

Romans 6:14-16

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

15 *What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.*

16 *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*

We last saw that the Law actually put Israel under the *dominion* of sin, meaning it put them under the power, control, and even penalty of sin; it did not fix the underlying problem, but rather exposed it.

Because the Law recruits the flesh to perform, the Law necessarily recruits the sin of our members. This is why the sanctification of the saint requires an *alternative process*, to circumvent the sin which is in our members, thus it must be by *the Spirit—by faith in the word of God*, and that word working in our inner man. If we put ourselves under the Law, we put ourselves under the dominion of sin as well, because we are essentially putting ourselves under the dominion of our flesh.

God has not put us under the Law in any sense. Paul's focus here in Romans has been the imperfection of man in stark contrast to the absolute righteousness of God, and his use of the phrase "the Law" has been in terms of the commandments themselves—the "*Thou shalt's*," and the "*Thou shalt not's*." Thus, what is in view here is not the Old Covenant system which we call the Law, but the righteous standard of commands contained within it. We are not under the Old

Covenant system of the Law, but neither are we under any of these commandments, nor any performance based system. This means we are not under the ten commandments either.

This does not mean we are not under *anything*; God did not take us out from under the Law and then leave us to our own devices. He actually provided something more *excellent*.

Consider Philippians 1:

Philippians 1:9-11

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.

11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Paul's prayer here is that love would abound in knowledge and judgment, and that we would *approve*, or test and thereby demonstrate, the things that are excellent. If they are *excellent*, they must necessarily *excel* something else.

The power of grace *exceeds* the power of the Law, and this is exactly Paul's point in **2 Corinthians 3**, when he says,

9 For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

10 *For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.*

He is speaking here of the ministration of the Spirit in contrast to that of the Law.

And how will our love abound in knowledge and judgment? How will we approve the things that are excellent? It is by the fruits of righteousness which are *by* Jesus Christ. In 2 Corinthians 3:5 Paul tells the Corinthians,

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.

Our sufficiency is not by the Law, and it is not by the flesh; it is not by our own attempts to be righteous in our flesh, but by the *fruit* that God produces in our inner man as we engage in this process of edification that Paul calls the work of faith in 1 Thessalonians 1:3 and 2 Thessalonians 1:11. It is the “*good work*” Paul is confident that God will perform *in* the Philippians until the Day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6).

My point here is not to delve into these passages, but merely to show again that the doctrine we’re learning here at the beginning of Paul’s epistles serve as the foundation for what follows.

As I previously stated, if there is something wrong with our flesh, God must have put something in place to circumvent the flesh, if we are going to be made functionally alive to God so that we can serve Him, and be systematically conformed to His image.

We are told right here in Romans 6:14 that we are not under the dominion of sin itself because we are not under the Law but under grace. We are *under* grace.

What does it mean to be “under” grace? Verse 14 says sin shall not have dominion over us because we are not under the Law, but are under grace, drawing a parallel between Law and grace, and by implication, there is then a *dominion* to grace as well.

If one is *under* a dominion, one is in fact *subject* to a higher authority. A dominion is a sovereign or supreme authority with the right of possession and with the power to direct or control, according to Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language. To be *under* that dominion is to be subject to its authority and control.

If sin shall not have dominion *over* us, because we are not *under* the Law, but *under* grace, this means grace not only takes us out from under the dominion—*or control*—of sin, but puts us under an *entirely new dominion*. This requires there to be a *new* sovereign authority with a *new* right of possession over us, and with its own *new* power to direct or control, if we are to be consistent. And in fact this is the case.

Grace is more than “unmerited favor,” as it is often defined. It *is* unmerited favor, but it only begins with the unmerited favor of God upon the sinner, to justify him freely of all sins; it continues on however, not only to provide for the sinner what he could not provide for himself—namely, justification and its basic components (propitiation, imputation, and atonement), but it also provides something beyond these positional necessities. It provides power for the here and now so that we can be functionally profitable to God.

The mechanism by which this is possible is of course through the gospel, much in the same manner as in justification, how there was essentially a trade-off between the Lord Jesus Christ and ourselves: He performed what we couldn't and gifted it to us, while taking our sins upon Himself. The same is true for sanctification: His soul was made an offering for sin on the cross, and when we trusted the gospel we were baptized *into* Jesus Christ and our old man was crucified with Him, and in place we are given a brand new identity in Christ. Thus the work was already accomplished. What remains is the flesh and the freewill of the saint. The battle begins and ends in the mind of the believer. In this we saw previously that we must then come to *yield* to the truth.

The power of grace lies in faith in what God has accomplished, when He united our spirit with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and thus with the very power of His eternal, resurrection life. This is the power of grace.

Ephesians 1:18-20

18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places...

It's *His* power to us who *believe* in verse 19, and this is the same power that God wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. This passage is not simply speaking of the power of God to one day raise us from the dead, but of the power of God to make us functionally alive in our mortal bodies by the same power that was in Christ Himself.

Colossians 2:10-12

10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

The Ephesians and Colossians are saints who were *actively participating* in the work of faith. They were allowing their minds to be renewed and were applying the doctrine *by faith* in their daily lives, and were putting off the body of sins. Not all christians can actually say this. Not all christians are having their minds renewed by the truth and reckoning themselves to be crucified with Christ, and therefore do not experience the power and life of Christ Himself.

All of our “completion” is *from* and *in* Him, but we must engage in the work of faith in order to see it become a personal reality in life. Our being “risen with Him” (v12) depends on our being buried with Him in baptism, that is, baptized into His death, and our being risen with Him then is through *the faith of the operation of God*. This entire process of sanctification is achieved by faith and the effectual working of God’s word, by the acknowledging of the truth which after godliness (Titus 1:1).

