

THE GLORY OF GOD'S GRACE DISPLAYED IN IT'S ABOUNDING OVER THE ABOUNDING OF SIN

Occasioned by the Death of Mr. John Smith, Preached at the Time of his Interment, April 15, 1724.

Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound: but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord- [Ro 5:20-21](#).

It is the manifest design of this Epistle to explain and vindicate the great doctrine of a sinner's free justification before God by the imputed righteousness of Christ: And in order to set this doctrine in its proper light, our apostle takes this following method; he first proves that all mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, are involved in the guilt, and are under the power of sin; that they are all destitute of a righteousness, and not capable of attaining one by the deeds of the law: and then proceeds to tell us, that that righteousness, by which a sinner is justified before God, **is manifested without the law**, though both the law and the prophets bear testimony to it; that it is the righteousness, of God, wrought out by one who is God, as well as man; that our justification by it springs from pure, free, and rich grace, through the redemption that is in Christ; and that the way by which it is conveyed and applied to us, is by an act of God the Father imputing it to us, and by our faith apprehending it, as our justifying righteousness before God; from whence abundance of peace, joy and comfort arise to our souls: This is now the sum and substance of the first four chapters of this Epistle; and in this fifth chapter, our apostle sets forth the stupendous love of the Father in giving his Son to die, and the inexpressible love of Christ in shedding his precious blood for sinners, whilst such, that they might be justified by it, and saved **from wrath to come**; and also takes an occasion to compare the heads of the two covenants, Adam and Christ, and shew, how sin and death came into the world by the one, and righteousness and life by the other; and how much the glory of superabounding grace appears in our justification to life by Christ.

And in handling this great doctrine of justification, he does, as he goes along, obviate those objections which were then formed against it; "that it made void the law, discouraged the performance of good works, and countenanced licentiousness;" which are the very same objections that are now formed against it; and which, to me, is an evidence of the sameness of doctrine; that is to say, that the doctrine of **justification by Christ's** imputed righteousness, which we preach and assert, is the same which the apostle preached and asserted, because the same objections are leveled against the one as the other; and confirms me in the belief of this, that the doctrine of justification **by works** is not the scripture-doctrine, because it will not admit the same objections to be made against it, which that doctrine had. Now I apprehend that there is in the words which I have read, an anticipation of an objection, which might be made against the doctrine the apostle had asserted, after this manner; If there is no justification by the deeds of the law, if sin was in the world, and death by sin so universally extended its empire before the law was given, then for what purpose was the law introduced? The apostle answers, **that the offense might**

abound; an answer much like to that which he gives to a like objection in [Ga 3:19](#): Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions.

Though it is thought by others, that the apostle having treated concerning the state of things from Adam to Moses, subjoins those words, lest any should think that the law was given to deliver men from sin, and repair the loss sustained thereby; however, it is evident from the words, that one end or consequence of the law's entrance was, **that sin might abound**; and sin is permitted to abound, that there might be an opportunity, or an occasion for super-abounding grace to manifest itself; and grace does thus abound, that so it might reign.

My time will not allow me to make and improve those doctrinal observations, which these fruitful words would furnish us with; therefore the method which I shall take in speaking to them, will be to discourse,

I. Concerning the law's entrance, and the end or consequence thereof.

II. The abounding of grace over abounding sin.

III. The reign of grace in opposition to the reign of sin.

I. I shall discourse concerning the law's entrance, and the end or consequence of it; it will therefore be proper to explain these three things in discoursing on this head.

1. What we are to understand by the law.

2. What by the entrance of it.

3. In what sense the offense abounded by it.

1. What we are to understand by the law: By the law is meant either the ceremonial or the moral law; the ceremonial **law was a shadow of good things to come**; it prefigured the Lord Jesus Christ, and was the Jews schoolmaster, which led them to him; it consisted in the observation of **meats and drinks, and divers washings and carnal ordinances** imposed on the Jewish church, **until the time of reformation**. {[Heb 9:10](#)} It may not be amiss if we consider a little, how far the words will bear this sense.

The ceremonial law entered but for a time, it was not to continue always; and this is thought by some to be the import of the Greek word *pareishlyen*; and it is the observation of one of the ancients, that the apostle does not say the law was given, but **it entered**, and that on purpose to shew that the use of the law was but temporary. The moral law abides for ever, as a rule of life, but the ceremonial law was to continue but for a time, even **until faith came**, {[Ga 3:23,25](#)} that is, Christ, who is both the object and author of faith; for Christ the substance being come, those shadows vanished and disappeared: His blood being shed, **which cleanseth from all sin**, no more need of the blood of bulls and goats, nor of

those divers washings and purifications; this great sacrifice being offered up, the daily sacrifice ceased; and spiritual ordinances being instituted, no more need of carnal ones.

Again; The ceremonial law was superadded to the moral law; it was an appendage to it, it entered in over and above that. The moral law was given to discover the evil of sin; the ceremonial law was superadded to it to lead the faith of God's children, under that dispensation, to a proper atoning sacrifice for it.

Again; The ceremonial law was an indication of that great evil which is in sin; God's requiring sacrifices to be offered for the typical expiation of sin, does manifestly shew how highly he **resented** it, and of what an evil nature it is; and if you will but consider the frequent reiteration of those sacrifices, and how there was, notwithstanding them, a remembrance of sin made every year; {[Heb 10:1-4](#)} also how far short of perfection these sacrifices left the comers thereunto, and how impossible it was that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin; you will then easily observe the vile nature of sin, and how it abounded and became **exceeding sinful** by this law.

Lastly, As the design of this law was to lead the faith of God's children to the person, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ; so it was not only to shew us what sin is, and how highly displeasing to the great God; but also how much his superabounding grace appears in the remission of it, through the blood and sacrifice of Christ prefigured thereby; **so that where sin abounded grace did much more abound**. But then,

By the law may be meant the moral law, which was given by Moses, and is mentioned in apparition to that grace and truth which came by Christ. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. {[Joh 1:17](#)} The sum of which law is love to God, and love to our neighbor; as appears from the answer which Christ gave the lawyer who put this question to him; saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment: And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments, hang all the law and the prophets. {[Mt 22:35-37](#)} Hence it is that the apostle Paul says, that love is the fulfilling of the law. {[Ro 13:10](#)} And this is the law which I apprehend is meant in the words of my text. I shall now therefore consider,

2. What is meant by **the entrance** of this law. We may consider the law as it entered into the world by Moses, as it was **ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator** on mount Sinai, and also as it enters into the conscience of a poor sinner.

The entrance of the law by Moses, does not suppose that there was no law previous to that which was given by him; for there was a law of nature which was inscribed on Adam's heart, and continued there during his innocent state; some broken remains of which are yet to be found, even in the very Heathens, as is manifest from [Ro 2:14-15](#).

Besides this, there was also a positive law given to Adam as a covenant-head, recorded in Genesis. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the

day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. Through the transgression of which law he ruined himself and all his posterity, and that for ever, had it not been for the kind interposition and efficacious mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus then there was a law antecedent to the law being given on mount Sinai.

Nor does it suppose that this law, which entered into the world by Moses, is of a different nature from that which was inscribed on Adam's heart, in his state of innocence; but only that it was delivered in another manner, the one was written upon the fleshly **table of the heart**, the other upon tables of stone; the one was given to Adam to be kept by him, the other was put into the ark, which ark was a type of Christ; the one was delivered as a covenant of works, the other only as a rule of life, to shew what is to be done, and what to be avoided, to discover the nature of sin, and the creature's inability to keep that law; in order that souls under a sense of these things, might make application to Christ, who was made under this law, and is become the fulfilling end of it for righteousness to every one that believes: {[Ro 10:4](#)} so that the law of nature, and the law of Moses, for substance, are the same. Again:

The word here used may denote the time of its entrance, it **intervened**, it came, as it were, between Adam's sin, and Christ's sacrifice for it; the offense was committed long before the law entered; and the law entered long before Christ's sacrifice was offered; it entered into the world between them both. The offense is permitted, and after some considerable time the law is given, that the offense might abound; and after as long a time, Christ comes to atone for this offense, that **grace might superabound**. Quickly after the offense was committed, a promise of grace was made; now between that promise, and the fulfilling of it, the law entered. But we may consider the law, as it enters into the conscience of a poor sinner, and thus it enters privately, secretly, and as it were by stealth; and in this sense is the word used, where we read of false brethren **unawares** brought in, who came in **privily**, pareishlyon, crept in, as it were by stealth, to **spy out our liberty**; now the law as given by Moses, did not enter in such a manner; there were present ten thousands of saints, that is, Angels. And so also when the Lord spake the ten words, all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; {[Ex 20:18](#)} so that the law was not given in a private manner, but in the presence of angels and men. But when the law comes and enters into the conscience of a man, it is suddenly, at unawares, and it immediately causes sin to abound. An instance of this, we have in the apostle Paul; for I was alive, says he, without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. {[Ro 7:9](#)}

He thought himself, before the commandment came, as good, holy and righteous as any man, and in as fair a way for heaven; but when the commandment came nearer to his conscience, and he saw the perfection; and spirituality of it, and was thereby powerfully convinced of the filthiness of his nature, and the imperfection of his obedience, immediately sin revives, abounds, and appears exceeding sinful, and he becomes a dead man in his own apprehension; thus the words may be referred to the use of the law; though I am rather inclined to think they are to be understood of the law's entrance by Moses. Thus much for the law's entrance; we shall now consider,

3. The end or consequence thereof; that was, **that the offense might abound**: By the offense, we may understand either the sin of Adam, or any, or all other sins, and transgressions; there is some reason to believe that by the **offense**, the apostle primarily intends the sin of Adam; because it is that sin which he particularly treats of in the preceding verses, as also the word *paraptwma*, which the apostle makes use of here, signifies a fall, and so may intend what we commonly call the fall of Adam; though, I confess, the word is sometimes used for actual sins and transgressions. But however, it may not be amiss to consider how this offense of Adam's abounded by the entrance of the law of Moses.

