

XXXVIII. Romans in Biblical Perspective
The Gospel of God
“Paul’s Emotional Response to Gospel Heresy”
Romans 6:1–4
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This is God’s Word that is inerrant and infallible. Romans 6:1-14 says [1] *What shall we (believers) 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.*

[5] For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. [6] We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. [7] For one who has died has been set free from sin. [8] Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. [9] We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. [10] For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. [11] So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

[12] Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. [13] Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. [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.

As we get back into Romans, I am both excited and intimidated and here’s why. I recently read Paul’s exhortation to Timothy as he stepped up to preach at Ephesus in II Timothy 1:7 which says [7] *for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.* But that spirit of fear is with me and here’s why. We have already covered five chapters in Romans which is Paul’s exposition of the Gospel of God which he is eager and unashamed to preach. Now we have come to the section that covers Romans 6, 7, and 8 that deals with the Christian life. You can’t have a Christian life until you are a Christian so you have to make a commitment to Christ as your Lord and Savior.

What is the Christian life – how is it lived in a world under the curse of sin and in the lives of Christians who still have a body of death and the old man still within them? This is what Romans 6, 7, and 8 are all about. There are many other texts of Scripture that deal with the Christian life but there is no other text of Scripture that is more crucial, foundational, essential and comprehensive for the authentic Christian life than Romans 6, 7, and 8.

Having said that, here is another reason I’m excited and intimidated. Of Romans 6, 7, and 8 with their peculiar emphasis and their specific benefits to the Christian’s life, they all are built on Romans 6:1-14. This is the focus text and distillation text that Christians must grasp in order to navigate the trajectory on the Christian’s way to heaven on living under Christ, in Christ and for Christ. Furthermore, it isn’t easy but it is hard and challenging to understand. It is crucial,

but not a bumper sticker or a slogan. We will have to gird up the loins of our mind to understand this text. We will have to embrace taking every thought captive, but one of the reasons I'm glad to be in this text is in my heart of hearts pastorally and personally, I believe that as Christians here you are not averse to be a thinking Christian, to loving the Lord with all your mind and so you are willing and ready to embrace this crucial text.

I'm deeply indebted to a number of commentators who have done the deep dive into Martyn Lloyd Jones, perhaps the best expositional preacher of the 21st century. It was his book Preaching and Preachers that totally captivated my life and even had the privilege to preach about him at a recent preacher's conference and share what his life meant to me. It was an extraordinary blessing in my life. I also have his seven volume commentary series on Romans but before he ever started one of his elders came to him and said 'we have appreciated your expositional preaching, but when will you start a series on Romans?' Jones said to him 'My friend that is easy, when I understand Romans 6:1-14, I'll be ready to preach on Romans.' That's how crucial these verses are.

Now do you see why I'm excited and why I'm intimidated? One of the ways you grasp something that is hard, is God calls preachers and teachers to help you work your way through it and I don't want to falter at my task. As you read Romans 6:1 which says [1] *What shall we (believers) say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?* That statement doesn't come out of thin air. That statement comes out of the context of what we have been studying as we have worked our way through Romans 1 through 5.

Paul says this Gospel of God declares the power of God unto salvation and the righteousness of God for salvation. It is a Gospel that can and does save any and all who put their trust in Him whether they belong to the category of Jew or Gentile. Paul says in Romans 1:16-17 [16] *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. [17] For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."* In other words, you're not saved by your works but Christ's work and you obtain the benefits of that work by the power and righteousness of God by faith and He gives you the faith whereby you lay hold of Him. Paul wants to go right to the power center of Rome to preach the power of God with no reticence whatsoever because he longs to be there.

He says this this Good News is glorious, amazing, astonishing and astounding, why? It is because of the bad news. For three chapters Paul lays out the bad news – to the pagan Gentile in Romans 1:18-32, to the religious Gentile in Romans 2, then to the Jew and the bad news is that everyone who is born dies and it's because of sin. The reason we sin is we're born sinners – spiritually helpless and hopeless, unwilling and unable. At the end of Romans 1 through 3 Paul begins to compile the verses from the Old Testament to affirm this.

