

# Sinners Desperate for the Gospel

*"Wrath Surrounding, Grace Abounding" Series*

25 January 2006

Pastor Matt Black

Midweek Service

Romans 5:20

Discipleship: Let's review our discipleship questions...

Q. What is the first commandment of God's moral Law?

A. *Thou shalt have no other gods before me (Exodus 20:3).*

Q. What is the second commandment?

A. *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image (Exodus 20:4).*

And now this week's question...

Q. What is the third commandment?

A. *Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain (Exodus 20:7).*

Introduction: Let's Bibles to the book of Romans. Our text tonight is found in Romans chapter 5 and verse 20.

We continue in our evangelism series which we have entitled "Wrath Surrounding, Grace Abounding." This week we will cover God's purpose in giving His moral Law, so the title of the message tonight is "Sinners Desperate for the Gospel."

Romans 5, and verse 20—

Romans 5:20

*"Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"*

As we begin our study tonight, we are going to see that God's Law is the most necessary tool that we can use to bring lost sinners to Christ. When I find a sinner, and God gives me the open door to speak with Him, I go as fast as I can to the Law of God! You see the Law will bring sinners to Christ—it will make them desperate for God. I take them to the Law so that I can bring them to Jesus! That's exactly what this verse is saying...

*Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound, But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"*

- I. The Spirit of God uses the Law to prepare a sinner for grace. "the law entered" ultimately so that "grace" might "abound." Once we begin to use the Law the Holy Spirit begins to work, and the tool he uses to make grace abound is the Law!!

This verse makes it clear that...

- A. This Preparation by the Holy Spirit is absolutely Essential experience. We can't just push people into the Kingdom unaware or flippant toward their sin. They must be drawn into the Kingdom by the conviction of the Holy Spirit of God who makes them painfully aware of their true condition. John tells us that the Holy Spirit's work is to "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). A sinner is drawn to Christ

when the Holy Spirit applies the righteous standard of God's Law to the sinner's heart. The lost must be shown their desperate need for Christ. Don't you want to see sinners desperate for the Gospel? What is it that makes sinners desperate for Christ—desperate for a solution for their sin? The Law! "The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul... the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psalm 19: 7-8).

- B. This Preparation is an Awakening experience. Sin is not real to the sinner because Men are Asleep to God. Why do people sin boldly? Because they think there are no consequences to their sin. They are asleep to God. They are dead in their sins. They do not think about God. They do not think about the consequences of their sins. They live for pleasure because they do not understand that they have offended God. But when they are awakened by the Law to the knowledge of sin, they become desperate for Christ!

Illustration: In 1993, in Washington D.C., traffic police found themselves in a public dilemma. Members of a foreign embassy had been issued numerous parking tickets for breaking the law, but because they were diplomats, they didn't have to pay for their parking violations! To that date, they owed the city six million dollars in unpaid fines! How could that be? They simply had no respect for the law because there was no fear of future punishment. They knew the law, but they did not apply it to themselves! Finally, the city said if you don't pay your fines, you cannot register your vehicle.<sup>1</sup> Guess what? They were desperate to do what they had to do!! They paid their fines!!

Listen, God's Law wakes men up to their accountability. It shows them the seriousness of the debt they owe. It shows them that there are infinite penalties that are weighing upon them. They become desperate for they Gospel. So this is my burden tonight. My motive is to convince you that men and women will never be desperate for Christ until they are as shocked concerning their sin as God is offended.

That brings us to our next point.

- II. The Spirit of God uses the Law to Convert a sinner by God's grace.

*Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound, But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"*

The Law enters so that salvation comes—so that, as our text says, "grace abounds!" The Law was designed to convert the sinner's soul and open his eyes to his own lost condition. "The law of the LORD is perfect converting the soul" Psalm 19: 7. The Law shows the sinner what a desperate condition he is in! The Law is the perfect instrument to convert the souls of sinners. How does this take place?

- A. The Holy Spirit applies the Law so that the sinner's Mind might be Sharpened. The Law entered that sin might "abound." The Lord instituted His moral Law, the Ten Commandments, not so that men would sin more. That is not what this verse means. It means that man's knowledge of his

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<sup>1</sup> Ray Comfort. *The Way of the Master*, (Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, 2004), 75.

own sinfulness might be *sharpened*. "The Law causes sin to stand out in all its heinousness and ramifications."<sup>2</sup>

Men do not know they have offended an infinitely holy God. That is why we must bring the lost to the Law of God, so that God can *sharpen* the pain of their offense. Charles Spurgeon said this:

"The Law serves a most necessary purpose... [Sinners] will never accept grace, until they tremble before a just and holy Law."

Illustration: Let's go to the civil realm, for example. Imagine that you are on a freeway with no visible sign of the law. See how motorists exceed the speed limit. It seems apparent as you put the pedal to the medal that the law has forgotten about *this* part of the freeway. Perhaps you are transgressing the law by 10, 15, perhaps 20 miles an hour—and besides he isn't the only one doing it! ...Notice what happens when the law enters the fast lane with flashing red lights. Your heart misses a beat. You are no longer secure in the fact that other motorists are speeding also. You know now that you are *personally* guilty, and that *you* could be the one the officer pulls over. Suddenly your mere 15 mile an hour transgression doesn't feel like a small thing after all. It seems to abound.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of the Law is to revive the reality and presence of sin in all humanity--to make it obvious, to reveal and show it to every man, so that they will see the absolute necessity of coming to Christ! This was and is and ever shall be God's purpose for the Law.