1st, The guilt of Adam's sin has abounded to all his posterity, being imputed to them; for in the preceding verses we are told, that **by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; and that by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners**. Now the apostle asserts, in [Ro 4:15](#) that where there is no law, there is no transgression; and in [Ro 5:13](#) that sin is not imputed where there is no law; so that the objection then is, how could sin exist, and be imputed, and death by it reign over the sons of men, when there was no law given? I answer, There was, as I have before observed, a law of nature written upon Adam's heart, the same in substance with the law on mount Sinai; which last was broke, through the violation of a positive command, and **thereby sin did exist**, and was justly imputed by God; Adam then standing as a common person, and representative of all mankind; but by the fall, this law and light of nature became weak and dim, so that the existence and imputation of sin did not appear so manifest; wherefore the great God thought fit to renew the law on Sinai, that the offense might be more conspicuous, and the imputation of it appear more just; thus **the law entered, that the offense might abound**.

2dly, Not only the guilt of this sin is imputed, but a corrupt nature is propagated to all his posterity; for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one: {[Job 14:4](#)} This corruption of nature, which is sometimes called by the apostle, sin, and sin that dwells in us, abounds in every man, and by the law abounds more and more, according to what the apostle says in [Ro 7:8](#), But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence; that is, "This inherent corruption of my nature took the opportunity, through the law's prohibition of sin, to stir up in me the lusts of the flesh, and carnal desires of the mind, and pushed me on to a performance of sinful actions." **Thus the law entered, that the offense might abound**. But,

3dly, By the entrance of the law of Moses, Adam's sin appears **exceeding sinful**, attended with aggravating circumstances. For though the eating of the forbidden fruit, may seem to be a small offense, yet if you consider what an indignity was offered to the great God thereby, how his divine authority in his holy command was trampled upon, the glorious perfections of his justice, truth and power were despised, his pure and perfect image in man, which consisted in righteousness, and true holiness, defaced, and also that glory which the creature by its service should have brought to him, lost: thereby, it was great.

He at one slap (as it is well expressed by a learned divine) breaks both the tables, and all the commandments,

1. He chose him another God when he followed the devil.

2. He idolized and deified his own belly.
3. He took the name of God in vain, when he believed him not.
4. He kept not the rest and estate wherein God had set him.
5. He dishonored his father which was in heaven; and therefore his days were not long in that land, which the Lord his God had given him.
6. He massacred himself, and all his posterity.
7. He committed spiritual fornication in eyes and mind.
8. He stole that which God had set aside not to be meddled with.
9. He bare witness against God, when he believed the witness of the devil above him.
10. He coveted an evil covetousness, which cost him his life, and all his progeny.

Thus he broke all the commandments. Now it is the law, which thus discovers the heinousness of this sin, in those particular instances. And in this sense **the law entered, that the offense might abound.**

By the offense we may also understand any, or all actual sins and transgressions; now let us see in what sense they abound by the law.

First, The law makes a plain and open discovery of them, and sets them forth in their own proper colors; **for by the law is the knowledge of sin**, {[Ro 3:20](#); [7:7](#)} yea, the apostle tells us, that he had not known sin but by the law; it is a glass wherein we may behold in the light of the Spirit, our inward deformities, as well as the grosser sins of life; though it is neither a magnifying, nor a multiplying glass, it does not make sins to appear greater than they are, nor more than they really be; but it discovers those sins to be great ones, which before were looked upon to be but small; and those to be sins, which before were not esteemed so; and thus sin abounds by the law's entrance.

Secondly, It makes sin to abound by a prohibition of it; not that any fault is to be charged upon the law; but upon the corrupt heart of man, which, the more it is restrained and prohibited from doing any thing, the more eager it is to effect it. It is just like a person in a violent fever, who the more he is restrained from drinking, the more he thirsts after it; or like a torrent of water, which when attempts are made to stop it, it rises, swells, rages, and overflows the more; such is the untoward, perverse and corrupt heart of man: thus when the Lord would have the Israelites go into the land of Canaan, then they refuse; but when the Lord had forbid them to enter, then they must needs go in all haste; so also when circumcision was God's ordinance, then the nations round about loathed it, and the Jews for it; but when it was abolished by Christ's death, then it needs must be taken up, as

necessary to salvation. Oh, the abominable corruption of man's heart! Thirdly, The law being given, sin committed against it, is attended with more aggravating circumstances; it is committed against light and knowledge; here can be no plea of ignorance, **no cloke for sin**; for he that **knows his Lord's will**, and does not according to it, shall be **beaten with many stripes**; {[Lu 12:47](#)} it is bidding an open defiance to heaven, and a despising and trampling under foot the majesty and authority of God, enstamped on his law; for according to the majesty and greatness of the lawgiver, does the offense in proportion arise: This law, which sin is the transgression of, being given forth by that great lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy; {[Jas 4:12](#)} makes the offense to be the more heinous. And thus **by the entrance of the law sin abounds**. This may suffice for the first head of discourse. I shall now,

II. Discourse concerning the abounding of grace over the abounding of sin. First, I shall endeavor to shew where it does so. Secondly, Give some instances of God's superabounding grace.

