

# Romans 5:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

## Analysis

---

**Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound**—the *νόμος* (nomos, 'law') *παρεισῆλθεν* (pareisēlthen, 'came in alongside/entered additionally'), a subordinate clause suggesting law's supplementary purpose. The *ἵνα* (hina, 'in order that') clause states God's purpose: that *τὸ παράπτωμα πλεονάσῃ* (to paraptōma pleonasē, 'the trespass might increase/abound'). This doesn't mean law causes sin but that it reveals sin's true character and extent, transforming vague wrongdoing into explicit transgression against known divine commands (7:7-13).

**But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound** (οὗ δὲ ἐπλεόνασεν ἡ ἀμαρτία, ὑπερεπερίσσευσεν ἡ χάρις)—the triumphant declaration: grace *ὑπερπερισσεύω* (hyperperisseuō, 'super-abound/overflow beyond measure'). The intensified compound verb stresses grace's overwhelming victory. Sin's increase under law serves to magnify grace's triumph—where sin reaches maximum expression, grace surpasses it infinitely. This isn't license (6:1-2) but assurance that no sin exhausts God's grace.

## Historical Context

---

This verse addresses why God gave law if it increases transgression. Paul's answer: law serves grace by fully exposing sin's magnitude, driving sinners to despair of self-righteousness and cast themselves on Christ alone. Luther's spiritual breakthrough came from understanding that law's purpose is to slay self-

trust and reveal sin's depth, making grace precious. The law is 'pedagogue unto Christ' (Galatians 3:24), not the savior but the revealer of need for the Savior.

## Related Passages

---

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

---

1. How does the law making sin 'abound' serve grace—isn't more sin worse?
2. What sins in your life does God's law expose that you might otherwise ignore or minimize?
3. How does grace 'super-abounding' over sin protect against both legalism (thinking sin disqualifies you) and license (thinking sin doesn't matter)?

## Interlinear Text

---

νόμος δὲ παρεισῆλθεν ἵνα ἐπλεόνασεν τὸ παράπτωμα.

**the law** **But** **entered** **that** **abounded** **the offence**

G3551 G1161 G3922 G2443 G4121 G3900

οὐδὲ ἐπλεόνασεν ἡ ἀμαρτία ὑπερεπερίσσευσεν ἡ

**where** **But** **abounded** **G3588** **sin** **did much more abound** **G3588**

G3757 G1161 G4121 G266 G5248

χάρις

**grace**

G5485

## Additional Cross-References

---

**Romans 6:1** (Grace): What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

**Psalms 25:11** (Sin): For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.

**Romans 6:14** (Grace): For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

**Romans 4:15** (Word): Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

**Luke 7:47** (Sin): Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

**John 10:10** (Parallel theme): The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

**Isaiah 1:18** (Sin): Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

**Matthew 9:13** (Grace): But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

**John 15:22** (Sin): If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.

**Ezekiel 16:52** (Sin): Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters.