

XXXVII. Romans in Biblical Perspective

The Gospel of God

“Dead? Or Alive?”

Romans 6:1-4

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This is God’s Word that is inerrant and infallible. Romans 5:18-21, 6:1-4, 14 says
[18] Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. [19] For as by the one man's (Adam) disobedience the many (humanity) were made sinners, so by the one man's (Jesus) obedience the many (His people) will be made righteous. [20] Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, [21] so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[6:1] What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? [2] By no means! (God forbid) How can we who died to sin still live in it? [3] Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? [4] We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

[14] For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

It is not my intention to make Romans a life long study for you because I’m sure some are thinking this series is moving rather slowly but as we get further along, I will be able to handle larger parts in Romans but that’s not where we are right now. These opening chapters of Romans and particularly Romans 6, 7 and 8 which we are now entering, are intricate, complex, profound, crucial and foundational in life so when you get to something like this as a preacher, I have two choices. One is that these truths can so easily be misrepresented so these truths are absolutely essential when it comes to knowing how to deal with the issues of life as a Christian so I can’t just skim through these things when it comes to my responsibility of discipleship from a broader perspective, the pulpit. Secondly, I could just try and chomp down on the whole thing.

I remember being overseas for an extended period of time and I was in a country whose cuisine was not anywhere near what I am used to eating. That was a tough two weeks for me. As we were getting ready to head home from this mission trip one of the deacons on the trip said to me, ‘Pastor, other than hug your wife, Cindy, what is the first thing you are going to do when you get home?’ I said ‘That’s easy, I’m going to get a double cheese whopper.’ As much as I would want to, I would refrain from sticking the whole thing in my mouth at one time because I would choke to death on it, but on the other hand I’m not going to slice it into little morsels because you have to get enough to get the flavor. You learn to chew and masticate on it as you let it linger on the tongue and that’s what I’m trying to do with this text before us. We’re not going to treat this text like you would in a small group discipleship group but we’re not going to skim through it like a conference either.

As a pastor, I want you to get these things rooted in your life and deeply rooted at that. Paul is such an exquisite preacher and teacher and those preachers who want to preach the Word of God to God’s people for their evangelism and equipping, want to be faithful to the Word,

clear for the benefit of the listener and you always have to anticipate their meaning and how to respond. Paul is one of those preacher teachers. What will this text illicit in questions? Paul not only asks questions to get you thinking where he wants you, but he anticipates your questions. Once Paul gives a Biblical propositional truth, he then anticipates what you will ask and answers it. He anticipates two questions now that are unasked yet but he goes ahead and answers them because he knows they will be asked in light of what he has just taught.

The first section of Romans is an exposition of why the Gospel is so important and Good News by giving you the bad news. The first section is showing our situation of being rightly under God's condemnation. He starts with the pagan in Romans 1:18 and then in Romans 2 he begins by showing how the religious pagan is under God's condemnation. In Romans 3 he shows how the Jew is under God's condemnation and then sums it up in Romans 3:23 which says [23] *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* He shows the depth of that depravity by saying [10] *"None is righteous, no, not one; [11] no one understands; no one seeks for God. [12] All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one"* (Romans 3:10-12). Paul shows our situation in that we are helpless, hopeless, unwilling, unable and under condemnation.

Then comes the second section which is God's solution of salvation through justification – it is a justification whereby God takes sinners who are all wrong with God and makes them all right with God and God right within them. We see the start of Paul's exposition on justification in Romans 5:1 which says [1] *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* We have access to Christ, we rejoice in the glory of God and in our sufferings through our Lord Jesus Christ and we rejoice in the presence and power of the indwelling work of the Spirit of God.

How is this salvation given to us? There was an Adam who we were all in and this Adam – the one – acted for his many, all of humanity and when he sinned, we sinned. When he died, we died. Then there is a greater Adam – the last Adam, the second Adam, Jesus – and there is no comparison between them. The second Adam brings life and everlasting forgiveness and righteousness to all of His seed – those whom the Father has given to Him, for He loses not one. This is a glorious truth that we are saved in the Second Adam for He is greater than the first Adam. I Corinthians 15:21-22 says [21] *For as by a man came death, by a Man has come also the resurrection of the dead. [22] For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*

When Christ was on the cross, all of His people were with Him and in Him. And His obedience to the Father became our obedience and His death becomes our death. Galatians 2:20 says [20] ***I have been crucified with Christ.*** *It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.* When He came out of the grave, we came out of the grave. When He redeemed us from our depravity then we now live in Him.

