

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

Lesson 14, Chapter 6

Romans chapter 5 verse 20 said this: ***And the Torah came into the picture so that the offence would proliferate; but where sin proliferated, grace proliferated even more. (Rom 5:20 CJB)***. Or in plain English, Paul is saying that the Law of Moses was given so that sins would become even greater; but where sin increased God's grace increased an even greater amount so God was always ahead of the curve. This is a very bold assertion but Paul intends it as more than that; he intends this to be a fundamental doctrine that Believers in Yeshua should adopt. However, because he is presenting his doctrines in typical Talmudic style (presenting his proposed regulation to a straw man, in essence), he leaves himself wide-open for an assumption by the straw man that is radical to the point of absurdity. And that assumption is that if what Paul is asserting is true, then it follows that Believers have just been given the divine green light to go ahead and sin more, since apparently the more we sin the more God pours out His grace; and the more God pours out His grace, the more glory God receives from His worshippers. Therefore it must be the duty of Believers to sin more so that more adulation and glory goes to God!

Paul is well aware that a Roman Believer could take his assertion to an extreme and draw the same absurd conclusion as the straw man so he must remedy this. That is what the opening 2 verses of Romans chapter 6 addresses. And by the way: clearly he is concerned that the Roman Believers indeed were predisposed to take what he said the wrong way. The receivers of the letter live in the capital of paganism and worldliness, Rome, and Paul has never met these Believers and can only surmise what they know and don't know about the Gospel. He has no personal knowledge of what doctrines (good or bad) they might have established among themselves. It might seem disjointed to us when looking at our modern Bibles that Paul would propose the doctrine in one chapter and then wait until the next chapter to explain himself. But it only seems that way because of the addition of chapter divisions and verse markers that didn't exist in his day. When he wrote the letter it was just as we would write a letter; it was one long narrative without any divisions or marked sub-sections. The Bible wasn't divided into chapters until the 13th century.

Before we read chapter 6 I think it is important that we discuss the word "grace". In Hebrew the word typically translated as grace is ***chen***, although sometimes the Hebrew word ***chesed*** is translated as grace in English Bibles (but it ought not to be). ***Chen*** means favor or grace. ***Chesed*** more means loving-kindness. In Greek the word that is almost always translated into English as grace is ***charis***. So the Greek ***charis*** is attempting to translate the Hebrew ***chen***. However the Greek word ***charis*** seems to more or less combine the definitions of the Hebrew words ***chen*** and ***chesed***, so ***charis*** can mean favor, grace, kindness, or good will. Nothing wrong with that; it just points out that Greek and Hebrew vocabularies don't always have a complete one-to-one relationship. That is, there are many Hebrew words that don't have a direct equivalent Greek word (and vice versa), so when translating Hebrew words or thoughts to Greek, sometimes the best that can be done is an approximation. Nonetheless, there is no

reason to quibble over the choice of the Greek word **charis** to indicate grace in the way Paul meant it, and in the way we typically think of it. There really is no other Greek word that could have been used.

However grace has a very broad meaning in the Bible and in English use. Grace involves the notion of favor; but it is Christianity that has taken it one step further and made the definition of grace as UNMERITTED favor. That is because in English “favor” can indeed be fully merited; it can be a tit-for-tat reciprocation (I did a favor for you, now you owe me a favor in return). Favor can be something that is expected or customary. Favor can simply indicate approval or support, or it can indicate a preference or even an indulgence. I completely accept the notion that, Biblically speaking, grace means unmerited favor so long as we limit it to God bestowing it upon humans. Even so we next have to ask ourselves an important question: what is the particular substance of God’s grace? In other words, when God gives us grace it involves Him doing something in particular for us. So for instance: God could show me grace by giving me the job I so badly needed. He could show me grace by healing me from a serious illness. He could show a ministry grace by supplying a monetary need. So the term “grace” doesn’t have any real applicable meaning for us until we connect it to a specific act or event. So as we read Romans 6, be aware that when Paul speaks of God’s grace he means it as a kind of shorthand. When Paul speaks of grace he means it in direct relation to some particular action that God did that Paul is thinking about.