Paul says in Romans 3:9-12, [9] *What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, [10] as it is written: "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."* He sums it up in Romans 3:23 which says [23] *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* We are all born with a bad, sinful heart, a bad record and the wages for those sins is death. We're not sin sick but sin dead. We're not floundering in the ocean of misadventures but we're at the bottom of the ocean with a ten million pound lock upon us, with the question of Job burning upon us – how can a man be right with God when we're all wrong with God?

Then Paul tells us that God has the solution and this is why it is Good News to both Jew and Gentile. One time I was at a conference and heard a man share ‘God wants you to be saved, Amen?’ And all in the audience said ‘amen’ rightly so. Then he said ‘but God has a problem...’ We talked afterwards and I said to him ‘I thank God for your ministry and I only wish to participate in the shadow of it but to be a little more precise, God takes no delight in the death of the wicked and God calls upon us to be saved, but God doesn’t have a problem – we do. But only God has the solution and that solution is sure for it is Jesus.’

In Romans 4 and 5 Paul explains that we cannot be saved by our obedience to the law for we are saved through Christ alone. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone and when you come to Christ the power of God gives you a new heart. The righteousness of God gives you a new record. You are now alive in Christ instead of dead in sin and now you’re alive to Christ. You now have a new life and Paul sums it up 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.*

Paul doesn’t stop there for he then gives five glorious Gospel blessings that belong right now to every one who is in Christ and Christ is in you. Number one you have peace with God. Your warfare is over – Jesus is your Peace. The second blessing is that you have access to God – instead of being separated from Him now and for all eternity in hell, He is right within you. Thirdly, you rejoice in your sufferings for God. Four, instead of falling short of the glory of God, your greatest joy is worship and the glory of God. You rejoice in the glory of God. Fifthly, you are saved, sealed, secured and are being sanctified by the Spirit of God within you.

How did I get that sin nature? If I now have righteousness by grace, where did that grace and righteousness come from? At the end of Romans 5 Paul gives us the explanation. We die because we sin. We sin because of our sin nature. Our sin nature is there because when Adam sinned, we sinned because we were in Adam so we were born of Adam – dead in our sins with that sin nature – helpless, hopeless, unwilling and unable to come to Christ, with no desire to. That is original sin but it doesn’t mean the very first sin but it means the origin of all sin which began in Adam’s sin which is why we sin.

There is Good News because there is another Adam – in Adam all die but in Christ, all of His shall be made alive. By the transgression of the one we died (Adam) but by the obedience of the One (Christ) now comes grace and His righteousness. In Him I am born again with a new heart, justified with a new record, and a new life that comes from Christ. So why is the Old Testament full of the law of God? The law doesn’t have the power to save us. I don’t have the power through obedience to the law to save myself. At the end of Romans 5 Paul tells us the law is there to incite our sin. The law comes to show us the bad news that will send us to Jesus for the Good News. The law exposes sin and sin is the transgression of and the lack of conformity unto the law of God in thought, word or deed. The law also exposes your sin nature because when the law comes your desire is to rebel against it. It also exposes your inability to save yourself. The only place you can find salvation is in Jesus, not the law. You are in Him by the grace of God found in Christ, not by the law.

Where the law comes, sin abounds but in Jesus, grace does much more abound. He is not saying here is sin and here is grace. His grace is not comparative to your sin for it is much greater. God’s grace in Christ is greater than all of your sin, than any and all sin. Paul knows when he makes this statement there are going to be those who are thinking – some thoughtfully and some cynically – the cynic would say I can’t out sin God’s grace so they would think Paul has no use for the law – he’s an antinomian, meaning he is against the law. So, then the cynic

will be antinomian, won't obey the law and think they are doing God a favor because God's grace is greater than their sin and the more they sin the more grace God gives. Paul knows the cynic is already thinking that and has already acknowledged that people charged him with being antinomian – dismissing the law – and he mentions that in Romans 3.

Paul also knows there are concerned Christians who want to know where the incentive is to holiness. Here is where it is not. The incentive to holiness is not that I have to do the law to help God save me or to allow God to save me or to help God to keep me saved. There is an incentive to the Gospel use of the law and Paul will get to that in Romans 6:1-14 as he gives us three responses. He gives us his emotional response, instructional response and then his directional response. He will lay out a roadmap for us in Romans 6:1-14 as he responds to this. I won't have time to talk about baptism in this study but I am planning on giving three studies on Romans 6:1-14 that include each one of Paul's responses.

