

Cooperating with Grace: Three Primary Principles (Rom. 6:11-13)

I. THE REIGN OF GRACE (ROM. 5:21)

- A. God requires us to cooperate with His grace. Paul urged us to not receive His grace in vain by neglecting to cooperate or lay hold of it. There is a division of labor. God will not do our part and we cannot do His part. Paul outlined three principles in cooperating with grace (Rom. 6:11-13).

¹*We...plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. (2 Cor. 6:1)*

- B. As we were under the reign of sin before our salvation, we are now under the reign of grace.

²¹*As sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through...Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:21)*

- C. ***The reign of sin***: We were under ***condemnation*** (judgment) before God. We were ***powerless*** before sin (at the heart level) and satanic attacks. We had no ability to challenge them. We had no power to resist the sinful promptings in our heart (anger, pride, bitterness, lust, etc.). We were in ***darkness***, without the ability to understand God and His Word or to receive divine direction for our life. We were ***destitute*** and without a lasting purpose or hope of a future in God.

- D. ***The reign of grace***: We received a new position, power, nature, insights, and destiny. We are now enjoyed, indwelt, empowered, and commissioned by God with a relevant purpose.

1. ***God's acceptance with affection***: The result of receiving this new position is that God enjoys and delights in relating to us as sons of God and the Bride of Christ.

2. ***Indwelling Spirit***: The Spirit gives us new power with new desires and insights that we may know God, His Word, and His will. We received power to resist sin and Satan. The Teacher dwells on the inside of us. The fruit of His actual presence in us is love and peace, etc. (Gal. 5:22). Therefore, we are to turn our attention inward and thank the Spirit for His presence in our spirit. For example, as we "thank" the Spirit for His peace that is in our *spirit*, then we will actually experience His peace in our *soul* (mind and emotions).

²²*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness... (Gal. 5:22)*

3. ***Authority***: We were given the authority to use Jesus' name to release the works of God and hinder the works of Satan in our life and circumstances, as well as in others. We are seated in heavenly places with Jesus, with access in prayer to God's presence.

⁶*...raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ... (Eph. 2:6)*

4. ***Divine destiny***: We have a lasting purpose in God that goes beyond our physical death. We will forever reign with Him. Every day is relevant as we do God's will, because He sees our effort and it so moves Him that He gives us eternal rewards for our faithfulness.

II. OVERVIEW OF ROMAN 6: THE TRANSFORMED LIFE

- A. **Romans 6:1-10:** Our legal position (what we received by being united to Jesus at the new birth).
²**How shall we who died to sin [freed from the reign of sin] live any longer in it? (Rom. 6:2)**
1. By virtue of our legal position, we are united to Jesus by the indwelling Spirit (6:3-10). Thus, the benefits of Jesus' work on the cross are automatically ours at our new birth. In declaring that we "died to sin" (v. 2), Paul was not exhorting us to do something for God, but to believe in something He did for us.
 2. Paul proclaimed that we died to the reign of sin (Rom. 5:21; 6:2). We were freed, or permanently separated from, our former position under the reign of sin, where sin had a mandatory control over our hearts and we had no power to challenge it. The impulses of sin do not all go away, but now we have power to effectively challenge them.
- B. **Romans 6:11-13:** How to cooperate with grace (the three primary principles)
- C. **Romans 6:14-23:** Our living condition (what we experience as we cooperate with grace)

III. PRINCIPLE #1: KNOWING THE TRUTH (FAITH)

- A. **Knowing Principle (Rom. 6:11):** We must know who we are in Christ. To "reckon ourselves" is to see ourselves in the way that God sees us and according to what the Word says about us. The knowing principle includes knowing about God's majesty and heart as a Father and Bridegroom.
¹¹**Reckon [see] yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ... (Rom. 6:11)**
- B. **See yourself alive to God:** We must see ourselves as enjoyed, indwelt, empowered, and commissioned by God with a relevant purpose. To "reckon" ourselves is to "see" ourselves according to what the Word says about us. We see ourselves as God sees us. We see our new identity as sons of God and the Bride of Christ, who function as kings and priests (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). We are to apply "new creation" truths to our spiritual identity.
- C. **See yourself dead to sin:** We are dead to the reign of sin. We are removed from the position where we were condemned, powerless before sinful promptings, in darkness without the ability to understand God's Word, and destitute without a lasting purpose.
- D. We are freed from the realm where sin had a mandatory reign over us without our ability to challenge it. In other words, we are dead to sin's penalty, shame, and mandatory power over us.
- E. Paul was not saying that "sin died in us" in the sense of sinful desires dying in us. The impulses of sin do not all go away, but now we have power to **effectively challenge** them, because we have the power of the indwelling Spirit in our born-again spirit.
- F. We are transformed by changing our thinking. We are set free by the knowledge of the truth. The renewing of our mind includes **confessing** the Word back to God. Our confession is what we say to the indwelling Spirit about who we are in Christ (Rom. 10:8-10). Talk to the Spirit, saying, "Thank You, Spirit, for Your indwelling presence that empowers me to resist sin (Gal. 5:22)."
²**Be transformed by the renewing of your mind... (Rom. 12:2)**

