

Romans 6:1-14 "The Scandal and Sanctifying Power of Grace"

Read Romans 6:1-14

(vs. 1) The passage opens with Paul articulating a critique. If our relationship with God is based upon grace alone, if his forgiveness covers everything I have or will ever do, if my future is secure in him, then why not sin?

1. Have you encountered examples of people treating grace as if it were license to sin?

There have been a number of historical examples of this throughout church history.

A third century Bishop reflected that he was stunned by martyrs who were using their last night to revel in drunkenness and promiscuity, thinking a martyrs death would cover a multitude of sins.

In Cromwell's England an extremist sect know as the Ranters developed a doctrine of the holiness of sin. One leader cursed for an entire hour in the pulpit of a London church; others got drunk and blasphemed in public.

Though I doubt these examples would be widely known I should think we may have a few personal examples.

I have a friend who became "addicted" to the feeling of returning to God in repentance after sin. He would deliberately sin so that he feel the relief of his sins being forgiven.

We probably all have stories of people using God's forgiveness as a way to treat their sins lightly. Well God will forgive me any way so I'll do this thing.

2. (vs. 2-10) Paul will tell us that before Jesus' death and resurrection sin and death operated in our lives a certain way. After Jesus' death and resurrection sin and death operate in our lives very differently. If we are in Christ what is our relationship now with sin and death?

Jesus carried our sin to the cross and paid the wages of sin (for the wages of sin is death – Romans 6:23). If we are "in Christ" then we have paid the price of sin, he died our death, death then has no ultimate claim on us.

Our old self, our sinful self, was buried with Christ. We were once only able to sin, now we are free, free not to sin.

United with his death, we are also united with his resurrected life. Our life is hidden with God in Christ, our future secure in Him, a new humanity won in him.

3. What are the signs that a person is no longer under the "mastery" (v. 14) and the "reign" (v. 12) of sin?

We would no longer tolerate it in our lives. While we may still sin we grieve it, we are repulsed by it.

While we still sin, there will be a diminishment of indwelling patterns of sin.

4. (vs. 11) What would it look like to "consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God"? What impact would this have on our lives?

The following is an unedited excerpt from the sermon:

There's a story told from the life of St. Augustine – he had quite a reputation for being enslaved to his lustful desires – he comes to faith in Jesus – comes alive to God – now not long after he is travelling to a town where one of his mistresses lived – and she sees him and seeks to reignite the passion – but while he is very kind to her – he doesn't respond to her advances – she is confused – and thinks to herself – maybe it's that he doesn't recognize me – so she calls out after him – Augustine it's me – He turns – I know – but it is not me – consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God.

One of the commentators invites us to consider it this way – imagine you have a trust fund put into your name – unless you draw on it - it won't change your actual financial position – the trust fund should mean the end of all your financial troubles – but it won't have any effect unless it's used – we are dead to sin - unless we act on this great privilege it will not automatically be realized in our experience

5. (vs. 12-13) Paul invites us to present our members (Voice, eyes, ears, hands, feet, etc) not to sin, but to God for righteousness sake. What would it look like to present our members to God for righteousness sake?

The following is an unedited excerpt from the sermon:

Being in Christ means we can turn to such things as bitterness – anger – deceit – lust – greed – unforgiveness – and say – I don't need to give into you anymore – I don't need to give my members over to your use...

O yes you do – they respond – and more than that – you want to!

O you are right – I do want to – but you are wrong – you are forgetting the good news – I don't have to give in – Jesus Christ is dead to you – I've been baptized into him – I am united to him in his death and resurrection you have no claim on him – and because I am in him you have no claim on me either.

I am free – free to turn over my members to be instruments of righteousness – instruments of peace – reconciliation – justice – mercy - to join in the glorious symphony of new creation that God is bringing in Jesus.

6. In light of your discussion how would you answer Paul's original question - Does grace give us a license to sin?

This is a question designed to help your fellow small group participants summarize the teaching of this passage so that they may lay a hold of the teaching in their own words.

No grace is not license, grace not only justifies us (makes us right with God), grace also sanctifies us (makes us new).

7. What motivations for living holy lives are taken off the table in this teaching? What motivation(s) are we left with?

The law is taken off of the table as a means by which we are made new. We are not made new by self-discipline.

We are not made new by fear – I have to live this way or else God will "get me" or at least not bless me. If my relationship with God is rooted in grace this kind of fear is taken off the table.

We are not made new by pride – I want to live a new way so that I'm not like "those people" over there – grace tells me I am no different from "those people".

The only motivation left to the follower of Jesus is gratitude – thankfulness for all that God has done for us in Jesus.