First, I shall endeavor to shew where it does do so; that is, where grace does so much abound, more than sin.

1. In the human nature; sin did and does abound therein. No sooner did sin enter into the world, but, like a fretting leprosy, it overspread and infected it; all human nature being then in Adam, the blood of all being then in his veins, was tainted by sin; and he then representing all his posterity, they sinned in him, according to [Ro 5:12](#), Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that feon wj, in whom all have sinned.

Sin so abounded in, and by Adam to all his posterity, that there is not one, who descends from him by ordinary generation, who is free from it. Jews and Gentiles are all under it; there is none righteous, **no not one**, {[Ro 3:9](#)} the disease is universal and epidemically. Now our Lord Jesus Christ, in the fullness of time assumed the same human nature; because the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same, {[Heb 2:14](#)} and the nature which Christ assumed, was attended with all sinless, though not sinful infirmities; therefore he is said to be sent in the likeness of **sinful flesh**, and not in sinful flesh itself; now in this nature Christ appeared **full of grace and truth**; there is an infinite, inexhaustible, overflowing, and superabounding fullness of grace dwells in him, that we from thence might receive grace for grace. Thus in the same kind of nature, **where sin abounded, grace does much more abound**.

2. In the several powers and faculties of the soul, where sin abounded, grace does much more abound. Sin has abounded, and does abound, in every power and faculty of the soul of a natural man; as the disease is universal, with regard to persons, the descendents of Adam, so it is with regard to the several parts and faculties of the souls of those persons. What is said of the Jews, in their political state; is true of every man in his natural state; the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores; {[Isa 1:5-6](#)} they are not only destitute of all righteousness, but filled with all unrighteousness; empty of

all that is good, and full of all that is evil; sin abounds and overflows in their corrupt hearts, which are continually casting up the mire and dirt of sin; from thence proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. {[Mt 15:19](#)}

O, what an abounding, what an overflowing of sin is here? The heart is hardened, and dead in trespasses and sins, the will obstinate and perverse, the judgment depraved, the understanding darkened, the mind and conscience defiled, and the affections become inordinate. What wretched work has the abounding of sin made in the soul of man!

Now where sin has thus abounded, grace in effectual vocation superabounds; for by powerful efficacious grace, in conversion, the stony heart is taken out of the flesh, and an heart of flesh is given; new principles of life and love infused, and all sorts of grace implanted; the will is subdued and brought into subjection to Christ, the judgment is informed, and the understanding enlightened; nay, an understanding given to know him, whom to know is life eternal; the mind and conscience **are purged from dead works to serve the living God**, and the affections set upon things which are above. What an amazing, surprising change is this! O, abounding, superabounding grace!

3. This is true of the poor Gentiles, among whom sin has abounded, and grace also **has much more abounded**; and this the Syriac scholiast particularly takes notice of in this place; sin exceedingly spread itself, and overflowed in the Gentile world; there being nothing but the dim light of nature to guide, and no positive laws and commands of God to direct them, no wonder that sin should so much abound among them; it having no other bounds nor limits but the weak law of nature to restrain it; but the greatest wonder is, that grace should here superabound. This was the great mystery, which in other ages, preceding the gospel-dispensation, was not so made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel. {[Eph 3:5-6](#)} How was the grace of God magnified in their vocation! the abounding of sin among them made the superabounding grace of God appear the more glorious: what beauty and glory does the apostle cast upon the free, and rich grace of God, manifested in the conversion of Gentile sinners? Who, when he had drawn up a large list and catalogue of the vilest sinners, adds, And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. {[1Co 6:9-11](#)} **Thus where sin so much abounded, grace did much more abound.**

4. This is eminently true of some particular persons, such as a Manasseh, a Mary Magdalene, a Paul before conversion, who looked upon himself as the chiefest of sinners, and could not but admire superabounding grace in his conversion; saying, I, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, I obtained mercy; {[1Ti 1:13](#)} and so must every one, more or lest, admire boundless grace, who have been plucked as brands out of the burning, and translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. But I will now proceed,

Secondly, To give some instances of God's superabounding grace in the actings of it, to us-ward who believe.