I’ll say it again this way: saying “grace” by itself simply means an unmerited favor from God. But what favor? Until we know the exact nature of the favor we don’t know what that act of grace involved. One more illustration and we’ll move on. You walk in the front door and say to your wife: “Isn’t that nice; our neighbor just did us a wonderful favor”; and you turn and walk out of the room. Wives, what would be your first thought? First, you’d be bewildered because you have no idea what he’s talking about. So you would think: “What favor did our neighbor do?” Favor, grace, must be connected to a particular identifiable action for it to have any real application or meaning to us. So when we say we are saved by grace, it has little actual application until we identify what particular action of grace God did to save us.

Thus as we read Romans chapter 6 and Paul repeatedly uses the term “grace”, he has a specific action in mind that he has previously identified. And what is it that Paul says God did for sinners as His act of grace? He made us righteous. And how did He make us righteous? He reached down from Heaven and “righteoused” us as a free gift. In Christian-eze, He “justified” us in an act of grace. We’ll come back to this to clarify a bit more as we go along in chapter 6.

We are going to walk slowly and deliberately through chapter 6 as Paul makes numerous theological points that are critical for our understanding of our faith. So we’ll take as much time as needed to get all we can from it and we’ll work at defining some terms as we do.

READ ROMANS CHAPTER 6 all

So to begin chapter 6 Paul uses the typical Talmud method to deal with the issue of God granting more grace as people sin more. Our straw man has come to the erroneous conclusion that is presented in verse 1: **So then are we to say: “Let’s keep on sinning so that there**

can be more grace?” Thus, the straw man has created his own regulation that says that Believers should be encouraged to keep on sinning so that more grace will abound. Paul obviously disagrees with that regulation and (again in standard Talmud fashion) responds to it to begin verse 2 with: **“Heaven forbid!”** Now that the incorrect regulation has been stated, and Paul reacts strongly against it, he states the correct regulation: **“How can we who have died to sin, still live in it?”** And from there he fleshes out the details of his regulation and why his doctrine is the right one.

Another of the main doctrines that Paul establishes is what he calls “dying to sin”. Here is one of those phrases (or terms) that Christians often use, which is not so easy to understand or to explain. For one reason most Bible commentators don’t seem to be able to come up with a single, standard definition of it with some commentators suggesting that Paul means “dying to sin” in a number of ways simultaneously. Great pains are made to connect “dying to sin” to Christ’s death, and sin to the Law, and so on. I see the issue as becoming needlessly complicated within Christianity because we don’t understand it in the Jewish cultural mindset of the 1st century; an understanding that was widespread and common knowledge among the Jewish people. So since Paul is a Jewish scholar then we need to look at it the way he would have.

One of the most fundamental Jewish beliefs was (and still is) that mankind is born with two inclinations: a good inclination (**yetzer ha tov**) and an evil inclination (**yetzer ha rah**). Since all humans have two opposing God-given inclinations within us then it follows that we also have the freedom to choose to obey one or the other; this is the Jewish definition of free will and how it is made possible. In Jewish thought a human is mastered either by his good inclination or his evil inclination. So a master/slave relationship is contemplated since slavery was a normal and visible part of life in the Biblical era and the relationship of slave to master was understood by all. In this Jewish belief the master is the inclination, while the slave is the person. This principle was encapsulated by a fundamental Jewish doctrine (taught by the Pharisees) called the doctrine of the Two Ways. The Essenes held an almost identical doctrine that they titled the doctrine of the Two Spirits. The bottom line to both of these doctrines is that man cannot be a slave that serves two masters. Thus a man cannot obey both his evil inclination and his good inclination; he must choose. Yeshua obviously believed this doctrinal philosophy and He taught it this way:

^{CJB} Matthew 6:24 No one can be slave to two masters; for he will either hate the first and love the second, or scorn the second and be loyal to the first. You can’t be a slave to both God and money.

