

## Paul's Letter to the Romans Lesson 4

The grace of God came to the world because of sin. Where sin exists, grace exists. Where sin increases, grace increases. Sin can never become greater than the grace of God. Prior to the Lord's giving the Law to the Jews, sin existed, but man did not understand the extent of sin from God's perspective. Man instinctively knew the difference between wickedness and goodness, yet he did not grasp the full scope of sin. Finally, the Law provided mankind with God's list of sins and their eyes were opened to God's concern for godliness in the daily lives of man. Instead of just looking at the overall picture of wickedness and goodness in a man's life, man could now look at a document that caused him to examine every details of his life. Going from the general to the specific, sin now abounded as man recognized the minute sinful acts occurring in the heart and soul as well as the physical acts performed with the body. The check list of sins in a person's life multiplied in number, but sin can never increase beyond the capacity of God's grace to forgive.

**Romans 6:1** What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? **2** May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? **3** Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? **4** Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

**Grace of God** - In chapter 5 Paul introduces the picture of God's interjection of His grace to the world through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Actually, the grace of God has always existed in the world, but Christ's death is the ultimate interjection of God's grace into the daily lives of mankind. The sins committed by all of mankind can never overwhelm the gift of God's grace portrayed on the cross. Knowing that the grace of God increases beyond man's ability to sin, should man purposefully sin to cause the grace of God to increase all the more? Absolutely not! When we place our belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, our old sins have not only been overlooked, they have also been wiped clean from the slate in God's eyes. When this transformation occurs in our lives, Paul says we "died to sin." A person who is transformed by the grace of God through his belief in Jesus Christ knows that his sins have been forgiven and wiped clean from his slate. Why would he want to return to the mire of his old sins? Notice how Paul draws the picture of baptism into the story. Paul's intent is to show how the redeemed man participates in God's grace through Christ's death. Baptism is a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. When a person follows the Lord's example and command in baptism, he is buried with Christ in the likeness of His death and risen to walk in a newness of life.

**5** For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also *in the likeness* of His resurrection, **6** knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; **7** for he who has died is freed from sin.

**Grace of God** - The promise of the gift of God is not only the grace of God to wipe away past sins; it is also the promise of a resurrection to a new life. In the context of this passage Paul is not focusing on the resurrection to eternal life with the Lord after death; rather, he is focusing on daily life in this world after the transformation triggered by belief in Christ. The sins of the past are removed from the record on the day of salvation; however, in this life, the next day the temptation to sin returns and that temptation must be avoided. Before belief in the Lord, a person is enslaved to his sins; after belief in the Lord, a person must live as if he is free of the old sins that enslaved him.

<sup>8</sup>Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,  
<sup>9</sup>knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. <sup>10</sup>For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. <sup>11</sup>Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

**Grace of God** –Paul now moves to the topic of the long term gift of God's grace. Just as death could not master the Lord Jesus Christ after His death, so too, the threat of death and eternal separation from God means nothing since the believer has already died with Him and risen with Christ in eternal life. Since death has no mastery over Christ, death has no mastery over the believer because he has died with Christ into the likeness of His death and risen in the likeness of His resurrection.

<sup>12</sup>Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts,  
<sup>13</sup>and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. <sup>14</sup>For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.

**Grace of God** - After salvation, brought about because of belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, Christians must not allow the sins of the past to continue in their daily lives. Christians must not purposefully sin; rather, Christians must purposefully live in righteousness. The Law leads to the curse of death, but the grace of God leads to the gift of eternal life. The Law speaks plainly regarding God's perspective of sin leading to the curse of death. As the beloved of God, we must not allow any of the sins described by Him in the Law to master our lives. We must master the sins, putting them far from realm of Christian life.

<sup>15</sup>What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! <sup>16</sup>Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? <sup>17</sup>But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, <sup>18</sup>and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

**Grace of God** – Once we enter into a sin, physically or mentally, the sin becomes our master. The sin is inanimate. The sin cannot act on its own.

The sin does not exist unless a person commits the sin. It is a thought. It is a feeling. It is a desire. It becomes the most important thing in our lives, yet it cannot exist unless we commit the sin. People who become slaves to their sins cannot control their addiction. The grace of God frees us from our addiction to those sins, and at that point we must become slaves to righteousness. Righteousness is God's approval process, bestowed by God not man. God deems us righteous beyond our deeds because God looks at our hearts. If the heart is enslaved to sin, God sees unrighteousness. If the heart is enslaved to God's righteousness, God sees righteousness.

<sup>19</sup>I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

**Grace of God** – Even though the faith of the Roman church was known worldwide according to chapter one, the members of the church were immature in their daily walk. Paul refers to this immaturity when he speaks of the “weakness of your flesh.” The faith of the church members is strong, but the flesh of the church members is weak. The impurity of the Roman world, with its false religions and Roman culture, has infiltrated the daily lives of the beloved of God. Paul is using this letter to pull the Roman church into maturity and strength in Christ. Paul is straight forward in addressing the problem in the Roman church when he says, “present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.” Fleeing from sin and charging toward righteousness leads to sanctification.

Sanctification is part of the gift of grace of God. Sanctification and holiness are synonymous. Both mean that a person is “set apart,” different from the rest of the world. This new godly life is slavery to righteousness that results in this “setting apart.” It is slavery without lapses in judgment and sinful sprees. As a slave to sin, righteousness does not exist. As a slave to righteousness, sin should not exist.

