

Doctrine of Human Behavior and Consequence

Lesson 1 - Introduction

Romans 6:14 – "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace."

INTRODUCTION

We find ourselves at the culmination of a comprehensive journey through the doctrines of Scripture. This series on human behavior and consequence stands as the final piece in our exploration of systematic theology, where we have methodically built an understanding grounded in the Bible's own words. Let us begin by considering the verse of the lesson, Romans 6:14, which reminds us of the freedom grace provides. Sin no longer holds dominion because we operate under grace, not law. This truth shapes everything we will discuss, as behavior and its outcomes must be viewed through the lens of God's redemptive plan revealed across the canon.

In summary, all believers in Jesus Christ are justified by God, both initially and perpetually, through faith in Christ and His Word. We are sons of God and heirs with Abraham, receiving his blessings not through law but grace. The Law holds no sway over us; designed as it was to curb sin, it binds its followers in futility. Under grace, we live in liberty, serving one another in love rather than pursuing selfish ends.

RECAPPING OUR JOURNEY

To appreciate where we stand now, it helps to look back at the path we have traveled. Our program started with systematic theology, where we delved into the attributes of God, the person and work of Christ, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the nature of salvation, the role of the church, and the unfolding of end times. Each doctrine emerged from the text itself, without reliance on external systems. We saw God's sovereignty in creation, His holiness demanding justice, and His love providing redemption through the cross.

We also incorporated Israelology, studying God's specific dealings with Israel as His chosen nation. We examined the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants, noting how they reveal principles of promise, obedience, and kingdom hope. The church does not replace Israel, nor do we take the history and revelations found in the Hebrew Scriptures as allegory. Rather, we understand the intent in passages like Genesis 12 and Deuteronomy 28, where God's faithfulness to Israel illustrates His character for all peoples.

Apologetics came next, arming us to defend the faith with Biblical and material evidence. We addressed challenges to Creation, Scripture's reliability, miracles, and resurrection, always returning to the text as our foundation.

Bibliology followed, affirming the Bible's inspiration, inerrancy, and sufficiency. We explored how the Holy Spirit guided human authors, incorporating their experiences while ensuring divine truth, as in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

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Our most recent series on the Biblical Worldview tied these together, showing how doctrines inform our thinking, decisions, and perception of reality. We learned to filter life through Scripture, avoiding worldly philosophies and embracing God's truth as the ultimate authority.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS SERIES

This final series integrates all these elements into the doctrine of human behavior and consequence. Why focus here? Because Scripture does not leave doctrines as truth, it shapes how we live. Behavior, at its core, flows from the heart, as Proverbs 4:23 states: "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life." The Bible portrays human actions as choices influenced by our hearts, that is, our minds. We behave wrongly often because of that inherited tendency toward self, as seen in the fall, but grace motivates us to align our will with God's principles.

Matthew 12:35 provides a clear balance, stating: "The good man out of his good treasure brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth what is evil." This verse comes right after Jesus addresses the Pharisees' accusation that He casts out demons by Beelzebul, using it to illustrate that words and actions reveal the heart's content.

The Greek word for *treasure*, *thesauros* (*thesauros*), refers to what's stored up inside, like a repository of thoughts and intentions. For the good person, this inner storehouse yields positive actions and words (kindness, truth, righteousness) because it's filled with what aligns with God's principles. For the evil man, out of his heart, brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.

Mark 7:21-23: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

The Greek word for *heart*, *kardia* (*kardia*), refers to the inner self, the seat of thoughts. Mark emphasizes that true uncleanness isn't from outside influences but from what's already inside us. Jeremiah 17:9 offers a strong parallel: "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?" This principle runs through Scripture, reminding us that behavior modification starts inwardly. This is why, as we have noted, the typical structure for Epistles in the New Testament is to demonstrate the doctrines, then challenge the behavior. Believers are to change their minds as they understand their identity in Christ and why they should behave a certain way (in response to the grace of God). When you change the way you think, you change your reason; you are actually changing what you desire; you are changing your priorities and perspectives. Then the behaviors are easier to modify.

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This is what most in Christendom miss. They attempt to modify behavior without addressing the knowledge, the thinking, or the desires of the believer.