Remember:

a. The Law of God is a Reflection of God's Holy Character. It is a Mirror that tells us Who God is. Giving someone the Law of God is a prelude to Judgment Day. The Law was originally given to the children of Israel in the wilderness because they had forgotten Who God was and were thinking about all the pleasures they had left in Egypt. So God gave the Law to Moses to remind and awaken these people to God. What the Law of God does is it reflects all of God's infinite holiness! Think of God's moral law, the 10 commandments. "Thou shalt not bear false witness!" God never lies—He is a God of truth that is always pure and right. He is Holy! The Law always points us to the holy character of God. So the first step in evangelism must be using the mirror of God's Law. The Law was God's idea. The commandments are what God demands—they reflect His Person.

b. The Law is also a Reflection of our own Corrupt Character.

"The Law is also very useful, because it shows us our defections and stains. It is like the [mirror] which my lady holds up to her face, that she may see if there be any spot on it. But she cannot wash her face with the looking-glass. When the mirror has done its utmost then there are the same stains. It cannot take away a

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<sup>2</sup> William Hendricksen. *New Testament Commentary: Romans* (Baker: Grand Rapids, 2004), 184.

<sup>3</sup> Comfort. *Way of the Master*, 67.

single spot, it can only show where one is. And the Law, though it reveals our sin, our shortcomings, our transgressions, it cannot remove the sin or the transgression. It is weak for that purpose, because it was never intended to accomplish such an end."

CHARLES SPURGEON

Have you ever tried to wash your face with a mirror? The Law cannot cleanse you!! It was not given to erase your sin.

So the Law of God is sent to sharpen man's understanding of sin. We also see,

- B. The Holy Spirit uses the Law so that the sinner's Mouth might be Shut. God uses the Law to open the sinner's eyes and shut his mouth from making all his excuses.

Romans 3:19-20

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: *that every mouth may be stopped*, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for *by the law is the knowledge of sin*.

1. Excuse # 1: I'm not that Bad! This verse makes it apparent that the chief road block to any man's salvation is his own self-righteousness. He is casual about sin, and thinks he is ok. He is by nature not desperate for Christ at all. He doesn't see His sin as God sees it. He thinks it's "no big deal." Most people don't think they're guilty or that they're going to be held accountable by God's Law. So every one you meet goes around thinking that they may not be perfect, but that can't be bad enough to deserve hell! The biggest excuse when I give someone the Gospel is "I don't need it! I'm not *that* bad!" God says, "Close your mouth!"

Illustration: I've given this illustration before, but it bears repeating. We go around telling people that we have the cure for cancer, and no one is listening. I have the cure for cancer! "Oh, that's nice." So we go around telling people, you know, God loves you, and He died for you. But very few listen because they think they are ok. They are actually filled with their own self-righteousness.

What we need to do is give sinners the Law. Tell them they have cancer. Show them precisely where it is. Tell them how it came about, tell them that they only have 2 weeks to live, and that they'll never see their children or spouse again. Tell them their true condition, and instead of saying "oh, that's nice" or "I don't need it," they will be totally silent, trying to absorb the seriousness of what you have told them. They will be desperate for Christ!!

Then give them the cure, and they will weep for joy!

The same happens when we give someone the Gospel. No one wants it. Sinners are not desperate for Christ! But give them the Law. You see God's Law will sharpen sin and shut the mouth, so that the soul might be

converted. Give them the Law, and the Holy Spirit will make the knowledge of sin about. They will personalize and realize how bad they are.

But there is another excuse that is very common among lost people.

2. Excuse # 2: I'm ok, I've kept the Law! The greatest misconception we will find in the world is that people think that if they keep the Law, they will be justified. The Law *NEVER* transfers any righteousness to us. In fact, it does the opposite. If you go trying to keep the Law, you will see how dirty and wicked you are! The Law of God will never make you clean! Paul makes this clear in his letter to the Galatians.

Galatians 5:4

Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Amazingly, there are people everywhere that are still teaching the ancient heresy that God's Law will justify us. Go to Rome, and they will tell you that if you are good enough, you might go to heaven, or you might even be canonized as a saint. That is diametrically contrary to the teaching of the Bible, but most people who believe this never read their Bible! I mean, Paul wrote a whole book of the Bible to combat this false teaching! He says in the book of Galatians chapter 2 and verse 16,

Galatians 2:16

"[A] man is *not justified by the works of the law*, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for *by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*"

The "Christian Church" also called the Disciples of Christ believe that you must be baptized in order to be saved! That is works righteousness! They have a Bible but they don't believe it, and there are 7 of these so-called "Christian" churches within a 10 mile radius of us!!

You see, Righteousness (or what the Bible calls *justification*) does not come from baptism, or any works that we do. Righteousness comes not from a work of man, but a work of Grace in the heart. If you want to have your sins taken away, you must taste the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

Titus 3:5

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Conclusion: Would you be upset if you broke a vase that you could easily replace? The story is told of a child who broke his father's antique vase. He was told never to touch it. The child didn't know it, but the vase was an archeological marvel worth over \$25,000. The child was not aware of this, and thought it was just another vase, worth maybe \$2 or \$3 dollars. So when he broke it, he didn't think anything of it. He went off to play with his little friends hardly aware of what he had done.

When his father came home, he got the boy alone and told him what he had done. He told his son that the vase was a priceless treasure and that it was irreplaceable. Suddenly, the little boy became sick in his heart. He felt the terror of what he had done. He began to weep, and we was desperate for his father's forgiveness.

Let me challenge all of us to use the Law in our evangelism. When sin is confronted with God's Holy Law, sinners will be desperate for forgiveness. When they realize the severity of their crimes, they will run to the Cross! Grace will gleam when sin is taken seriously. But grace is greater than our sin. When we tremble at the Holiness of God, then God comes with forgiveness that is even greater than our sin! Sin abounds, but grace does much more abound!!

Closing Hymn: 5 O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing