



THE TEACHING ABOUT

HUMANKIND

commonground
church

GROUNDED 1

Talks 11-15 of Michael Eaton's Whole Counsel of God series

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MAN AS THE IMAGE OF GOD

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THE TEACHING ABOUT HUMANKIND, PART 1 MAN AS THE IMAGE OF GOD

TALK 11

Contents:

- Introduction
- We are made in the image of God

INTRODUCTION

Note: Eaton uses the terms 'man', 'humanity', 'humankind' and 'the human race' interchangeably. Why is it necessary to think through our understanding of the human race? Answer: it helps us understand ourselves. We struggle to understand ourselves. Unless God gives us a revelation, we don't even understand ourselves.

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

The world is always trying to medicate its symptoms. Educators, politicians, philosophers, and professors always try deal with our circumstances. But they fail to see that it is not our environment that is wrong, it is humanity itself. If we educated a sinner, he is merely an educated sinner. If we make a poor man rich, he becomes a rich sinner. The source of the problem is the human race itself. This is why the gospel does what reformers can't. It gives people a new heart.

Throughout the Bible we see stories of people who don't understand themselves. For example, see how Nebuchadnezzar has an inflated view of himself.

Daniel 4:28-32

All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" Even as the words were on his lips, a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox.

Or think of Paul's description of a man who can't make sense of himself.

Romans 7:15-19

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.

Very often, people study theology or psychology to try to make sense of themselves. Unfortunately, this doesn't always help – it can get people more ignorant about who they are.

We think of David who makes sense of himself as a human being as he ponders God's greatness.

Psalms 8:3-5

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what are mere mortals that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned them with glory and honour. Some people, trying to make sense of themselves, are too optimistic (e.g. Nebuchadnezzar), while others are too pessimistic (e.g. suicidal Judas).

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT WHO WE ARE?

We are made in the image of god

Genesis 1:26-27

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image (or 'as our image'), in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created human beings (Hebrew: 'adam') in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

When it says, 'Let us' it means that God took counsel within himself. Human beings are made in the image of God. In Genesis 1-2, everything revolves around humanity. God shapes it for humanity. Even the sun and moon are for telling us the seasons and times. Every plant is for our food. The word 'adam' as a name only comes in, in Genesis 4. Genesis 2 tells us much about man: Man is given work to do. Man's obedience is tested. He is under probation. He is sinless, but is able to sin. There is one thing that is defective when God first made the man – he is alone (2:18).

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE 'IN GOD'S IMAGE'?

There have been many different answers over the centuries, depending on what people have been interested in:

- Augustine, interested in Plato, believed it was an immortality of the soul.
- In the sixteenth century, the Reformers said it referred to the righteousness of man.
- In the nineteenth century, the people said it referred to the dignity and brotherhood of man.
- Barth, in the twentieth century, said it related to our capacity for relationship.

How do we find out what it means? There are three answers:

- We must look at the concept of 'image' in the ancient world.
- We must look at the phrase in the context of Genesis 1 and 2.
- We must look at what the New Testament says about the term? (Curiously, Eaton does not do this).

a) 'Image' in the ancient world. In temples there used to be a statue or image of the god whose temple it was. So, when the Bible tells us that humanity is God's image, it means that the whole world is God's temple, and human beings represent the God whose temple this is. Man is the representative of God. It is for this reason that man 'rules' in the world. He is God's ambassador. He represents the kingship of God.

b) The context of Genesis 1-2. We learn much about the personal nature of God in Genesis 1-2. He thinks, creates, chooses, discusses, speaks, interacts, is righteous, is good, sees, and enjoys. In the same way, God made us to be like God: thinking, creating, discussing, speaking, investigative, think about the future, relational. To be an image-bearer means to reflect God's personal nature.

So what is the image of God? It is a multi-meaning term that refers to who man is in himself, as well as to how man functions.

BEING AN IMAGE-BEARER IS A REFERENCE TO WHAT MAN IS IN HIMSELF.

Like God, we are personal. We are spiritual. We survive beyond the grave. We are able to think, plan, interact, and speak language. These are god-like qualities. Only the human race has these qualities. What about our bodies? Are our bodies part of the image? The answer is yes. In the Bible, our hope is a resurrected body on a glorified earth, not some ethereal experience in outer space (a Platonistic idea). The Bible doesn't speak about the immortality of the soul, but it does speak about the immortality of the body. The shape of our bodies tells us something about God. The word 'image' means 'shape'. Does God have a body? Answer: no. But does God have a 'shape'? Answer: Yes. When God appears, he does appear in a shape. We are designed after that shape, that image. Often when God appears to people in the Bible, he does so in the shape of a man. He is not appearing in our image however. His shape pre-existed the human race. The whole person of man (body, spirit, mind) is a representation of God in some way.