In Yeshua’s statement God is personified as the master of the good inclination, and money (or really, the world system) is personified as the master of the evil inclination. Since it is the evil inclination that produces sin, then to “walk in sin” is to be a slave to the master of your evil inclination. Conversely to “die to sin” is to acknowledge a change of masters. You cease being a slave to the evil inclination and instead become a slave to the good inclination. It really is no more difficult than that, and it is certainly what “dying to sin” would have meant to the Jews.

In verse 3 Paul begins by saying, “Don’t you know?” So he is saying to the Believers of Rome

that he assumes that they already understand the ritual of baptism that has been practiced by Hebrews since time immemorial. Ritual bathing was fundamental and would have been required for any gentile Believer to congregate with any Jewish Believer. So Paul is connecting the concept of baptism as a symbol of dying to sin, with the death of Yeshua. What can be a little confusing is what the term “baptized into Christ” or “immersed into Christ” means. The Greek word for baptize is **baptizo**. It was a rather common word for the era that didn’t always have religious overtones. Rather it was something that those in the cloth industry used. **Baptizo** meant to immerse; but it also meant more than simply dunking an object in water or liquid. In the cloth industry it meant to immerse cloth into a vat of dye and the cloth taking on the characteristics of the dye liquid; that is, the cloth absorbed the colored dye and so it became that same color. So when used in the religious realm, when Jews walked into the Mikveh (the ritual bath), they took on the qualities of the Living Water they were immersing in (Living Water is pure and it cleanses). And when a Believer immersed themselves in Christ (were baptized into Christ), the idea is that we are being immersed into His qualities, which we absorb into ourselves much like a cloth absorbs the colored liquid in a vat of dye. Thus since one of Christ’s qualities was that He died, then when we are baptized we also absorb the quality of His death. Therefore we can say that we died with Christ.

Of course for Believers in Yeshua, by Paul’s day baptism was also a ritual for gaining membership into the community of Believers (very much as it is seen in Christianity in our time). This was not a new concept; the Essenes did the very same a long time before Yeshua was born. A person who wanted to join the Essene community had to be baptized into it...they had to be immersed into a Mikveh symbolizing absorbing the qualities of the Essenes, which was needed to become part of the community.

Starting in verse 4, Paul starts to further nuance what he wants to communicate and frankly it starts to get rather complicated. I’ll do my best to untangle it and make it more comprehensible. Paul says that through our immersion (baptism) into his death (that is, we both identify with Christ and we take on the qualities of his death), we are also buried with Him. Death is one thing; burial is another. Burial signals the logical and culturally accepted way to indicate the end of life. It is also the official end of the old life. So Believer’s baptism doesn’t only identify us with Christ’s death, but also with His burial. Thus just as His old life was dead and buried, so is our old life (life before salvation) dead and buried. Christ’s death was by means of crucifixion and that has significance in itself. So Believer’s baptism identifies us as symbolically joining Christ on the cross as the means of death, and also of joining Him in the grave as the finality of death. Understanding this different symbolism between death and burial will help us to see what Paul is getting at as we move along in this chapter.

The last half of verse 4 explains that the reason for our baptism and identification with Christ’s death and burial is in order for us to be able to take the next step, which is to identify with Christ’s resurrection from the dead. So just as the Father resurrected Yeshua from the dead into a brand new life, so it will be for us. It is important that we understand that this resurrection that Believers experience is twofold: first, we are resurrected into a new quality of life in the here and now. Second, in the future we will be bodily resurrected and enter an entire new glorified physical state, just as Christ did when He was resurrected. So the change we undergo upon baptism into Christ is partly immediate and partly in the future.

