

## UNDERSTANDING LAW AND GRACE

### **TEXT: ROMANS 6:14-23**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. My message last week was entitled, “The Way of Victory Explained.” I stressed that Christians are dead to sin (cf. 6:1, 2, 11).
2. Dean Alford said that “dead to sin” means being separate from sin and “apathetic toward sin as the dead corpse is separate and apathetic toward the functions and stirrings of life.”
3. In his commentary on the book of Romans, W.H. Griffith Thomas tells about a missionary in South Africa who led a man to the Lord. The missionary asked the man what he thought about Colossians 3:3, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."
4. The man said, "Soon I shall be dead, and they will bury me in my field. My flocks will come to pasture above me. But I shall no longer hear them, and I shall not come forth from my grave to take them and carry them with me to the grave. They will be strange to me, as I to them. Such is the image of my life in the midst of the world since I believed in Christ" (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*).
5. We are saved by grace through faith and we are sanctified by grace through faith (6:14, 15).
6. Romans 4 & 5 teach justification by grace through faith. Romans 6—8 teach sanctification by grace through faith.
7. “Sanctification” means “holiness” (cf. 6:19, 22).
8. Romans 6—8 are very practical. We have been saved from the penalty of sin, and we have been saved from the power of sin.
9. We stopped off last week at Romans 6:14, which is the transitional verse in this chapter. As I stated last week, many people are confused over this Scripture. They seem to think that because we are not under the law we are lawless. This is not what the Bible teaches.

#### I. WHAT “NOT UNDER THE LAW” DOES NOT MEAN

#### II. WHAT “NOT UNDER THE LAW” DOES MEAN

#### III. WHAT “UNDER GRACE” MEANS

#### I. WHAT “NOT UNDER THE LAW” DOES NOT MEAN

1. It certainly does not mean we are to be lawless (6:15-18).
2. The word, “antinomianism” comes from two Greek words: *anti* means against and *nomos* means law. So antinomianism means against the law,

specifically against God's moral law. It means lawlessness. This describes many churches and many professing Christians today.

3. Nearly two thousand years ago, the apostle Paul wrote, "For the mystery of iniquity (lawlessness) doth already work" (II Thess. 2:7). This mystery of iniquity or lawlessness has infiltrated many churches.
4. On the one hand, we have churches and cults that are trying to put Christians under the Mosaic Law (e.g., SDA), and on the other hand you have churches and Christians that are promoting worldliness and lawlessness.
5. These days many churches are becoming increasingly tolerant of adultery and homosexuality. Churches are damaged and corrupted with rock music, gossiping, carnality, worldliness, etc.
6. It is not unusual to meet so-called Christians who drink, commit fornication, use dirty language, etc. and then when they are corrected they say with great indignation, "Hey, we are not under the law!"
7. But this is not what this means.
8. Romans 6—8 teach us victory over sin. But no person can expect victory over sin who has a weak, tolerant attitude toward sin.
9. The attitude that grace gives us license to sin makes deliverance from the power of sin impossible.
10. Years ago I debated a fanatical Roman Catholic on a cable TV show. I said I have been saved from the penalty of sin, and I am being saved from the power of sin, and some day I will be saved from the very presence of sin. The Roman Catholic laughed and said, "Oh, that's just something they taught you in your Baptist Bible college."
11. His remark bothered me but he had a point. He had probably seen very few Christians who have given evidence of being saved from the power of sin.
12. So we know that "not under law" does not mean "lawless." It does not mean license to sin (6:15). Then what does it mean?

## **II. WHAT "NOT UNDER THE LAW" DOES MEAN**

1. The apostle Paul is referring here to "law" (no article in the original Greek) and not just the Mosaic Law. The term "under the law" means ruled or governed by the law as a way to find victory over sin.
2. Law commands, but law cannot control. Law orders, but law cannot enable. That is why all this talk about "gun control" is foolish. Politicians can pass gun laws but they cannot force criminals (especially criminals with mental problems) to obey the law.
3. The real object of gun control is to disarm law-abiding people, not to stop shootings by maniacs who ignore the law.