Consequences, meanwhile, serve as God's instructive tools. They are not arbitrary punishments but outcomes that reveal truth and encourage understanding of God's will and way. In the Hebrew Scriptures, they were direct and often national, like the curses in Deuteronomy. But throughout the narrative, many individuals also experienced the judgment of the Lord. Under grace, we understand and learn from their mistakes, so we do not experience what they did, but we learn the same lessons they did.

Our aim for this study is to uncover God's perspective from Genesis to Revelation. We will examine why humans act as they do, rooted in creation's design and sin's distortion, and how consequences play out throughout history. In the end, we will remember our position under grace: free from law's bondage yet drawing timeless principles from all Scripture. This avoids inappropriate application and legalism while honoring the text's intent.

STRUCTURE OF THE SERIES

To build this understanding methodically, the series follows a structure that progresses through Scripture while highlighting key themes. We'll have 13 lessons total, with this introduction, 11 core teachings, and a conclusion.

After today, we move to Lesson 2 on God's design in creation, exploring the ideal of behavior as image-bearers. Lesson 3 addresses the fall, explaining why we behave wrongly. Lesson 4 covers patriarchal examples, like Abraham, showing faith's role in family consequences. In Lesson 5, we examine the Law's function in suppressing sin yet revealing human failure.

Lesson 6 turns to prophetic warnings, emphasizing behavior and heart issues and national outcomes. Wisdom literature takes center stage in Lesson 7, offering practical principles for choices. Lesson 8 presents Christ as the perfect model of human behavior. Apostolic teachings for the church follow in Lesson 9, focusing on living from your identity.

Lesson 10 discusses community and corporate behavior, while Lesson 11 explores conduct in trials, building endurance. Lesson 12 brings eschatological motivation, tying behavior to ultimate promises and how God uses the ultimate judgment of the wicked to curb the behavior of believers. Finally, Lesson 13 concludes by integrating it all into grace-filled living.

This flow ensures we see the Bible's unified narrative: from creation to the fall, to the restoration of all things, looking for the principles found in God's Word so we can be certain of what is right and what is wrong and understand the grace motivation for today.

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GOALS FOR OUR STUDY

What do we hope to achieve?

1. A deeper grasp of behavior as biblically defined, not cultural norms or personal feelings, but actions stemming from the believer that aligned or misaligned with God. We will ask why: What drives our choices? The sin nature pulls toward rebellion, but grace enables volition toward righteousness.
2. We aim to understand consequences objectively. In Scripture, there are natural and supernatural consequences; both are instructive for correction. For believers, they foster growth without condemnation, as Romans 8:1 assures: "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
3. Integration is the main goal. This series weaves in our prior studies:
 - Systematic Doctrines provide the "what."
 - Apologetics defends the "what."
 - Bibliology ensures the authority.
 - Worldview provides the lens and the "why."
 - This series is the "how."
 - i. We see how truth transforms thinking
 - ii. Leading to godly desires
 - iii. Providing the proper understanding of God's will for our lives
 - iv. Using the information to help us transform our behavior and character

KEY SCRIPTURES AND INSIGHTS

Let us turn to a few foundational passages to anchor this introduction.

Genesis 1:26-28 sets the stage for ideal behavior: "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"

Here, the Hebrew term for "image," **תְּלִיאֵם** (tselem), is representation, physical likeness, and/or functional role. Humans are made in his likeness, and we are created to behave to reflect God's rule with harmony. Yet sin disrupts this, as we will see.

Romans 6:14, our verse of the lesson, contrasts economies: not under law's mastery but grace's freedom. The Greek word for "master," **κυριεύω** (kurieuo), means to lord over, emphasizing sin's lost control. One of the most misunderstood doctrines is that, as believers, we do not need to sin; we are not bound to it; we are free to choose to do good.

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James 1:22-25 urges active engagement: "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does."

In essence, this is the goal: to be a hearer and a doer of the word. This is Jesus' example, and we need to understand that we are capable of doing the same thing.

The "perfect law of liberty" points to grace's framework, where behavior aligns with truth, not to be blessed but because we already are. Note how James uses the mirror analogy; self-examination leads to correction, a principle we carry forward.

CONCLUSION

This introduction lays the groundwork for our series, reminding us of our journey and setting our sights on God's view of behavior and consequence. As we proceed, let the text guide us, revealing principles that transcend time. In the next lesson, we begin with creation's design, building from there to see the full scope.