I had the opportunity in life to play sports – baseball, basketball and football. All of my coaches but particularly my football coaches, had two bags of talks – two speeches. One talk had to do with their inspirational speech, the pep talks – the one that inspired you to win the game. This talk was always at the beginning of the game, in the locker room or at half time. Then coaches also had instructional talks. It was called a skull session and that was that your head could be used for something other than a baseball cap or football helmet – it had to do with x's and o's. This skull session took place in a classroom.

This is what Paul is doing here. First, he has his emotional and inspirational response to this blasphemy of the Gospel to continue in sin that grace may abound. Then he has an instructional response – meaning get in the classroom for he is going to put you in the skull session. Paul even says in Romans 6:3, [3a] Do you not know... There is something to live the Christian life that you need a theological foundation and then he takes the time to use the sacrament of baptism to show us how arrogant and stupid the notion is that we who are believers will continue in sin that grace may abound. Then he will constantly say 'we know', 'consider', 'remember', 'so you must consider'... so from Romans 6:3 all the way to Romans 6:11 Paul moves from his emotional response to his instructional/theological response.

Here is something for you to think of between now and the next study. Then in Romans 6:12-14 Paul does something in what he writes that he has not done once in five chapters. Note he is giving directions and I'll give it to you in the next study but take a look at those verses in the meantime and ponder it.

Romans 6:12-14 says [12] *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. [13] Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. [14] For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.*

Notice that Paul doesn't give direction until he makes sure your theology is right. You know who you are, then you do, because we are not who we are by what we do – we are who we are by what He did. Now we do what we do for Him. How does Paul start here? He starts with an emotional outburst. Look at how he starts this chapter.

Paul is talking to the believer who has put their trust in Christ alone. Romans 6:1 says [1] *What shall we (believers) say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?* When I was in school there was always a chalkboard and not the electronics that there are today. There would always be somebody back then who would go to the chalkboard, put their fingernails on it and pull down. You know that screeching sound, don't you? There is a phrase I

hear quite regularly and I laugh like everyone else but it's like fingernails on a chalkboard to me – 'Oh you're reformed in your theology' or 'Oh you're presbyterian' or 'You're part of the frozen chosen.' The reason this grates on me is I don't think anyone who grasps theology in its glorious majestic truth that God is as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer can ever live as a frozen block of ice. That tells me that you don't really know your theology. Secondly, I am pained in my soul for the way those that I'm among that we might be living to give any credence to that stereotype. It pains me that we give ammunition to that wayward bullet.

When it comes to worshipping our God and being a witness for our God there is no one who ought to be more passionately engaged than those who know the truth and it sets your whole soul free. When a Lord's Day comes and Satan wants me to be a part of the frozen chosen in the gathered assembly mumbling great truths of the Gospel, then I ask God to set me free that I might praise God from whom all blessings flow. I will not let the stone cry out in my place. I want to be part of those who rise up and say 'bless the Lord Oh my soul and all that is within me bless His holy name!'

When the Apostle Paul hears the cynic come with blasphemy against the Savior, against grace against the Gospel, what does he say in his response? I believe Paul is reaching for a malediction so I tend to favor the King James and the New American Standard versions of the Bible as he says in Romans 6:2, 'God forbid this!' Paul invokes the anathema of God upon such blasphemy in the arena of Gospel sanctification – the Christian life. Paul calls for it and demands it. Paul emotionally responds to this blasphemy. I know you have heard me say many times that we don't base our Christian life on our emotions, but on the Word of God that instructs your emotions and yes, I'm not backing off of that, but when God's Word has instructed you by the Gospel and you hear this kind of blasphemy, it's time for the visible, vigorous, vital, Holy Spirit leashed display of our emotions. Worship and witness for the sanctity of our God, His Word and the Gospel must be an emotional event, for it's called to be.

