

Grace Abounding Over Abounding Sin

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"Moreover the Law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." [Romans 5:20](#).

THE first sentence will serve as a preface. The second sentence will be the actual text. "Moreover the Law entered, that the offense might abound." Man was a sinner before the Law of Ten Commandments had been given. He was a sinner through the offense of his first father, Adam. And he was, also, practically a sinner by his own personal offenses. For he rebelled against the light of nature and the inner light of conscience. Men, from Adam downward, transgressed against that memory of better days which had been handed down from father to son and had never been quite forgotten.

Man everywhere, whether he knew anything about the Law of Moses or not, was alienated from his God. The Word of God contains this truthful estimate of our race—"They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable. There is none that does good, no, not one." The Law was given, however, according to the text, "that the offense might abound." Such was the effect of the Law. It did not hinder sin, nor provide a remedy for it. But its actual effect was that the offense abounded. How so?

It was so, first, because it revealed the offense. Men did not in every instance clearly discern what was sin. But when the Law came, it pointed out to man that this evil, which he thought little of, was an abomination in the sight of God. Man's nature and character was like a dark dungeon which knew no ray of light. Yonder prisoner does not perceive the horrible filthiness and corruption of the place wherein he is immured, so long as he is in darkness. When a lamp is brought, or a window is opened and the light of day comes in, he finds out to his dismay the hideous condition of his den.

He spies loathsome creatures upon the walls and marks how others burrow out of sight because the light annoys them. He may, perhaps, have guessed that all was not as it should be but he had not imagined the abundance of the evils. The light has entered and the offense abounds. Law does not make us sinful but it displays our sinfulness. In the presence of the perfect standard we see our shortcomings. The Law of God is the mirror in which a man sees the spots upon his face. It does not wash you—you cannot wash in a mirror. But it prompts you to seek the cleansing water. The design of the Law is the revealing of our many offenses, that thereby, we may be driven out of self-righteousness unto the Lord Jesus, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

The Law causes the offense to abound by making an offender to stand without excuse. Before he knew the Law perfectly, his sin was not so willful. While he did but faintly know

the commands, he could, as it were, but faintly break them. But as soon as he distinctly knows what is right and what is wrong, then every cloak is taken away from him. Sin becomes exceedingly sinful when it is committed against light and knowledge. Is it not so with some of you? Are you not forced to admit that you commit many sins, now that you have been made to know the Law and yet willfully offend against it, by omission or commission? He who knows his Master's will and does it not, will be beaten with many stripes—because he is guilty of abounding offenses. The Law enters to strip us of every cloak of justification and so to drive us to seek the robe of Christ's righteousness.

Next, I think the Law makes the offense to abound by causing sin to be more evidently a presumptuous rebellion against the great Lawgiver. To sin in the front of Sinai, with its wonderful display of Divine majesty, is to sin, indeed. To rebel against a Law promulgated with sound of trumpet and thunders and pomp of God is to sin with a high hand and a defiant heart. When you have heard the Ten Commands, when you know the Law of the kingdom, when your Maker's will is plainly set before you, then to transgress is to transgress with an insolence of pride which will admit of no excuse.

Once more—the entrance of the Law makes the offense to abound in this sense, that the rebellious will of man rises up in opposition to it. Because God commands, man refuses. And because He forbids, man desires. There are some men

who might not have sinned in a particular direction if the commandment had not forbidden it. The light of the Law, instead of being a warning to them to avoid evil, seems to point out to them the way in which they can most offend. Oh, how deep is the depravity of human nature! The Law itself provokes it to rebel. Men long to enter because trespassers are warned to keep away. Their minds are so at enmity against God that they delight in that which is forbidden—not so much because they find any particular pleasure in the thing itself but because it shows their independence and their freedom from the restraints of God.

This vicious self-will is in all of us by nature. For the carnal mind is enmity against God—and therefore the Law, though in itself holy and just and good, provokes us to do evil. We are like lime and the Law is as cold water, which is in itself of a cooling nature. Yet, no sooner does the water of the Law get at the lime of our nature than a heat of sin is generated—thus, "the Law entered, that the offense might abound."

