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Grace Abounding

Romans 5.18-21

Series: The Pure Gospel

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The Village Church

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I. **The Cascade of Grace**

- A. One of the claims to fame of Fort Myers is its connection with two captains of industry
 - 1. Two notable people who have shaped these United States
 - 2. Two inventors and entrepreneurs without whom much of which we enjoy, and which we take for granted, would not even exist
 - 3. And I am proud to say I share something in common with them
- B. I'm talking, of course, about Thomas Edison and Henry Ford
 - 1. Who both found Fort Myers to be their destination of choice for their winter abodes
 - 2. For Edison, so much so, that he established one of his laboratories here
 - 3. We're familiar with the Edison and Ford estates
 - a. Popular with the locals and with visitors
 - b. One of the prime tourist attractions and educational experiences in our fair city
- C. I, on the other hand, knew nothing of Fort Myers during my growing up years, through much of my adulthood
 - 1. Until we visited our friends, Dave and Julianne Nesselroade back in the late 1980's
- D. But long before those days – even before Jean and I were married – the Hawkins family vacationed in a very different set of environs
 - 1. No palm trees
 - 2. No sandy beaches
 - 3. No perpetual sunshine
- E. No – we went to the Western Maryland Mountains
 - 1. And we camped
 - 2. Started out the old fashioned way – in tents, with fireplaces, and we split our own wood
 - a. My brother and I were boy scouts – it came naturally to us
 - 3. Graduated to tent trailers eventually
 - a. And Coleman stoves
 - b. And more accouterments of modernity
 - c. But we started out roughing it, as they say
- F. Our favorite spot was Swallow Falls State Park
 - 1. Located on the Youghiogheny River in Western Maryland

- a. It is one of the most scenic whitewater rivers in the eastern U.S.
 - 2. In the state park are numerous water falls
 - a. Including Muddy Creek Falls – at 53 feet, the highest natural waterfall in Maryland
 - b. And **Swallow Falls** proper – which is actually a series of falls
 - c. A cascade, a series of pristine natural cataracts
- G. Now, what, you may ask, does that have to do with Thomas Edison and Henry Ford?
 - 1. Well, Swallow Falls was not only the favorite summer vacation destination of the young Hawkins family
 - 2. It was also a favorite summer vacation spot of Thomas Edison and Henry Ford
 - a. Who, along another contemporary captain of American industry, Harvey Firestone, also loved to camp
 - 3. And they landed in that very location in the late teens and early 20's of the 20th Century
 - 4. And there is a **plaque** to mark the spot
- H. Remarkably, for some reason that escapes me, there is not similar plaque to mark the Hawkins family campsite
 - 1. Even though we spent more time there than they did!
- I. Now I'm sure there are many other more impressive waterfalls from sea to shining sea in the land of the free and home of the brave
 - 1. And even more impressive whitewater cascades
 - 2. But when I think of the term “cascade” it is Swallow Falls that enters my mind's eye
 - 3. That relentless flow of water
 - a. Over rocks and shelves and ledges
 - b. Racing inexorably to its final destination
 - 4. A relentless flow, ceaseless over the more than 100 years since Edison, Ford and Firestone graced its banks
 - a. Indeed, over the hundreds of years when native Americans graced its banks
 - b. And thousands, even millions of years when who knows what graced its cataracts
- J. But a cascade is what I think of when I think of the 5th Chapter of Romans
 - 1. A cascade of grace
 - 2. A relentless flow of bountiful blessings
 - a. Carrying us to a destination of glory
 - 3. All through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
- K. Chapter 5 – section which begins to unfold the benefits and blessings of the great doctrine of the gospel – **Justification by Faith Alone**
 - 1. Which Paul has been jealous to lay out in crisp and succinct detail
 - 2. He establishes the need for justification
 - a. The sinfulness of humanity