BEING AN IMAGE-BEARER IS A REFERENCE TO MAN'S FUNCTION.

In Genesis 1:28-29 it immediately links the fact that we are image bearers with our function. We have ruler-ship in this world. We are to shepherd and guard this world.

Unfortunately, the Bible tells us that we have failed to do so. Although we were made for kingship, we have lost some of the image of God, some of his glory. That is why we don't have the dominion over the world that we ought to. Hebrews 2 tells us two things on this theme.

'At present we do not see everything subject to them' (v8). We've lost our authority.
'But we do see Jesus' (v9). Christ is regaining that authority for us.

We are not to exploit or dominate our world. We are to shepherd the world. We are to look after it.

We are also meant to have creativity in this world. If God, in whose image we are made, is Creator, then we too have creativity. We can't create things out of nothing like God can. But there is meant to be creativity in our lives. Our function in this world is to represent God – his loving rule, and his creativity.

Jesus is the perfect image of God. We as Christians need to imitate the image of Christ in this world. 'Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matthew 5:48). 'Blessed are the peace-makers, for they will be called 'sons of God'' (Matthew 5:9). We're meant to display the glory and character of God in our actions and deeds. Like a child reflects and represents a parent, so we're meant to reflect and represent God in this world.

SOME IMPLICATIONS THAT COME WITH US BEING IMAGE-BEARERS:

1) It explains the second of the ten commands. We are not to make an image of God, because we are to be the image of God.

Exodus 20:4

“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

2) It explains sin. Sin is the losing of the glory of God.

Romans 3:23

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

3) It explains why some crimes are worse than others. Murder is worse than other sins for this reason. It attacks the image.

Genesis 9:6

Whoever sheds human blood, by human beings shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made humankind.

Gossip and slander is wrong because it is speaking against a person made in God's likeness. It attacks the image of God.

James 3:9

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness.

4) It explains why men and women are equal in status. Both are in the image of God.

5) It helps us understand what it means that Jesus is the image of God. To know what God is like, look at Jesus.

John 14:9

Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.

6) It is the explanation of our ultimate destiny. When we are glorified, we shall be restored to our destiny as full image-bearers of God. As Jesus is clothed with glory, so shall we be in our resurrection body.

1 Corinthians 15:49

And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man (i.e. Adam), so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

We still have the image of God (James 3:9), but it has been damaged. It is being restored in us. We are being transformed 'from one degree of glory to another' (2 Corinthians 3:18). Ultimately, Christ will bring us to glory (Hebrews 2:10).

THE TEACHING ABOUT HUMANKIND, PART 2

THE ASPECTS OF MAN

TALK 12

Contents:

- Aspects of man: body, soul, flesh, mind

ASPECTS OF MAN: BODY, SOUL, FLESH, MIND

There are many words that speak of the different aspects of our make-up. None of these terms are exactly technical terms. We must be careful how we use language from the Bible.

Sometimes we just use Bible words. But meanings of these words tend to vary in different places in the Bible.

Sometimes we take one meaning of a Bible word, and we make it our technical term. But, again, there are different usages of words in the Bible.

Sometimes we use our own term (not a Bible word) to capture a meaning.

THE WORD 'BODY' (GREEK: 'SOMA')

Romans usages of the word 'body':

- For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with (6:6)
- Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires (6:12)
- What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? (7:24)
- Even though your body is subject to death because of sin (8:10)
- He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies (8:11)
- By the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body (8:13)
- We wait eagerly for our adoption, the redemption of our bodies (8:23)
- In view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God (12:1)

SO WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT 'THE BODY'?

a) The body is not evil in itself. Plato, the Greek philosopher, deemed the body to be evil, a prison for the soul. But the Bible doesn't see the body like this.

b) But the body is not yet redeemed (Romans 8:23). There is a bit of our salvation which we've not yet got. We still have a fallen body. One day our body will be saved too. We are awaiting our new resurrection body. The body is dead (i.e. fallen, not saved) because of sin. For now, it is a 'lowly body' or a 'body of humiliation' (see Philippians 3:21). But he will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body. For now, our body is decaying. It is like an old clay pot (2 Corinthians 4:7). However, Christ wants his life to be manifested even in our mortal bodies (2 Corinthians 4:11).

c) The body is used by sin. The body is not sinful in itself, but it is used by sin. Sin comes to us through this fallen, unredeemed aspect of our being. This is what is meant by the phrase 'the body of sin' (Romans 6:6). Sin comes to us through our body. We're tempted through it. It is not only physical sins (such as lust, gluttony, laziness) that come to us through our bodies. All sins come to us through it. That is why Paul prayed, 'Who will rescue me out of this body?' (Romans 7:24). That is why he said that the body is a body of death.

