

# Romans 6 - Two Questions

## Romans Series (Part 6)

*By Ed Stevens -- Then and Now Podcast -- Dec 8, 2013*

### Opening Remarks:

- A. Here we go for another study of biblical history and eschatology from a full preterist perspective.
- B. Last time we looked at the second of the five sections of Romans, which we labeled as "The Good News."
- C. This time we need to deal with a couple of the questions that have been raised in regard to some fellow preterists who interpret Romans from a Collective Body perspective. It is important to do this right here at this point in our study just before we start looking at Romans 6.
- D. Before we look at those questions, however, let's ask God's blessing on our study:  

Sovereign LORD of the universe, the Only True God and our Heavenly Father, full of mercy and grace for Your chosen servants. We need your Spirit's illumination to understand Your Word, especially here in Romans. There are so many confusing and contradictory opinions floating around out there which can lead us in the wrong direction spiritually and cause us to produce bad fruit in our lives and the lives of those whom we are in contact with. Help us rightly divide Your Word so that we may clearly understand what your bond-servant Paul intended to communicate to the Jewish and Gentile saints in the city of Rome in AD 58. We pray this in the Name of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.
- E. In the last few weeks I received two questions related to our studies here in Romans that we need to clear up first, before moving onward into the next section.

### Question about "THE sin" in Rom. 6:1

**[QUESTION]** Regarding Romans 6:1:

Romans 6:1 (NASB)

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?

Romans 6:1 (YLT)

What, then, shall we say? shall we continue in THE sin that THE grace may abound?

You appear to take this verse as has traditionally been interpreted. In other words, Paul, in your view, is warning the Gentiles from abusing grace by living it up and partying hearty. At least that's what it sounded like you were arguing in your most recent podcast.

Have you ever dealt with the view that Frost, Curtis and Bondar have taught? They suggest that, as it is in the YLT, Paul isn't talking about sinning too much, but doing just the opposite i.e. **continuing in THE SIN** (the sin of Adam). In other words, they think that Paul is referring to their attempts to please God by **continuing to follow the law**.

They think that "**the sin**" is equivalent to "**the law**." Since most of the translations omit the definite article "the" here, which precedes both "sin" and "grace" in the Greek, is it possible that Paul is making the same point as he made to the Galatians who were beginning with grace and attempting to perfect that grace with works?

If Paul wrote, "Shall we continue sinning..." the traditional view would make sense. However, when he prefaces sin with THE, it appears to me that he's making the opposite point to the way that verse has been commonly interpreted.

**[ED'S REPLY]** Thanks for sharing this interesting question about Rom 6:1 and its usage of **THE sin** and **THE grace**. I will put this in the list of things to deal with in the podcast that deals with the third section of Romans in our outline. I heard Sam Frost teach this idea back when he was allegedly a Full Pret, but from my study of Koine Greek at the Intermediate (exegetical) level, it appears to be a bogus argument. I have over three dozen commentaries on Romans and close to two dozen Greek grammars, plus I have had over two years of NT Greek study at Christian College and Seminary, and NEVER ONCE did I hear my Greek instructors or the grammars or the commentaries say that the usage of the definite article here in Romans 6:1 should be construed this way.

Sam Frost needed that equation (**THE sin = THE Law**) to buttress his notion of "resurrection of a collective body out of SIN DEATH." He was letting his CBV paradigm drive his definition of terms, his interpretation of texts, and his translation of Rom. 6:1.

If Frost's view was correct, it would mean that Paul was arguing against continued law-keeping by the Jewish Christians (i.e., "died to sin" = "died to the Law" - Rom. 6:2, 6-11). That would mean that Paul is arguing against their continued custom of keeping the Law. That is patently false. The Judaizers accused him of that very thing when he went to Jerusalem in AD 58, and he emphatically denied the charge, and went into the temple to pay his sacrificial dues and prove that there was nothing to that accusation against him! He kept the Law and taught Jewish Christians inside Judea and outside in the Diaspora to continue keeping the Law until the End.

Furthermore, Jesus had commanded those Jewish Christians (including Paul himself) to keep every jot and tittle of the Law until it was all fulfilled and passed away at AD 70 (Matt 5:17-20). Paul would have been directly contradicting what Jesus commanded him and all the other Jewish Christians to do -- i.e., to keep the Law more scrupulously than the scribes and Pharisees (as a good testimony to the Jews, so that the gospel would be attractive to their fellow Jews). Sam Frost simply did not understand the historical situation with the Jew-Gentile conflict, plus he was listening too much to N.T. Wright and the other *New Perspective on Paul* (NPP) advocates.