I want to conclude with a couple of observations and the takeaway. Number one is, if we are not vulnerable to the charge of antinomianism then we have not proclaimed the Gospel of God with integrity. I rephrased that from Martyn Lloyd Jones. Who do you think would be in the top five of Gospel preachers of all time? Do you think the Apostle Paul would make the list? Yes. Was Paul charged with antinomianism? Yes. Are you a better Gospel preacher than Paul? No. If we're not vulnerable, and I didn't say guilty, to the charge of antinomianism then we haven't preached the Gospel of God with integrity for we make it clear that God's grace is greater than our sin. My obedience is not necessary to help God. My obedience is the evidence of the power of God.

Secondly, if we have not passionately answered the charge of antinomianism then we have not proclaimed the Gospel of God with clarity.

Here is the takeaway. Paul's emotional response reminds me to remind you, even to lay upon your heart, an authentic Christian is fully invested in the Gospel of God out of love to Christ, His people and the lost. Yes, my Christian life is not built on my emotions but it does not eradicate or cancel emotions. The Christian life is a whole hearted, whole souled endeavor. Meaning it takes all of our heart, mind and soul. When the time comes to worship God, to bear witness and to answer Gospel theological errors, we will not be silent! We will not be detached! We will not become spectators. We will not become critics. We will, led by the Holy Spirit, directed by God's Word from our mind to our heart unleash the emotions of our heart through the leadership of the Holy Spirit and when the reigns of the Holy Spirit come to give self-control

then we will ventilate Christ exalting passion and joy. Errors – anathema! Truth – glory be to God! It is not emotionalists.

Hebrews 12:2 says *[2] looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.* Then will not I who follow Him for joy not follow that Savior? I can't say 'no' to my emotions. I can't be without passion. I understand that we all have different personalities and that expressions are different, but our passion is not absent. We passionately under the reigns of the Holy Spirit defend the faith, proclaim the faith, worship our God, love and embrace, protect and declare, the Gospel – the Word of God – and the majesty of our God. You may call me the thawed flawed but I'm not going to be the frozen chosen. We will have that passion in worship and witness for Jesus Christ.

We're not only ready to give a rational proclamation in defense of the Gospel of saving grace, but we are also passionately and emotionally embracing that moment and the joy of our heart propels the truths of our mind, to the public square and for the public glory of God. This is so powerful to me because I know my own inclinations. I love the depth of God's Word, the intricacy of God's Word, the noncontradictory nature of God's Word, the consistency and clarity of God's Word and yet it can easily become a mental exercise for me but the souls of men – heaven and hell are at stake and the glory of my God is at stake. It can't be a mere mental formulaic engagement with the truth. It is a truth that sets me free and when I am free, led by the Spirit of God it brings not only the mind and will, directional and instructional, but it brings the heart – emotional.

This last year was the first time I ever spoke at the National Ligonier's Conference and after I spoke on the assigned topics a young man came up to me and said 'Would you sign my book?' I said 'I don't need to for it's already authentic and you paid for it so it's yours.' He said 'I just want you to sign it.' So I agreed to and then he said 'Is this your first time preaching at the National Conference?' I said 'Yes.' He said 'Are you a southerner?' I said 'What would give you that idea?' He said 'I just listened to you talk, the words you use and all of that and I just think that you're from the south.' 'So, why would you think that?' He said 'Your accent gives you away.'

When people meet us and say 'Are you a Christian?' Our heart should already give us away. Jesus is the joy of our life and He is our joy for life. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the privilege to be in Your Word. I thank You for the glory and majesty of Your Word and I thank You so much for Jesus. I thank You that He speaks to our hearts. If you are a believer reading this then just let the Holy Spirit speak to you right now. If you have not yet come to Christ, I invite you to come to Him, to turn from your sins and put your trust in Him for the Christian life awaits you and it's one of heart, soul and mind, but first you need to come to Him alone for your salvation. Just say to Him, 'I'm a sinner, I put my trust in You alone Jesus.' If you want to pray with someone about this, please call us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200. Don't leave today hopeless and helpless – leave today with Jesus. To those in Christ, here is our first step of our trajectory – the life of Christ is one of the heart, passionate with the truth by which it is informed through the mind and our life choices are those of passion and joy even in the midst of brokenness, through Christ our Lord, I pray this, Amen.