

ROMANS 5-8: Living Your Life God's Way

The Radical Nature of Grace

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Hello men, I'm Pat Morley. Welcome to Man In The Mirror Bible Study. Today, we're going to be talking about the radical nature of grace. Would you please turn in your Bibles to Romans 6:1. So I have to confession to make. When we started camping six years ago, I had a severe case of fire starting anxiety. I had never lit campfires before, so I didn't know how to do it. I didn't know how to build them, how to keep them going. And it seemed like I would only be able to start a campfire about one out of every three tries. So whenever I went out to start a campfire, I wasn't really sure whether or not it would keep going. So I developed fire starting anxiety. Eventually I learned more. I learned the difference between a log cabin and a teepee. I learned a little bit about airflow and how tinder works and some of the different ways to, wet wood versus a properly dried wood. And I can tell you with great excitement that today I don't have any fire starting anxiety.

I probably started 150 to 200 fires now, and I have a confidence to start fires that just wasn't there. Today, we're going to talk about a fire of a different sort. We're going to talk about a fire that can be lit and kept lit when we have a confidence in the radical nature of grace. Let's reveal a little bit about how we got here. The first part of Romans, the first four chapters was a series, what makes a man a believer? We ended that series by talking about justification by faith alone. Paul was putting a lot into that. We talked about the most important decision a man can ever make. And we concluded with this strong emphasis that if you have faith, nothing else matters. If you don't have faith, nothing else matters.

Now we have moved on to the second part, Romans chapter five through eight, which we're calling, living your life God's way. We started out by a discussion on rejoicing, that we ought to be known as men who rejoice in good times and bad times because of Jesus as a feeling, but always as an attitude. When we were last together, we talked about the devastation that sin brings into men's lives, but how God is calling us to show men Christ, not to fix their behavior. So, we come to our text today, Romans 6:1, and let's go ahead and read it. And as we're reading it, let's be asking the question, okay, why is Paul saying this? What is his concern? What is his purpose for writing these words? He says in verse one, rather, "What shall we say then, shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means. We are those who have died to sin. How can we live in it any longer?"

When he talks about, shall we go on sinning, the Greek word there means to make sin a habit or to tarry in sin, as opposed to just the from time to time sins that everybody commits, but it's more habitual sinning. So again, what shall we say then, shall we go on habitually sinning, if you will, so that grace may increase? By no means. We are those who've been, called ourselves dead to sin. You know, we're not going to live in that any longer. Well, how did we get here? Why is Paul asking this question? He's concerned about grace abuse. He's talked about how justification is by faith alone so much that someone might get the impression that that's all that matters. That what comes after that, you can do whatever you might want to do. But the radical generosity that God has given us in grace is because of the radical pervasiveness of sin without grace.

In the previous chapter, verse 20, it said "Where sin increased, grace increased all the more." And so Paul's wanting to do a check on that to make sure we don't abuse grace. The first thing we're going to be talking about then is what happens when grace gets abused.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN GRACE IS ABUSED

It is true, I've said it to you before that nothing you do will ever make you good enough for God to love you. He loves you because he made you. So there's nothing good that you can do that's going to be good enough to qualify, but neither is there anything that you can do that's bad enough that's going to disqualify you either. No matter what you've done, you can be forgiven. You see, it's not like God has put a \$10 million deposit up to cover your sins and then when you spend through the \$10 million of grace, that's it, you're on your own. Sorry. No, you spend all \$10 million and he puts another \$10 million on account.

The idea we're going to talk about today is Paul's deep concern though, that we would abuse this privilege that we have of this unlimited grace. Grace is God's unmerited favor, but it is also unlimited, and we have unlimited access to it, unlimited access to unlimited grace. This is a very powerful thing that we have. And he's deeply concerned that this generosity that God has given to us would be abused. And so he's going to remind us of the radical nature of grace and how it can evoke a radical response to this grace. But first, what does grace abuse look like? It looks like two things. It looks like not doing what you should do and doing what you shouldn't do. Let's take them in this order, doing what you shouldn't do. It could be not taking sin seriously enough, for example, thinking that you can manage this sin because you think it's a little sin.

For example, it might be watching what you might think is soft porn on your streaming service. I can assure you that if you think that is soft porn, you have become the frog in the kettle. It's not soft porn. When you see nakedness on TV, through your streaming service or on your iPhone or what ever device it is, it's not a little sin anymore. You are involved in sexual immorality. You're the frog in the kettle. Or perhaps in this category of doing what you shouldn't do. Maybe you started out just fudging a little bit on your income tax or on your expense reimbursements. We have a man who attended our Bible study. He just started this, a little fudge, right?

But this radical nature of sin is that once it gets its talons into you, it doesn't want to let go. He ended up, as it turned out, over a period of two years, swindling \$50,000 from one of the Orlando Magic players by falsifying a credit card bills or payments or purchases. And actually I think ended up spending some time in prison for it as well, but it just started as a little sin and then it got bigger and bigger and bigger. So one way we abuse grace is just winking at the little sins, thinking that it's not that big of a deal and doing what we shouldn't do.

The other way is not doing what we should do. And these are omissions. These are much more deceitful, even then the little fudges and the little, oh, it's just a little bit of TV streaming. They're very deceitful. Demosthenes said nothing is easier than self-deceit for what each man wishes that he also believes to be true. So the sins of omission, if you will, are anything, any opportunity we have to love our neighbor or do a good deed or disciple someone in their faith, and we withhold that from them when it was actually in our power to act. So you see a younger man who needs a word of wisdom and you say, I don't want to bother him. It's not my place to do that. That is actually not doing something that you're supposed to do, discipling that man or whatever other thing it might be.