Why, then, did God send the Law? Is it not an evil thing that the offense should abound? In itself it may seem to be so. But God deals with us as physicians sometimes deal with their patients. A disease which will be fatal if it spends itself within the patient must be brought to the surface—the physician, therefore, prescribes a medicine which displays the evil. The evil was all within but it did not abound as to its visible effects. It is needful that it should do so, that it may be cured. The Law is the medicine which throws out the depravity of man, makes him see it in his actions and even provokes him to display it. The evil is in man, like

rabbits in yonder brushwood—the Law sets a light to the cover and the hidden creatures are seen.

The Law stirs the mud at the bottom of the pool and proves how foul the waters are. The Law compels the man to see that sin dwells in him and that it is a powerful tyrant over his nature. All this is with a view to his cure. God be thanked when the Law so works as to take off the sinner from all confidence in himself! To make the leper confess that he is incurable is going a great way towards compelling him to go to that Divine Savior who alone is able to heal him. This is the object and end of the Law towards men whom God will save.

Consider for a moment—you may take it as an axiom, a thing self-evident, that there can be no Divine Grace where there is no guilt—there can be no mercy where there is no sin. There can be justice, there can be benevolence—but there cannot be mercy unless there is criminality. If you are not a sinner, God cannot have mercy upon you. If you have never sinned, God cannot display pardoning Grace towards you for there is nothing to pardon. It were a misuse of words to talk of forgiving a man who has done no wrong, or to speak of bestowing undeserved favor upon a person who deserves reward. It would be an insult to innocence to offer it mercy. You must, therefore, have sin or you cannot have Divine Grace—that is clear.

Next, consider that there will be no seeking after Divine Grace where there is no sense of sin. We may preach till we are hoarse, but you good people who have never broken the Law and are not guilty of anything wrong, will never care for our message of mercy. You are such kind people that, out of compliment to religion, you say, "Yes, we are sinners. We are all sinners." But you know in your heart of hearts you do not mean it. You will never ask for Divine Grace. For you have no sense of shame or guilt. None of you will seek mercy till first you have pleaded guilty to the indictment which the Law of God presents against you. Oh, that you felt your sins! Oh, that you knew your need of forgiveness! Then you would see yourselves to be in such a condition that only the free, rich, Sovereign Grace of God can save you.

Furthermore, I am sure that there will be no reception and acceptance of Divine Grace by any man till there is a full confession of sin and a burdensome sense of its weight. Why should you receive Divine Grace when you do not want it? What is the use of it to you? Why should you bow your knee to God and receive, as the free gift of His charity, that which you feel you do not need? Have you not already earned eternal life? Are you not as good as other people? Have you not some considerable claim upon God? Do I startle you with these plain questions? Have I not heard you say much the same? The other day when we preached the electing love of God you grumbled and muttered that God was unjust to choose one rather than another.

What did this mean? Did it not mean that you felt you had some claim upon God? O Sir, if this is your spirit I must deal plainly with you! If you have any claim upon your Maker,

plead it and be sure that He will not deny you your just rights. But I would advise you to change your method of dealing with your Judge—you will never prevail in this fashion. In Truth, you have no claim upon Him. You must appeal to His pure mercy. You are not in a position for Him to display free Divine Grace to you till your mouth is shut and you sit down in dust and ashes, silently owning that you de-

serve nothing at His hands but infinite displeasure. Confess that whatever He gives you that is good and gracious must be given freely to one who deserves nothing.

Hell gapes at your feet—cease from pride and humbly sue out a pardon. You see, then, the use of the Law—it is to bring you where Divine Grace can be fitly shown you. It shuts you up that you may cry to Jesus to set you free. It is a storm which wrecks your hopes of self-salvation and washes you upon the Rock of Ages. The condemning sentence of the Law is meant to prepare you for the absolution of the Gospel. If you condemn yourself and plead guilty before God, the royal pardon can then be extended towards you. The self-condemned shall be forgiven through the precious blood of Jesus and the Sovereign Grace of God.

