

Making Grace Amazing

by Ray Comfort

Ray Comfort's sermon highlights the essential role of the Law in revealing sin to magnify the grace of God and lead to genuine repentance.

Scripture: 2 Samuel 12:9, Psalm 19:7, Romans 3:20, Romans 5:20, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 2 Corinthians 7:10

Topics: "Law And Grace", "True Repentance"

Description

Ray Comfort emphasizes the importance of the Law in leading sinners to recognize their need for God's forgiveness. By illustrating how the Law exposes our transgressions and makes sin personal, he highlights the necessity of understanding our guilt before appreciating the good news of Jesus' sacrifice. Comfort echoes the teachings of Charles Spurgeon and John Newton, stressing that a proper understanding of the Law and Grace is crucial for true repentance and acceptance of God's salvation. He encourages believers to grasp the depth of their redemption from sin to fully appreciate the gift of the cross and be motivated to share the Gospel for genuine church growth and revival.

Transcript

At the end of an article about a comprehensive study, which found that over 260,000 converts of a major denomination's one year's harvesting couldn't be accounted for, the author concluded his commentary by saying, "Something is wrong." It goes without saying that something is wrong, but it has been wrong for nearly one hundred years of evangelism, since the church forsook the key to the sinner's heart. When it set aside the Ten Commandments in their function to convert the soul (Psalm 19:7), and show us our true state, it removed the sinner's means of seeing his need of God's forgiveness. The Law cannot justify us, it wasn't given for that purpose. It is clearly evident from scripture that no one can be right with God through keeping the Law. Romans 5:20 tells us why it "entered" the scene:

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

When sin abounds, Grace "much more" abounds; and according to Scripture, the thing that makes sin abound is the Law.

We can see the work of God's Law illustrated in civil law. Watch what often happens on a freeway on which you are traveling. When there is no visible sign of the law, see how motorists transgress the speed limit. Everyone knows the maximum is 55 m.p.h., but watch how they all naturally flow together at an

unlawful 70 m.p.h. It seems that the law has forgotten to patrol this part of the freeway. You are just "going with the flow." Besides, you are only transgressing the law by 15 m.p.h., and you are not the only one who is over the speed limit.

Now, notice what happens when the law enters. He comes through on the fast lane with his lights flashing. Your heart misses a beat. You no longer feel secure in the fact that other motorists are also speeding; you know that you are personally as guilty as the next guy, and you could be the one the law pulls over. Suddenly your "mere" 15 m.p.h. transgression doesn't seem such a small thing after all. It seems to abound.

Look at the freeway of sin. The whole world naturally goes with the flow. Who hasn't had an "affair" (or desired to) at one time or another? Who in today's society doesn't tell the occasional "white" lie now and then, or take something that belongs to someone else, even if it's just a "white collar" crime? They know they are "over the limit," but their security is in the fact that so many others are just as guilty.

It seems God has forgotten all about sin and the Ten Commandments. "He has said in his heart, God has forgotten: He hides His face; He will never see it."

Now watch the Law enter with lights flashing. The sinner's heart is stopped. He lays his hand upon his mouth. He examines the speedometer of his conscience. Suddenly it shows him the measure of his guilt in a new light, the light of the Law. His sense of security in the fact that there are multitudes doing the same thing becomes irrelevant, because he knows he is as guilty as the next person. Sin not only becomes personal, it seems to "abound." His mere lust becomes adultery of the heart (Matthew 5:27,28); his white lie, false witness (Revelation 21:8); his own way becomes rebellion; his hatred, murder (1 John 3:15); his "sticky" fingers make him a thief. "Moreover the Law entered that the offense might abound" (Romans 5:20). Without the Law entering, sin is neither personal nor is it severe. "For without the Law, the sense of sin is inactive" (Romans 7:8, Amplified Bible). It was the "Commandment" that showed Paul sin in its true light, that it is "exceedingly sinful" (Romans 7:13). Paul spoke from his own experience because he sat at the feet of Gamaliel, the great "teacher of the Law," and therefore saw sin in its true colors.

The "Offense" and the "Foolishness" of the Cross

According to Romans 3:20, "The real function of the Law is to make men recognize and be conscious of sin, not mere perception, but an acquaintance with sin which works towards repentance" (Amplified Bible).