4. According to Scripture, we are not justified by the law, nor are we sanctified by the law.

5. Here is a good illustration from H.A. Ironside:

Some years ago, I had a little school for young Indian men and women, who came to my home in Oakland, California, from the various tribes in northern Arizona. One of these was a Navajo young man of unusually keen intelligence. One Sunday evening, he went with me to our young people's meeting. They were talking about the epistle to the Galatians, and the special subject was law and grace. They were not very clear about it, and finally one turned to the Indian and said, "I wonder whether our Indian friend has anything to say about this." He rose to his feet and said, "Well, my friends, I have been listening very carefully, because I am here to learn all I can in order to take it back to my people. I do not understand all that you are talking about, and I do not think you do yourselves. But concerning this law and grace business, let me see if I can make it clear. I think it is like this. When Mr. Ironside brought me from my home we took the longest railroad journey I ever took. We got out at Barstow, and there I saw the most beautiful railroad station and hotel I have ever seen. I walked all around and saw at one end a sign, 'Do not spit here.' I looked at that sign and then looked down at the ground and saw many had spitted there, and before I think what I am doing I have spitted myself. Isn't that strange when the sign say, 'Do not spit here'?"

"I come to Oakland and go to the home of the lady who invited me to dinner today and I am in the nicest home I have been in. Such beautiful furniture and carpets, I hate to step on them. I sank into a comfortable chair, and the lady said, 'Now, John, you sit there while I go out and see whether the maid has dinner ready.' I look around at the beautiful pictures, at the grand piano, and I walk all around those rooms. I am looking for a sign; and the sign I am looking for is, 'Do not spit here,' but I look around those two beautiful drawing rooms, and cannot find a sign like this. I think 'What a pity when this is such a beautiful home to have people spitting all over it—too bad they don't put up a sign!' So I look all over that carpet, but cannot find that anybody have spitted there. What a queer thing! Where the sign says, 'Do not spit,' a lot of people spitted. Where there was no sign at all, in that beautiful home, nobody spitted. Now I understand! That sign is law, but inside the home it is grace. They love their beautiful home, and they want to keep it clean. They do not need a sign to tell them so. I think that explains the law and grace business."

As he sat down, a murmur of approval went round the room and the leader exclaimed, "I think that is the best illustration of law and grace I have ever heard." {*Illustrations of Bible Truth* by H. A. Ironside, Moody Press, 1945, pp. 40-42 }

6. This is what Romans 6:14 means. The law commands but the law cannot enable. To teach that one can be saved by the law is to deny the Gospel.

7. Galatians 2:21 says, "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."
8. Paul says in Galatians 3:24 that "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."
9. The law reveals our sin and shows us our sin, so that we might turn to Christ and be saved (Rom. 8:3).
10. You can think of the law as a mirror showing you your need for soap and water. The law shows us our need for salvation but the law cannot save us. We are saved by God's grace (Eph. 2:8, 9).
11. When people boast of keeping the Law (e.g., Orthodox Jews, SDA, etc.) they are deceiving themselves. "Being under the law" implies at least three things:
  - a. A divine commandment ordering perfect obedience
  - b. A divine promise of reward for perfect obedience
  - c. A divine threatening of punishment for falling short of perfect obedience
 (from W.H. Griffith Thomas, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*).
12. The law demands perfect obedience. Exodus 19:8 says, "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD."
13. Deuteronomy 27:26 says, "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen."
14. James 2:10 says, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."
15. Galatians 3:10 says, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written (in Deuteronomy 27:26), Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."
16. These Scriptures demonstrate the utter futility of attempting to live under the law (cf. Galatians 5:1-4).

### III. WHAT "UNDER GRACE" MEANS

1. The word "grace" is one of the most beautiful words in the English language. It speaks of reconciliation with God, cleansing from sin, the enjoyment of God's favor, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, victory over sin, eternity in heaven – and much more.
2. The idea behind the term "under grace" is God's gracious bestowment of inward power to obey Him (Rom. 6:14). Grace displaces the old subjection to sin.