Oh, my Hearer, you must sit down there in the dust, or else God will not look at you! You must yield yourself to Him, owning His justice, honoring His Law—this is the first condition of His mercy. And to this, His Grace brings all who feel its power. The Lord will have you bow before Him in self-abhorrence and confess His right to punish you. Remember, "He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion." And He will have you know this and agree to it. His Grace must reign triumphantly and you must kiss its silver scepter. Thus has the first sentence served us for a preface—God bless it to us!

I. The doctrine of the text itself is this, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." And I shall try to bring out that Truth of God, first, by saying that THIS IS SEEN IN THE WHOLE WORK OF GRACE, from beginning to end.

I would direct your attention to the context. The safest way to preach upon a text is to follow out the idea which the inspired writer was endeavoring to convey. Paul has, in this place, been speaking of the abounding result for evil of one sin in the case of Adam, the federal head of the race. That one sin of Adam's abounded terribly. Look at the multitudinous generations of our race which have gone down to death. Who slew all these? Sin is the wolf which has devoured the flocks of men. Sin has poisoned the streams of manhood at their fountainhead and everywhere they run with poisoned waters. Concerning this, Paul says, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

First, then, sin abounded in its effect upon the whole human race—one sin overthrew all humanity—one fatal fault, the breach of a plain and easy Law, made sinners of us all. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." Simple as was the command which Adam broke, it involved obedience or disobedience to the sovereignty of God. All the trees of the garden were generously given to happy Adam in Paradise—"Of every tree of the garden you

may freely eat." There was but one tree reserved for God by the prohibition, "You shall not eat of it—for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die."

Adam had no need to touch that fruit—there were all the other trees for him. Nothing was denied him which was really for his good. He was only forbidden that which would ruin him. We all look back to that Paradisiacal state and wish we could have been put in some such a position as he—yet he dared to trespass on God's reserves and thus to set himself up above his Maker. He judged it wise to do what God forbade—he ran the risk of death in the foolish hope of rising into a still higher state.

See the consequences of that sin on all sides, the world is full of them. Yet, says Paul, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," and he gives us this as a proof of it—"And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification" ([Rom. 5:16](#)). The Lord Jesus came into the world, not to put away only Adam's sin but all the sins which have followed upon it. The second Adam has repaired the desperate ruin of the first and much more. By His death upon the Cross, our Divine Substitute has put away those myriads of sins which have been committed by men since the first offense in Eden.

Think of this! Take the whole aggregate of Believers and let each one disburden his conscience of its load of sin. What a mountain! Pile it up! Pile it up! It rises huge as high Olympus! Age after age Believers come and lay their enormous loads in this place. "The Lord has made to meet on Him the iniquities of us all." What Alps! What Himalayas of sin! If there were only mine and yours, my Brothers and Sisters, what mountains of division would our sins make! But the great Christ, the free gift of God to us, when He bare our sins in His own body on the tree, took all those countless sins away.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world"! Here is infinite grace to pardon immeasurable sin! Truly the "one man's offense" abounded horribly. But the "one man's obedience," the obedience of the Son of God,

has superabounded. As the arch of Heaven far exceeds in its span the whole round globe of the earth, so does Divine Grace much more abound over human sin.

Follow me further, when I notice, secondly, that sin abounded in its ruinous effects. It utterly destroyed humanity. In the third chapter of Romans you see how, in every part of his nature, man is depraved by sin. Think of the havoc which the tyrant, sin, has made of our natural estate and heritage. Eden is withered—its very site is forgotten. Our restfulness among the trees of the field freely yielding their fruit, is gone and God has said, "In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread." The field we till has lost its spontaneous yield of corn—"Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you." Our life has lost its glory and immortality—"Dust you are and unto dust shall you return." Every woman in her pangs of travail, every man in his weariness of labor and all of us together in the griefs of death—see what sin has done for us as to our mortal bodies.