Paul now anticipates a question. The first question he anticipates is if we sinned in Adam and died in Adam and we are alive, and saved to eternal life in Christ as our Second Adam, then why do we have the 39 books of the Old Testament, particularly why the Pentateuch and the law of God through Moses? Paul answers this in Romans 5:20 which says 'the law came in...' just as Christ is going to come in and save His people from their sins. I Timothy 1:15 says [15] *The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...* First, before He comes the law is given by God, it comes in, why? So that the sin might increase... Romans 5:20, for it has a purpose for coming. When the law comes in, sin

is identified and exposed because sin is the transgression of the law of God and that's the first thing it shows us. Sin is already here because we sin in Adam. Original sin isn't simply referring to him taking the fruit, but it's a term that tells us the origin of all sin was in Adam's sin and we are born dead in our sin therefore we sin.

Paul is telling us the law comes to give us the bad news so we can understand the importance, the imperative, and the glory of the Good News. The second thing the law does is identify and expose the sinfulness of sin – how it increases and is magnified. We also see the ceremonial law with all its rites, rituals, sacrifices, feasts and fasts which is constantly telling us there is sin and sin costs so we need a vicarious sacrifice but bulls and goats can't do it and priests can't intervene for us for we need a better Priest and better Sacrifice.

Thirdly, the law shows us our sin nature. As soon as the law comes what do we do in our rebellion against God? We say 'we will not have You to rule over us.' Thus, we rebel against His law. He tells us not to murder and we find ways to murder and put it under legal sanctions. He says don't commit adultery and we find ways to engage in sexual promiscuity and legally permit it and extend it to sexual perversion. God's law incites us to reveal our depravity of our sin nature and the reign of sin is revealed.

As the law comes and sin increases now the grace of God is magnified because Christ's grace is greater than our sin. Now the reign of grace is magnified. Sin's dominion and the dominion of grace are not equal adversaries. Christ's grace is deeper and wider than any and all of my sins. In other words, my sin and God's grace is a mismatch. He wins, not if I help Him but if He redeems me. There is no contest when it comes to God's grace and my sin.

Growing up I loved watching boxing. I watched Rocky Marciano in my days, then I watched the unbelievable skills of Muhammad Ali as I got older. If we could be transported back about 30 to 40 years and you heard the outline 'Harry Reeder is boxing Muhammad Ali' I wish you would come to that match, not to buy a ticket but to intervene and say 'no! mismatch, no contest! This is not going to turn out well for Harry!' When God's grace meets my sin, it doesn't turn out good for sin but it turns out glorious for those who have been rescued by God's grace.

Then Paul anticipates a second question which is you mean what God does secures my salvation and I can't out sin His grace? Increasing and abounding sin reveals increasing and abounding grace. So why don't I sin a lot because I can't lose my salvation and the more sin, I do the more grace God has to give? There are two problems with that question. One is when God's grace comes you don't think that way. If you do, you kill it pretty quickly. Secondly, is God doesn't have to give grace for by definition grace is a gift. He doesn't owe it to us. You can see how the mind is working, how the mind begins to think as the old man keeps trying to rebel against the truth of God's Word. Look how Paul answers this question.

Romans 6:1-2 says [1] *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?* [2] *By no means! (God forbid) How can we who died to sin still live in it?* Who are the we in verse 1? It is those who are saved by faith alone in grace alone in Christ alone. By no means has already been used five times in the book of Romans and here again and it's a malediction. According to verse two every two believer who has come to Christ did not come to Christ holding sin and holding Jesus. According to verse two when you come to Christ you have died to sin. You have died to the guilt of sin – He paid it. You died to the shame of sin – He has removed it. You have died to the power of sin – He has broken it. That's why you're no longer helpless, hopeless, unwilling or unable. I Peter 1:3 says [3] *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a*

living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. You are now a new creation in Christ Jesus. You have died to sin to live in and to Christ.