Now a question: so far Paul has been talking about baptism. Is baptism a must, or is it optional? If it is a must does this mean that UNTIL we are baptized we are not dead to sin, we are not buried with Christ, and so we are still the old person, not yet living the new redeemed life of a Believer? That is: what about a person who has professed Christ but for one reason or another has never been baptized (whether prevented by circumstances or declined by choice)? I may not be able to give you a satisfactory answer to that, but one thing is certain: in Romans 6 (and in other passages) for Paul baptism (immersion) is absolutely the indispensable ritual moment for gentiles or Jews when the finality of leaving our old sin life in Adam and entering our new righteous life in Christ occurs. When we go to a funeral, and especially if there is a graveside service and the casket is lowered into the earth, there is a sense of closure. Even if that loved one has been deceased for a few days, the impact of death's finality doesn't usually begin to happen until the funeral is over. For Paul baptism serves that same role for a new Believer; it indicates finality and closure. But there is also another aspect of baptism to consider. Baptism is the initiation rite into the community of Believers for a new Believer. Faith in Christ is of course assumed before baptism occurs, so it seems that salvation happens independently from, and before, baptism. But salvation and its effects upon us are not all immediate or all at once. There are great religious debates over the sequence and timing of coming to faith, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the reception of spiritual gifts, and so on for a newly professed Believer. Baptism, to Paul, is clearly part of the salvation sequence and an important milestone that is not to be set aside. For Paul baptism goes far beyond mere symbolism and carries real and tangible consequences with it. Interestingly the consequences of baptism seem to be more in the here and now in these present bodies than upon our resurrection into our new bodies. So too, therefore, does the lack of baptism carry real tangible consequences with it. Believers; I urge you: do not neglect being baptized even if you cannot quite imagine the true benefits. Paul insists the benefits are there and they are real. But most importantly, baptism is a matter of obedience.

In verse 6 Paul asserts that when our "old self" was put to death on the cross (that is, in baptism we have joined Christ on the cross) that is the moment when everything that caused us to sin is laid waste and so we are no longer slaves to sin. The old self means all of us; the whole person. Every aspect of who we were that represents all the effects of fallen man as caused by Adam is involved. But we must not also assume that Paul is saying that our old self no longer exists; in some mystical way that old self lingers on to be a challenge to us all of our days. These old bodies, so fragile and subject to time, will continue on until our death; we don't emerge from the cleansing waters of baptism with a new body. Death in Christ, just as resurrection in Christ, is a process: some now, some later. So we must not be surprised when temptation at times still wins out. But the best news for us is that we are no longer slaves to sin; or, from the Jewish view of Paul's time, no longer is the evil inclination our master to which we are its slave. We have been liberated to be able to respond to God and the good inclination within us.

And why are we so free from sin? Paul says in verse 7 it is because dead people can't sin. And since we have fully identified with Christ in His death, then of course we identify with Him in His resurrection and His new life. Yet while Christ's death and resurrection is a completed happening for Him it is not that way for us. Yeshua is no longer burdened by a fragile body nor the links and relationships of this world; but we, His worshippers, are. Not until we go to the

grave will those links and relationships end. Not until we are resurrected from the grave will our bodies be replaced with new, eternal, glorified ones. So; we wait. And hopefully with each passing day our new life and our identification with Christ increases in its effects even in this present world. But that is up to us; that is our obligation to see to it that it happens. Our forgiveness, mercy, compassion, and loving kindness towards our neighbor don't come automatically with salvation; we must work at it just as we must work at our obedience to God.

In verse 12 Paul draws some conclusions from all that he has asserted up to now. It is that if we are dead to sin, but alive in God through Christ, then this means that an entire new dynamic is possible for us and we need to be aware of it, and we need to take advantage. So now that we have learned how we are to think and understand what Yeshua's death and resurrection mean for the Believer on a spiritual level, the next step is to understand what physical, tangible actions we are to take as a result of this reality. And the first thing a Believer must do is to prevent sin from reigning in our lives. Before salvation we were fairly helpless against the power of sin; but now we have more control. Since the evil inclination is no longer our master and we its slave, then we shouldn't behave as though it is still that way. Soldiers and others who have had horrific experiences (especially over long periods of time) can sometimes come away with PTSD; Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. And while it can manifest itself in a number of ways, in the end the situation is that when the time comes that the victims of PTSD are no longer in those circumstances nor in harms way, their sub-conscious minds still at times feel as though they are. They can't reconcile their old dangerous situation with their new safer situation. The result can be behavior that doesn't match their current conditions, but rather is more like a strong afterglow from the trauma of the past. As Believers we had been under the power of sin, under the mastery of our evil inclinations, since our birth. We were in that dangerous condition for so long that we aren't quite sure how to act since the moment of our salvation when the situation changed. As Believers we can still carry the residue of our past sins with us, and so behave out of instinct and knee-jerk reaction more than in relation to our new reality.