Alas, it has gone deeper—it has ruined our souls. Sin has unmanned man. The crown and glory of his manhood, it has thrown to the ground. All our faculties are out of gear. All our tendencies are perverted. Beloved, let us rejoice that the Lord Jesus Christ has come to redeem us from the curse of sin and He will undo the evil of evil. Even this poor world He will deliver from the bondage of corruption. And He will create new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. The groans and painful travail of the whole creation shall result in a full deliverance, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As for ourselves, we are lifted up to a position far higher than that which we should have occupied had the race continued in its innocence. The Lord Jesus Christ found us in a horrible pit and in the miry clay and He not only lifted us up out of it but He set our feet upon a rock and established our goings. Raised from Hell, we are lifted not to the bowers of Eden but to the Throne of God. Redeemed human nature has greater capacities than unfallen human nature. To Adam the Lord did not say, "You are a son of God, joint-heir with the only Begotten." But He has said that to each Believer redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus. Beloved, such a thing as fellowship with Christ in His sufferings could not have been known to Adam in Paradise.

He could not have known what it is to be dead and to have his life hid with Christ in God. Blessed be His name, our Lord Jesus Christ can say, "I restored that which I took not away"! He restored more than ever was taken away from us. For He has made us to be part-takers of the Divine nature and in His own Person He has placed us at God's right hand in the heavenly places. Inasmuch as the dominion of the Lord Jesus is more glorious than that of unfallen Adam, manhood is now more great and glorious than before the Fall. Grace has so much more abounded, that in Jesus we have gained more than in Adam we lost. Our Paradise Regained is far more glorious than our Paradise Lost.

Again—sin abounded to the dishonor of God. I was trying the other day to put myself into the position of Satan at the gates of Eden, that I might understand his diabolical policy. He had become the archenemy of God and when he saw this newly-made world and perceived two perfectly pure and happy creatures placed in it. He looked on with envy and plotted mischief. He heard the Creator say, "In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die," and he hoped here to find an opportunity for an assault upon God. If he could induce those new-made creatures to eat of the forbidden fruit, he would place their Maker upon the horns of a dilemma—either He must destroy the creatures which He had made, or else He must be untrue.

The Lord had said, "You shall surely die," and He must thus undo His own work and destroy a creature which He had made in His own image, after His own likeness. Satan probably perceived that man was an extraordinary being with a wonderful mystery of glory hanging about his destiny. And if he could make him sin, he would cause God to destroy him and so far defeat the eternal purpose. On the other hand, if the Lord did not execute

the sentence, then He would not be truthful and throughout all His great universe it would be reported that the Lord's Word had been broken—either He had changed His mind, or He had spoken in jest, or He had been proven to have threatened too severe a penalty—in either case, the Evil Spirit hoped to triumph. It was a deep, far-reaching scheme to dim the splendor of the King of kings.

Beloved, did it not seem as if sin had abounded beyond measure when first the woman, and then the man, had been deceived and had done despite to God? Behold how Divine Grace, through our Lord Jesus Christ, did much more abound! God is more honored in the redemption of man than if there had never been a Fall. The Lord has displayed the majesty of His justice and the glory of His grace in the great sacrifice of His dear Son in such a manner that angels and principalities and powers will wonder throughout all ages. More of God is to be seen in the great work of redeeming love than could have been reflected in the creation of myriads of worlds—had each one of them been replete with marvels of Divine skill and goodness and power.

In Jesus crucified, Jehovah is glorified as never before. Where sin abounded to the apparent dishonor of God, grace does much more abound to the infinite glory of His ever-blessed name.

Again—sin abounded by degrading human character. What a wretched being man is as a sinner against God! Unchecked by Law and allowed to do as he pleases, what will not man become? See how Paul describes men in these progressive times—in these enlightened centuries—"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof."

Human nature was not at all slandered by Whitefield when he said that, "left to himself, man is half beast and half devil." I do not mean merely men in savage countries. I am thinking of men in London. Only the other day a certain newspaper gave us plenty of proof of the sin of this city—I will say no more—could brutes or demons be worse? Read human history—Assyrian, Roman, Greek, Spanish, English. And if you are a lover of holiness, you will be sick of man. Has any other creature, except the fallen angels, ever become so cruel, so mean, so false? Behold what villains, what tyrants, what monsters sin has made!

