

# CONTINUING IN GRACE ROMANS 6 OR THE REIGN OF GRACE (Part 1)

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*"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Romans 6:1 & 2*

We return this morning to our studies on Keep the Fire Burning or Do Not Let the Fire Go Out. We have been using Lev.6:8-13 as our text since the beginning of the year. Verse 13 says, *"The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out."* It is our responsibility to never let the fire go out in the altar of our hearts. We have considered four things for our studies:

- I. What Causes the Fire to Flicker?
- II. What Causes the Fire to Fade?
- III. What Causes the Fire to Fluctuate?
- IV. What Causes the Fire to Flourish?

We have dealt with our first point and are in the middle of our second point. We said that there are 3 things that will cause the fire to fade: sin (flesh), the world and the devil. We spoke on the importance of mortification of sin in our lives which brought us to Romans 8:13 and now to Romans chapter 6.

We spent most of last week introducing the theme or thought of the Apostle Paul in regards to Romans 6. Most commentators and preachers plunge into the doctrine of sanctification as the theme of Romans 6, though there is something to that, I believe that Paul is continuing his thought from Romans 5. There should not have been a chapter division here. I think that the chapter division does injustice to the thought process of Paul. You can disagree with me and that's alright, but I believe that there is some validity to what I am saying. Paul speaks of sanctification in Romans but not at this point or junction. The issue is SIN! It could also be that chapter 6 & 7 are but a parenthesis and then he continues his thought in Romans 8. Notice how Romans 5:21 and Romans 8:1 read and how they proceed very smoothly. There is continuity between these two verses.

Justification has been the major doctrine of Paul for the past few chapters; he teaches the clear truth of free justification by faith, not salvation by works. Now, Paul will transfer from justification to deal with indwelling sin in our lives.

Consequently when he gets to Romans 6 in the first few verses, perhaps all the way to verse 15 he is dealing with the issue of sin. I don't want to be dogmatic in my supposition here like those who are dogmatic in proclaiming that Paul starts on sanctification, I'm just suggesting this to you, because as we said last week, this is a hard chapter to interpret. I'm not being dogmatic here but as I read through the first 15 verses Paul is constantly dealing with sin, look at verses 1, 2, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 (16,17,18,20,22,23). What Paul is also conveying or communicating to us is that we must also believe ourselves dead unto sin. There is sin, but sin has been dethroned, its power destroyed and should no longer rule over us and we must reckon and consider ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin. Look also how the words dead, death and died are used also in this chapter, 2, 3, 4(2), 5, 7, 8, 9(2), 10(2) and 11.

Paul is deep here in this chapter. May God be pleased to teach us and show us what the true application of this chapter is. Don't trust what I say; you study it out, pray over this text, and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Peter knows something of this for he says in his second epistle in chapter 3 verse 16, "*As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*" There are some hard things to understand in the Scriptures and Romans 6 is one of those hard passages to understand. Only an arrogant fool would say, oh I know, I know.

Therefore I'm using the word suggestion to give my thoughts on this chapter. I think we can safely say that Paul is speaking about sin and death, i.e. we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin, but alive in Christ. This is how I will consider these first few verses as we look at Romans 6. There are 3 things I want to consider regarding the first 2 verses:

## **I. THE CONTEMPLATION.**

## **II. THE CLARIFICATION.**

## **III. THE CONTRADICTION.**

The first thing we want to look at is: **I. THE CONTEMPLATION.** The first verse in chapter 6 of Romans sets this forth, "*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*" Paul asks two questions back to back because he contemplated that the recipients of this letter and others who would read what he said at the end of chapter 5 would come to some wrong conclusion. He anticipated a wrong conclusion regarding his previous statements. His two rhetorical questions are set forth in order to make a powerful statement because he knew some might not understand what he was saying. The objection some would have regarding his

former sayings in Romans 5 would be outrageous and ridiculous. Remember he has just said in Romans 5:20 & 21, “*Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*” The last part of verse 1 of chapter 6 brings up these verses. Paul at the end of verse 1 says, “...*shall we continue in sin **that grace may abound?***” Paul has just said that where sin abounds, grace will much more abound, thus, if this is true, then some would think that Paul is saying that if we sin more we will have more grace. Can you now see how Paul can be misconstrued? Now, if this is misunderstood we can easily see how the antinomians and legalists come out by the groves. Paul objects to this thought process and therefore by way of interrogation he makes his point. Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? He does this to prevent a view of licentiousness in sin. As though he knew where some might run with this thought and he rejects this deduction or conclusion as illogical or offensive (I will prove this in our second point). Paul’s rejection and confutation of this view is very clear by his emphatic interrogation which we will see in our third point. I’m trying my best not to get ahead of myself.

The strength of his argument is seen in our understanding of being dead to sin, “...*How shall we, **that are dead to sin**, live any longer therein?* But for the meantime we are considering his contemplation; that is, considering or contemplating what he is saying so that we can have a proper understanding to help keep us from falling into error.