Paul says that Believers, thanks to salvation, now have a control and a resource that they didn't have before coming to faith because as a result we are no longer a pawn under the spell of an evil master (our evil inclination). We are now removed from our dangerous, traumatic conditions, thus we don't have to let sin have its way with us any longer. In fact, we must fight our lingering sinful tendencies as rebels fight against an evil tyrant when we feel ourselves slipping back to the behavior and mindset of our old self, which in reality exists for us only as a memory. So Paul focuses his attention on our bodies because they still belong to this present world and can be used for either Godly things or unrighteous things. It is through our bodies that we connect to this present world; through our senses and through our extremities. So we must learn to control these bodies that were not made any different because of our salvation. We must consciously control what our bodies see, what they hear, what they touch, what they say, what they eat, what they drink, and what they do. It is through these mortal bodies where sin can have its most devastating effect because these bodies are essentially the held-over vestiges of our old self. But now we have the power of God to help us regain control for doing righteous things with these bodies instead of the unrighteous things we used to do. But make no mistake: the responsibility lies with us. We can no longer offer the excuse that "the Devil made me do it"; or "it's just my nature to do wrong". You are no longer a slave to sin and to

your evil inclination.

And how is all the above possible? In verse 14 Paul says something that has been interpreted and re-interpreted over the centuries. It has led the Church to come up with the nearly universal doctrine that the Law is dead and gone. And yet some top Christian scholars continue to say that such cannot be the case because of what Paul said and because such a thought is a radical departure from what Yeshua instructed. Let's look at verse 14 in a small sampling of different English translations.

^{CJB} Romans 6:14 *For sin will not have authority over you; because you are not under legalism but under grace.*

^{NAS} Romans 6:14 *For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.*

^{KJV} Romans 6:14 *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

Depending on how your ears are tuned, what you may have heard is that Believers are no longer subject to the Law of Moses, but rather are subject to grace. This is the primary NT verse where the doctrine of Law versus Grace is defined as not only a means to salvation, but whether the Law of Moses has any relevance in the life of a Believer. And I tell you that honest, good Bible scholars confess that this verse is very unclear and ambiguous in its meaning. So that is why various denominations will each take something different from it. Let's see what conclusions we can reach here in Seed of Abraham Torah Class.

Let's begin by noticing that of these three different versions of this verse I read to you, one in particular is a poor translation (the KJV) and another is what is called a dynamic translation, which means it is an attempt to tell us the meaning rather than transliterating the Greek words to English (the CJB). Notice how the NAS says "under law" while the KJV says "under THE Law". Clearly the use of the term "**The** Law" is nearly universally used in the Bible, OT or NT, to refer to the Law of Moses. However, "**The** Law" is an incorrect English translation. I'm not a Greek language expert but I know enough to notice that the definite article "the" does not appear before the word "law" in the Greek manuscripts. I consulted our ministry Greek language PhD. Rabbi Baruch, and he agreed that there is no definite article present. So it is NOT "under **the** Law", rather it is simply "under law". Big difference as this means that we are not to see this as meaning that Paul places the Law of Moses in opposition to grace. But it does mean that we are to see some characteristic of law itself in opposition to some characteristic of grace.