d) We should say no to sin in our bodies. Since we are no longer slaves to sin (Romans 6:6), we have to take charge of our bodies (Romans 6:5). On the one hand the Spirit who lives in us is producing new life, yet we're still tempted through our unredeemed body. The body drags us down. That is why we're told to mortify the deeds of the body (Romans 8:13) with the help of the Spirit. We have to handle the body. We ourselves, now under grace, have power over sin. We are no longer in the kingdom of sin. That is why we have authority to say no to the temptations that come to us through the body. Although sin no longer reigns over us, it does try get to us through our bodies. That is why we must 'not let sin reign in our bodies' (Romans 6:12). We are to 'beat our bodies'. We are to 'strike a blow to our bodies and make it our slave' (1 Corinthians 9:27). We are to discipline our bodies. This does not refer to asceticism, treating our bodies badly. Rather it is reference to self-control. We are to glorify God in our bodies.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.

e) We should present our bodies to God and righteousness. We offer our members to God. Our members refers to the bits and pieces of our physical life (eyes, hands, mouth, brain etc).

Romans 6:19

Just as you used to offer your members as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer your members as slaves to righteousness

f) We don't totally identify with our bodies. Paul said, 'I see in my members' (Romans 7:23). Your body is you in one sense. But it is not you in another sense. There is a subtle disassociation here. 'You' are redeemed, even though your body is not yet redeemed. 'You' are stronger than your body. Our body may be a nuisance to us, but we are capable of handling it. Though our body is decaying, yet 'I', the regenerated self, am being renewed.

2 Corinthians 4:16

Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

g) Although we're to control our bodies, yet we must not be cruel to our bodies. Asceticism is wrong. These have no value in restraining the sinful nature. Luther, the Reformer, before discovering the gospel, tried to find peace with God through asceticism – but it was no good. We are meant to discipline our bodies, but we aren't meant to be cruel to ourselves.

Colossians 2:21-23

“Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!” These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

THE WORD 'SOUL'

It is not a Greek philosophical word, meaning 'the immaterial self'. The only time it is used like this is in Matthew 10:28. Generally, the word 'soul' in the Bible means 'life', 'energy', 'mental and emotional capacities', 'inner appetite of every kind'. Even animals in the Old Testament are said to have souls. It refers to 'a living being'. The word can even mean 'a dead body'. It is not some bit in you. We are all souls. This is why modern translations use the word 'soul' less and less. For example, Romans 13:1 actually says, 'Let every soul submit' but is now translated, 'Let everyone submit'.

Let me say something about the teaching of Watchman Nee. He used to teach that we are made of three parts: body, soul and spirit. He used to separate soul and spirit. He misuses Hebrews 4:12 to do this. He used to elevate our 'spirit' and used to put under 'soul' things such as music, the gift of tongues. But it is fanciful teaching. Nee was a great man of God. He was an original thinker – and this was his downfall; he was eccentric in some of his teachings. His teaching tends to make us overly self-analytical. And it wrongly interprets Hebrews 4:12.

THE WORD 'FLESH' (GREEK 'SARX')

The word 'flesh' can refer to 'human nature'. Jesus took it on (see John 1:14) when he became a man. Sometimes it means our physical body. Even animal's bodies. It can even refer to our physical relatedness to others: to our earthly fathers (Hebrews 12:9), or to our nationality (in Romans 11:14, Paul speak of fellow Jews as those who share his 'flesh').

Sometimes it refers to our sinful nature. The NIV translates 'sarx' in many instances to be 'sinful nature':

Galatians 5:19 and 6:8

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery ... Those who sow to please their sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction

Does a Christian have a sinful nature? Answer: Yes and no, depending on what you mean by the phrase, 'sinful nature'. The word 'nature' is not used in the Bible very much. The NIV translation can be confusing for this reason.

No we don't have a sinful nature in this sense: we are no longer ruled by sin (Romans 6:2-6). In Christ we are set free from sin's dominion. We have died to sin. We are now under grace not law.

Yes we do have a sinful nature in this sense: we still have a sinful side to us. Though we are not in the kingdom of sin, sin can still tempt us. We are still fallible. We wrestle against temptation.

Though we are no longer under the dominion of sin, we are still tempted:

James 1:13-15

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each of you is tempted when you are dragged away by your own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Galatians 5:16-17

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. 17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do whatever you want.

Notice that as Christians, we are pulled in two directions (the flesh pulls us one way, and the Spirit pulls us the other) and 'we' are in the middle. Which one will win? Answer: the one you give in to. We lose something through sowing to the flesh, and we gain something through sowing to the Spirit. Don't just passively pray, rather be proactive in saying no to the flesh, and yes to the Spirit.