The significance of this is again seen in his rhetorical questions wherein he is making his point or his statement, “*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*” As though Paul doesn’t expect an answer as such, but he does expect us to be spiritual enough to see the answer in the question. The answer is simple and accurate, that is, we cannot continue or abide in sin if we are true bona-fide believers. If we have died to sin we cannot live in sin. The problem is that some professing Christians think that once a person is saved, they can continue living in sin; again this is known as antinomianism (anti=against and nomas=law, living a life of lawlessness). They condone a loose view of living and practicing sin and use the term which I don’t like, OSAS, “once saved always saved.” We prefer the perseverance of the saints in setting forth the eternal security of God’s people. The Apostle John deals a death blow to the thought of antinomianism in I John 3:9, “*whoever is born of God doth not (Greek = absolute negation) commit sin (present tense = the present tense represents a simple statement of fact or reality viewed as occurring in actual time); for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*”

Paul moves from the doctrine of justification wherein God declares the sinner who believes in Christ righteous, Romans 3:20 – 5:21, to the practical effects of salvation (Heb. 6:9, “*But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany*

salvation...”) to those who have been justified. As conversion and regeneration are inseparable in like manner justification and sanctification are inseparable. Remember, I didn’t say Paul does not teach on sanctification, he does, but here he is dealing concerning the effects of justification in relation to us being dead to sin. He deals with God producing righteousness or holiness in us (see last phrase of verse 9), but we must understand or reckon ourselves first dead to sin (verse 11), therefore we are not to live in sin any longer. In other words, Paul has been done with the teaching of justification and now brings us to our acceptance by faith as being dead to sin.

He has given us a theological foundation so that now we can be fortified and have the necessary resources for our mortification of sin. It begins with truly understanding our deadness to sin. Hence, Paul is showing clearly the inconsistency of continuing in sin if we are justified by faith, or, that continuance in sin is a contradiction of a new life in Christ. It does not mean we are sinless or that we do not sin. No, far from that, but that indwelling sin shall NOT have dominion (verse 14) or reign in us as it did when we were lost. Grace reigns now, where sin abounds, GRACE DOES MUCH MORE ABOUND! Notice carefully the preface to chapter 6 in Romans 5:21, “*That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*” Notice the past tense, that as sin **HATH** reigned unto death, likewise **GRACE REIGNS** through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our LORD. The phrase “*hath reigned*” is in the aorist tense in the Greek, therefore it speaks of a past action existing at a certain point. This is why he asks the rhetorical questions, because he knew that GRACE IS EFFECTUAL = GRACE REIGNS! He knew the answer to his questions, but he wanted his readers to capture the inference or conclusion regarding grace reigning. As one writer puts it, “*There is a corollary to the principle that grace always outruns and exceeds sin, and it is this: sin always seeks to use that which is good to promote evil.*” Good point and deduction. Grace will always exceed the wickedness of sin which gives sinners much hope, but the problem is that sin is always working to produce wickedness.

But when grace reigns it means that we will not continue in sin which is Paul’s inference to his rhetorical questions. The word continue here in verse 1 is powerful; it is in the future tense (The future tense corresponds to the English future, and indicates the contemplated or certain occurrence of an event which has not yet occurred), active voice and the indicative mood (The indicative mood is a simple statement of fact. If an action really occurs or has occurred or will occur, it will be rendered in the indicative mood). The following is from the Blue Letter Bible. “The Greek word for continue is *epimeno*, it is a compound word from *epi*=which means upon, in or at = *meno* = stay or remain. The prefix *epi* intensifies the meaning and so this word is a strengthened form of *méno* and gives the force of adherence to and persistence in what is referred to which means to abide

in, continue in. The literal picture is one abiding, or remaining on, of tarrying or staying at a place. It means to remain at or in the same place for a period of time.”

In other words we cannot continue or remain in sin, it is impossible. It doesn't mean that we can't fall into a certain sin, but to remain in that sin all of our Christian life is an impossibility. We might mortify a sin and it can come back up later if we are careless and negligent. Like some pesky weeds in our yards, we rooted them out last week or last month and they come back. Paul uses the present tense which speaks of this abiding as always being continual. The concept is the abiding under the rule and reign of sin. Paul is not speaking of a believer falling into occasional sin, what he is speaking about is living in an intentional and willful sinning lifestyle which is an established pattern in your life. Paul's point is clear and that is, a genuine bona-fide believer does not continually live in habitual sin as when they were in their lost estate. Paul's contemplation was that some will have a wrong view of what he was saying and therefore uses strong language to make his point. “*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*” Are we going to continue in sin, which we have been saved from and turn around and say that grace abounds if we do this? Paul says, you are missing the point and thus brings us to our second point: (preached May 4, 2008)