- b. Its universality and pervasiveness – every single human being, and every dimension of our nature being affected
 - 3. But then he lays out the grand remedy – God’s plan of redemption from all eternity
 - a. God sending His Son Jesus Christ
 - b. To take upon Himself our humanity, and come as the God-man
 - c. Live a life without sin – indeed without even a moral blemish
 - d. And then to suffer and die on a cross
 - e. Taking upon Himself in the process the just punishment of the sins of every human being who would ever believe
 - f. Experiencing hell itself in His separation from His heavenly Father
 - g. And then be buried
 - h. And on the third day, raised from the dead
 - i. Validating His nature; vanquishing the enemy of death
 - 4. And then, wonder of wonders, granting forgiveness of sins and release from the penalty of our transgressions
 - a. All by faith in Jesus Christ
 - 5. What a gospel!
 - 6. As Horatio Spafford penned in his wonderful hymn, It Is Well with My Soul
 - a. My sin – oh, the bliss of this glorious thought! –
 - b. My sin, not in part but the whole,
 - c. Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
 - d. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!
- L. But that’s just the beginning
 - 1. The cataracts of blessings now flow from the source
 - a. Cascading relentlessly down from the summit
 - b. Destined for the ocean of love – in the heavenly presence of the Lord Jesus Christ
- M. **The Cascade of Blessings**
 - 1. **Peace with God**
 - a. No longer enemies and strangers, but friends
 - 2. **Access to God**
 - a. No longer separated by walls and curtains and a priesthood
 - b. But direct access through our Great High Priest, Jesus
 - 3. **Hope of the glory of God**
 - a. Confident assurance that all those who believe can participate in the magnificence of His nature, basking in its light, glowing in its countenance
 - 4. **Joy in our Sufferings**
 - a. Yes! We can even find joy in our trials and difficulties
 - b. Knowing that in the economy of God, in which nothing is ever lost or superfluous, God works all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to his purpose
 - c. And our sufferings produce endurance, character and hope

- d. Working to conform us into the image of the Lord Jesus Himself!
- 5. **The Gift of the Holy Spirit**
 - a. Who, poured into our hearts, grants us, even now, the very nature of Christ Himself
- N. All of this because Jesus Christ died for us
 - 1. Not us in our goodness and righteousness – for we have none!
 - 2. But died for us while we were yet sinners
 - 3. Reconciled to God by His death, and saved by His life
 - 4. Saved, in fact, from the wrath of God – which we so genuinely deserved
 - 5. All of that – **Romans 5.1-11**
- O. But then, we have been examining Romans 5.12ff
 - 1. And the cascade continues
 - a. More and more blessings
 - 2. Which Paul pours out through a series of comparison and contrasts
- P. **Comparison – Adam and Christ**
 - 1. Adam – the representative head of the human race
 - a. Whose sin plunged the human race into sin
 - b. By which we are found guilty
 - c. And in which we have been “fast-bound in sin and nature’s night” (Charles Wesley)
 - 2. Christ – the representative head of all those who are redeemed by faith in Jesus
 - a. Our union with Him providing us with all the benefits of grace
- Q. And then the **Contrasts**
 - 1. How our unions with Adam and Christ move us in opposite directions
 - a. From curses to blessings
 - 2. The free gift of grace is not like the trespass
 - a. The trespass brought death
 - b. The free gift brought **life**
 - 3. The sin of Adam brought condemnation
 - a. But the free gift brought **justification**
 - 4. The trespass of Adam brought the reign of death
 - a. But the free gift of grace and righteousness brought the **reign of life**
- R. Finally, we come to the final verses of Chapter 5
 - 1. A wonderfully concluding summary of our cascade of grace
 - 2. And once again, unfolded by Paul in a series of contrasts
- S. Text
 - 1. **Romans 5:18–21** (ESV) —
 - a. 18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.
 - b. 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.
 - c. 20 Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

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

II. **Reversing the Curse**

- A. And in this set of contrasts we find the original curse of Adam is reversed
 1. The effects of Adam's sin is rendered null and void for all those who trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation
 2. Curse involved **condemnation** – death even, spiritual and physical
 - a. And eternal judgment
 3. The curse involved **original sin**
 - a. The inclination and capacity to act in disobedience and rebellion against the Lord of the universe
 4. The curse involved **binding under the Law of God**
 - a. Soul-incarceration
 - b. Bound under the cosmic justice system
- B. **From Condemnation to Justification**
 1. **Romans 5:18** (ESV) —
 - a. 18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.
 2. One trespass – Adam's trespass
 - a. The result – condemnation
 - b. For whom?
 - c. For all men (and women!)
 - d. All humans captured by the curse
 - e. All humans transgressors
 - f. This was established unequivocally by Paul because all died (**Romans 5.14**)
 - g. So the result for all human beings is condemnation
 3. But one act of righteousness – the righteousness of Christ – leads to justification
 - a. Justification – a declaration not guilty in the Divine courtroom
 - b. But more than that – “and life” for all who believe!
 - c. Justification – not guilty – is just the beginning
 - d. We are now set free to live a life of growing righteousness as God transforms us into the image of Christ
 4. But wait – “one act of righteousness”
 - a. It's clear that Adam's trespass started with just one act – his act of disobedience to God's command in the garden
 - b. What is Christ's “one act” of righteousness
 5. Some would say it was His death on the cross
 - a. But I believe His “one act” was the entirety of His life
 - b. Every expression and dimension compressed into one act of righteousness
 - c. We are saved by His life, His death, and His resurrection!
 6. But whatever it is – what a turnaround!