<sup>20</sup>For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

<sup>21</sup>Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. <sup>22</sup>But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. <sup>23</sup>For the wages of sin is death, but the free **gift of God** is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Gift of God** – The grace of God is the gift of God. When a person is transformed at his salvation by the grace of God, sins are wiped away, death has no power, sanctification ensues, and God's gift of eternal life is awarded. Eternal life cannot be awarded to a person who is a slave to sin for the wages of sin is eternal death, not eternal life. Once a person is enslaved to righteousness, eternal life is awarded as part of the free gift of God and His grace.

**Romans 7:1** Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? <sup>2</sup>For the married

woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. <sup>3</sup>So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man.

**Gift of God** - The gift of God clears up many of the issues in daily life. Paul gives an example of one issue by addressing the institution of marriage. Marriage is a covenant between a man and woman for life. Once death separates the two, the remaining spouse is free to marry again without breaking the Law, is sinless in action, and approved by God. However, if, as in this illustration, a woman has sexual relationships with a man who is not her husband while still married to her husband, she is seen in God's eyes as an adulteress, a breaker of the Law, guilty in action, and disapproved by God. As long as a Christian is alive on earth, the Law still instructs that person in God's approval and disapproval of personal actions. Christians under the gift of God cannot break the Law of God and remain pure in God's eyes.

<sup>4</sup>Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God. <sup>5</sup>For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were *aroused* by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. <sup>6</sup>But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

**Gift of God** – After giving the example of the marriage between a man and a woman, Paul compares marriage to our relationship with God. While we are in a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, we are in a marriage of holiness, set apart from the world and its evil lust. We are pure and holy, approved by God and sinless in action. However, if we stray from our relationship with Christ and pursue our sinful passions, we have become adulterers in our relationship with Christ. The gift of God's grace releases us from the Law which condemns our sins so we can serve the new relationship of the Spirit and our marriage to Christ.

<sup>7</sup>What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET." <sup>8</sup>But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin *is* dead.

**Gift of God** – By the gift of God, the Law is not sin, it does not create sin, it does not cause sin, and it can not be accused of being sin. The Law simply states God's record of what He considers sin for our benefit. Once we know what God considers sin, our eyes are open to the multiple sins that we are guilty of in God's eyes. Once Paul knew about coveting, his eyes were open to all the instances of coveting in his own life. Without the Law, Paul would never have known that he was sinning against God through coveting because the Law brought his sin to life.

<sup>9</sup>And I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died; <sup>10</sup>and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; <sup>11</sup>for sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me. <sup>12</sup>So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. <sup>13</sup>Therefore did that which is good become *a cause of death* for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

**Gift of God** - Paul is no different from the rest of mankind. A person who has never heard the Law does not understand why certain things are considered sinful to the believer. Actually, it has nothing to do with the believer at all. The believer knows that something is a sin because he knows God's law. To the unbeliever, the Law of God is foreign. The Law is holy and righteous and good because once a person hears the Law, he has heard the word of God concerning sin. Once the Law of God is known, that person knows he is sinning against God with his sinful actions.

<sup>14</sup>For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. <sup>15</sup>For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate. <sup>16</sup>But if I do the very thing I do not wish *to do*, I agree with the Law, *confessing* that it is good. <sup>17</sup>So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. <sup>18</sup>For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is not*. <sup>19</sup>For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. <sup>20</sup>But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. <sup>21</sup>I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. <sup>22</sup>For I joyfully concur with the **law of God** in the inner man, <sup>23</sup>but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

**Law of God** – Paul reveals a part of his personal life that is rarely seen in Scripture. In an unprecedented style of writing, Paul states the personal struggle within his earthly body. Like every human being on earth who believes in Christ as Lord and Savior, Paul is striving to do well and flee from evil, yet evil creeps into his daily life. Try as he may, Paul is not sinless. Yes, he is an apostle of the Lord, called to minister to the Gentiles, sanctified and set apart for the work of the Lord; however, sin still dwells in his earthly body. Paul cannot get away from sin in his life. Everyday he must fight the battle and master sin before it masters him. Long before the Law of God was presented to man, the Lord addressed Cain on this same matter.

**Genesis 4:3-7** So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. <sup>4</sup>And Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; <sup>5</sup>but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very

angry and his countenance fell. <sup>6</sup>Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? <sup>7</sup>"If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? **And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.**"

Sin crouched at the door of Cain. In his heart he detested his brother Abel and wanted him dead. Cain did not master his sin and killed Abel. He became a prisoner of his sin and he could not escape its draw and desire. Paul did not want to fall into the same sin of allowing his sin to be his master.

<sup>24</sup>Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

<sup>25</sup>Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the **law of God**, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

**Law of God** - Sin is at the door of Paul's heart, even while he is faithfully serving in the army of the Lord. Paul recognizes his sin and his wretched state, but he also recognizes the grace and gift of God that has freed him from the penalty of death. It is no different for our lives today. Sin is crouching at our doors, seeking to devour our lives and destroy our labors for the Lord. Even in the midst of this sin we are set free from the penalty of death. The law of God shows our need for the gospel of God, concerning the Son of God which is the power of God to salvation. The Son of God provides the gift of God which is the grace of God, keeping us from the wrath of God in every instance.