacked him and the forces of earth and the forces of religion, but he turns his eyes toward heaven and he sees no fellowship there. The heavens are brass. Then he screamed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

And he died alone. He said, "It is finished," and bowed his head and gave up the ghost.

And they came with their big old mallets to break the legs of the crucified ones to hasten their deaths, to get them off the cross so they wouldn't defile their sacred day. But they came to him, they saw that he was already dead. But a soldier took a spear and just jabbed it clear up into his side here. And out came blood and water. Christ came not by blood only, but by blood and water, not only to justify, but to sanctify, sanctify.

And they took him down from the cross and they took him and put him in a tomb and rolled a stone before it and put the seal of the Roman government and stationed some soldiers and everybody walked away.

Is it over? Did sin win? Did sin triumph? Sin abounded. The forces of hell and earth and the demons of the prince of the power of the air, everything is quiet now. Did sin triumph? Did it overflow just too...is this too much?

No, sir. They come to the tomb that Sunday morning and that stone is rolled away. Peter and John come to the tomb. John stops outside and looks in. Old Peter just runs right in. And he is not here. And the angel said, "Why are you seeking the living among the dead? He is not here. He is risen."

And I will tell you, my friend, up from the grave he arose. My representative, my sin offering, my sacrifice, my savior, with a mighty triumph over my foes. They say his foes, but those were my foes. He arose a victor over the dark domain and he lives forever with his saints to reign.

Where sin abounded his grace did much more abound. And, you know, I look at this world and everybody gets all excited. They say, "Well, the world is getting worse." It always has. It always has. It has never gotten any better. It seemed like all is lost, but I will tell you this, where sin abounded grace one day will much more abound. And this is my Father's world. The battle is not done. Jesus who died will be satisfied and one day by his grace heaven and earth are going to be one.

And I am looking forward to that day.

A dear girl told me today, she said, "I used to be afraid to die. But since I have come to know Christ I am kind of anxious to see it."

Is that right?

Let's sing that. This is my Father's world. Let's sing that. I think we sing it...what number is that?

Number 39. Maybe with a special meaning, maybe with a little more enthusiasm. Where sin abounded and overflowed, thank God grace, his grace, sovereign grace, sufficient grace, effectual grace, eternal grace did much more....Bob, I might just preach on much more several more times. I like that much more, much more abound.

All right. Let's stand while we sing it, 39.

[singing]

This is my Father's world and to my listening ears all nature sings and round me rings the music of the spheres. This is my Father's world, I rest me in...