So the basic question that the Church and Bible scholars wrestle with is: is Paul saying that grace has suddenly appeared and replaced God's laws and regulations? Or, does grace perhaps replace or mitigate some aspect or consequence of laws and regulations? But the second basic question is: what does Paul have in mind when he speaks of grace? As we learned to start this lesson, we cannot just speak of grace (unmerited favor) without knowing what act of favor God connected to it. Paul has made clear that grace is not some indefinable

divine “favor” that God has given His worshippers that saves us; rather it is something very specific. It is that God favors us (He graces us) with righteousness. Or better, God favors us BY MEANS OF Him righteousing us (justifying us in more traditional terms) even though we don’t deserve it.

You know my position on this; at its most basic, whatever this verse may intend to convey it cannot possibly mean that Paul is saying that an act of divine grace has abolished and replaced the Law of Moses. Because if Paul does indeed mean that then he is in direct confrontation with His Messiah Yeshua because in Matthew 5:17 -19 Yeshua says He did NOT come to abolish the Law of Moses, and that not the tiniest part of the Law will change, let alone vanish in its entirety, until Heaven and earth pass away. And in fact, if anyone says He did, and so decides not to obey the Law, then Christ will relegate him or her to the least position in His coming Kingdom. But the people who agree with Him that the Law of Moses continues untouched, and obeys the Law, Christ will relegate as the greatest in His Kingdom.

Professor C.E.B. Cranfield’s Commentary on the Book of Romans is thought by even the greatest modern day Christian scholars to have no peer. His is the pinnacle, the Gold Standard, for Romans commentaries. Here is what Cranfield says about verse 14.

“...for you are not under the law but under grace” is widely taken to mean that the Old Testament law has been superseded, its authority having been abolished for Believers. This, it may be admitted, would be a plausible interpretation, if this sentence stood by itself. But since it stands within a document (the letter to the Romans), which contains such things as (Romans) 3:31; 7:12; 14a; 8:4 and 13:8-10, and in which the law is referred to again and again as authoritative, such a reading is extremely unlikely. The fact that ‘under the law’ is contrasted with ‘under grace’ suggests the likelihood that Paul is here thinking not of the law generally, but of the law as condemning sinners; for since ‘grace’ denotes God’s undeserved favor, the natural opposite to grace would seem to be ‘under God’s disfavor or His condemnation’. And the suggestion that the meaning of the sentence is that Believers are not under God’s condemnation pronounced by the law but under His undeserved favor receives strong confirmation from (Romans) 8:1. “So then there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

While I don’t agree with Cranfield that what Paul is referencing in this verse is the Law of Moses (for reasons I gave you moments ago), I do agree with him that it **is** usually assumed in institutional Christianity that the Law of Moses is what is intended. But even under that assumption it still doesn’t pan out that Paul is saying that Believers have no further obligation to obey the Law of Moses because instead they are under grace. In exactly what capacity the Law has relevance for Believers today is open for debate; but it is not open for debate (especially using Paul’s own words in other places in his letter to the Romans) that what he means in verse 14 is that the Law is dead and gone for Christians. So it seems clear that what we as Believers are not under is the curse of the Law; the issue is not the Law itself. The curse of the Law comes from disobeying the Law. Disobedience to the Law is defined throughout the Bible (OT and NT) as sinning. The curse that results from sinning is God’s wrath, and God’s wrath against us results in our eternal death.

But the reason that Believers who disobey the Law are NOT subject to God's wrath or our eternal death is certainly not because God has abolished the Law; but rather because God has righteoused we sinners by means of His undeserved favor upon us (His grace). Remember: since chapter 1 Paul has framed this letter to the Romans as revolving around the problem of sinning and the consequences of God's wrath. And that wrath is not only applicable to the people of the Law (Jews) who have broken the Law, it also applies to gentiles who did **not** have the Law of Moses but who **did** have God's Natural Law that all humans have written within us, but broke it, and so are also subject to God's wrath. God's solution: He righteouses Jews and gentiles who will trust in Yeshua's faithfulness to God His Father. And this righteousness exempts us from God's wrath. That is the proper doctrine.

We'll continue with Romans chapter 6 next time.