3. In Romans 6:14, there is a promise and then the provision -- "For sin shall not have dominion over you" (the promise); "for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (the provision -- God's grace).
4. The law demands obedience, but grace supplies the will to obey and the power to obey. Grace breaks the mastery of sin as law could not.
5. Therefore, "under grace" cannot possibly mean license to sin (Rom. 6:15). Rather, it refers to the power not to sin.
6. W.H. Griffith Thomas said, "The Cross of Christ has not only separated us from the consequences of sin as transgression; it has separated us from the authority of sin as lord" (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*).
7. There are certain things a Christian must know if he is to have victory over sin. First there is our union with Christ (6:3, 6, 9).
8. Union with Christ in His death means victory over sin – we are dead to sin. Union with Christ in His resurrection means walking in newness of life (6:4).
9. Our union with Christ means deliverance from the power of sin. Griffith Thomas said, "Sinning is absolutely impossible to those who realize and maintain their union with Christ. Union with Him in His death means cessation from the exercise of sin; union with Him in His life means the communication of new life and power."
10. Now we see in verse 16 another fact that we must know – we now have a new Master (6:16). Over and over the Bible teaches we can only serve one Master.
11. Our Lord said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).
12. Sin is a terrible slave-master. Sin always enslaves people (Rom. 6:16). We see this vividly here in New York where there are literally millions of people enslaved to sin – drugs, alcohol, smoking, pornography, gambling, homosexuality, adultery, etc.
13. The other day a wealthy dermatologist from Manhasset died of a drug overdose. She was married with children but was out drinking and doing drugs with another man, who was also married.
14. The Bible teaches that when a man yields to sin, sin gets a hold on him and soon he is under the power of sin. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John 8:34; cf. II Peter 2:18, 19).
15. "But God be thanked..." (6:17), there have been multitudes of sinners who have turned from sin to Christ (6:17).
16. We ought to thank God that we are no longer servants to sin (cf. 7:25a).

17. We ought to thank God that now we have the privilege of serving Him.
18. Ephesians 5:20 says, "Giving thanks always..."
19. First Corinthians 15:57 says, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."
20. Second Corinthians 2:14 says, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ."
21. God does not want us to live defeated, but to "triumph in Christ."
22. "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."
23. Most religions teach you must serve in order to be saved. But the Bible teaches that we have been saved to serve (6:18). We are free from the power of sin, and free to serve God (cf. vss. 18 and 20).
24. "Reckon" (6:11) is a fact word; and "yield" (6:13, 16, 19) is an act word.
25. God reckons us to have died with Christ; therefore we are to keep on reckoning ourselves to have died and to have risen with Him. These are Bible facts, which we are to believe (6:11), and then act upon (6:11-13).
26. Verse 19 reminds us that our flesh is weak; therefore we must not yield to the flesh.
27. Instead we must yield to righteousness and holiness (6:19). Griffith Thomas refers to this as "a transfer of moral energy...as we serve our new Master." Sin was our old master; Christ is our new Master.
28. Romans chapter 5, 6, 7, and 8 all end the same way -- "through Jesus Christ our Lord."

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. There is an interesting word found in Romans 6:17 – "form of doctrine." This word can be translated as "mould."
2. *Vine's Expository Dictionary* says, "The Gospel is the mould; those who are obedient to its teachings become conformed to Christ."
3. Another preacher put it this way, "When we were saved, God cast our inward natures into the mold described in Romans 6. The gospel not only delivers us from the penalty and power of sin; it shapes our character as well" (John Phillips, *Exploring Romans*).
4. Beloved, let us thank God for our salvation (6:17). Let us thank God we have been delivered from the bondage of sin and the power of sin.
5. And let us "obey from the heart that form of doctrine" so that God can mold us into the kind of Christians He wants us to be.