

It Is Written

*A weekly publication of the
Junction Highway church of Christ in Kerrville, TX.*

Vol. 1

April 7, 2019

No. 14

Under Grace

By Doy Moyer

“For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace” (Rom 6:14).

By this point in Romans, Paul had been laying out his case for the need of the gospel, wherein the power of God for salvation is displayed for all who, by faith, stand in God’s grace. In simplified form:

- 1. Gentiles are sinners (ch. 1).
- 2. Those who judge others are also guilty (ch. 2).
- 3. Jews are sinners (ch. 2).
- 4. All have sinned; grace through Christ is God’s answer to the problem (ch. 3).
- 5. The works of Law are insufficient to justify (ch. 4). We need grace.
- 6. Abraham is the pattern of faith for both Jew and Gentile, given that he was justified prior to the Law (ch. 4).
- 7. We have access by faith into the grace and peace offered by God (ch. 5).
- 8. Adam presents a path and pattern of sin; Christ presents a path and pattern of righteousness (ch. 5). Grace is highlighted through Christ.
- 9. Grace does not give license to sin, and being baptized into Christ means we have chosen to follow the path and pattern of Christ into righteousness as it indicates our own death, burial, and resurrection (both newness of life now and future resurrection, ch. 6).
- 10. Because we submitted to Christ, we are set free from sin. Because of that, “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (6:11).
- What, then, of verse 14?

While it is true that one can give himself completely over to unrighteousness overtly, there is something else to think about as it relates to “not under law but under grace.”

These are two systems of justification. We can attempt to be justified by law or we can submit to the justification of grace. In Christ, justification by grace through faith is the only viable option because law cannot save.

Paul’s argument should spur us on to a better mindset about our relationship to God, sin, and God’s will for us. I can approach my sin in one of two ways: I can try to “work it out” by law, which means I am an horrible failure, or I can receive God’s forgiveness of sins by His grace.

This has a practical import. How many times have we felt, “I just can’t do it”? When we are feeling that way, it is probably because we are seeing our justification based on law, in which case our failure is on display. The problem is that if we maintain this mindset for long, we will continually feel the sting of those failures and then be tempted to quit altogether. We don’t see forgiveness. “I’ve tried and tried, and I fail every time. I just can’t do it. I might as well give up.” Law has won out. We are enslaved to sin because we cannot escape the failure highlighted by this “justified by law” mentality. Works become more ritualistic, more of a drudgery, and this is not sustainable in service to God. This is a burden we cannot bear.

The good news is that we can, instead, see our justification in light of God’s grace. In this mindset, forgiveness is highlighted. We will not think that we can continue in sin (6:1-2), but we will also recognize that we cannot be justified by law because our sin makes that impossible. Instead of being burdened by the continual reminder of our sins, we are encouraged by grace and forgiveness and spurred on to submit to God’s will because we are thankful for what He has done. This is the significance of Titus 2:11-14. The grace of God teaches us to do God’s will, not because we think we are flawless, but because we are grateful for God’s salvation. This, in turn, makes us zealous for good works (cf. Eph 2:8-10). The fruit is sanctification and life (6:22).

Seeing our justification in light of grace is why we can consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God (v. 11). Instead of continually seeing ourselves as abject failures before God, God says we are to think of

ourselves as alive to Him. This is not saying we are flawless or never aware of sin. It is saying that we are seeing ourselves more as God sees us. Our minds have been renewed. Our thinking is changing.

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.” (Rom 8:5-6).

This is about a mindset. It is about the way we learn to see ourselves in the way God sees us. We are justified through His grace, and that changes everything. I can serve God with this mindset because I no longer have to be dragged down by my sin. I can thank God for forgiveness and seek to do His will out of a grateful heart. We are not ignoring our sin; we are experiencing the forgiveness of it. Praise God!

Christ Will Never Reign Over An Earthly Kingdom

By Bryan Matthew Dockens

Confusion persists as to the nature of the Kingdom of Christ. Many cling to the notion He will one day claim a throne in Jerusalem from which He will reign a thousand years, but Scripture teaches otherwise.

1. His Kingdom is invisible. “Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, “See here!” or “See there!” For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20-21).

2. His Kingdom is otherworldly. “Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36).

3. His Kingdom already exists. “And He said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power” (Mark 9:1).

4. His Kingdom will not begin at the end of time. Rather, that is when He will present His perfect kingdom to His Father. “Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power” (1st Corinthians 15:24).

5. The curse of Coniah forbids Jesus from reigning in Jerusalem. Concerning the last king of Judah, the prophet wrote, “Thus says Jehovah: ‘Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days; For none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah” (Jeremiah 22:30). Because Jesus is a descendant of Coniah (Matthew 1:1-11), also called Jeconiah, He is disqualified from occupying a throne in Judah.

6. Christ will never step foot on earth again. The apostle Paul comforted Christians who stressed about the end times, telling them, “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1st Thessalonians 4:17). If the saved will meet the Lord in the air and if the saved will thereafter always be with the Lord, then the Lord is not coming back to earth.

7. The Revelation concerned events imminently fulfilled. The first sentence of that prophecy says so: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants — things which must shortly take place” (Revelation 1:1). The word “shortly” means absolutely nothing if this prophecy remains unfulfilled two millennia later.

8. The Revelation pertains to Jerusalem’s destruction, not the end of the world. “And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified” (Revelation 11:8). Our Lord was crucified in Jerusalem. His warnings about Jerusalem’s destruction (Matthew 24) mirror the contents of the Revelation.

9. Theories about an earthly reign fail to consider figurative language. Scripture does foretell that “they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years” (Revelation 20:1-7), but it does so in a book full of symbolism. Christ is known to become exasperated with disciples who fail to grasp figurative language (Matthew 16:5-12).