Realize that everyone who is a member of a church is not a true believer. You can fool elders who are listening to your testimony, but those who have experienced the converting power of the grace of God through the power of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit and the Word of God and brought us to a conviction and confession of sin and a fleeing to Jesus Christ alone for salvation have died to sin, but it's not dead to you. You no longer live in it but you still have it living in you. That's why having died to sin for the rest of our life, the evidence of dying to sin and being in Christ is the desire to progressively put to death sin in our life.

The believer is not only putting to death the sin in their life but they long to rescue the perishing. They are on a lifelong search and destroy mission of their remaining sin and it will not be perfected until we get to heaven. They are also on a search and rescue of other sinners to bring them to Christ. So, Paul says how can we live in what we have died to? He affirms again we have died to sin - guilt, shame and power. He doesn't say it's not living in us. We still have remaining sin but what we don't have any longer is reigning sin. We are not under its dominion. We can say 'no' to sin and 'yes' to Jesus out of a love for Christ who by His unstoppable love through His grace, unmerited favor, has brought us from death unto life.

This notion that the saved can sin like you want and still have remission is perverted logic that is unbiblical, dishonoring to God by being blasphemous to His grace, actually takes hold and when people respond to it – they respond one of two ways. Both of the responses to this notion bring adulterated heresies to the Gospel. One heresy is called libertinism or licentiousness or antinomianism. They say God's grace saves me and not my obedience, therefore my obedience doesn't matter – in fact, the more I sin the more it manifests God's grace. That is against the Gospel use of the law.

Remember, God's law exposes sin, the sinfulness of sin and our sin nature, the ceremonial law fulfilled in Jesus, the civil law and the moral law. Jesus didn't come to abolish the law but to fulfill the law. Now that He has fulfilled the law, we are free to use the law Gospel. You must never be against the law but you must be against any doctrine that says our obedience to the law saves us or our obedience to the law enables or allows God to save us. That is legalism which is the second error, heresy.

There is a right use of the law in the Gospel. Romans 6 gives us the glorious, magnificent doctrine of sanctification. We have moved from condemnation to justification and now sanctification in Romans 6, 7 and 8. Romans 6 lays it out for us as Romans 7 tells us about the battle within – the old man – and then Romans 8 gives us the triumph of grace and how to walk in the Spirit, do war against sin and live unto Christ. All of the Christian life is wrapped up in these three chapters and that's why I want to get it in bite sizes for us.

A guy called me recently from a church nearby and said "Pastor, we have this man who has been preaching grace and there is this kind of bohemian Christianity he is teaching us. It's almost like who cares about sin and being careless in your walk for Jesus and if you say pursue holiness, they call you a legalist. I think we're getting too much grace. Can we get a little legalism here? Do you know of any preachers to send us?" I said "I hope not for your problem isn't that you're getting too much grace, the problem is you are getting a dwarfed grace. You're getting a grace that only talks about the declarative blessings of God, not a grace that calls you to embrace the transformational blessings of God." You have been born again. You're a new creation. You have the power through the means of grace to go on war against that sin and kill

it, not cope with it, manage it or sign peace treaties with it – but kill it! You have all the weapons of the Spirit to put it to death. That is what you need to start hearing.

To get away from libertinism you say I'm saved by faith as long as my works are added to that faith. Legalism teaches you can be justified if your sanctification is good enough and our response to God's commandments allows God to save us or enhances God's salvation with us – that's wrong! If you have a quiet time every day of your life for the rest of your life, lead one person to Jesus each week, have family devotions, lead all your children to Christ, have small groups in your home – that's a great life but you will never be more justified than you are right now. Our sanctification does not add to or enhance or enable our justification. Our works don't enter into justification at any point whatsoever for we are not saved by our works. But we are saved by works – the works of Jesus, who went to the cross as my sins were put on Him and His righteousness was put on me and you, if you're in Christ.

We are going to this unbelievable section in Romans on sanctification but you can't get loose theologically, logically or grammatically from the section on justification, why? It is because you can't really do the Christian life in the pursuit of holiness and sanctification without always reminding yourself that that does not save you. I am saved by Jesus and His grace for you always have to know that you are saved by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone. I am justified by faith and now the working out of my faith is a glorious testimony but it doesn't add to my justification. I pray that you get that because as long as you are under the cloud of what you do saves you or allows God to save you then you can forget joy and perseverance for you have despair and discouragement coming. It is what He did and now we do what we do because His grace enables us to do it and we do it because it's honoring to Him whom we love deeply.

