

Romans

Shall we Sin? Never! - Part 2

March 15, 2015

I. Introduction

A. Romans 6:1-7 . . . 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? [3] 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, [6] 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; [7] for he who has died is freed from sin.

B. As stated last Sunday, Paul uses Romans 5:20-21, to prepare us for chapter 6 by reminding us of the role of the law, the growth of sin, the power of sin to kill, and the abundant power of God's grace to restore righteousness to those who have been living in sin, and life to those who are dead in their sin. And Paul reminds us that God chooses to do all of this through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ.

C. Prayer

II. What shall we say? Shall we sin so grace may increase? No, never!

A. 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?

1. Here at the beginning of Romans 6, Paul raises a question about the reasonableness and practicality of Christians continuing in sin. Now clearly, Paul's question implies that someone in the church was teaching that if the power of God's grace always exceeds the power of sin, then it no longer matters if we sin or how much we sin. And the question also implies that someone in the church was teaching that there is a positive side to sinning, because when we sin, we open the flood gates to even more of God's powerful grace than we are currently experiencing. Therefore, since experiencing God's powerful grace is so incredibly wonderful, why shouldn't we seek to experience more of it?

2. Though I personally do not know anyone who teaches that sinning is a good thing in that it opens the way for us to experience the abundant grace of God, over and over again, I do know those who teach – either outright or by implication – that God’s grace is so powerful, and the imputed righteousness of Christ is so effective, that no matter how much a Christian sins, he is still in good standing with God and his entrance to heaven is still guaranteed – which means not much has changed since Paul wrote Romans.
3. Therefore, I want to warn us of three major issues we must overcome if we are to take seriously Paul’s answer to his own question. And when I say take seriously, I mean do what is necessary to turn away from sin and pursue holiness in all our behavior.
 - a. First, we must overcome the notion that living life our way is better, happier, and more secure than living God’s way. Though this notion is a lie, it is so widespread that we find Christians holding it to be true in some areas of their life. However, it is a lie that feeds self-rule, selfishness, and rebellion against God. And it produces an outcome that always increases selfishness, sin, and destruction, and eventually leads to death.
 - b. Second, we must overcome spiritual laziness, including the desire for God to supernaturally zap us into instant Christian spirituality, godliness, and effective Christian service.
 - (1) For example, how many Christians do you know who genuinely count it all joy when they encounter various trials because they want the spiritual growth that comes from doing the hard work of enduring such trials and tribulations? Sadly, too many Christians are spiritually lazy – wanting God to miraculously make them grow without the trials.
 - (2) Another example of spiritual laziness is our dependence on repeatedly asking forgiveness for the same sin rather than doing the preparatory work necessary to deny self, resist temptation, reject the influences of the world, and put on Christ-likeness in order to bring an end to the sin.
 - (3) Now it is true that dying to self, daily denying self, killing off pride, dealing with our ungodly fears, putting away favorite sins, killing off sinful habits, putting on righteousness, nurturing godly habits, loving God, living to please God, and persevering in the pursuit of holiness, is hard – and sometimes even exhausting work. But it is God’s prescribed way to go from one who practices sin to someone who practices

righteousness in every area of life. And we know from scripture and experience that God gives us everything we need to live this kind of righteous life.

- (4) Therefore, even if we agree with the message of Romans 6, we will not take it seriously until we abandon spiritual laziness, push ourselves beyond our comfort zone, and do the hard work necessary to get the job done.
- c. Third, we must overcome that nagging voice in the back of our mind that tells us it is normal for Christians to sin.
 - (1) Now admittedly, it is all too common for Christians to sin. And sadly, it is all too common for Christians to think it is normal to sin. But according to God's word, it is not normal, and in fact it is not even to be common for Christians to sin.
 - (2) Does this mean Christians don't sin or won't sin or can't sin? No. But according to Romans 6 and other scriptures, what it means is that Christians don't have to sin, and ought not to sin – which is why it is abnormal for Christians to sin.
4. Now you may be thinking that I have it all wrong. You may be thinking that all Christians sin, and if they haven't sinned yet, they soon will. Therefore, it must be normal for Christians to sin.
 - a. And to support your opinion, you could point to John's letter where he speaks of confessing our sin, which leads to being forgiven of our sin.
 - b. And to where John says if we do sin, we have an advocate before the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who takes up our cause and represents us before God.
 - c. You might also point to James, who exhorts us to confess our sins to one another so that we can gain God's healing.
 - d. Now there is no question that these words from scripture are all true, and we ought to take them seriously, for they represent hope when we do sin. But do they verify that it is normal for Christians to sin?
5. To get a balanced view, we must look at both sides of the coin, for there are scriptures that teach it is not normal for Christians to sin. Therefore, in seeking a balanced view, let's begin with Paul, who in Romans 6, asks twice if there is ever a good reason to sin. And both times his answer is an emphatic, No! Never!
 - a. In this same chapter, Paul says we have died to sin, and in dying we have been freed from sin. He says that we are to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God, that we are to no longer

allow sin to rule over us, and we are to stop presenting the members of our body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness – for sin is no longer master over us.