Paul constructs a proper balance between antinomianism and legalism for both the Jewish and Gentile Christians there in Rome (and elsewhere) without negating the law-keeping of the Jewish Christians, or justifying the dualism, libertinism, or antinomianism of some of the Gentiles. When we remember what Paul's purpose was for writing this epistle, then we have to ask how Frost's argument would fit into Paul's overall flow of thought. It does not fit. In my opinion, Frost's argument was artificial and contrived, and out of sync with Paul's real argumentation and his purposes for writing the book of Romans.

We will deal with this more coming sessions, but I wanted to at least begin to make us aware of how some of the Collective Body advocates are approaching Paul's

argumentation here in Romans 6. They suggest that "the sin" here in Romans 6:1 really means "the law." In this context it will not work, because Paul is certainly not teaching that they had died to law-keeping, but rather that they had died to their old sinful fleshly way of living. The Jewish Christians were commanded to continue keeping every jot and tittle of the Law until it passed away in AD 70. Paul is not contradicting Jesus here.

## Question about the "Body" in Romans 6:12

**[QUESTION]** To be "absent from the **BODY**" is to be present with the Lord (2 Cor 5:6-10), and when Michael disputed with the Devil about "the **BODY** of Moses" (Jude 9). I was told recently that **BODY** in both of these verses was referring to Old Covenant Israel under the Law (i.e., referring to a collective **BODY**, not to individual bodies). Is this correct? Dave Curtis took this same approach in his Sermon on July 24, 2011 based on the phrase "your [plural] mortal body [singular]" as found in Rom 6:12.

**[ED'S REPLY]** This particular interpretation of these two texts is incorrect. Those who advocate this interpretation do so merely because it is the only way these two texts will make sense in their Collective Body resurrection view. They have assumed that the Collective Body view is being taught in these two texts, therefore they feel justified in twisting the meaning of these two texts to make them fit their Collective Body View. They are ASSUMING what they need to PROVE. Let's take a look at the context of each of these two scriptures, to see if their Collective Body interpretation is validated by the verses surrounding them:

**2 COR 5:6-10 ("absent from the BODY")** -- Here is the biblical text under consideration here (NKJV):

(6) So **we** are always confident, knowing that while **we** are at home **IN THE BODY** **we** are absent from the Lord. (7) For **we** walk by faith, not by sight. (8) **We** are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be **ABSENT FROM THE BODY** and to be present with the Lord. (9) Therefore **we** make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well-pleasing to Him. (10) For **WE MUST ALL** appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that **EACH ONE** may receive the things done **IN THE BODY**, according to what **he** has done, whether good or bad. (2 Cor 5:6-10 NKJV)

Notice what verse 10 says: "...**WE** [a group of individuals] **MUST ALL** [not just some of them] appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that **EACH ONE** [each and every individual] may receive the things done **IN THE BODY** [his own individual body], according to what **HE** [individually] has done..."

Do you see the point there? There is NOT a collective body anywhere in this context. This is talking about individuals here. And these phrases "in the body" and "absent from the body" are referring to the **individual bodies** of each of the individual saints there at Corinth. Each of those saints there at Corinth had their own body, and each of them would stand before the judgment seat of Christ to be rewarded or punished according to what **"he"** (individually) had done in **his own individual physical bodily life** on earth.

Furthermore, we need to point out here that the judgment scene mentioned here in verse 10 was supposed to occur at the Parousia, and notice that Paul does not distinguish between living saints versus dead saints standing before Christ to be judged. Paul explicitly says that "**ALL**" the saints, both living and dead, would "appear before the judgment seat of Christ" at the Parousia. What does that imply? What would have to happen before those living saints could "appear before the judgment seat of Christ"? Their bodies would have to be changed! And that is exactly what the preceding verses are talking about (2 Cor 5:1-4) – **A BODILY CHANGE** for the living and remaining saints! Do you catch the power of that?