But now look on the other side and see what the Divine Grace of God has done. Under the molding hand of the Holy Spirit a gracious man becomes the noblest work of God. Man, born again and rescued from the Fall is now capable of virtues to which he never could have reached before he sinned. An unfallen being could not hate sin with the intensity of abhorrence which is found in the renewed heart. We now know by personal experience the horror

of sin and there is now within us an instinctive shuddering at it. An unfallen being could not exhibit patience, for it could not suffer, and patience has its perfect work to do.

When I have read the stories of the martyrs in the first ages of the Christian Church and during the Marian persecution in England, I have adored the Lord who could enable poor feeble men and women thus to prove their love to their God and Savior. What great things they suffered out of love to God! And how grandly did they thus honor Him! O God, what a noble being Your grace has made man to be! I have felt great reverence for sanctified humanity when I have seen how men could sing God's praises in the fires. What noble deeds men have been capable of when the love of God has been shed abroad in their hearts! I do not think angels, or archangels have ever been able to exhibit so admirable an all-round character as the Divine Grace of God has worked in once-fallen men whom He has, by His grace, inspired with the Divine life.

In human character, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." I believe God looks out of Heaven today and sees in many of His poor, hidden people such beauties of virtue, such charms of holiness that He Himself is delighted with them. "The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him." These are such true jewels that the Lord has a high estimate of them and sets them apart for Himself—"They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels."

Again—dear Friends, sin abounded to the causing of great sorrow. It brought with it a long train of woes. The children of sin are many and each one causes lamentation. We cannot attempt to fathom the dark abysses of sorrow which have opened in this world since the advent of sin. Is it not a place of tears—yes, a field of blood? Yet by a wonderful alchemy, through the existence of sin, Divine Grace has produced a new joy, yes, more than one new joy. The calm deep joy of repentance must have been unknown to perfect innocence. This right orient pearl is not found in the rivers of Eden.

Yes, and that joy which is in Heaven in the presence of the angels of God over sinners that repent is a new thing, whose birth is since the Fall. God Himself knows a joy which He could not have known had there been no sin. Behold, with tearful wonder the great Father as He receives His returning prodigal and cries to all about Him, "Let us eat and be merry—for this My son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found." O Brethren, how could almighty love have been victorious in Divine Grace had there been no sin to battle with? Heaven is the more Heaven for us since there we shall sing of robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb. God has greater joy in man and man has greater joy in God because Divine Grace abounded over sin. We are getting into deep waters now! How true our text is!

Once more, sin abounded to hinder the reign of Christ. I believe that Satan's design in leading men into sin at first was to prevent the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ as man and God in one Person. I do not lay it down as a doctrine, specifically taught in Scripture,

but still it seems to me a probable Truth of God that Satan foresaw that the gap which was made in Heaven by the fall of the angels was to be filled up by human beings, whom God would place near His Throne. Satan thought that he saw before him the beings who would take the places of the fallen spirits and he envied them. He knew that they were made in the image of the Only-Begotten, the Christ of God and he hated Him because he saw united in His Person God whom he abhorred and man whom he envied.

Satan shot at the second Adam through the breast of the first Adam. He meant to overthrow the Coming One. But, fool that Satan is, the Lord Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, is now exalted higher than ever we could conceive Him to have been had there been no sin to bear, no redemption to work out. Jesus, wounded and slain, has about Him higher splendor than before. O King of kings and Lord of lords, Man of Sorrows, we sing hallelujahs unto You! All our hearts beat true to You! We love You beyond all else! You are He whom we will praise forever and ever! Jesus sits on no precarious throne in the empire of love. We would each one maintain His right with the last pulse of our hearts. King of kings and Lord of lords! Hallelujah, Where sin abounded, Divine Grace has much more abounded to the glory of the Only-Begotten Son of God.

II. I find time always flies fastest when our subject is most precious. I have a second head, which deserves a lengthy consideration. But we must be content with mere hints. This great fact—that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound— crops up everywhere. THIS IS TO BE SEEN IN SPECIAL CASES.