- b. In Colossians 3, Paul says we are to put to death immorality, impurity, passion, evil desires, and greed. And we are to put away anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech, and lying. This is presented as what normal for Christians to do.
 - c. In his first letter, John states that he wrote what he wrote so that we would not sin. He goes on to say that Jesus came, died, and rose again in order to take away sins; and that no one who abides in Jesus sins. In fact, John says, no one who is born of God practices sin, because God's life resides in him and he cannot continue sinning.
6. Now, I don't want to get into the controversy of sinless perfection or suggest that if we sin, it means we are no longer a Christian. God's people sin, and that is a well-established fact, both from scripture and experience.
- a. But what I do want to make clear is this – according to God's word, Christians no longer have to sin, and Christians no longer ought to sin. Therefore, we ought never believe it is normal for us to sin. For the Christian, sin is an abnormality.
 - b. So why is this truth so vital? Because if we live as those who believe that it is normal for Christians to sin, then we will find a way to explain away Paul's teaching in Romans 6.
- B. 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?
1. Putting Paul's question in different words, it might go like this: "Since God's abundant grace is so powerful and so incredibly wonderful, wouldn't it be reasonable to continue to sin in order to experience more of it?" And Paul's answer is: "No! Never!" But why not?
 2. The fact that Paul has to answer this "why not" question implies there were those in the church who still did not want to give up all of their sinful ways, or who did not want to do the hard work of putting off sin and putting on righteousness.
 3. To this question Paul gives his first reason for not continuing in sin. And the reason is this: we have died to sin. Now you know that a dead person cannot do anything. Therefore, since we have died to sin, it is, at the very least, logically impossible to continue sinning.

4. However, one of the problems we face with Paul's answer is the apparent contradiction between God's word and human experience.
 - a. And I say this because it is my best guess that all of us have sinned since repenting and coming to faith in Jesus Christ.
 - b. And it is probable that some of us have committed the same sins repeatedly – be they sinful ways of thinking, desiring, fearing, speaking, or behaving.
 - c. And my point here is this. We humans tend to treat personal experience and personal feelings as more valid than God's word, and in my opinion we do this because it is more convenient or advantageous.
 - (1) For example, some of us would rather believe we can't help sinning, because we don't want to give up all our sin.
 - (2) Some of us want to believe it is normal to sin because it frees us from the hard work of put sin off and righteousness on.
 - d. And I could go on, but what I am asking you to see is that regardless of our experience with sin, God's word says we are dead to sin. And God's word teaches that we no longer have to sin. Therefore, when we knowingly and willingly sin, it is because we want to sin, not because it is normal for us to sin and we can't stop or change what is normal.
 5. There is a second problem we face when dealing with Paul's words that we have died to sin, and this second problem is the misguided theology that puts so much emphasis on avoiding any hint of works based salvation that it ends up promoting salvation without obedience.
 - a. In saying this, I do not want to diminish the extent of God's grace, or His patience with sinners, or His forgiveness of repentant sinners. Nor do I want to imply that Christians cannot sin or imply that no one who is a true Christian, sins.
 - b. What I am urging all of us to do is to agree, with Paul, that as Christians, we have died to sin. And having died to sin, it is now not only illogical, but contrary to the normal Christian mindset to knowingly and willingly continue to sin.
 6. But when did we die to sin? Again, Paul has an answer.
- C. Romans 6:3-4 . . . Or do you not know (*in other words, it is possible you haven't learned this yet, but here is the truth*) 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 (*by the same power that raised Jesus*).

1. What Paul is telling us is that when we were baptized, we were baptized into Christ's death and raised out of that watery grave to live a new life in Christ – a new life begins here and now.
2. However, because of our evangelical and fundamental roots, it is likely most of us think of baptism as an option, and as a symbol having no mystical or life changing spiritual effect.
 - a. Therefore, it is possible some of us haven't been baptized. And if baptism is merely symbolical, how could it have such a profound impact on our spiritual life?
 - b. And we know from Paul's teaching on circumcision in Romans 2:25, that even if we have been baptized, if we do not continue to live according to the way a baptized Christian ought to live, then our baptism is of no consequence. It is as if we haven't been baptized. So how important can baptism be?
3. Now regardless of what you think about baptism, Paul is basing his first reason for not continuing to sin on the fact that all who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death – and that is when we die to sin!
 - a. Now when Paul uses the phrase “all who have been baptized,” he is referring to everyone who has become a Christian under the teaching of the apostles, because they baptized everyone who was converted. In other words, Paul's assumption is that all Christians have been or soon will be baptized.
 - b. And Paul's assumption is not unique among Christians down through the ages, for even though some branches of the church do not treat baptism as an inseparable part of repentance, justification and the gift of eternal life, there are some who do, such as the Roman Catholic church, the Eastern Orthodox church, the Anglican, Episcopal, and Lutheran church, and a few Protestant groups.
4. Now you may be wondering where Paul got his assumption that all Christians would be baptized. To answer this, let's turn to God's word.
 - a. Matthew records what we call the Great Commission in which Jesus said: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I commanded

you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20).

- b. According to Mark 16:15-16, Jesus said to His disciples, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. [16] He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.”
 - c. At the end of Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost, those who were feeling convicted asked how they should respond, and Peter said:” “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39] For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself” (Acts 2:38-39).
 - d. And last, but not least, we have the words of Ananias, whom God sent to restore Paul’s sight and inform Paul of the work that lay before him. We read Paul’s account of this in Acts 22:14-16, “The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. [15] For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. [16] Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on God’s name.”
5. My point here is simply this: whether symbolically or mystically, these first Christians believed in baptizing every convert, and that one of the important realities that takes place in baptism is the reality of dying to sin and rising to a new life of righteousness.
 6. Therefore, Paul’s first reason for why we Christians are not to continue in sin is because through baptism we have died to sin by being buried with Christ (*immersion*) and raised with Christ, by being brought out of the watery grave, to live a new life of righteousness.
 7. And because of this baptismal death and resurrection, it is not normal for a Christian to sin, but rather it is now normal for the Christian to press forward in putting off sin and putting on the new, Christ-like life that has no more to do with sin.

III. Conclusion

- A. Romans 6:5-7 . . . 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, [6] 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; [7] for he who has died is freed from sin.