And we see this at the Bible study, or through the ministry all the time as well, where men are gorging, if you will, on good teaching, but then they don't pass it along to other people. So you may have heard me say before that the average Christian, in my opinion, the average Christian doesn't need more food. He needs more exercise. How does God provide to solve this problem? I'm going to go ahead and give you the Big Idea for the day. And this is the solution to this problem of grace abuse. It's has to do with our

understanding of the radical nature of grace. **Grace ignites in me a fire so intense that I feel compelled to radically live for Jesus Christ.** Grace ignites in me a fire so intense that I feel compelled to radically live for Jesus Christ.

THE EVEN MORE RADICAL NATURE OF GRACE

This next thing we want to talk about then is the even more radical nature of grace, even more radical than sin itself. Sin is like a cancer. It's like a great weight, but as we're going to see, Paul writes that the radical nature of grace is even more powerful. The next verse then is verse three. So he's asked, are we going to keep sinning so that grace might increase? He says, by no means, he said, heck no. And then he goes on to verse three, "Or don't you know, that all of us who are baptized into Christ were baptized into his death?" So now he's be starting here to discuss what grace has done. So maybe you have had a little grace anxiety. Maybe you have not understood. Maybe you haven't been working with grace long enough, you don't know the difference between a teepee and a log cabin way of making a fire. Maybe you don't understand all the nuances of grace.

So he goes right into the richness of God's grace and mercy here so that we can assuage our grace anxiety. He goes on, verse four, "We 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 have a new life." That's grace. Verse five, "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his." That's radical grace. He paid a debt he didn't owe because we owed a debt we couldn't pay. Verse six, "For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin." That's radical grace. Verse seven, "Because anyone who has died has been set free from sin." That's radical grace.

And then he concludes, "Now, if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him." That's radical grace. "For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again. Death no longer has mastery over him." That's radical grace. "The death he died, he died to sin once for all. But the life he lives, he lives to God." So you could think of grace like a credit card. Because of what Christ has done, you have been issued a credit card with an unlimited spending limit. You can spend as much as you want and at the end of the month, he's always going to pay the debt because that's how radical grace is. And that's what Paul of course, is wanting to make sure we appreciate with such intensity that we don't want to abuse it.

In that view, two questions then for you. Do you think there's any way that you can pay your debt apart from grace? We all know that we have done things that, were it not for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we would never be able to do enough, earn enough, pay enough, conform enough, perform enough in order to pay the debt. So is there any way you can pay the debt? No, there's not. This is what Paul wants us to understand. The second question, is there any debt you can accrue that is so big that your father wouldn't have enough to pay it off? What Paul wants us to see here is just the unlimited nature of grace. We have been set free. Let me just pick a couple of phrases out of that. We've been united with him in death. We've been united with him in resurrection. Our old self has been crucified with him. We are no longer slaves to sin. We have been set free. We have died with Christ and now we live with him. This is the radical nature of grace.

And so the answers to the question, is there any way that we could pay our debt? The answer is absolutely not. And then the second question, is there any debt so great that our Father can't pay it? And the answer is absolutely not, any amount of debt that you accrue, God can pay. And the result of that is, is that when I understand this, when I begin to have my grace anxiety replaced by grace confidence, it fills me up with an intense desire to live radically for Jesus Christ. The Big Idea today, **Grace ignites in me a fire so intense that I feel compelled to live radically for Jesus Christ.**

RADICAL GRACE EVOKES A RADICAL RESPONSE

Then finally, radical grace evokes a radical response. In the following text, after Paul explains some of the beauties of this grace, he gives us a way to respond to that. Verse 11, "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires, do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness." This sounds a lot like taking personal responsibility for how we live out our faith, doesn't it? He goes on, "But rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness, for sin shall no longer be your master because you are not under the law, but under grace." Under the radical nature of grace.

And so we see here that He is giving us a template, if you will, for what a response to radical grace might look like. And I think you could sum it up as it's a burning fire of desire to make a full, total, complete surrender of our lives to Jesus in humility, in honesty, in repentance, in personal holiness, that we would not offer any member of our body, whether it's our eyes or anything else to sin, but rather that we would allow the power of God's grace to enable us not to abuse his grace. So with this in mind, I'd like to ask you how you would like to respond to today's message?

Picture yourself as a college student and your wealthy father has given you a credit card. It has no limits. You can spend as much as you want, and you know that your father is going to pay off the balance owed at the end of every month. What kind of a son do you want to be? Do you want to be a frivolous son who is abusing the privilege by doing what you shouldn't do or not doing what you should do? Or do you want to let the confidence and the trust that your father has had in you to extend this incredible grace to you, to let it ignite in you a fire to live radically for him?

The Big Idea today, **Grace ignites in me a fire so intense that I feel compelled to live radically for Jesus Christ.** I hope you feel it too. And I hope that you will help the men around you to understand the radical nature of grace. Let us pray. Our dearest Father, thank you for this message on grace. I pray that you would help each of us, Lord, to get over any grace anxiety that we might have and have a full confidence in the radical nature of grace, so much so that we would never want to abuse it, but rather that it would ignite in us a fire that burns so intense and so deeply that we do feel compelled to live radically out of that grace for the glory of your son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we now pray. Amen. Thank you men. God bless.