The first special case is the introduction of the Law. When the Law of Ten Commands was given, through man's sin, it ministered to the abounding of the offense. But it also ministered to the abounding of Divine Grace. It is true there were ten commands. But there was more than tenfold Grace. With the Law there came forward a High Priest. The world had never seen a High Priest before, arrayed in jeweled breastplate and garments of glory and beauty. There was the Law. But at the same time there was the holy place of the Tabernacle of the Most High with its altar, its laver, its candlestick and its table of show-bread. There was, also, the secret shrine where the majesty of God dwelt. God had, by those symbols and types, come to dwell among men.

It is true, sin abounded through the Law. But, then, sacrifices for sin also abounded. Up to then there had been no morning and evening lambs. There had been no day of atonement; no sprinkling of blood; no benediction from the Lord's High Priest. For every sin that the Law revealed, a sacrifice was provided. Sins of ignorance, sins of their holy things, sins of all sorts were met by special sacrifices—so that the sins uncovered to the conscience were also covered by the sacrifice.

The story of Israel is another case in point. How often the nation rebelled. But how often did mercy rejoice over judgment! Truly, the history of the chosen people shows how sin abounded and grace did much more abound. Run your eye down history and pause at the

crucifixion of our Lord Jesus. This is the highest peak of the mountains of sin. They crucified the Lord of Glory. Here sin abounded. But do I need to tell you that Divine Grace did here much more abound? You can look at the death of Christ till Pilate vanishes and Caiaphas fades away and all the clamor of the priests and Jews is hushed and you see nothing and hear nothing but free grace and dying love.

There followed upon the crucifixion of our Lord, the casting away of the Jewish people for a while. Sin abounded when the Lord thus came to His own and His own received Him not. Yes. But the casting away of them was the saving of the nations. "We turn to the Gentiles," said the Apostle. And that was a blessed turning for you and for me, was it not? They that were bid to the feast were not worthy and the Master of the house, being angry, invited other guests. Mark, "being angry"! What did He do when He was angry? Why, He did the most gracious thing of all. He said, "Go you out into the highways and hedges and as many as you shall find bid to the supper." Sin abounded, for Israel would not enter the feast of love. But Divine Grace did much more abound, for the heathen entered the kingdom.

The heathen world at that time was sunk in the blackest darkness and sin abounded. You have only to study ancient history and you will fetch a heavy sigh to think that men could be so vile. A poor and unlettered people were chosen of God to receive the Gospel of Jesus and they went about telling of an atoning Savior in their own simple way, until the Roman empire was entirely changed. Light and peace and the Truth of God came into the world and drove away slavery and tyranny and bestial lust. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. What wonderful characters were produced in the terrible reign of Diocletian! What consecration to God was seen in the confessors! What fearlessness in common Christians! What invincible loyalty to Christ in the martyrs! Out of barbarians the Lord made saints and the degraded rose to holiness sublime.

If I were to ask you, now, to give the best illustrations of grace abounding in individuals, I think your impulse would be to choose men in whom sin once abounded. What characters do we preach of most when we would magnify the grace of God? We talk of David and Manasseh and swearing Peter and the dying thief and Saul of Tarsus and the woman that was a sinner. If we want to show where grace abounded we naturally turn our eyes to the place where sin abounded. Is it not so? Therefore, I need not give you any more cases—it is proven that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

III. Lastly. And this is what I want to hold you to, dear Friends, at this time—THIS HOLDS TRUE TO EACH ONE OF

US.

Let me take the case of the open sinner. What have you been? Have you grossly sinned? Have you defiled your body with unhallowed passions? Have you been dishonest to your fellow men? Does some scarlet sin stain your conscience even as you sit

in the pew? Have you grown hardened in sin by long perseverance in it? Are you conscious that you have frequently, willfully and resolutely sinned? Are you getting old and have you been soaking these seventy years in the crimson dye of sin till you are saturated through and through with its color? Have you even been an implacable opponent of the Gospel? Have you persecuted the saints of God? Have you tried by argument to batter down the Gospel or by ridicule to put it to reproach?