Notice that as we say yes to the Spirit, we see the 'fruit' of the Spirit in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23), but when we say yes to the flesh we see the 'works' or 'acts' of the flesh (Galatians 5:21). What's the difference between 'fruit' and 'works'? Works are instant, but fruit comes slowly – we sow a seed, and slowly it grows into the fruit of a changed life, starting with love.

THE WORD 'MIND'

1 Peter 1:13

... with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace

We use our minds. We worship God with all our minds. We read God's word. We think, study, meditate, ponder, scrutinize. It is not spiritual to switch your mind off. We don't just rely on experiences. Our minds play a major part in our lives and faith.

THE TEACHING ABOUT HUMANKIND, PART 3

MAN FALLEN/SIN (ROM 5:12-21)

TALK 13

Contents:

- The fall of humankind: a verse-by-verse study of Romans 5:12-21

In the first five minutes, Eaton recapped his teaching about humankind so far.

D. THE FALL OF HUMANKIND: A VERSE-BY-VERSE STUDY OF ROMANS 5:12-21

Society seeks to improve the human race by dealing with our circumstances. Yet the Bible tells us that our main problem is our sinful heart. No constitution, finances or education can adequately deal with the sinful heart. If a poor sinner gets a lot of money they simply become a rich sinner. The gospel alone deals with the real problem, not just symptoms.

The church has a message that can change hearts. When enough lives are changed by the gospel, society changes for the better. Typically, a period of spiritual revival in a country leads to a period of economic prosperity. Wherever the Christian gospel has taken root, the whole culture's morality and respect for people lifts as a result of the long-term influence of the gospel.

WHERE DOES SIN COME FROM?

Here are some main historical views:

View one:

The doctrine of free will. Pelagianism (a heresy) is the belief that humans sin because Adam is a bad example. We don't have to sin at all. We have free will. We don't need grace to change. We must just use our free will correctly. Pelagius taught this heresy. Augustine countered him, teaching that we need God's empowering grace or we cannot overcome temptation.

View two:

The doctrine of original sin. Augustine taught that sin is inherited. Much like we receive through birth the physical genetics of our parents, so we inherit through birth our sinfulness from Adam through our parents. We have are 'in Adam', born sinful.

View three:

The doctrine of federal headship. This is the view that Adam represented the whole human race. Theologically, this means that he is our federal head. When he blew it, he blew it for all of us. (This is a useful way to see it because this is how Christ redeems us. It is as we are 'in Christ', which partially means 'under Christ's representation or federal headship', that we receive salvation. Jesus, the second Adam, gets it right for us.)

Romans 5:12-21 teaches us that View Three is in fact the correct one.

Let us explore this section verse-by-verse:

Romans 5:12

12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man (Adam), and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

Notice the long dash at the end of the sentence. It is an unfinished sentence. What he was going to say is how righteousness came into the world through one man (Christ). We see this in verse 18b where he finishes the sentence:

Romans 5:18b

'... so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all.'

After verse 12, Paul digresses twice before he gets to verse 18. Two things cross his mind half way through his thought. His first digression is verses 13-14, and his second digression is verses 15-17. But let us look at verse 12 again:

Romans 5:12

12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man (Adam), and death through sin, and in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned—

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT 'ALL SINNED' ALONG WITH ADAM? WHY DID DEATH SPREAD TO ALL PEOPLE?

The answer, given in verse 14, is that they died, not because of their own sin, but because of Adam's sin. When Adam sinned, we were all there sinning with him. In what ways are we connected with Adam?

Refer back to the three views above. View one is wrong. View two, the doctrine of original sin, is partially right but is not what Paul is speaking of here. But view three, the doctrine of federal headship, is the one that Paul is teaching here: Adam represented us all legally. We know this is what Paul is teaching here because he compares the way Adam is a 'pattern of the one to come', Christ (v14). In the same way Adam represented us and fell on our behalf, so Jesus represented us and did not fall – on our behalf. His righteousness becomes ours when we are 'in Christ'.

We might say, 'That's not fair. How come Adam represents me?' Answer: 'Adam was the best human representative there was. If he fell, you definitely would have fallen too.' God treats you like you are in Adam because you would have done the same thing if you were there.

We are born fallen. Not that we understand this all. But we just take the Word of God on this point. But don't complain too much. Jesus, the second Adam, also represents us – and he obeys God perfectly. His righteousness is counted as ours. As Christians, we are not in Adam and in his sin, but we are in Christ and in his righteousness. In fact, what we get back in Christ is far more than what we lost in Adam. As the old hymn puts it, 'In Christ, the tribes of Adam boast of more blessings than their father lost':

Romans 5:15-17

¹⁵ But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ¹⁶ Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. ¹⁷ For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

Judgment came because of Adam's one sin. But grace comes after billions of sins across the human race. We get back in Christ more than we lost in Adam.

