

Romans Chapter 6
New American Standard Bible®

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Romans Chapter 6: 15-23

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

¹⁶Do 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? ¹⁷But 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, ¹⁸and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹I 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.

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

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

In Verse 1 of Chapter 6, Paul asks a question that many Christians have expressed:

¹What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ²May it never be!

Once we have been united with Christ through faith in his life and teachings and believe in the power of the Holy Spirit and have joined through baptism in his death and resurrection we must ask the question, "Can I go on living as I once did, just as if nothing ever happened with full expectation that I will go to heaven when I die? Wouldn't my continued sin simply allow for continued expression of God's Grace?"

Is it OK to follow a lifestyle of sinfulness, relying on continued grace from God to cover the sin?

Paul simply and emphatically answers, "No".

In verse 15, he asks the same question again, in a slightly different way.

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

If we are not subject to the Law, living in grace, does that make it OK to sin? Can we say “I am not subject to the Law because I live under grace?”

Once again, Paul answers the question with a certain response: "Absolutely not!"

To live such a life (choose to live such a life) is an indication that the sinner never really participated in the death and resurrection of Jesus. In other words, they are not really a Christian. Anyone who goes on in an unchanged life after having professed that they have come to Christ is simply giving testimony to everyone that they have not been changed in their heart at all. In fact, they may likely belong to the group of people Jesus spoke of when he said,

"Many shall come to me in that day and say, 'Lord, Lord, did we not do many mighty works in your name and cast out devils?' And I shall say, 'Depart from me, I never knew you,'" (Matt 7:22-23).

There is a difference in the two questions. The first question Paul asks is “Can we?” while the second asks, “Shall we?” Another way of expressing the second question is should a Christian occasionally sin because of whatever reason?

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

Paul provides a threefold answer to this question:

1 - Sin makes you a slave (Verses 16-19).

¹⁶Do 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? ¹⁷But 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, ¹⁸and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹I 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.

Slavery is a term we should still understand. A slave is totally committed to the will of their master. Paul says that we present ourselves to slavery, either to obedience or to sin and our decision determines our state from that point onward. If we are slaves to obedience, our state is righteousness. If we choose to be slaves to sin, our state is death – of spirit and soul.

Paul reminds us that before Christ, we were slaves to sin, but that we changed “from the heart” to the teaching of Christ.

The result of our choice to submit ourselves as slaves to obedience is righteousness (justification), leading to sanctification. The result of a choice to be slaves to sin is impurity and lawlessness, which Paul reminds us leads to further lawlessness. In other words, it won't get any better.

The fact is, we will be slaves to something. Paul reminds us that the choice is ours. We will either be slaves to obedience (The call of Christ) or Sin (the call of worldly desires of self). We will answer the call of God and Christ, or the call of the world. Experience tells us that if we do not choose Christ, we are left to the world. This is because of Adam and his disobedience.

So what happens when we sin? Paul reminds us that at that point, even though we are under grace, we fall prey to our sin – we suffer the consequences of that sin. We may be under grace, but we still suffer the results of each sin we commit. We are slave to it.

Jesus said this very thing:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that commits sin is the slave of sin," (John 8:34 KJV).

As long as we are slaves, we have no control over our situation. That is what we see when we sin. For that circumstance, we give over control of our situation to sin and all of the problems associated with sin in our lives. That is what sin does to us. We sin once and then as the result of that sin, we sin again to cover the first sin and then again and again. One lie leads to another and then another. Often, each additional sin is worse than the previous. That is what sin does to our lives. We lose control over our lives and we move deeper and deeper into sin.

I have a good friend who says, "Stopping smoking is easy. In fact it is so easy that I have stopped smoking a hundred times." That is the slavery we suffer to sin.

2 - Sin will make you ashamed (Verses 20-21).

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

All of us are ashamed of something we have done or some situation we involved ourselves in. Such shame sticks to us in ways that we cannot remedy.

Here is an acceptable definition of shame. "Shame is the awareness of unworthy actions, irreparable damage that we do to others and our painful feeling about it." Paul reminds us that sin, no matter what it is or how small it seems, always leads to shame. Our memories of the past are stained and dirtied by this sense of shame that we experience when we sin. We suffer from the shameful deeds that we would like to forget, but can't. We are unable to put aside the hurtful words that we wish we had never said and are forced to endure strained relationships that go on for years or broken relationships that we are unable to repair. In these cases, whenever we encounter those we have sinned against we feel uncomfortable in their presence.

This is another painful consequence of sin in our lives.

3 - Sin will spread death throughout your whole existence (Verses 22-23).

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

All of us understand life and death. The death Paul mentions here is probably not physical death, but death of spirit and soul. It is a death we must live with daily. It is a death we carry with us as a burden that quickly becomes too heavy to bear.

Physical death is a darkness – the darkness of life ended and the grave. In that darkness, our body begins to decay. It rots away. We become foul and offensive and we deteriorate, rotting to absolutely nothing of any value. It is the same with spiritual death. We suffer a living darkness much worse than the grave. It is a darkness of separation from God and in that darkness we rot spiritually as we become ever more offensive to God, useless to everyone and of no value to Him. Sadly, that is the living death Paul wants us to consider here.

In two beautiful passages, Paul tells us that with God and our enslavement to Him we will become sanctified, which will lead to life eternal – Spiritually with God, forever. Then Paul makes certain we understand that with sin, we earn death as a wage of sin. The other outcome? It is free – we do not earn it as a wage. God gives it to us:

”The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”