Then hear this text—"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." And as it was in the beginning it is now and ever shall be till this world shall end. The Grace of God, if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, will triumph over the greatness of your wickedness. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Throw down your weapons of rebellion—surrender at discretion—kiss the pierced hand of Jesus which is now held out to you and this very moment you shall be forgiven and you shall go your way a pardoned man, to begin a new life and to bear witness that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Perhaps this does not touch you, my Friend. Listen to my next word which is addressed to the instructed sinner. You are a person whose religious education has made you aware of the guilt of sin. You have read your Bible and you have heard truthful preaching. And although you have never been a gross open sinner, yet you know that your life teems with sins of omission and commission. You know that you have sinned against light and knowledge. You have done despite to a tender conscience very often—and therefore you rightly judge that you are even a greater sinner than the more openly profane.

Be it so. I take you at that. Do not run back from it. Let it be so. For "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Oh, that you may be as much instructed in the remedy as you are instructed in the disease! Oh, that you may have as clear a view of the righteousness of Christ as you have of your own unrighteousness! Christ's work is a Divine work, broad enough to cover all your iniquity and to conquer all your sin. Believe this! Give glory to God by believing it. And according to your faith, so be it unto you.

I address another, who does not answer either of these two descriptions exactly. But he has lately begun to seek mercy and the more he prays the more he is tempted. Horrible suggestions rush into his mind. Damnable thoughts beset and bewilder him. Ah, my Friend, I know what this means—the nearer you are to Divine mercy, the nearer you seem to get to Hell's gate! When you most solemnly mean to do good you feel another Law in your members bringing you into captivity. You grow worse where you hoped you would have grown better.

Very well, then—grip my text firmly as for your life—"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." If a whole legion of devils should be let loose upon you, Christ will glorify Himself by mastering them all. If now you cannot repent, nor pray, nor do anything—remember that text, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died

for the ungodly." Look over the heads of all these doubts and devils and inabilities and see Jesus lifted on the Cross, like the brazen serpent upon the pole. And look to Him and the fiery serpents shall flee away from you and you shall live. Believe this text to be true, for true it is—"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

"Ah," says another, "my case is still worse, Sir. I am of a despondent turn of mind. I always look upon the black side of everything and now if I read a promise I am sure it is not for me. If I see a threat in God's Word I am sure it is for me. I have no hope. I do not seem as if I should ever have any. I am in a dungeon into which no light can enter—it is dark, dark, dark, and worse darkness is coming. While you are trying to comfort me, I put the comfort away."

I know you. You are like the poor creature in the Psalm, of whom we read—"His soul abhors all manner of meat." Even the Gospel itself he cannot relish. Yes. I know you. You are writing bitter things against yourself. And your writing is that of a poor bewildered creature. It is not to be taken notice of. I see you writing in text hand, great black words of condemnation. But there is nothing in them all. Verily, verily, I say unto you, your handwriting shall be blotted out and the curse, causeless, shall not come. Thus says the Lord, "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled and your agreement with Hell shall not stand, for the Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed you and where sin abounded, grace shall much more abound."

Broken in pieces, all asunder, ground between the millstones, reduced to nothing, yet believe this Revelation of God, "that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Notice that "much more"—"much more abound." If you can grip it and know it to be of a certainty the great principle upon which God acts—that grace shall outstrip sin—then there is hope of you. No, more than hope—there is salvation for you on the spot. If you believe in Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation for sin, you are forgiven.

Oh, my Hearers, do not despise this Divine Grace! Come and partake of it. Does anyone say, as Paul foresaw that some would say, "Let us sin, that grace may abound"? Ah, then, such an infamous inference is the mark of the reprobate and your damnation is just. He that turns God's mercy into a reason for sin has within him something worse than a heart of stone—surely his conscience is seared with a hot iron.

Beloved, I hope better things of you—for I trust that, on the contrary, the sound of the silver bells of infinite love, free pardon, abounding grace—will make you hasten to the hospital of mercy that you may receive healing for your sinfulness, strength for your feebleness and joy for your sorrow. Lord, grant that in this house, in every case wherein sin has abounded, Your Grace may yet more abound, for Jesus' sake! Amen.