Romans 5:18-19

'Therefore, just as (Adam's) one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also (Christ's) one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all. For just as through the disobedience of the one man (Adam) the many (the human race) were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man (Christ) the many (those who trust in Christ) will be made righteous.'

Then Paul adds another thought. He explains why God brought the law of Moses into the world. It was not to make things better. It was to make things worse. It powerfully evidenced to us how sinful we already are. It didn't reduce the battle. It made it worse: 'The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase' (v20).

Paul then sums up what his main point is. We are no longer part of the old human race in Adam. We are now part of the new human race in Christ. We are part of a new humanity and new kingdom altogether. We are connected to Jesus Christ our Lord. It is bigger than the old way. 'Grace reigns over us'. God more than compensates for the devastation of our previous life in Adam.

Romans 5:20-21

But where sin increased, grace increased all the more,²¹ so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The most powerful thing we can do is to preach the gospel. It deals with our heart. We don't help people when we only uplift their circumstances. They are still in Adam. We need to help people step out of Adam into Christ. The gospel does this.

If we do try to help poor people financially, we must very closely supervise it. And we need to supervise the supervisor. This sinful human factor is real.

The countries where people long to immigrate into are the countries that have had the longest history in the gospel. Interestingly, many of these countries are now drifting from their Christian roots, but Christian immigrants are flooding in and are upholding the Christian roots.

THE TEACHING ABOUT HUMANKIND, PART 4

MAN REDEEMED (ROM 6 & 7)

TALK 14

Contents:

- The redemption of humankind: a verse-by-verse study of Romans 6:1-14

E. THE REDEMPTION OF HUMANKIND: A VERSE-BY-VERSE STUDY OF ROMANS 6:1-14

In the previous talk we looked at Romans 5. Let us now look at Romans 6 and 7. Interestingly, Romans 6 and 7 are a digression in Paul's flow of thought. Romans 8:1 naturally follows on from the end of

Romans 5. The reason he includes the contents of Romans 6 and 7 is because he expects that, in light of what he says in Romans 5, two questions have come into their minds:

- 'What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?' (Romans 6v1)
- 'What shall we say, then? Is the law sin?' (Romans 7:7)

Romans 6 and 7 answers these two questions.

PAUL'S ANSWER TO QUESTION 1:

'SHALL WE GO ON SINNING SO THAT GRACE MAY INCREASE?' (ROMANS 6V1)

In Romans 5:20 Paul said something outrageous: 'But where sin increased, grace increased all the more.' This would have made the readers of his letters ask, 'So, if we're saved by sheer grace, is it fine to sin then?' Paul answers them.

On a side note, does anybody ever accuse you of being too gracious? If they don't say it to you, why not? The teaching of the grace of God, when taught correctly, is vulnerable to that accusation. If people never ask this question then perhaps you're just teaching moralism, not grace. Of course we can answer this question, but our teaching on grace should attract the question in the first place. After all, even Jesus caused people to ask this question by his teaching and graciousness toward sinners.

Matthew 9:10-13

¹⁰ While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

¹² On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³ But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

We should have such a doctrine of the grace of God that someone somewhere should ask the question, 'You don't seem to think sin is very important; does that mean we can sin?'

On yet another side note, we should have such a great doctrine of holiness, that some people might think we believe in perfectionism (which we don't). Similarly, we should have such a great doctrine of predestination that some people might think that God is unjust (which he isn't). (See Romans 9:10-14).

Paul answers the question:

Romans 6:1-2

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

We were in Adam (and therefore in sin). But, as Romans 5 explains, we died to Adam, and now we are in Christ. That is why sin no longer rules over us. Now righteousness rules over us (see Romans 5:21).

When we are in Christ, grace is over us. Grace reigns over us. This means that God's grace deals with us. God's grace doesn't just make us acceptable to God. It begins to transform and train us.

Titus 2:11-12

¹¹For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. ¹² It trains us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

God's grace changes us. God's grace now rules us. When grace gets hold of us, it makes us say no to sin, and yes to righteousness.

'We died to sin' (v2): When was that moment? It was at the moment we put our faith in Christ. At that moment, we came out of Adam and into Christ. He speaks more on this:

Romans 6:3

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

What is Jesus referring to with his mention of baptism here? Is he referring to 'water baptism' in these verses? The answer is 'no'. We must remember that the words in the Bible are used differently in different places. There are no technical terms in the Bible. The word 'baptism' is used in four different ways in the Bible. It is used of 1) water baptism, 2) experiencing the Spirit's outpouring, 3) being placed into Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:13), and 4) suffering.

If we believe these verses (Romans 6:3-4) refers to water baptism, then we end up believing that we are saved by baptism. In fact, these verses are not teaching on water baptism at all. It simply refers to being placed or put into Christ. At the moment of salvation, we were placed or immersed in Christ by the Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 12:13). That is what breaks the power of sin in our lives.