Verse 10 (2 Cor 5:10) totally nukes the Collective Body interpretation of verses 6-8 (2 Cor 5:6-8). Apostle Paul here is clearly talking about each individual being judged for what he has individually done in his or her own individual body. The collective body idea is NOT found here in this text. That concept has to be shoe-horned (force-fitted) or imported into this text from outside the context. Their interpretative system NEEDS it to be talking about a collective body, so that they can avoid the obvious implications of an **INDIVIDUAL BODILY CHANGE** mentioned in the previous verses 2 Cor 5:1-4). Their collective body system cannot work with a "bodily change" to individual mortal bodies, so they have to twist the meaning of the text to make it fit their preconceived collective body interpretation. But as you can see from looking at verse 10, when these verses are studied in their context, they are clearly talking about **individual bodies**, and not at all about one big collective body! The commentaries agree that this is a reference to **INDIVIDUAL BODIES** being **changed from mortal to immortal** at the Parousia (1 Cor 15:51-52; 2 Cor 5:2-4; Phil 3:21; 1 Jn 3:2). This bodily change happened to the living and remaining saints "in a moment, in the blink of an eye" at the time when the dead disembodied souls were raised out of Hades and given new bodies (1 Cor 15:51-52). In other words, the dead were raised out of Hades and given their new bodies, while the living saints had their bodies changed. When this bodily change occurred, the living saints were then in the UNSEEN realm where the resurrected dead saints were. Both groups were then caught up to be with Christ forever afterwards (1 Thess 4:17).

**JUDE 1:4-13** ("**the BODY of Moses**" v. 9) -- As far as I know, all of the Collective Body advocates interpret this verse (Jude 9) as a reference to the collective body of the nation of Israel who were under the Old Testament Law of Moses. And we need to look at the context in which this verse about the "body of Moses" appears (NKJV):

(4) For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. (5) But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. (6) And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; (7) as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. (8) Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak

evil of dignitaries. (9) Yet **MICHAEL** the archangel, in contending with **THE DEVIL**, when he disputed about **THE BODY OF MOSES**, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (10) But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. (11) Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. (12) These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving *only* themselves. *They are* clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; (13) raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. (NKJV)

Here is what several commentaries say about the "**body of Moses**" in verse 9. We will notice that not one of them interpret the "body of Moses" as a reference to a collective body of Old Covenant Israelites. They all understand it as referring to the individual body of Moses himself. Notice what they have to say:

#### **BEALE-CARSON Commentary on the Use of the OT in the NT:**

The incident that Jude (9) describes we know about from the church fathers, beginning with Clement of Alexandria (*Fragments on the Epistle of Jude*), who claims that Jude is quoting *Assumption of Moses*, an apocryphal work. But no extant manuscript preserves the story. There is, however, a manuscript (the Milan manuscript) that preserves another apocryphal book called *Testament of Moses*, whose ending has been lost. In a long excursus, Bauckham (1988: 65–76 [cf. more briefly Davids 2006: 59–63]) argues that this lost ending is what originally preserved the story (that Jude here briefly relates) of Michael disputing with the Devil over the body of Moses. The tradition of angels disputing with the devil goes back to Zech. 3:2 (referred to in §B above) and grows stronger in the literature of early Judaism (e.g., CD-A V, 17–18; 1QS III, 18–25; *T. Ash.* 6:4–6). The idea seems to be that when Moses dies, Satan wants to claim or destroy the body of Moses rather than bury him, perhaps on the grounds that Moses was a failure (just as Satan wants to claim Joshua, in some sense, in Zech. 3:2).

#### **BIBLE DIFFICULTIES:**

This account [of Jude 9 about the body of Moses] is not found in the Old Testament but is thought to have been included in a Christian treatise (now lost) entitled "the Assumption of Moses" (cf. Buttrick, *Interpreter's Dictionary*, 3:450), at least according to Origen (*On the Principles* 3.2.1). It would be a logical fallacy to argue, however, that an inspired biblical author like Jude was strictly limited to the contents of the canonical Old Testament for all valid information as to the past. Both Stephen (in Acts 7) and the Lord Jesus (in Mt 23) refer to historical episodes not recorded in the Old Testament. Apparently there was a valid and accurate body of oral tradition available to believers in the New Testament period; and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they were perfectly able to report such occurrences in connection with their teaching ministry. We are to deduce from this passage, then, that there was such a contest waged by the representatives of heaven [Michael] and hell [the Devil] over the body of Moses.

### **NEW INTERNATIONAL BIBLE COMMENTARY (NIBC):**

The OT makes no reference to **Michael disputing with the devil** and simply states that God **buried his servant Moses** “in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows **where his grave is**” (Deut. 34:6), a secret no doubt designed to prevent the Israelites from turning the spot into an idolatrous sanctuary.

The dispute referred to by Jude was recorded in the now lost ending of an apocryphal Jewish work called the **Assumption of Moses**. But the tradition can be reconstructed from references to that account in a number of early Christian writings (see Bauckham, pp. 65–76). Satan laid claim to the corpse of Moses for his kingdom of darkness because Moses had killed an Egyptian (Exod. 2:12). He was therefore a murderer, no matter how virtuous were his subsequent achievements, and so was unworthy of honorable burial. Satan, in his ancient role of accuser of God’s people (Rev. 12:10), was seeking to prove Moses’ guilt.