- a. From condemnation to justification and life
 - b. Another cataract in our cascade of grace!
- C. **From Sinner to Righteous**
1. **Romans 5:19** (ESV) —
 - a. 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.
 2. Adam’s sin is described as “disobedience” in this contrast
 - a. He acted against the express command of Almighty God in the garden
 - b. And in fact, all of our sin is disobedience against the command of God
 3. And in the disobedience the many – all humans – were “made” sinners
 - a. That is, we were declared sinners
 - b. Declared guilty – designated as sinners
 4. Some would argue that “made sinners” involves original sin – the fact that from Adam’s sin we all became sinners by nature – having from that time on, a sinful nature which the Bible refers to as the flesh
 - a. Well, that is certainly true
 - b. But I don’t think that’s what this verse means
 - c. That’s because the contrast is with the many “made righteous”
 - d. And this is another way of saying believers are declared to be righteous with the righteousness of Christ
 5. And that is possible because of Christ’s obedience
 - a. Christ obeyed all the express commands of God, His Father
 6. **Active obedience**
 - a. **Galatians 4:4–5** (ESV) — 4 But when the fullness of time had come, 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.
 - b. From Jesus’ birth onward – He was sent to fulfill the Law of God
 - c. **Matthew 3:14–15** (ESV) — 14 John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” 15 But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented.
 - d. Jesus’ baptism wasn’t needed for His own sin – he had none!
 - e. Jesus was baptized to identify with our humanity – so that His obedience to the Law might then be credited to our account
 - f. And He fulfilled the Law completely
 7. **Passive obedience**
 - a. Refers to Jesus’ death on the cross
 - b. Jesus wrestled with the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane
 - c. **Matthew 26:39** (ESV) — 39 And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”

- d. Jesus' submission to the Father's will in going to the cross was His passive obedience to the Father's will
- e. And in doing so He experienced, not just an ordinary death, but a death in which He took upon Himself the just punishment for our sin
- f. He experienced hell itself in His separation from the Father
- g. "My God, My God – why have You forsaken Me?"
- 8. So in every dimension of Jesus' life and death, Jesus obeyed His Father
 - a. **John 17:4** (ESV) — 4 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.
 - b. **John 8:29** (ESV) — 29 And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him."
- 9. So through the obedience of Jesus Christ
 - a. His life – active obedience
 - b. His death – passive obedience
 - c. We are "made righteous" – declared not guilty, reckoned as having the right standing that Christ Himself had with the Father
 - d. Even though through Adam we were "made sinners" – guilty, as they say, as sin!
- 10. What a turnaround!
 - a. What an amazing reversal!
 - b. From sinner to righteous
 - c. All because of the obedience of Jesus Christ
- D. **From Law to Grace**
 - 1. **Romans 5:20** (ESV) —
 - a. 20 Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more...
 - 2. But now we have a remarkable turnaround
 - a. The contrast – the Law v. Grace
 - b. Put your seat belts on – this one's leads us into a bit of a different territory
 - c. But the reward for your diligence will be that much greater!
 - 3. **"The law came in to increase the trespass..."**
 - a. What? Wait! The law came in to increase the trespass?
 - b. How can that be?
 - c. Why would that be?
 - 4. Remember from our earlier study, in the garden God had one law
 - a. Don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
 - b. They did – they, and we, were toast – apart from the grace of God
 - 5. The Law of Moses came hundreds – thousands maybe – of years later
 - a. But people were still condemned
 - b. They all died
 - c. Because they all sinned
 - 6. But something happened when the Law of Moses showed up
 - a. Sin increased!

- b. That's surprising
 - c. You'd think that having the Law would decrease sin
 - d. Yet the opposite happened!
7. Aside – I'm amused every time something evil happens, and everyone says, "There ought to be a law!"
- a. And there's a great push to pass more laws about this or that evil
 - b. But it never seems to work!
 - c. Why not?
 - d. Well, the Law has its rightful place – but in an of itself it gives no power for its fulfillment
8. Well, what does the Law do?
- a. Martin Lloyd Jones identifies from scripture four ways that the Law increases sin
 - b. And in essence, the Law increases our awareness of sin, our knowledge of sin, and even our inclinations to sin
9. **The Law defines sin for us**
- a. **Romans 7:7** (ESV) — 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."
 - b. We only know what sin looks like when the Law defines it for us
 - c. The Ten Commandments, for instance, define the Law for us in terms of the character of God Himself – and we begin to understand why our selfish desires and inclinations are wrong
 - d. And what "wrong" looks like
 - e. The Law defines sin for us
10. **The Law reveals sin's nature**
- a. Sin's nature is that it is, in the final analysis, a rebellion against God's nature
 - b. The Law – especially as expressed in the Ten Commandments – makes this absolutely clear
 - c. When we violate the Law, we violate the holy and righteous character of God
 - d. Remember David and Bathsheba
 - e. Once David becomes aware of his sin and repents, he composes his great penitential psalm – Psalm 51
 - f. **Psalm 51:4** (ESV) — 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.
 - g. He doesn't mean that he did nothing wrong against Bathsheba and Uriah, her husband whom David had killed
 - h. But he means that he understood that ultimately his sin was against God's character – against God himself
 - i. People talk about sins without a victim
 - j. No! God is always the victim – even if the sin seems to only affect ourselves!