The takeaway is a glorious truth I want to share with you to the praise of God. Here it is; it is impossible for those who have died to the reign of sin (those converted) to live in sin as they now under the reign of grace live in Christ as sworn enemies against their remaining sin that is living in them. Take the time to work through that. When I say it is impossible, I mean it! It's impossible to live under the reign of sin – its power, guilt, shame – now Satan will tempt you to live that way, but don't. He will say things to you like 'there is no way you can get rid of that sin for you will just have to cope with that sin the rest of your life.' No, for I can see it weakened, removed and assaulted in my life.

I did not say it's impossible to sin. I John 1:8 says *[8] If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* Another translation says 'he is a liar' in place of 'we deceive ourselves.' In the application of this text, I said it's impossible for those who have died to the reign of sin to live in sin. Yes, they still have sin living in them but they don't live in sin under its power, guilt and shame. They now live under the reign of grace in Christ and that makes us sworn enemies of the remaining sin that is living in us. We die to sin and live unto Christ. We die to the power and guilt of sin therefore were putting to death the life of sanctification.

We will look further at positional sanctification and its perfections, progressive sanctification in this life and perfected sanctification in the life to come. Right now I have been delivered from the power of sin and I don't have to sin for I'm not under its dominion. I have been delivered from the guilt of sin – I have been forgiven – and now I can go on the war path against sin with the weapons of the Spirit in the context of God's people in the church of Jesus Christ in order to live unto Christ.

The law came to show me I needed deliverance from the power, penalty, and persuasion of sin and then the law sent me to Jesus. That is the right use of the law. This is its evangelistic use. It shows you your sin and you need a Savior to deliver you from the power, penalty and persuasion of sin and increasingly deliver you from the practices of sin and one day deliver you from the presence of sin.

Then there is the discipleship use of the law. The law can't disciple me but it can direct me how to love God with all my heart, soul and mind and my neighbor as myself. The law has no power but it can direct me. The law when used in evangelism and discipleship, loved by God's people in its Gospel use begins to restrain sin in society and retard the sinfulness of men so that men who are totally depraved will not live absolutely depraved. This is the right use of the law.

So, I will not be antinomian nor will I be a legalist. Sanctification is not my work to allow Jesus to justify me. Sanctification is Jesus' work for me in justification now being delivered to me in sanctification. As I grow in grace to deal the death blow to sin from which He has delivered me from its guilt and shame, I am being sanctified. Romans 4 and 5 don't come after Romans 6, 7, and 8 because when you are right with God now you can live rightly for God increasingly as you grow, not for grace but you grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

I'd like to close with this illustration. I'll use Jesus. When Jesus talks of salvation He says you have enter by narrow gate and then on the way to glory you walk the narrow path (Matthew 7:13-14). Legalism says to get on the narrow path to get through the narrow gate. We say 'no' to that. Antinomianism/libertinism says you can go through the gate but you can say 'no' to the path. Again, we say 'no' to that. How do you get on the narrow path? You go through the gate and Jesus is the Gate, but as soon as you go through the gate, what is the evidence that you have gone through the Gate? You are on the path and that path has two ditches – libertinism and legalism – an you say 'no' to them for Christ is your Redeemer. His work is sufficient and He is the working in you and on you. The evidence in your life will reveal the path you are on in life. If you're in Christ it will be Spirit-filled, Christ-centered, grace-enabled for the glory of God for it's our warfare against sin and our following of Christ. Oh, the joy that comes in walking with Him and for Him. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Perhaps you are reading this and for many years you have gone to church to get on the path in order to get to the gate. No, we arrive in heaven on the path but you first go through the Gate – come to Jesus just as you are. If you would like to pray with someone about that commitment to Christ please call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we'd love to pray and talk with you about this, for then comes the narrow path. Perhaps you are reading this and you tell people you have come to Jesus but your life isn't evidencing the pathway for Jesus, then let's take a look – have you come to Christ alone for salvation? If so, your salvation by faith will never be alone. You will walk in Him, for Him and by Him. Your sworn enemy is sin and your greatest delight is Jesus and whenever we falter, we turn to Him who delivers us from this body of death. Jesus come and minister to Your people I pray. Please lay the foundation of justification by faith alone in Christ to set us on the journey of sanctification by the power of Christ and to the glory of Christ, in Jesus' Name, Amen.