In response to the charge, Michael did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against Satan. Barclay (DSB, p. 188) expresses the opinion of most commentators that Jude means: “If the greatest of the good angels refused to speak evil of the greatest of the evil angels, even in circumstances like that, surely no human being may speak evil of any angel.” This interpretation takes accusation (*blasphēmias*) as a genitive of quality (Moule, *Idiom-Book*, p. 175), and as such it suits the context both in Jude and in the parallel passage in 2 Peter 2:11 (*blasphēmon krisin*, “slanderous accusations”). The terms used in this passage are forensic, the language of the courtroom. Bauckham (p. 43) considers that Jude’s meaning must be determined by his source, the *Assumption of Moses*, and according to that it was Satan who had “slandered” (*eblasphēmsei kata*) Moses by accusing him of murder. Michael, in his capacity as a legal advocate, refuted the slander (*blasphēmia*) and appealed to God for judgment against Satan: “The Lord rebuke thee!” Michael refused to take it upon himself to pronounce judgment, for that was God’s prerogative.

### **NEW INTERNATIONAL GREEK TESTAMENT COMMENTARY (NIGTC):**

There are several patristic references to a lost apocryphal work called the *Assumption of Moses*, which apparently spoke of Moses’ removal to heaven (cf. **Jude 9**). This work may have been the concluding part of (or a revised edition of) the *Testament of Moses*, the extant text of which breaks off before the end of Moses’ farewell speech. For Jewish belief that Moses did not die, see J. Jeremias, *TDNT*, vol 2, p. 939, n. 92.

### **BIBLE KNOWLEDGE COMMENTARY:**

**The archangel Michael** was sent to bury Moses’ body, but according to Jewish tradition (the pseudepigraphical book, *The Assumption of Moses*), **the devil** argued with the angel about **the body**, apparently claiming the right to dispose of it.

**CONCLUSION:** These commentaries point out the obvious: Jude was talking about the literal individual physical body of Moses. He was not talking about the collective body of Israel who came out of Egypt with Moses. That idea is totally foreign to this context. When we have such an easy and obvious interpretation as the above commentaries provide, which clearly and perfectly harmonizes with the whole context of Jude and all of Scripture, there is no need to go looking for a different interpretation that disrupts the context and makes nonsense out of the flow of thought in Jude. The Collective Body View advocates are simply grasping at straws to extricate themselves from the exegetical quicksand that their flawed view has thrown them into. They hate the idea of a rapture so much that they are forced by their bias and prejudice to manufacture something (anything) out of the thin air to get around the rapture idea. I would suggest that it is much better to let the context of scripture tell us what it means, and then accept it and follow it. We need to conform our faith to the true exegesis of scripture, rather than force-fit our own preconceived interpretations into scripture.

Furthermore, when we see all the bad fruit that the Collective Body View has produced (universalism, covenant creationism, hyper-cessationism, “immortal body now”, “heaven now”, “no more sin now” or “continuing to sin in the afterlife”, and even skepticism), it should make us back away from it. It is not a safe or healthy view for us to follow. Every part of it tends to undermine and weaken our faith and Christian lifestyle.

So far in our studies of the first five chapters of Romans, we have seen both the **bad news** and the **good news**. Next time we will see how both Jews and Gentiles were expected to live in response to that good news here in Romans chapters six and seven. What kind of lifestyle changes would they need to make as an expression of their faith and gratitude? And this raises another question against the collective body view of Romans 6-11. The fact that Paul is talking about the kind of lifestyle that they needed to live in response to the grace of God, shows that chapters six and seven especially are dealing with that change in lifestyle. Chapter seven is explicitly talking about the struggle that Apostle Paul, as well as those saints in Rome, were having as they tried to live godly lives as an expression of their gratitude for their justification.

That automatically shows that chapter seven cannot be talking about a collective body struggling to be resurrected out of covenantally dead Judaism. That collective body idea has to be imported into the context from outside. It is not there otherwise. We will see why I say this in our upcoming sessions on Romans 6-11. You will want to read those chapters this coming week before we begin to study it next time.

Well, that will wrap it up for this session. Hope this was helpful for you. Please email me and let me know what you are learning in this study of Romans. Ask me some questions for further clarification if you are not sure you understand what I am saying.

Thanks so much for listening.

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