1st, Superabounding grace manifests and discovers itself in conversion and regeneration; the state out of which sinners are brought, and the blessings, which are then bestowed, as also the mighty grace, which is then wrought, and the surprising change, which is then effected in them, are so many evidences of the overflowings of God's love and grace towards them, and in them. Well may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be said to beget us again unto a lively hope, according to his abundant mercy, {[1Pe 1:3](#)} abundant mercy indeed! Abounding, superabounding grace! That he should, without any regard to our will or works, of his own will beget us with the word of truth, {[Jas 1:18](#)} and **quicken us when dead in trespasses and sins**; is an instance of his free, rich, sovereign, inconceivable and eternal love; here is the first display and discovery of grace and mercy to a poor sinner; it is true, there was grace and mercy in God's heart before, grace and mercy in the covenant before, and grace and mercy shewn in giving Christ, but until now the poor soul knew nothing of it. This river of God's love and grace ran under-ground from all eternity, and is now broke up in effectual vocation, and comes with its full flows into the sinners heart; which is now plentifully filled therewith, having as much as its narrow vessel can receive; so that where sin abounded, grace does much more abound; an instance of this we have in the apostle Paul, who tells us in [1Ti 1:14](#), And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus; was exceeding abundant, uqperpleonase, there was an over-plus of it; he had as much, nay more, than he could contain; it overflowed, it ran over and over; O abounding, superabounding grace!

Nay further, as there is a display of grace in the conveyance of it into the sinner's heart at conversion, even to a redundancy, so there is a sight and view given to the soul of exceedingly much more in the heart of God; it beholds God as **the God of all grace**, and views a boundless ocean of love and grace in him; O glorious sight! O happy discovery! this is what the apostle prayed for, for the Ephesians, that they might be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. {[Eph 3:18-19](#)}

Again, Superabounding grace manifests itself in our justification; how often does the apostle in the preceding verses, when he takes notice of the grace of God, displayed in Christ's justifying righteousness, use those words, much more, in order to set forth the great abundance thereof? The grace of God is manifest in sending Christ to bring in this righteousness, by which we are justified; and the grace of Christ is as evident in working it out; and when it was wrought out, the grace of the Father appears in accepting it in our room and stead, as also in imputing it to us, without works, and giving us faith to lay hold upon it: In short, there is so much of the grace of God conspicuous herein, that we are said to be justified freely by it. {[Ro 3:24](#)} And a learned interpreter, upon this place, is of opinion, that by this **superabounding grace** we are to understand, by a metonymy of the adjunct, the obedience of Christ, which is of grace imputed to us for righteousness; it is certain, that there is more virtue in Christ's righteousness to justify, than there is in sin to condemn; for those who are once justified should never be condemned, there being no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?, {[Ro 8:1,34](#)} who dare do it? who can do it? and if they do, to what purpose will it be! seeing **it is God that justifies; who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died,**

Those who are justified by Christ, are completely **justified from all things from which they could not be by the law of Moses**; they are perfectly justified from all sin, and eternally secured from all wrath and condemnation. O glorious grace!

Again, Superabounding grace appears in the forgiveness of our sins: what rich grace is this, that our sins, which are many, should be forgiven us! Sins which are attended, with aggravating circumstances, sins against light and knowledge, against grace and mercy, secret and open sins; sins before and after conversion; sins of thought, word, and deed, of omission and commission; all sins, past, present, and to come; all are fully and freely pardoned through the blood of Christ, according to the riches of God's grace; grace! rich grace indeed! What reason had a David, a Manasseh, a Mary Magdalene, a Peter, to admire this abounding grace in the pardon of their sins? Nay, has not every pardoned soul reason so to do? What grace is it, that God should lay our iniquities on Christ, and that he should bear them, and take them away? that God should remove them as far from us **as the east is from the west**, and blot them out, and remember them no more; that when they are sought for, **they shall not be found**, because he hath pardoned those, whom he hath reserved for himself! [{Jer 50:20}](#)

So also it does appear in our adoption; that we, who are by nature children of wrath, even as others, whose carnal minds have been at enmity against God, should be adopted into his family, is grace indeed; had he made us his servants, it had been an act of grace; but to make us his sons, is an act of superabounding grace; so that we have reason to say as the apostle John: Behold what manner of love hath the Father bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. [{1Jo 3:1}](#)

If we consider what we were by nature, how unlovely and undesirable, and that God stood in no need of us, we need not wonder to hear him thus saying, how shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? though we have a great deal of reason to wonder and be amazed to hear him say, thou shalt call me my father, and shalt not turn away from me. [{Jer 3:19}](#)