Romans 6:15

What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

This is the fifth “God forbid” statement made in the book of Romans, where Paul again must correct our carnal thinking. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God (Rom. 8:7), and having just begun this education with the book of Romans, our minds and thinking have not been fully renewed.

Thus, to the man ignorant of the truths contained in this book, his mind is to some extent *necessarily* carnal, that is, natural, wordly, ungodly. And so Paul addresses the carnal mind and its incorrect assumptions often with this phrase, *God forbid*.

This means that the christian can be carnally minded without *appearing* ungodly. He can seem rather “godly” by outward appearance, though in truth be *ungodly* because his mind has not been renewed by the scripture to think as God, and therefore cannot access all of the free gifts God has provided for us through the gospel, such as sanctification and its components (being dead to sin and alive unto God, and walking in the status of sons of God).

This is how one can have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof (2 Tim. 3:5).

And so to the carnal mind, when you communicate the truth that you are not under the law, the natural response is often one of horror, though they themselves fail to keep the righteousness of the Law. The common objection is “so you’re saying I could just do whatever I want.”

The answer to this hypothetically is yes, but the question is based upon a faulty premise, as it comes from carnal man who *cannot* please God. Shall we sin, since we’re not under the Law? The answer of scripture is *God forbid*, but this does not negate the truth that we are not under the Law. Paul is going to now use an illustration in the following verse to support his exhortation.

Romans 6:16

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

The reality is that to commit sin is to be brought into bondage to sin, and the fruit of sin itself is death. Thus, those who choose sin choose to bring forth fruit unto death. This is antithetical to the purpose of the gospel. For a believer, to continually and consciously *choose* sin in their lives is indicative that they have not truly understood some of the essential doctrines of the faith; perhaps the wrath of God against their sin and the reality of their absolute guilt before Him is not something they have fully understood, and thus God’s grace goes unappreciated.

Or perhaps they don’t want to sin but are still held in bondage to it; this also is indicative that they have not fully understood and internalized the doctrine in their heart, for he that is dead is freed from sin (Rom. 6:7).

And so we’ve been set free; why then would we want to be brought back into the slave/master relationship of sin? You see then how the issue is one of perspective. If we see it from God’s perspective, as the scripture has been teaching us, we see that it’s not an innocuous relationship at all, but one of abuse. Sin is violence, not only against ourselves but against those around us; it violates our natural design and the rights inherent in that design, and it violates the natural

rights of those around us. This is why love is the fulfilment of the Law, as love worketh no ill to his neighbor (Rom. 13:10). The Law protected the individual and others from violations of God's design. The problem was not with the Law of course, but with us.

And so to the carnally minded, all they understand is "Thou shall," and "Thou Shalt Not." But God wants us to understand the reason behind the commandment. We must understand the nature of our relationship to sin is one of slavery and abuse, of violence, and one that leads to death, as it is the violation of God's character and design for the creation.

And so with the proper understanding of the *why*, the motivation necessarily changes. We don't need to be threatened in order to desire to walk in righteousness, we simply need to understand the nature of our old relationship to sin.

Romans 6:16 is a clear articulation of the same truth found in John 8:34:

John 8:31-36

31 *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;*

32 *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

33 *They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?*

34 *Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*

35 *And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.*

36 *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

Though the Body of Christ is not in view whatsoever in John 8, but was still a mystery hid in God, the truth of mankind's nature as that of being "in Adam," as that of a sinner, is universal. Though there are dispensational differences between God's dealings with the believing remnant of Israel

and the Body of Christ, the state of man and the spiritual needs of man are the same regardless of dispensation.

All of man is unable to justify Himself in his flesh; all of man is spiritually destitute, morally bankrupt, and in an insurmountable sin debt they will never be able to repay; all of mankind is held in bondage to sin outside of Christ, and no man is capable of providing for themselves the spiritual things needed to be made right with God or useful to God. The remnant is no different in these regards. The prophecies regarding the New Covenant testify to this, that God Himself would write His Law upon the tables of *their hearts*; that He would remove the heart of stone and replace it with a softened heart of flesh. It was necessary that God would have to do something *in them*.

The difference with the remnant will be that they are still under a time of punishment and correction according to the Old Testament Law, and thus, while God, by Christ and the Holy Ghost, provides them the freedom from sin and the power to walk in that freedom, they must endure God's chastening as sons before they receive their ultimate salvation at Christ's return. Thus, it is not works of their flesh, but a work of faith just as ours, as Christ provides everything they need to be free from sin and walk in liberty.

Consider what Peter writes in 2 Peter 2:

2 Peter 2:18-19

18 *For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.*

19 *While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.*

Just as the blood of the lamb was shed for the Passover and God ransomed the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt, and they were baptized and sanctified unto Moses, yet had to endure the temptations of the wilderness before entering the promised land, so too with the remnant in the

time of Jacob's trouble. Christ their passover was slain for them, and they were set free from the bondage of sin, and set apart for the Apostle and High Priest Jesus Christ, but must then endure the temptations of the tribulation or else risk forfeiting the promises.

The principle we learn in John 8:34 is a universal one, one that applies across time and space and dispensation—if we yield ourselves to sin, we become the servant of sin. And sin, as James says, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. And so we need to reorient ourselves in our thinking, not as that of tenacious children who don't want to be told what to do, but as mature sons and daughters who understand the implications and consequences of their choices.

It is likely your flesh lusts after certain things, but your flesh hates God, and you are not your flesh. Your flesh is a prison cell awaiting a death sentence. Your flesh can never, ever be satisfied. It is an open ended question with no answer. The result of violating God's design is death.

In **Proverbs 8**, wisdom and understanding speak and say,

1 Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?

2 She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths.

3 She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors.

4 Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man...

34 Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.

35 For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.

36 But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