Romans 6:3-4

³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

If salvation is us being fused into Christ, then we are fused into both his death and his resurrection life. That is the reason we experience this new life. We have been fused into Christ's resurrection power to deliver us from the kingdom of sin. That is why as Christians we cannot now live like we want to, and sin.

Romans 6:5

⁵ If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

An illustration:

We can remove a car wheel, but we can't remove a finger. The wheel is not fused into the car, but the finger is fused into the body. In the same way, we are fused into Christ, into his death, and into his resurrection. If he has died for our sin, then we have died to our sin. If he is risen, so are we. If he is seated in the heavenly places, then so are we (see Ephesians 2:6)! If he is coming again, we will come again with him (see Colossians 3:4)! Amazingly, we are 'hidden with Christ in God' (Colossians 3:4)!

Romans 6:6-7

⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— ⁷ because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

Our 'old self' is all we used to be when we were still in Adam. The old self has died. It was crucified with Christ.

We are now 'freed from sin' (v7), legally released from sin. Illustration: the best way to get free from a court charge is to die. The moment we die, we are legally released. Similarly, we have died with Christ – we are now legally free from sin. We are not in Adam anymore. Through Christ's death, we are now in Christ.

Romans 6:8-10

⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.

¹⁰ The death he died, he died to sin once for all (meaning 'forever'); but the life he lives, he lives to God.

Now we live with Christ! Christ will never die again. We're in him forever. Being fused into Jesus, we cannot fall out of the kingdom anymore than Christ can fall out of heaven. Death has no dominion over him – and therefore over us.

Romans 6:11-12

¹¹ In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

Sin is still there. But is no longer ruling us. We are dead to sin – and alive to Christ. So what must we do? First, we must count (or 'reckon') ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. It is not enough that we are in Christ and not in Adam. We need to consciously affirm this to be so. Second, we must not listen to sin by obeying its evil desires.

Illustration:

I have keys in my hand. I can see and hear and feel them. Then I put them in my pocket. Now I can't see nor hear nor feel them, but I still count them to be there. I reckon that they are there. In the same way, we might not feel that grace is more powerful than sin, and that we are no longer under sin's reign – but nonetheless we are to actively affirm that we are joined to the resurrected Christ. We should stand on God's word in this matter.

Temptation is real – but you are not ruled by sin! You are alive to God in Christ. It generally doesn't feel easy to overcome temptation until we do it in Christ's strength. It is as we affirm our position in Christ in the face of temptation that we experience God's resources in the moment. (Much like the man with the withered hand stretching out his hand, in obedience to Jesus). By pure faith (in your new position in Christ) say no to sin and God's power will be there for you. It is as you sow to the Spirit you will reap back life and energy from the Spirit (Galatians 6:8). It is as we by faith affirm that we are 'dead to sin and alive to God in Christ' we reap power to overcome sin's pull.

The main thing is who we are and where we are. Who we are: a child of God. Where we are: in a new realm of God's kingdom.

Interestingly, this is the first command in the book of Romans. Before we can do anything, there is much we must know.

Romans 6:12

¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

He does not say, 'Do not let sin reign in you'. That's because sin no longer reigns in us. That would contradict what Paul has already said. He says 'Do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies'. The body is the weak point. The body is not yet redeemed. The body is the channel through which sin comes to us from. Our spiritual position is in the kingdom of grace, but our bodies have not yet been redeemed.

Romans 6:13-14

¹³ Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

Since we are 'dead to sin but alive to God in Christ' we should live accordingly, by not offering our bodies to sin, but rather to God.

Final analogy of citizenship in a new kingdom:

If we were to emigrate and get a new passport in a new country, probably we won't be very good at the language and culture of that country. A little bit of our old self will come through but that doesn't undermine our new citizenship. Similarly, we have to re-orientate to our new position in Christ, and citizenship in the kingdom. We are now under Christ. We need to learn to live that new identity out, though we're not over-surprised that it doesn't always come very easily. We have to work at it. But our spiritual citizenship and status in Christ is absolute, even if we we're not yet good at living that citizenship out.

Now that we're citizens of the kingdom, we can appeal to our new king, Christ. Now that we're citizens of the kingdom, we learn how to be a good citizen. We 'offer the parts of our body' – our eyes, ears, feet, hands, mouth. We put them all at the disposal of Christ. We flow with the new kingdom. We also anticipate the grace of our new citizenship. We are ruled by grace. Grace pursues us, picks us up and enables us to live sober, upright and ungodly lives.

THE TEACHING ABOUT HUMANKIND, PART 5

REDEEMED MAN LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND HOW HE RELATES TO THE LAW (ROM 7:5-6 & 12:1-2)

TALK 15

Contents:

- The place of the Law of Moses in the life of a Christian: including a verse-by-verse study of Romans 7

[Eaton spent the first 4 and a half minutes recapping the teaching so far].