Now as the superabounding grace of God does thus appear in our regeneration, justification, remission and adoption, so also it will in our glorification; for our salvation is all of grace, from first to last. If it is an act of abounding grace to beget us again **to a lively hope of an incorruptible inheritance**, and to make us heirs of it, then will it be much more so, to put us into the possession of it: if we can observe superabounding grace now, we shall be much more capable of observing it in that state where all imperfection will be done away; then shall we **bring forth the head-stone with shoutings, crying, grace, grace, unto it**. This will be the delightful theme and happy subject, which the saints shall be entertained with throughout the endless ages of eternity. But before I dismiss this second general head, I would just observe to you, that this clause in the text seems to be added to prevent despondency, and to comfort distressed minds, who, seeing that the law was so far from justifying from sin, or diminishing it in them, that; on the contrary, it abounded by it, might imagine that there was no room to hope for deliverance, and so give way to diffidence and despair; the apostle, I say, seems to add these words, to prevent this, and administer comfort, **but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound**; that though

sin has overflowed all human nature, and spread itself over all the powers and faculties of the soul of man, yet there is an infinite fullness of grace with God, which grace he plentifully sheds abroad in the hearts of poor sinners: Therefore let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. {[Ps 130:7](#)}

Also these words may be considered as the end of the permission of sin, and the entrance of the law, that it might abound. God voluntarily permitted the sin of Adam, and that with a design to magnify the glory of his grace in the salvation of sinners; he suffered that first sin to enter into the world, which was the foundation of all after ones, that he might have an opportunity of displaying the perfections of his grace and mercy; then he sends the law into the world, that thereby, that sin, and all others, might appear in their proper colors, as they are in themselves, exceeding sinful; that so the sinner himself, in the light of the spirit, might more easily observe the superabounding grace of God in his deliverance from them. This may suffice for the second head of discourse. I now proceed to discourse,

III. Concerning the reign of grace, in opposition to the reign of sin. It may be very proper, in the first place, to say something concerning the reign of sin, which the apostle affirms was unto death.

The dominion of sin is universal; it has extended its empire over the whole race of human creatures: Elect, as well as non-elect, are under the power and dominion of it, until by irresistible, powerful, and efficacious grace, they are translated out of that kingdom into the kingdom of God's dear Son; and then sin shall not have dominion {[Ro 6:14](#)} **oufcurieusei**, "shall not lord it over them," because they are **not under the law, but under grace**; they are then no longer the subjects of sin, because translated into another kingdom, and so become the subjects of Christ; who is the head of the covenant of grace, as Adam was of the covenant of works; by whom sin, and death by sin, set up their empire in the world. Now it does not become any of those who profess themselves to be Christ's subjects, to yield any obedience to the laws or lusts of sin; let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. {[Ro 6:12](#)}

And as sin's empire is universal over every man, in a natural state, so its seat and throne are in every heart which is in the same condition; from thence it issues forth its laws, which have a mighty power in them to enforce obedience thereunto, from the several parts, both of soul and body: Hence you read of the law of sin, in opposition to the law of the mind, which law of sin has sometimes very great strength in a regenerate man, and is a ruling governing principle in an unregenerate one; even as the law of the mind, or the law of grace, is a ruling governing principle in a believer, also mention is made of it, in opposition to the law of God, the one requiring obedience thereunto, equally as the other; as also you will find that and the law of death coupled together, because the kingdoms of both are of the same beginning, extent and duration when sin entered into the world, death did so too; when sin let up its empire, death did likewise: over whom sin reigns, death does also; and when the one ceases, then will the other; their laws, interests, and kingdoms stand and fall together. {[Ro 5:12,14](#)}

And as it has erected a government in the world, and issues forth its laws, so it has its voluntary subjects, who observe these laws, not out of fear, but love; though while they promise themselves liberty, they become the servants of corruption; and are mere slaves and vassals to sin, while they are so greedily fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind: And for all this hearty and cheerful service, they will have no other stipend paid them, than death; **for the wages of sin is death**; {[Ro 6:23](#)} which is what our apostle intends, when he here says, that **sin hath reigned unto death**: and how it has done so, will deserve our consideration. Sin hath reigned unto death,

1. By subjecting all to a corporal death; this is what is intended in the threatening annexed to that positive law given to Adam, as a public person, mentioned in [Ge 2:17](#) though not to be understood exclusive, either of a spiritual or eternal death. Now Adam breaking that law, he himself immediately entered into a state of mortality; from that time his body became mortal, and a sentence of death passed upon him, and all his posterity; so that from that time this kind of death, or what is equivalent to it, has reigned, and will continue to the end of the world to reign over all the sons and daughters of Adam. But here a question arises, which deserves consideration, and that is this, namely, How comes it to pass that believers are not exempted from this kind of death, seeing Christ has undergone it in their room and stead, and made satisfaction for that sin, and all other sins of theirs, which first introduced it? I answer, It is true, Christ has done all this for them, and yet they are not exempted from death; nevertheless, through Christ's death and satisfaction, it ceases to be a penal evil, it is **disarmed of its sting**, and becomes one of the believers' privileges, death is yours. {[1Co 3:22](#)} So that now, blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; the saints may, as often they do, in their last moments, when God puts it in their mouths, sing that song, O death where is thy sting! O grave where is thy victory! {[1Co 15:55](#)}

For death to them is the end of all sorrow, a total abolition of sin, and a happy transitus or passage to the heavenly glory; and therefore it is they are not exempted from it.

