THE ABOUNDING GRACE OF GOD – Romans 5:20

νόμος δὲ παρεισῆλθεν, ἵνα πλεονάσῃ τὸ παράπτωμα· οὗ δὲ ἐπλεόνασεν ἡ ἁμαρτία, ὑπερεπερίσσευσεν ἡ χάρις.

> *But the law came in order to greatly increase the transgression; but where sin increased greatly, grace abounded even in greater abundance.*

One of the most beautiful words in the Greek New Testament is χάρις, usually translated by the English word *"grace."* In the Greek New Testament there is probably no word uttered by God that more distinctly declares all that was and is in His heart. There are times when Biblical scholars, teachers and preachers of God's Word contrast His mercy with His grace. While it may appear to some to be over simplistic, it is nonetheless valid to say that God's mercy refers to His loving withholding the deserved judgment on human beings, while God's grace refers to His loving kindness in giving to human beings what they do not deserve.

Grace is the act of a holy, loving God when He stepped out from His eternal throne of glory, became flesh and lived temporarily with us, and bore away all our sin in His own body on the cross. It was not for His personal friends alone, but for the sin of the whole world, past, present, and future. The Apostle Paul caught the deep significance of God's grace as he penned his letter to the Christians in Rome. *"Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more."* (NKJV) Another version translates this verse: *"Where sin multiplied, grace multiplied even more."* (HCSB) Still another version states it: *"Where sin increased, grace increased all the more."* (TNIV) It is interesting that these English translations use the same word to translate two different Greek words. While it is very legitimate that these words be considered synonyms, it is important for the student of New Testament Greek and all who teach and preach God's Word, that they recognize these two distinct words.

1. Sin Increased. Different translations render Paul's term here by *"abounded," "multiplied,"* and *"increased."* It really makes little difference which of these English words is used. It is more important to look carefully at the Greek text and find what Paul actually used. The word Paul uses is ἐπλεόνασεν. It is the 3rd person singular, aorist tense form of πλεονάζω, meaning *"to greatly increase," "to have more than enough."* The root word is πολύς which means *"much," "many," "great in quantity."* The idea from Paul's writing is therefore, that in reality there is an abundance of sin. There is plenty of it all the time. A cognate word is πλεονεξία, that translates *"greedy," "grasping for more,"* and represents a person who wants more than his or her share. Thus the problem facing the world is the greedy, grasping character of sin that is always increasing or multiplying.

2. Grace Triumphant. Paul draws a careful line of contrasting thoughts here. He freely admits that sin, being what it is, tends to multiply or increase. It is greedy, always grasping for the hearts of people. He then contrasts that greediness with the grace of God that comes alongside in an intensified countermanding action that triumphs over sin. Paul carefully chose his word here. It is ὑπερεπερίσσευσεν meaning *"to be over and above," "exist in a greater measure," "to be more than enough."* It is in the aorist tense here, indicating that God has provided it once for all! The actual verb is περισσεύω meaning *"to be present in abundance," "to exceed," "to surpass."* That appears to be sufficient, but the Apostle does not stop there. He prefixes the preposition ὑπέρ *(hyper)* indicating *"over and above that which is expressed in the main word."* We use the word hyper to mean something is excessive. So it is with grace that is more than adequate to bring the overcoming triumph that conquers sin in one's life.

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