F. THE PLACE OF THE LAW OF MOSES IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN: INCLUDING A VERSE-BY-VERSE STUDY OF ROMANS 7

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN AND THE LAW OF SINAI?

Answer: The Christian life goes forward by fellowship with a Person. We don't live by a legal code, not even the ten commands. We are in Christ, and we live on him.

John 6:53

Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."

Christ offers life. But it comes by feeding on him. We feed on who he is. We draw upon him. We pray to him. We live on a Person. That is the secret of the Christian life. We feed upon his cross too.

Jesus is our instructor. What is the Christian version of 'the law'? The answer is: Jesus himself is our law. He tells us to pray for our enemies. He sometimes instructs us by his Spirit. He takes us higher than the Law of Moses ever could. Jesus often contrasted his instruction to the Law of Moses, calling us far higher than the law of Moses ever could take someone. Unlike written laws, Jesus helps us to fulfill his instruction.

Romans 12:1

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice...

A large part of the Christian life is working out the logic of the gospel. For example in Romans 12:1, Paul tells us 'Therefore, in view of God's mercy (which he had just explored in detail in the previous

eleven chapters), offer yourselves'. But it is more than mere logic. The mention of 'God's mercy' here suggests that our hearts have been touched and warmed by God's goodness to us. It is not enough to keep our mind clear if we don't also keep our heart warm.

Jesus is our law, our guide, encourager, and our restorer. We live out the logic of the gospel with our hearts warm. There is great joy. Jesus inspires us and warms our hearts.

BUT WHERE DOES THE LAW OF SINAI FIT INTO ALL OF THIS?

This question concerned Paul. He speaks so much of the law of Sinai in Romans.

Romans 3:21

But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known

Romans 4:14-15

For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, because the law brings wrath.

Romans 3:20

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

Romans 5:20

The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase.

Romans 6:14

You are not under the law, but under grace.

Notice that Paul speaks critically of the law. But why? It is because there are many Jewish Christians in Rome. He needs to explain why the law of Sinai no longer features in the life of a believer. In Romans 7 he explains why he is speaking so negatively about the Law of Moses.

WHAT DOES PAUL MEAN BY THE WORD 'LAW'?

We often think that Paul's mention of 'the law' is a reference to 'principles of righteousness'. But that is not what he means. He means 'everything that was given to Israel in 1300BC through Moses on Mount Sinai'. There were rules about sacrifices, the tabernacle, food, hygiene, holy days, and the ten commands (which only make up 1% of the law). There are 2000 verses of regulations. If you make a fire on a Saturday, you could get killed.

Was this Law of Moses God's way of saving people? Answer: no, people had been getting saved for centuries before there was any law. Is it God's way of making people holy? Answer: many people were living righteous lives long before the law. Abraham was saved, and made godly – centuries before the law. Abraham was saved by faith in God's promise, not by the law. Joseph was godly before he had any law – he had to run for his life from Mrs. Potiphar. He didn't need a legal code to know adultery was wrong. 'The works of the flesh are obvious' (Galatians 5:19). We don't need a law book to tell us that some things are wrong. When we're in the Holy Spirit we know certain things are wrong.

The law of God came into being only when the people of God became a nation in 1300BC. God created a nation with its own territory. Why did God give them this law? Answer:

Galatians 3:19

What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.

It simply restrained evil in Israel's society by creating fear of punishment, which was to be administered by magistrates and the heads of clans. Generally speaking, this law had nothing to do with what was happening in our heart. It dealt with external behaviour. It doesn't tell us to pray or forgive. It was a civil law code controlling a nation. You didn't need to be saved to keep it. Interestingly, Paul claimed to have kept the law faultlessly. Generally, it produced a national morality.

But Paul explains that not only does it not help you spiritually. You need to die to it. If you live by it, you will focus on external moral behaviour. And it will likely be a barrier to true righteousness – a righteousness of the heart. Listen to Jesus' words:

Matthew 23:25

²⁵ "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

The law dealt with external morality. So Paul writes Romans 7 to answer some of your questions:

Romans 7:1-3

¹ Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives?² For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him.³ So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man.

Paul does two things here. First, he states a principle (v1). The law only operates on those who are alive. Second, he gives an illustration (v2-3). If a woman's husband dies, she is no longer married. Though the Law of Moses can't die, we can die to the law. We marry Jesus, not the Law of Moses.

Romans 7:4

So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

The 'body of Christ' here refers not to the church but to the death of Jesus. Christ's death sets us free from the Law of Moses. We no longer relate to a legal code – we now relate to a Person. We have to die to it, to be joined to Jesus. Once we are joined to Jesus, we will be able to start bearing the fruit of a truly, deeply changed life.