2. Sin hath reigned unto death, by bringing upon all a spiritual death, whereby they are destitute of all spiritual life and motion, and incapacitated to perform any spiritual action; and in this condition are all the elect of God, as well as others, till the Spirit of life from God enters and speaks life into them; and you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; {[Eph 2:1](#)} where the apostle does not only observe, to the believing Ephesians, the blessing of grace which was then bestowed on them, and that deplorable condition which they were formerly in; but also what it was which brought them into it, namely, their sins and trespasses; for, if it had not been for grace, they had never been quickened, so if it had not been for sin, they had never been dead. But,

3. Sin hath reigned unto death, inasmuch as it hath rendered all deferring of eternal death; for the wages of sin is death, that is, eternal death, as is manifest from the antithesis or opposition, in the following words, but the gift of God is eternal life; and this bids fair to be the sense of the words in my text; for if the reign of grace be according to the reign of sin, and the reign of grace be unto eternal life, then the reign of sin must be unto eternal death. Now, I say, all, by sin, are deserving of this death, though it is not inflicted upon some, because of Christ's satisfaction, only upon those who live and die in a state of impenitence

and unbelief; for the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death; {[Re 21:8](#)} what in another place of scripture is called eternal damnation, is here called the second death; a phrase peculiar to John in his Revelation, though frequently made use of by thei[i] ancient Jews in the same sense; thus you see in what sense sin hath reigned unto death.

I shall now consider the reign of grace, in opposition to this reign of sin. And we may, by grace here, understand either grace in the heart of God, which is gloriously displayed in our salvation, or else grace in our hearts, which is wrought there by the Spirit of God.

First, By grace may be meant, grace in the heart of God; and then taking it in this sense, we may observe that God's grand design in the contrivance, accomplishment, and application of man's salvation, is to set forth and magnify the glory of his grace; which end and design of his are effectually answered; for grace reigns, and reigns gloriously in every part thereof; it is gloriously displayed in the election of a certain number in Christ unto eternal life, and therefore called the election of grace; {[Ro 11:5](#)} upon the very mention of which, the apostle in the next words thus argues: And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more of grace; otherwise work is no more work; an argument which the adversaries of grace can never answer; a dilemma they are plunged into, out of which they can never emerge. it is also gloriously displayed in that everlasting covenant made with Christ before the world began, which is so well stored with valuable blessings, and exceeding great and precious promises: It likewise gloriously appears in the mission of Christ into this world, to obtain eternal redemption for us; for God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us: {[Ro 5:8](#)} Grace also manifests itself in effectual vocation; for he hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus, before the world began; {[2Ti 1:9](#)} and so also in our justification, adoption, remission, and glorification, as has been more fully evinced under the second general head. And now let us not forget to take notice, that this grace reigns in a way of righteousness, consistent with the glorious perfections of God's holiness and righteousness. God, in drawing the glorious model and platform of man's salvation, so ordered it, that there should be no disagreement between the divine perfections, but that all should shine with an equal glory; and therefore he set forth Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him, which believeth in Jesus: {[Ro 3:26](#)} So that through Christ's fulfilling the law, atoning for sin, and satisfying divine justice, the honor of God's holiness is effectually secured, and the glory of his righteousness displayed, as well as his grace and mercy magnified; thus mercy and truth are met together, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other. {[Ps 85:10](#)}

With this glorious scheme, and the sweet harmony of it, was our dear deceased friend often affected; and I scarce ever heard him mention this place of scripture, which is the subject our present discourse, but I always observed, that he took it in the sense now delivered, which made me the more willing to take notice of it.

But then again, grace reigns unto eternal life, by Christ; it shall never be frustrated; God will never be disappointed of his end, to wit, the glory of his grace. It reigned from all eternity, it reigns in time, and it will reign to all eternity: It reigned in the contrivance; it reigned in the accomplishment, and it reigns in the application of it; for God has so ordered it, that it should be by faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; {[Ro 4:16](#)} and it will reign till it has brought us to the full possession of salvation, even eternal life, by Christ. But secondly, let us now consider the words, as they may refer to grace in us.

This supposes an ejection of the strong man armed, a demolition of sin's empire and throne in the sinner's heart; which are effected by the powerful grace of the Spirit, in making the weapons of our warfare effectually mighty for the pulling down those strong holds. It also supposes a principle of grace implanted by the same hand; which principle exerts itself, reigns, and maintains its ground against all opposition, which it will do, if true, though it be but small; for it is an incorruptible, immortal, never-dying seed, a well of water, which springs up unto eternal life; and a good work, which being begun, **shall be performed until the day of Christ.**

Also this grace reigns by righteousness; it is supported and maintained by it; as Solomon says, the king's throne is established by righteousness; so is this throne of grace by Christ's righteousness imputed, and his grace imparted. All our peace, joy and comfort, in a great measure, result from, and are maintained by faith's living on Christ's righteousness, and by an apprehension of our justification by it; for being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. {[Ro 5:1-2](#)}

