

ON MORTIFYING SIN

Review of Romans 6:1-14

Romans 6:1-2 ~ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

- The goal of grace is to destroy sin and vanquish sin...not to increase it!
- The very suggestion that grace may be produced by living in sin, is so thoroughly obnoxious to Paul that he answers it by making use of one of his characteristic blunt rejection formulas (“may it never be”)
- Paul has no use for even the slightest intimation that grace encourages sin
- For a believer, continuing to live in sin is not only impermissible, it is impossible

Romans 6:3-5 ~ Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection

- Notice the emphasis on “knowing” these realities (cf. vv. 6, 9, 16)
- We are united with Christ’s death and his resurrection...his death counts for us and his life counts for us
- For the believer, this results in the ability to “walk in newness of life” (v. 4)
- “By faith we are united to Christ so that his death was our death...This means three things: (a) The mortal blow to our ‘old man’ has been struck; (b) the old self will not succeed in domination now; and (c) his final obliteration is certain.”¹

Romans 6:6-7 ~ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin

- Our old self was crucified...and we are free from the enslaving power of sin...we are no longer under sin’s domination and control

Romans 6:8-10 ~ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

- Our ability to mortify sin is intimately connected with our union with Christ which makes us participate in both his death and resurrection
- Christ didn’t just die FOR sin...he died TO sin...such that now he “lives to God”
- Christ’s pre-resurrection state was conditioned by the sin which he vicariously bore and sin is the contradiction of what God is...but since he made an end of sin in his death, his post-resurrection life is in no way conditioned by sin
- So now Christ lives entirely “to God”...for the purposes of God
- Because of our union with Christ, we are to live the same way, dead to sin and alive to God
- By our union with Christ, we have died to sin in order to live an unending life of service to God

¹ <https://medium.com/@johnpiperdg/thirteen-practical-steps-to-kill-sin-42ac3cee5b6a>

Romans 6:11 ~ Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

- “consider” (*logizomai*) = reckon, consider, regard, count (NIV), recognize, calculate
- The idea is that we are to reflect on our position in Christ...that we are dead to sin and alive to God
- This means that we are dead to the old life and cannot go back to it
- Paul is arguing that we should come to see the truth of our situation: Christ’s death and resurrection have altered our position, and we should live in accordance with the new reality
- Once we grasp this, that our old life has ended, with the score settled, the debt paid and the law satisfied, we shall want to have nothing more to do with it
- “Consciously reckon the old man dead; that is, believe the truth of Scripture about the old man’s death in Christ and seek to live in that freedom...Living out the reality that you are is the proof that you are. One clear illustration of becoming what you are is found in 1 Corinthians 5:7: ‘Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened.’ It sounds strange, but salvation is a strange and wonderful thing: Clean out the old leaven of sin, because it is really already cleaned out. If you try to play logic games with this reality and say, ‘I don’t need to fight sin because it is already cleaned out,’ you will prove only that you are not among the number who are cleansed.”²

Romans 6:12-13 ~ Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

- We must “not let sin reign in your mortal body”
- This of course assumes that sin is still there...unfortunately, we do not have the luxury as believers of having sin totally eradicated from our life now...it is defeated...but it is still a powerful force
- So we must not “let it reign” (*basileuteo*) = to be king, to rule...i.e...stop letting sin reign
- Paul is saying that we must continually, constantly, and vigilantly dethrone sin from our life
- When we let sin reign in our lives, we are putting ourselves back under the reign of a deposed ruler
- You have died to sin...you are no longer subject to the power of sin...why then are you allowing yourself this conquered dictator to take control of your life again? Why are you giving your allegiance to a dethroned monarch? Why are you submitting to the rule of a vanquished tyrant?
- “Lay siege to your sins and starve them out by keeping away the food and fuel which is their maintenance and life.”³
- “Indwelling sin has been dethroned and dealt its death blow through the believer’s union with Christ in his death. Now, with the Spirit’s aid, the Christian must spend his lifetime draining sin’s lifeblood. We may not relax, for sin ‘will not otherwise die, but by being gradually and constantly weakened; spare it, and it heals its wounds, and recovers strength.’”⁴
- “Rebel against sin’s coup. Refuse to be bullied by its deceits and manipulations.”⁵

- On Sept 11, 2007, Sampson Parker was harvesting corn with a corn picker when some stalks got stuck
- He reached in the still-running machine to pull the stalks out and the rollers grabbed his hand
- He tried yelling for help but there was no one near the field...he tried to pull his hand free but couldn't
- Eventually he was able to jam an iron bar into the chain and sprocket that drove the rollers on the picker

² <https://medium.com/@johnpiperdg/thirteen-practical-steps-to-kill-sin-42ac3cee5b6a>

³ Richard Baxter

⁴ J.I. Packer

⁵ <https://medium.com/@johnpiperdg/thirteen-practical-steps-to-kill-sin-42ac3cee5b6a>

- But his fingers were still caught...so he started to cut off his own fingers with a pocket knife
- But before he got very far, the sprocket that was grinding against the rod threw off sparks and started a fire
- The flames were so intense he knew he had to cut off his arm quickly...he cut through the flesh and nerves and used the force of his own body weight to break the bone and free him from the machine
- He drove his truck to a nearby road and forced a car to stop in order to get help
- He was flown to a hospital and spent 3 weeks in a burn center before going home
- Why the radical measures? → Because the machine had grabbed hold of his arm and wouldn't let go...he knew that if he didn't do something fast, he would lose his life

- This is what mortifying sin looks like in the spiritual realm
- This is why we must actively employ the means of mortification in v. 13
- God is worthy of our whole person...and our members...our entire self and our body are to be used for God's righteous purposes
- The "members" that were once used as weapons in service of sin and for unrighteous purposes are now to be used as weapons in God's service for righteous purposes
- Paul's point is that right now, completely and decisively, we must put ourselves entirely at God's disposal
- "Declare radical allegiance to the other side — God — and consciously put all your mind, heart, and body at his disposal for righteousness and purity."⁶
- This is what the man in Proverbs 7:6-23 failed to do

Romans 6:15-23

- As Paul continues in Romans 6, he wants to cement in our minds that we have a new master in Christ
- Our freedom **from sin** is not a freedom **to sin**...to make his point, he uses the analogy of slavery

The Absurd Question

Romans 6:15 ~ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?

- In vv. 1-14, Paul responded to the charge that the Gospel is a license to sin...he argued that believers cannot continue in sin because they died to it and are now alive to God in Jesus Christ
- He closed his argument in v. 14 ~ sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace
- Paul knows that some are also going to take that truth too far...some are going to assume they are free to live anyway they want
- So, he responds to those who think he is encouraging licentiousness or abusing grace
- He wants them to know that grace does not permit what the law forbids
- To be under grace does not mean that the holiness of God or his standards have changed
- Being under grace is not a license to sin
- What does it mean to "not be under law but under grace"? → in answering this question we must understand what it means to be under law

⁶ <https://medium.com/@johnpiperdg/thirteen-practical-steps-to-kill-sin-42ac3cee5b6a>

- First, it reveals the sinfulness of man's heart
- Romans 3:19-20 ~ Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.
- The law of God was given to teach people about the sinfulness of their hearts...to expose sin
- Apart from the law, mankind thinks they are fine...think they are basically good...mankind minimizes their sin and guilt...but the law makes it clear that mankind is sinful
- All wrongful acts are sinful, even without the law...but they are only seen to be sin when they are exposed as transgressions of the law of God
- Where there is no law, there is no law to break...without law there would be no accounting for sin because sin consists in the transgression of the law
- But the law turns invisible sin into visible transgression...the law points out sin
- Second, the law has a sin-producing and sin-intensifying effect...it excites and incites sin to engage in more
- Romans 7:8, 11 ~ But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead...11 for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.
- The sinful human heart wants to do the very thing that God prohibits
- The very thing we are prohibited from doing becomes the very thing we want to do
- Just put up a "wet paint – do not touch sign" or a "keep off grass" sign and watch human behavior
- Third, the law reveals the holiness of God
- The purpose of the law was to show men the perfect standards of God's righteousness and to show that those standards are impossible to meet in man's own power
- Fourth, the law brings condemnation because it points out that men are sinners
- The law has a condemning effect...it cannot be kept, so it curses
- Romans 4:15 ~ for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.
- Galatians 3:10 ~ For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM."
- No one can keep the law...so the law only enhances our sense of failure and it arouses the wrath of God
- The law promotes fear, wrath, condemnation...the law can do nothing but condemn
- Since it cannot assist anyone to keep God's moral standard, it can only show the standard and thus rebuke and condemn those who fail to keep it
- Fifth, the law leads people to Christ by showing them that no one meets God's standards
- Galatians 3:24 ~ the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith
- The law makes men more aware of their own sinfulness and inability to keep God's perfect standard and show them they need a Savior...the law escorts us to Christ
- But believers are no longer under that law that condemns...we are under grace
- Sin's dominion is gone...we are free from the tyranny of sin and the law
- Sin has lost its power because the believer does not live under that law anymore
- But some people will turn that grace into a license to sin...they will begin to abuse grace...they will assume that we are no longer under any obligation to keep the law of God
- It is that attitude that Paul is confronting when he asks the question in v. 15

The Definitive Answer

Romans 6:15 ~ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!

