

20 May 2012

Sin abounds but God's Grace abounds much more (Abound Pt1)

This week we will take a break from our current series of teachings on the resurrection and look at the word *abound* as it is used in the Holy Scriptures. There are 19 occurrences of the word *abound*, 5 of *abounded*, 3 of *aboundeth* and three of *abounding*.

According to the English Oxford dictionary the word *abound* means "overflow, either of vessel or of liquid. Be plentiful; be rich; team or infested with." The meaning of *abound* in the Scriptures appears to refer to being plentiful.

In this study we will cover three (3) points which include:-

1. The heathen *abounds* in sin
2. The law was given that sin would *abound*
3. God's grace abounds through Jesus Christ much more than sin *abounded*

As part of this teaching it is hoped to answer the question; does a Christian's sin *abound* because God's grace *abounds*?

Let us add a little detail to our three points and in the process answer our question;

1. The heathen *abounds* in sin

Prov 29:22 *An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.*

See also Joel 3: 13, Mt 24:12

The verse from Proverbs does not specifically identify the heathen as the one who *abounds* in transgression. But given that anger is not a sin, providing it is with a cause (see Matt.5: 22) and a furious man *abounds* in transgression I have used this verse and applied it to the heathen, with the assumption that the furious man is a heathen. Now compare the meaning of transgression in the Oxford dictionary, with the Bible meaning of sin; the Oxford dictionary points out that transgression is "an act that goes against the law, rule, or code of conduct; an offence;" and the Bible states that sin is transgression of the law (see 1Jn3: 4).

Paul points out that the heathen, those who reject the gospel of the grace of God serve sin, they do not seek good and are unable to do righteousness (see Rom.6: 20) and hence our assertion that transgression *abounds* in the heathen, they are overflowing with sin, their iniquity is plentiful, appears to be consistent with other verses in Scripture.

When this truth dawns on us, we cease to wonder at why the world is continuing to decay in morals and the acceptance of what has previously been known and accepted as sin. Take sodomy for example; look at the change in people's attitude toward this sin over the past 50 years. Just recently President Baraka Obama (a supposed Christian) endorsed two sodomites marrying in what appears to be an effort to buy voters, not by good Christian morals but by allowing himself to be seduced by the devil, to pretend that evil is good (see Ps.38: 20 & Mal.2: 17). According to the Holy Scriptures the act of marriage is between a man and woman and sodomy is an abomination before God (Lev.18: 22, 20: 13), it is evil and not good, it can never be good, it will always be sinful because God's standards do not change.

So if God's standards do not change how does our societies morals change?

When everyone does that which is right in their own eyes (Judg. 17: 6 & 21: 25). It is a gradual process, a gradual decline, like the illustration of the frog in water where the temperature of the water is slowly increased such that the frog does not know the water temperature is rising, until one day it dies. Society gradually accepts that which it previously condemned as repugnant. It becomes dead to the sin of lying, then fornication and then sodomy. And in doing so it defies the living God and calls evil good.

It uses medical science to show that a sodomite is a sodomite not by choice but because of a particular gene and so there is a medical reason for such deviance. At the same time those who support the acceptance of the sin of sodomy ask society to be more intolerant of those who are different, just as they do for any other medical condition that a person has no control over, like a mental illness. In doing so society makes excuses for sin, and calls evil good.

I wonder how long before society accepts bestiality? The bible also says that bestiality is a sin (see Lev.20: 15).

As the heathen's sin *abounds*, as his sin over flows, his iniquity is more and more plentiful, he will continue to make up excuses for his transgressions, in an effort to make what he does - right. *But the way of the fool is right in his own eyes* (see Prov.12: 15) And so the lines between good and evil will continue to be blurred, as everyone does that which is right in their own eyes and the heathen *abounds* in their sin.

Let us remember that for the heathen sin *abounds*, they are free from righteousness (Rom.6: 20), they are free from doing that which is good in the eyes of the Lord. Let us therefore should charity to the lost knowing that they *abound* in sin.

2. The law was given that sin would *abound*

Rom 5:20 *Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:*

We see in Rom.3: 20 that by the law is the knowledge of sin, but our verse in chapter goes a little further and says that the law entered that the offence might abound, which is reiterated in Rom.7: 13 where Paul points out that sin became exceedingly sinful with the law. So the law brought about a knowledge of sin and with that knowledge the volume or magnitude of sin increased, the level of humanities decay *abounded*, it became plentiful. Perhaps as the flesh, had knowledge of sin, it lusted after more sin. Hence when the scriptures identify that the heathen *abounds* in transgression, it is reasonable to state that the heathen also *abounds* in sin, because sin is transgression of the law.

What is the importance of a lost man knowing that he is sinful in the eyes of a Holy, Righteous and Just God? The bibles say that the law was our schoolmaster to *bring us* to Christ (see Gal.3: 24). So personal knowledge of our sin is the vehicle for bringing us to Christ. Because unless we know we have sinned and done wrong before God, we will never come to the point of needing a Saviour. Hence why the law is preached to the unsaved as part of the gospel of Christ crucified, because a man can never believe that Christ bore his sin on Himself if he does not know, if he does not have a conviction of his own sin, his own filthy rages (see Is.64: 6).

In each new town that Spurgeon went into it was said that he preached the law for a week before he preached the good news. One website suggests that he preached 90% law and 10% grace. He focused his audience on knowing they were sinners in the hands of an angry God, before he preached the love of God in Christ Jesus, the blessed redeemer who bore our sin on himself.