³²“*And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (Jn. 8:32)*

- G. We exercise faith in the working of God, who joined us to Jesus (as described in Rom. 6:3-10).
¹⁰*You are complete in Him...¹¹ In Him you were...¹² buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God... (Col. 2:10-12)*

IV. PRINCIPLE #2: RESISTING DARKNESS (CHOOSING RIGHTEOUSNESS)

- A. ***Resisting Principle (Rom. 6:12-13a)***: We resist sin, Satan, and sin-provoking circumstances. The principle of resisting involves resisting all the works of darkness, including sickness and oppression in our lives or the lives of those we are warring for in prayer, etc.

¹²*Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.*

¹³*And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin... (Rom. 6:12-13a)*

- B. ***Do not let sin reign in your body***: We must resist the inward prompting of sin and the schemes of Satan. We resist sin by denying fleshly lusts that war against us (1 Pet. 2:11).

¹¹*Beloved, I beg you...abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul... (1 Pet. 2:11)*

1. The need for self-denial is a very important aspect of New Testament teaching. It has been minimized by those who teach the distorted grace message.

¹*The grace of God...has appeared to all men,¹² teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly... (Titus 2:11-12)*

²⁴“*Let him deny himself and take up his cross [instrument of death]...” (Mt. 16:24)*

⁵*Put to death [denying sinful desires] your members: fornication, uncleanness, evil desire...⁶ Because of these things the wrath of God is coming... (Col. 3:5-6)*

- C. ***Do not present your members to sin***: We must refuse circumstances that inflame sinful desires. We present our body to sin by getting in circumstances that inflame sin in us. We must avoid being in circumstances where we must trust our flesh to choose right. We do not go to places, buy items, or look at or talk about that which stirs up sinful passions.

- D. Denying our lustful desires is the theatre God chose for us to express our love to Him in. Each of us has different struggles, thus, different assignments from which we offer our gift of love to God.

²¹*He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me... (Jn. 14:21)*

V. PRINCIPLE #3: PURSUING GOD AND PEOPLE (LOVE)

- A. ***Pursuing Principle (Rom. 6:13b)***: We pursue serving and relating to God and people in love. We present ourselves to God, and our bodies as His instruments, that He may use us to bless others. We pursue loving God and people. We make godly choices for love.

¹³***But present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. (Rom. 6:13b)***

- B. ***Present yourselves to God:*** This speaks of seeking to know, love, and please God in a personal and wholehearted way. We take time to cultivate intimacy with Him. Our first call is to love God with all our heart as an extravagant worshiper of Jesus. This speaks of cultivating His presence in our life and abiding in Christ (Jn. 15:5) and includes fellowshiping with the indwelling Spirit. We are to be preoccupied with the superior pleasures of the knowledge of God.
- C. ***Present your members as instruments of righteousness:*** This speaks of loving and serving people in righteousness. We do this first in our families and in the place the Lord has put us (not just in ministry trips). We are to be relational and missional.
- D. ***Our members:*** This includes our time, energy, abilities, money etc. We are to offer our body, our whole person, as a vessel for the Spirit to use to bless and serve others. This includes making the effort to be equipped to minister to others and to build quality relationships that glorify God.
- E. Presenting our members to be used by God as an instrument includes embracing the work that God has assigned us to serve in in His kingdom, regardless of how small and unnoticed it is.

VI. SUMMARY

- A. We must ***know truth, resist darkness, and pursue God***. We pursue loving God and people as we resist sin, Satan, and sin-provoking circumstances in the context of knowing who we are in Christ and the truth about God's heart as a Father and Bridegroom.
- B. None of these principles can be omitted. Some people resist sin and pursue God without knowing who they are in Christ. Some pursue God at prayer meetings without pursuing people or resisting sin. Others pursue people (relationship or ministry) without pursuing God or resisting sin. It does not work to only know truth and to resist sin without actively pursuing God and people.
- C. The distorted grace message often omits resisting sin (by denying our fleshly desires) and investing quality time to cultivate our personal relationship with Jesus in prayer and the Word.
- D. Many are content to be ***relational and missional*** without pursuing God and resisting sin, unaware that this leads to ***spiritual burnout***.
- E. Three results of the distorted grace message are legalism, compromise, and burnout.