- k. How much more should we be aware of our transgression against God!
11. **The Law exposes sin's power**
 - a. We hear it all the time with respect to addictions
 - b. "I can stop anytime I want"
 - c. Really?
 - d. Well, when the doctor says, "Now you must stop or you'll be dead" – the addict finds out just how difficult it is!
 - e. And he or she finds that they can't do it alone
 - f. The Law exposes sin's power
 12. **The Law unveils sin's deceit**
 - a. The Law lays bare our vain attempts at justification and excuse-making
 - b. We call sin something other than sin
 - c. We use euphemisms to diminish its seriousness
 - d. Worse yet – we redefine it and pretend our sin is actually a virtue!
 - e. We celebrate it – take pride in it
 - f. But the Law won't let us do that
 13. Lloyd-Jones: One of the greatest troubles in the church today, as well as in the world, is that men do not have a knowledge of sin as they should have. Sin is regarded very lightly and loosely.... It is when men and women realize the depth of iniquity and sin that is in them that they begin to cry out to God. But if men have no real knowledge of sin, if they are lacking of the knowledge of sin which is given only by the law, then they will be content with a superficial evangelism.
 14. In addition to the things Lloyd-Jones has mentioned, there is a sense in which the Law increases sin
 - a. It awakens sin in us
 - b. **Romans 7:8** (ESV) — 8 But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead.
 15. You know how this works!
 - a. Tell a **child** "no" and you can see the wheels turning in his mischievous little head!
 - b. And not just a child!
 - c. How many times has a law come down the pike that it incited you to want to break it!
 16. So the Law comes along and sin increased – in all of its dimensions
 - a. In knowledge
 - b. In awareness
 - c. In desires
 - d. In power
 17. But!
 - a. And it's a great "but"

18. **Romans 5:20** (ESV) — **20 Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more...**
 - a. Grace abounded – all the more
 - b. “Our sins they are many, his mercy is more!”
19. Grace abounds
 - a. But more than that – it superabounds!
 - b. Yes – that’s the essence of the word in the Gk
20. In v. 17 it talks about the abundance of grace
 - a. Abundance is **perisseia (Gk)**
21. Here the phrase “abounded all the more” is actually one compound word in the Greek
 - a. **Huperperisseuo (Gk)**
 - b. **“Huper” = hyper = super (Latin)**
22. Grace just doesn’t abound in the face of increasing sin
 - a. **Grace superabounds!**
23. There is no sin that cannot be covered by the grace of God except a sin from which we do not repent
 - a. Grace more than covers any sin!
 - b. Grace superabounds!

III. **The Reign of Grace**

- A. And that’s why grace reigns
- B. **Romans 5:21** (ESV) —
 1. 21 so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- C. The cascade of grace is unstoppable
 1. The cascade of grace is relentless
 2. The cascade of grace is irresistible
- D. Swallow Falls in the Youghiogheny River runs north until it dumps into the Monongahela River near Pittsburgh
 1. The Monongahela River joins the Allegheny River and becomes the Ohio River
 2. The Ohio River dumps into the mighty Mississippi River
 3. Which eventually empties into the Gulf of Mexico
 4. So water cascading down the Swallow Falls may eventually end up, well, gracing the shores of the Edison and Ford Estates
- E. But the cascade of grace, reigning through righteousness, flows inexorably all the way to eternal life
 1. Eternal life – that great ocean of love
 2. In the presence of the God who is love
 3. In the presence of Christ who is love incarnate
 4. In the presence of the Spirit of love
- F. And ultimately, in the presence of the people of love
 1. The body of Christ
 2. The people transformed from glory to glory

3. Into the image and likeness of the Savior of love
- G. **Through Jesus Christ our Lord**
1. But dear friends, you can only experience the cascade of grace through Jesus Christ
 - a. That is, in union with Jesus Christ
 - b. It is our spiritual union in Christ that we can ride the rapids downstream into the ocean of eternity
 2. And the only way to have union with Jesus Christ is by faith in Him
 - a. By trusting in Jesus Christ
 3. By immersing yourself in the stream
 - a. And allowing the current to ride you through the cataracts
 - b. And experience every dimension of the grace of Jesus Christ