- The goal of grace is to destroy sin and vanquish sin, not to increase it
- Paul has no use for even the slightest intimation that grace encourages sin
- Grace lays upon us the responsibility of holiness...life under grace is still a life of obedience
- Paul insists that even “under grace” there are obligations of obedience that must be taken seriously
- By the way, believers are still under the “law of Christ”...the NT is binding on us as our law code

Romans 13:8, 10 ~ Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law (the law of love)...Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

1 Corinthians 9:21 ~ To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.

Galatians 6:2 ~ Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

James 2:8 ~ If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,” you are doing well

The Clarifying Explanation

Romans 6:16 ~ Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone *as* slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?

- Notice the emphasis on “knowing” these realities...we must revisit this thought on a regular basis in our battle with sin
- We need to know that whatever we present yourself to you become enslaved to...we are slaves of whichever master we choose to obey
- A believer has options: live as a slave to sin or a slave to righteousness
- Paul uses the imagery of slavery here...slavery was very common in that day...it is estimated that one-third of the population of Rome in the 1st century were slaves
- It is likely that more than half of the Roman church either were or had been slaves
- They knew that obedience was the universal hallmark of slavery as slaves are bound to total obedience to their master...it demands a total, radical, and exclusive obedience
- Paul then applies this analogy to believers...they have two options: 1) continue living as a slave to sin which leads to death; 2) live as a slave of righteousness which brings freedom
- His point is that true believers are those who offer themselves to Christ as his slave

Romans 6:17 ~ But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,

- This discussion reminded Paul of what the grace had already accomplished in the lives of the Romans
- He burst out in praise because they had become slaves to Christ...they used to be under the continual, unbroken slavery of sin...but in salvation they experienced a transfer of allegiance
- This has resulted in “obedience from the heart”...it was not merely outward conformity

- This is an allusion to the New Covenant promises
- Jeremiah 31:33 ~ “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.
- The desire to live a holy life comes from within in the New Covenant

Romans 6:18 ~ and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

- They were set free from sin unto God, because of Christ
- We need to understand the concept of freedom...when most people think of freedom they think “free to do whatever I want”
- But that’s not the biblical concept of freedom...freedom from sin means a deliverance from those enslaving powers that prevent us from doing God’s will
- And it results in a slavery that enables us to obey God...Christian freedom is a kind of slavery

Romans 6:19 ~ I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

- Here Paul explains why he uses slavery imagery to depict the Christian life
- Some might object that slavery is degrading, inhumane, humiliating, and disgraceful...why use such a degrading analogy to illustrate this reality?
- Paul says that the reason is because of weakness to grasp these great spiritual truths...frail human nature cannot grasp profound truth unless it is presented in human analogies
- It is difficult to put divine principles and truths into terms that finite human minds can comprehend
- So, Paul chose the metaphor of slavery to help us comprehend this reality...it was used as an accommodation to his readers humanness...it perfectly illustrates the totality of our commitment to God
- How? → Slavery involves both ownership and obedience
- A slave is owned by a master...and they give unqualified obedience to that master
- Such is the case with believers...we are owned by a Master...and we give unqualified obedience to him
- We are to be exclusive in our allegiance to Christ as we are under the complete mastery of Christ
- We can’t be mastered by sin and Satan anymore
- Notice how he draws the analogy: “For just as you presented your members...”
- There is a comparison and a contrast between our pre-Christian slavery and our post-Christian slavery
- There is a contrast...they are to be different in direction and in kind
- Paul describes our lives prior to conversion...we used to present our members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness
- Before Christ, we offered ourselves fully to sin’s lusts and passions...to “impurity” (*akatharsia*) and “lawlessness” (*anomia*)...before conversion this is how we lived
- Notice that that sinful lawlessness was not static...it resulted in “further lawlessness” (v. 19)...literally “wickedness unto wickedness”
- Sin is a downhill path as it leads to every increasing lawlessness...its appetite grows when it is fed
- “Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay.”