The law kept Israel externally moral. By restraining evil, it kept the nation from self-destruction, so that it would exist until Jesus had come (Galatians 3:19).

Romans 7:5

For when we were controlled by our sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death.

Before we were saved, and were trying to live by the commands of the law, it only made the temptation to do wrong stronger.

We can't become holy just by promising ourselves that we will be holy. The more we promise not to do something, the more likely it is that we will do it. Resolutions only put us in more bondage.

The life of Martin Luther before he was saved was terrible. He would confess his sins for 5 hours. Sometimes he would pass out, from self-lashings and fasting. The more he tried to be godly in his own strength and resolution, the worse it got. It resulted in 'the fruit of death'.

Romans 7:6

But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new life of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

We have been released from the entire Law of Moses. Anything distinctive in it (e.g. tabernacle, holy buildings, holy days, food laws, pilgrimages, a Jewish king, animal sacrifices) we don't need.

What about the Ten Commandments? Answer: they are too low for you. It is not enough to just not steal, kill, commit adultery etc. You need to go way beyond the Ten Commandments.

We no longer serve under some written law code. We serve in the new life of the Spirit. The Lord Jesus is at work in us in joy and through the Spirit. We experience new life. We have a new power, a new grace at work in our lives.

Romans 7:1-6 is the most important part of Romans 7, and verse 6 is the highpoint.

WELL, IN THAT CASE, IS THE LAW ITSELF SIN?

Since Paul has spoken critically of the law, and has told us that as Christians we have no relationship with the Law of Moses, the question arises in the mind of the reader: 'Is the law sinful then?'

Romans 7:7a

⁷ What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not!

So Paul answers: 'No, the law was given by God, and it was good at what it was meant to do (i.e. restraining the nation of Israel from self-destruction). But it was limited in transforming us spiritually. The problem is not the law. The problem is us: we're sinners.'

Romans 7:7 - 13

Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."⁸ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead.⁹ Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died.¹⁰ I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.¹¹ For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.¹² So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.¹³ Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

Almost the entire Law of Moses had to do with external behaviour. But there was one command that revealed the state of the heart: the tenth commandment, which says, 'Do not covet'. Paul says that this particular command proved impossible to keep. In fact the more he tried to keep it, the more he realized that there is something at work in the human heart: sin. This particular command seemed

to make his sense of sinfulness spring to life. The law is good, but it doesn't deal with our biggest problem: the power of sin in our lives.

Romans 7:14-25

¹⁴ We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. ²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

This is an interesting section. The question we need to grapple with is, Who is this 'wretched man' who, though trying to fulfil God's law, finds he just can't because of the reality (or law) of sin in his life?

There are some weird (and wrong) answers people give. It is not Adam, or Israel, or 'existential man'.

There are 4 possibilities:

- 1) The normal Christians,
- 2) the unusual Christian,
- 3) The normal non-Christian,
- 4) The unusual non-Christian.

It can't be 1) or 2) because there is no sign of regeneration in this person. The Christian would never ask, 'Who will deliver me?' since he/she knows Jesus is the one who would deliver them.

It can't be 3) because the normal non-Christian quite simply doesn't 'delight in God's law' and obsessively tries to keep it.

It is therefore a reference to an unusual non-Christian. We must realize that everything in verses 7-25 is developing what is already there in verse 5: 'For when we were controlled by our sinful nature (i.e. not saved), the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death.' It is an unusual non-Christian who tries to be saved by keeping the law of Moses. It is the experience of an unsaved person who desperately tries to live a godly life. Paul does this to persuade

us to not even try be saved, or be transformed, by obeying a written code. He wants us to reach out for a Saviour – Jesus Christ. Life under the law as a non-Christian objectively persuades you that you're a sinner, and subjectively gets you into despair, but it can't do more.

Praise God that we have died to the law, and now we live on Jesus! The secret of the Christian life is to fellowship with this new husband, Jesus. Our ex-husband, the law, is terrible compared to our new husband, Christ. Both want to change us. But Christ helps us to change. He does not condemn us. He gives us the grace we need to do what he wants us to do. He himself is our law. He will lead us where the Law of Moses never did.

Finally, what's our relationship to the law then? Answer: We're finished with it! We fulfill it, when we live in the Spirit. When you love Jesus deliberately, you fulfill the law accidentally. You don't fulfill the law by being under the law, but by being under Jesus.

Romans 8:4

(Christ died for our sins) in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

Jesus radically summarizes the heart of the law: he brings it down to love. To live under Christ is to live under one main instruction: love! Paul summarizes it like this too.

Romans 13:8-10

⁸ Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," [a] and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Augustine said, 'Love God, and then do what you like.' We live under Jesus, and grace, not the law. He lives in our hearts.

