

SHOULD WE SIN?

Romans 6:15-23

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Has anyone ever taken your words the wrong way? One time I was at Lydia's family reunion in Texas. When her cousin Josh walked in the door, he was holding his young son, who I'd never met. I asked, "What his name?" He replied, "Blake." So I said, "Oh. Where did you get Blake from?" He paused, gave me a puzzled look, and said something to the effect of, "We got him the usual way that parents make babies." I laughed and said, "No! I mean, where did you get the name Blake?" The rest of the day I felt really stupid.
2. I remember an instance when my dad's words were taken the wrong way as well. We were at church (this was when I was growing up), and he was chatting with a little girl. She was in the third or fourth grade. And my dad told her the sweetest thing. He said, "Did you know that you are very special." At that, she ran to her mother and burst into tears. Why? To her, the word "special" meant "special-ed," so she thought he was saying she was mentally slow.
3. It's not unusual to be misunderstood; for people to take your words the wrong way.
4. In the book of Romans we find that this happened to Paul. Some people misunderstood him. They took his words the wrong way. Paul's message was justification by faith. Some thought the implication of this teaching was that sin is irrelevant, and Christians can go on sinning.
5. This brings up the question about the relationship between the Christian and sin. How should Christians view sin? Some churches don't talk about sin except in the context of forgiveness. God has forgiven you, you need to forgive yourself, and you need to forgive others. That's it. They never talk about God's hatred of sin and the imperatives of repentance and holiness. Yes, God's love and grace and forgiveness are

- amazing. Yes, God loves you no matter what. Yes, you can't lose your salvation. But that's not all there is to Christianity. Other churches talk about sin, but in a very generic kind of way. They talk about the evil of sin, and the need for repentance and holiness, but they don't get into specifics. They don't call sins by their name. But it's important to be specific. The Bible is very specific. Jesus was specific; Paul was specific; the New Testament has many lists of specific sins.
6. In one of his books, Bruce Wilkinson told about a time when he was preaching at a conference at a hotel, and during the off-time many of the people were relaxing by the swimming pool. A young woman approached him and said she was enjoying the conference, and she said that her boyfriend came with her, but that he wasn't attending the conference, he was just staying with her in the hotel room. Things got really awkward as many other Christians were listening in on their conversation. As they talked she also said that she and her boyfriend had been living together for quite some time. So Bruce said, "Did you know that it is sinful to sleep together before marriage?" She was shocked. After they talked awhile, she realized that she and her boyfriend needed to move into separate apartments until they got married. She was a little frustrated. She said, "I have many Christian friends, and I go to a Christian church, and nobody ever told me that I was living in sin. I didn't know."
 7. When it comes to sin, we must avoid the extremes. On the one hand there is the extreme of legalism, which is relying upon the law for salvation. Paul has dealt with that extensively in Romans 1-5. Justification is by faith, not works. On the other hand is the extreme of antinomianism (against law), or libertinism. This is the error of focusing only on God's love and grace and forgiveness, and not God's holiness. This is the error that Paul is addressing in Romans 6 (verses 1 and 15).
 8. First, Paul raised the issue in Romans 6:1.
 9. **Romans 6:1** What should we say then? Should we continue in sin so that grace may multiply?

10. Paul had just finished saying that no matter how much you sin, God's grace is greater (Rm 5:20). So, some people assumed that the more we sin, the more God's grace will be displayed, and the more God will be glorified. So the question was, "Should we continue in sin so that grace can multiply? Should we continue to sin so that God will get more glory?" Paul answered, "Absolutely not!" He explained in verses 2-14.
11. Next, Paul rewords the question in Romans 6:15.
12. **Romans 6:15** What then? Should we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? Absolutely not!
13. Why this question? Paul had just finished saying in verse 14 that as Christians we are not under law but under grace. He knows that some people will misunderstand him and take his words the wrong way.
14. What does it mean to be not under the law but under grace? Paul doesn't elaborate in Romans 6 on what it means, but on what it doesn't mean. It doesn't mean that you can just go on sinning all you want. It doesn't mean that God doesn't care about sin, or that God's moral law has no bearing upon Christians. We know this because the entire New Testament says that Christians are to repent of sin and pursue holiness.
15. In this passage, however, Paul focuses on three reasons why Christians shouldn't go on sinning. Let's read the passage, and then we'll look at Paul's answer.