- But our lives are to be utterly different now...slavery to God results in an entirely different direction in life
- v. 19 ~ so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification
- This is what happens when Christ invades your life...this is what true freedom looks like
- The entire emphasis is on holiness, the attitude and manner of life that is opposed to sin and dedicated to the service of God
- This “results in sanctification” (v. 19)
- Just as the life of sin leads to further sin (not static), so the life of righteousness leads to further righteousness, whose ultimate end is complete sanctification (not static)
- The more you give yourself to Christ and offer the members of your body to Him, the more you will grow in holiness!
- So as believers, we make the pursuit of holiness a priority
- In fact, we put forth the same level of commitment in our pursuit of holiness and sanctification that we once put forth in our pursuit of sin
- This is where our pre-Christian and post-Christian commitment is similar
- Notice that Paul draws this comparison in v. 19 ~ For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification
- The “just as” points to the fact that the same vigor, zeal, and enthusiasm that we once exercised in our pursuit of sin must now be redirected in our pursuit of holiness!
- Believers are to be just as wholehearted in walking in the ways of God now as they used to be in their bondage to sin
- They had given themselves wholeheartedly to sin; let them now give themselves equally wholeheartedly to righteousness

Romans 6:20-21 ~ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.

- That is Paul’s way of saying “you were not free to live righteously”
- We had no connection to righteousness...it made no demands on us...we were controlled and ruled by sin
- We were not subject to the rule of righteousness...we saw no compulsion to do what was right
- Such living resulted in shame and death (v. 21)
- While we were slaves of sin, we were not ashamed of those things...to be without shame is a mark of the sin dominated life
- If all sin brought was sadness and broken relationships and disappointment, why would you ever look at your old life and be attracted to those things?
- When we became believers, we came to see sin for the evil thing it is and our past deeds for the shameful things they were
- The fruit of our former way of living consists of things of which we are now ashamed
- The benefit of enslavement to sin was that it produced things that we are now ashamed of
- But that has now all changed in Christ...

Romans 6:22-23 ~ But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Holiness and sanctification is a benefit to your life

- Sin brings no benefit to your life whatsoever...
- Only obedience to Christ and submission to his lordship benefits us
- This is the gift which Christ has purchased for us!

SOME PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Starve Lustful Desires

- This is Paul's admonition in v. 12
- "If you want to stop lusting, then don't provide anything for lust to feed on. Lust has to be halted before it gets started. If you struggle with gluttony, don't go to the market with a lot of money, hungry, and alone. If you struggle with gluttony, you don't load up on junk food. If you're tempted with sexual desire, don't fill your mind with the images that build that temptation. Don't go to a movie that demonstrates that stuff, or read a novel that's all about that, or watch television along those lines. Make no provision for the flesh. It's a simple thing to remove what furnishes the mind with the means to entertain evil thoughts."⁷
- "Flesh is subtle and deceptive. It may leave you alone for a little while, make you think you're rid of it, and then come back with a hellish fury. Sin is a stalker, always lurking. When Agag and his Amalekite friends want to make friends with you and declare an end to hostilities, that's when you grab your sword and hack them to pieces. We are not ignorant of Satan's devices. We better not be ignorant of our weapons."⁸

Fix Your Heart on Christ

- Since you become the object of your worship, make Christ the focus of your life
- Remember what Christ has accomplished on your behalf
- Fix your mind on your union with him
- Aim to please him in all respects

Meditate on Truth

- No one can be transformed by what they don't know
- Thus, our aim must be to gaze into the glory of Christ as revealed in his Word
- This leads to our sanctification as the Word overpowers our thinking and our life

Psalm 119:9, 11 ~ How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word...11 Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.

John 17:17 ~ Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

- "John Owen, the great thinker and writer of Puritan times, observed that most of the Roman Catholic religious system consisted of 'mistaken ways and means of mortification': vows, orders, fastings, penances. All of that is useless. Sin cannot be annihilated through legalism, monasticism, Pharisaism, self-flagellation, or any other external means. The instrument of mortification is in the heart, and all the means of mortification are drawn from simple commands of Scripture that the believer must obey."⁹

⁷ https://www.masters.edu/thinking_blog/five-ways-to-kill-sin/

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.