Also this work of grace is maintained by fresh supplies of grace, from that fullness which is in Christ, out of which every believer does receive, more or less, **even grace for grace.** Now both these together, namely, righteousness imputed, and grace imparted, will bring a soul safe to eternal life. Christ's righteousness is our title to, and the Spirit's grace from Christ, is our meetness for, heaven; and without both there none shall enter there. Now I will only add this one observation more, that is, that all this grace, righteousness, and eternal life, come to us through Jesus Christ our Lord. All the discoveries of grace, which are made to our souls, are through Christ; and all that grace which is implanted in us, is from him, as well as all those fresh supplies by which it is maintained. Also that righteousness, by which we are justified, is in him, and that eternal life, which we are the expectants of, is through him.

Thus have I endeavored to open and explain to you, this glorious and comfortable portion of scripture, according to the desire of our deceased friend, whose character may now be expected from me. I apprehend that the design of funeral discourses is not to praise the dead, but to instruct the living; and sure I am, our dear friend had no such thing in view, when he desired a discourse from this text, on this occasion. How well he filled the relations of an husband and parent, his wife and children are here the mournful witnesses. How well that of a neighbor, many of you here present can attest; and how well he behaved himself as a member and officer of this church, that universal esteem he gained among the

members thereof, is a sufficient indication. The inward frame of his soul was generally very warm and lively; and with an uncommon seriousness, warmth and affection, would he speak of the great things of God. His light in the gospel was very considerable, and his conversation agreeable to that gospel which he professed; notwithstanding his employment in the world, daily threw him in the way of a great many snares and temptations. In short, he appeared to be an instance of mighty grace, reigning through righteousness unto eternal life. I shall add no more, but some brief improvement of this discourse, and so conclude.

1st, What encouragement is here for poor sinners from hence to hope for grace and mercy through Christ? What though, poor soul, thou seest the aboundings of sin in thy nature, and in every power and faculty of thy soul; yet look up and view the superabounding grace of God streaming through the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ; it is a mercy that thou seest the plague of thine own heart, and art not left to thy native blindness, to a vain conceit of the goodness of thy estate, when thou wert **poor, wretched, miserable, and blind and naked; take heart**, therefore, and do not be discouraged; **Christ's grace is sufficient for thee**; and where sin abounded, grace hath much more so; there is enough in Christ for thee; there is righteousness to clothe, and bread to nourish, grace to sanctify, strength to support, and every thing needful for thee; go to him as a poor perishing sinner, implore his grace, and venture on him, I dare say he will not reject thee.

2dly, Though here is encouragement for sinners from hence, yet no encouragement to sin. The doctrine of grace is no licentious doctrine; it gives no liberty to sin, nor encourages persons in it; however it may be clamored against, and bespattered by persons who neither understand the doctrine, nor have felt the power of it on their souls: that though there is more grace in Christ to save us, than there is sin in us to damn us, or because the more sin has abounded in us, the more his grace superabounded in our salvation; does it thence follow that we are, by this doctrine encouraged to **continue in sin that grace may abound? No, God forbid; how shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?** Which the apostle takes notice of in the beginning of the next chapter, foreseeing what objections would be formed against it, and how much it would be aspersed by a spiteful and ill-natured world. And whatever may be advanced against it, this doctrine is the foundation of all real holiness, the saints bulwark against apostasy, and their magazine of solid consolation.

3dly, If the grace of God is so apparent in our salvation, what reason have we to admire it, and to glorify God for it? The grace of the Father abounds towards us, and the grace of the Son abounds towards us, and so does the grace of the Spirit; therefore we should be equally concerned for the glory of the eternal three, whose grace has much more abounded where sin did abound; and this we cannot but do, when we consider what has been bestowed on us, and how much more is yet in reserve for us, though we are altogether undeserving of it.

4thly, Seeing that without Christ's righteousness imputed, and his grace imparted, none can enter into the kingdom of heaven; how much should souls be concerned for both; that this grace might be within them, and Christ's righteousness put upon them, that **being thus clothed, they may not be found naked?**

And then, lastly, With what comfort can any look death in the face, if sin reigns over them, and not grace in them? over them will the second death reign eternally; for none shall reign with Christ in glory, but those in whose hearts grace has reigned here.

But, on the contrary; how cheerfully do those resign themselves into the arms of Christ when death approaches, who have known the grace of God in truth? these shall for ever reign with Christ, and dwell in his presence; in whose presence is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore: these shall live in the continual view, enjoyment, and admiration of boundless grace; **ascribing blessing and honor, and glory, and power, unto Him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. Amen.**

i[i] Thus Onkelos in his Targum, on [De 33:6](#) paraphrases after this manner, let Reuben live in eternal life, and not die **atwm** the second death; to the like purpose the Jerusalem Targum on the same place, which adds, the death, which the wicked die in the world to come.