"If sinners be dammed, at least let them leap to Hell over our bodies. If they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees. Let no one GO there UNWARNED and UNPRAYED for." Charles Spurgeon

"I'd rather have people hate me with the knowledge that I tried to save them." Keith Green

"The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment." Jonathan Edwards

"Be cold, sober, wise, circumspect. Keep yourself low by the ground avoiding high questions. Expound the Law truly and open the veil of Moses to condemn all flesh and prove all men sinners, and set at broach the mercy of our Lord Jesus, and let wounded consciences drink of Him." William Tyndale - see <http://revivalandreformation.wordpress.com/2011/02/01/inspired-quotes-on-street-preaching/>

Let us remember that if there was no law we would not know of our sin that *abounds* (see Rom.3: 20). For example; thou shalt not covet, how would we know that lust is a sin if there was no law (see Rom.7: 7)? For without the law sin was dead (see Rom.7: 8). The Scriptures teach us that the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (see Gal.3: 24), so if there was no law, we would not know of our sin that *abounds* and we would not know our need for a Saviour. So our gospel message for today includes the law.

How many people have you spoken to about being a Christian and they have pointed out that they are a believer, yet they did not know of their *abounding* sin?

How many people have you spoken to about the Lord and they have said, yes, I know Jesus, but they only know that they have accepted Him into their hearts, they do not know of their sin? If a person professes salvation, but does not know of their sin, then how can the Lord Jesus have borne their sin on Himself at calvary? If a person does not know of their sin, they do not know of the law for it was given that our sin would *abound* in us and that we would be convicted of our iniquity.

Let us remember that the law was given that sin would *abound* and when we have an opportunity to speak to the lost that we preach *all have sinned and come short of the glory of God* (see Rom.3: 23), *there is none righteous, no, not one* (Rom.3: 10). The heathen *abounds* in sin! But God in His infinite love and mercy *abounded* with grace much more, as we will see in our next point.

3. God's grace abounds through Jesus Christ much more than sin *abounded*

Rom 5:15 *But not as the offence, so also [is] the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, [which is] by one man, Jesus Christ, bath abounded unto many.*

See also Rom 5:20, 2Cor 9:8 & 1Tim.1: 14.

That's right, when sin *abounded* because of the law, God's grace did *abound* much more (see Rom.5: 20). Our Loving Heavenly Father showed us the abundance of His grace through His Only Begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (see Rom.5: 17). According to Paul when sin *abounded* God's grace abounds *much more* and in *abundance*, in Christ Jesus. Note the double emphasis like the phrase free gift, which is also in our verse Rom.5: 15. And so the Lord makes it clear on the magnitude, of the enormity of His grace that *abounds*, it is much more in Christ, than the sin which *abounded* by the law.

Today, in this the church age, we do not see God's grace, except IN Christ Jesus, for outside of Christ there is no love of God (see Rom.8: 39). Grace that is beyond our human understanding, unmerited love that is beyond what parents show to their children, what friends show to each other. Grace that leads a man to repentance, grace that *abounds* through the Lord Jesus Christ is much, much more than sin that *abounded*. The very gospel Paul preaches is called the gospel of the grace of God (see Acts 20: 24).

And so let us keep in mind, that because it is by grace that we are saved (see Eph.2: 8), it cannot be purchased (as Simon found out in Acts 8: 18-20), it cannot be earned, it can *only* be received through faith (see Rom.5: 2 & Eph.2: 8), in all of its abundance. Any attempt to distort the gospel of the grace of God or to preach another gospel that does not include grace, is taken seriously by Paul (see Gal.3: 1-3), as it was by Peter in Acts. Let us take seriously any self acclaimed church today that professes the name of the Lord Jesus but excludes God's grace that *abounds* through Christ.

But given that we are now in this age of Amazing Grace (as the song goes) does a believer sin that the grace of God may *abound* even more? A question asked in Rom.6: 1 *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?* The following verse responds; *God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* (see Rom.6:2) Paul goes on to remind us:

Just as Christ died so is our old man crucified with Him (see Rom. 6: 5 & 6).

Therefore let not sin reign in our mortal bodies (see verse 12).

Neither yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield unto God (see verse 13).

Then in verse 15 Paul asks the question again,

This time he responds with further encouragement to:

Yield our bodies unto righteousness unto holiness (verse 19).

So, now that we are under grace and not under the law, do we sin? God forbid! When you consult the Oxford dictionary on the word forbid, it means "a fervent wish that something does not happen" God is fervently against us sinning just because He has graciously forgiven us for our iniquity. But nevertheless, I am sure there are things we all do, things we say that are of the flesh, that are sinful that we continue to struggle with, and we continue to come before our God in repentance. But the difference between this scenario and when a person sins that grace may *abound*, is that the first occurs as part of our daily battle, where the flesh wars with the spirit and we come to God with an attitude of true repentance and the other is where a believer lives a life of sin, accepts their sin and teaches others to sin. A bit like the Anglican church in the city who accept and endorse civil unions between two sodomites perhaps because they believe that God is a God of *abounding* grace and that's His whole character. But as we know, God is also a Just and Righteous Judge (See Rom.3: 26). And so the Lord is both *abounding* in grace, whilst being a just and righteous judge.

Have you ever met anyone that struggles with the grace of God? I remember a discussion with a man that was older than I and he used the KJV he preached Christ on the street, but he could not accept that once we are saved we have assurance of our eternal salvation. He believed that a person was saved, but could lose his salvation by future sin, in other words he had no security about his salvation. But again this denies God's grace that *abounds* through Christ, for if we can lose our salvation then we can earn it. And God's grace, by the virtue of being grace, is free, it is unmerited, it cannot be earned and it *abounds*, it is plentiful. And God's grace *abounds* through Jesus Christ much more than sin *abounded*.

Having said what we have said, let us say it again. In this our first teaching on the word *abound*, we have covered three points which include:-

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