To illustrate this, imagine if I said to you, "I have some good news for you! Someone has just paid a \$25,000 speeding fine on your behalf!" You would probably answer me with some cynicism in your tone, "What are you talking about? I don't have a \$25,000 speeding fine!"

Your reaction would be quite understandable. If you don't know you have broken the law in the first place, the good news of someone paying the fine for you won't be good news, it will be foolishness to you. My insinuation of unlawful activity will even be offensive to you.

But if I was to put it this way, "Today the police clocked you traveling at 55 m.p.h. in an area designated for a blind children's convention. You totally ignored ten clear warning signs saying that the maximum speed was 15 m.p.h. What you did was extremely dangerous. The fine is \$25,000 or imprisonment. The law was about to apprehend you, when someone you don't even know, stepped in and paid the fine for you. You are very fortunate."

Can you see that telling you the good news of the fine being paid, without telling you that you have broken the law first, will leave you thinking the "the good news" as nothing but nonsense? To make known your transgression actually gives sense to the good news. An unclouded explanation of the law, so that you can clearly see your violation, helps you understand and also appreciate the good news.

In the same way, to tell someone the good news that Jesus died for their sins makes no sense to them, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing..." (1 Corinthians 1:18).

It is quite understandable, if an unregenerate person is told that Jesus "paid the fine" for him (that He died for his sins), for him to say, "What are you talking about? I haven't got any 'sins.' I try to live the good life," etc.

Your insinuation that he is a sinner, when he doesn't think he is, will also be offensive to him.

But those who take the time to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, and open up the "spirituality of the Law," and carefully explain the meaning of the Ten Commandments, will see the sinner become "convinced of the Law as a transgressor" (James 2:9). Once he sees his transgression, the good news will neither be offensive nor foolishness, but the power of God to salvation.

What "Sin" Are You Talking About?

When David committed adultery with Bathsheba and killed her husband, God sent Nathan the prophet to reprove him. Notice the order in which the reproof came. Nathan gave David a parable about something he could understand. Sheep. He began with the natural realm rather than immediately exposing the King's sin. He told a story of a rich man, who rather than take one from his own flock, killed a poor man's pet lamb to feed a stranger.

David was indignant, and said that the guilty party would die for his crime. Nathan then exposed his sin of taking another man's "lamb," saying, "You are the man... Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight?" (2 Samuel 12:9). When David showed signs of contrition, Nathan then gave him Grace and said, "The Lord has also put away your sin; you shall not die." Imagine if Nathan, fearful of rejection, changed things around a little and instead told David, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. However, there is something which is keeping you from enjoying this wonderful plan; it is called 'sin.'"

Imagine if he had glossed over the personal nature of David's sin, with a general reference to all men having sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. David may have reacted with, "What sin are you talking about?" rather than admit his terrible transgression. Or he may have, in a desire to experience this wonderful plan, admitted that he, like all men, had fallen short of the glory of God. If David had not been made to tremble under the wrath of the Law, the prophet would have removed the very means of producing godly sorrow, which was so necessary for David's repentance. It is "godly sorrow" that works repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10). It was the weight of his guilt that caused him to cry out, "I have sinned against the Lord." The Law caused him to labor and become heavy laden; it made him hunger and thirst for righteousness.

How true are the words once spoken by Charles Spurgeon (the Prince of Preachers), "The Law serves a most necessary purpose." He also said, "They will never accept Grace, until they tremble before a just and holy Law." Those who see the role of the Law will be sons of thunder before they are the sons of

consolation. They know that the shoes of human pride must be removed before sinners can approach the burning bush of the Gospel.

Paradox though it may seem, the Law does make Grace abound in the same way darkness makes light shine. It was John Newton (the writer of "Amazing Grace") who said that a wrong understanding of the harmony between Law and Grace would produce "error on the left and the right hand." I don't know if any of us could claim to have a better understanding of Grace than the one who penned such a wonderful hymn. The world will never clearly see the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, until the blackness of sin is explicitly painted on the canvas of a just and holy Law. When a Christian sees what he has been saved from, he will realize what he has been saved for. He will have a love for God, for the unspeakable gift of the cross. It will be a continual source of joy. Gratitude will motivate him to reach out and do the will of God, to seek and save that which is lost. That is the key to genuine church growth, and that is how to see revival.

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