

Romans 6:14

From the book "Take Hold" by Ariel, and D'vorah Berkowitz

"For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under Law, but under grace."

Those who insist that a believer in Yeshua should not live by the Torah of Moses often use this catch phrase from this verse, "We are not under the law but under grace." We think that there is a better way to understand this passage. First, let us quote a respected Bible scholar on the meaning of the phrase in question and then we will finish with our own comments.

C.E.B. Cranfield has shed much light on the meaning of this Greek phrase, helping us to perceive what Sha'ul (Paul) actually meant as well as to understand more fully his true stand on the Torah. Because Cranfield's remarks are so pertinent we will quote him at length:

It will be well to bear in mind the fact (which, as far as we know, had not received attention before it was noted)...that the Greek language of Paul's day possessed no word-group corresponding to our "legalism", "legalist", and "legalistic". This means that he lacked a convenient terminology for expressing a vital distinction, and so was surely seriously hampered in the work of clarifying the Messiahian position with regard to the law. In view of this we should always, we think, be ready to reckon with the possibility that Pauline statements, which at first sight seem to disparage the law, are really directed not against the law itself but against that misunderstanding and misuse of it for which we now have a convenient terminology. If we make due allowance for these circumstances, we shall not be so easily baffled or misled by a certain impreciseness of statement which we shall sometimes encounter.

We encounter the same dilemma in the Hebrew language. There are no Hebrew words which can easily convey the concepts of "legalism" or "legalist". Thus Sha'ul (Paul), whether using his Hebrew-oriented mind or his Greek language, was hindered in his attempts to explain that legalism was not what God intended. From our understanding of the true nature of the Torah and Sha'ul's theology, it is our opinion that he did an excellent job of overcoming this language barrier.

Based on this understanding of the Greek in Romans 6:14, we can say, then, that this verse is teaching that because God regenerated us and caused us to believe in Yeshua, we now have an entirely new relationship to sin. We no longer rely on our legalistic efforts to earn God's righteousness. Instead, we rely on the grace of God. Legalism and grace never mix. But Torah and grace go hand in hand.

One of the many implications of trusting in the grace of God is that we become new creations in Messiah. This means among other things, that we now have a new relationship to sin. It is just as 6:14 states, "sin is no longer our master". For the new creation person, this is most definitely true! Relying on legalistic methods to attain salvation could never change our relationship to sin. Only trusting in the grace of God could effect such a change. For those of us who are now new creations by virtue of the new birth, our relationship to sin is forever changed. The Torah is not a legalistic document. It describes the lifestyle of the redeemed, and it was never God's intention that obeying it would achieve salvation.