II. TEXT: Romans 6:15-23

15 What then? Should we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? Absolutely not! 16 Don't you know that if you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of that one you obey—either of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness? 17 But thank God that, although you used to be slaves of sin, you obeyed from the heart that pattern of teaching to which you were handed over, 18 and having been set free from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness. 19 I am using a human analogy because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you offered the parts of yourselves as slaves to impurity, and to greater and greater lawlessness, so now offer them as slaves to righteousness, which

results in sanctification. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free with regard to righteousness. 21 So what fruit was produced then from the things you are now ashamed of? The outcome of those things is death. 22 But now, since you have been set free from sin and have become enslaved to God, you have your fruit, which results in sanctification—and the outcome is eternal life! 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

III. **THREE REASONS CHRISTIANS SHOULDN'T SIN**

1. **To avoid re-enslavement.**

- i. **Romans 6:16** Don't you know that if you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of that one you obey—either of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness?
- ii. Paul explains the Christian's relationship to sin and to God in terms of slavery, and he apologizes in verse 19 because our relationship with God is very different from slavery. While we belong to God, He is our master, and we live for Him alone, we are also His beloved children, and we serve Him out of gratitude not obligation. However, there is some value to the analogy of slavey, which is why Paul uses it.
- iii. Paul's point is this. You will have a master. If you sin, then sin will be your master. If you obey God, then God will be your master.
- iv. In verses 1-14, Paul described that miracle that happened to you at conversion. You died and rose with Christ. God set you free from enslavement to sin. He gave you power over sin. You now have the potential to live a holy life. However, if you willfully choose to sin, then you will be re-enslaved to sin. No, you won't lose your salvation, but sin will dominate you. Once again you will get addicted, and you will be controlled by sin.
- v. How does this work? Consider the sin of lying. God has set you free from sin, so that now you have the power and the desire to live in the truth. But you still have the ability to lie. At first, it will

be hard. You will feel awful. You will feel guilty. The second time, you will still feel uncomfortable, but it will be easier. The third time, it will be easy lie, and very difficult to tell the truth.

- vi. Just because God has changed your heart and given you the potential to overcome sin (see Rm 6:17-18) doesn't mean that the battle with sin is over. It has just begun. You have the power to be victorious, but if you choose to sin, sin will rule over you. You will get hooked, and it will become very difficult to get out of it.
- vii. This verse is saying that you can't play with sin. Many Christians think that they can dabble in sin and still serve God. It doesn't work that way. This is why many Christians are addicted to sin. Many Christians are addicted to lying, stealing, pornography, homosexuality, premarital sex, drunkenness, etc. If you dabble with sin, you will be dominated by sin. If you play with sin, it will pounce on you like a lion. If you flirt with sin, it will move in with you.
- viii. **Unknown** "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."
- ix. So, the reason to not sin is to avoid re-enslavement. If you choose to sin, you will fall deeper and deeper into sin and find it harder and harder to be obedient.

2. To be obedient.

- i. **Romans 6:19** "For just as you offered the parts of yourselves as slaves to impurity, and to greater and greater lawlessness, so now offer them as slaves to righteousness, which results in sanctification."
- ii. The second reason Christians shouldn't sin is to be obedient. God explicitly commands you to turn from sin and pursue righteousness and holiness.
- iii. The language in this verse is interesting. When Paul says "you offered the parts of yourselves as slaves to impurity," he is talking

about wholehearted commitment (Leon Morris). Before you were a Christian, you were wholeheartedly committed to sin; to living for yourself. But now that you are a Christian, Paul says that you need to have that same wholehearted commitment to righteousness.

- iv. What is righteousness? That word is used in two ways in the New Testament.
 - 1. First, relational righteousness, or a right relationship with God. This is peace with God and access to God and the hope of glory. Relational righteousness is a free gift to those who have faith in Jesus Christ. That's not the kind of righteousness Paul is talking about in this verse.
 - 2. Second, ethical righteousness. This is the right behavior that God demands from his people. This is the kind of righteousness in this verse. God commands you to offer the parts of yourself (every part of your life) to righteousness.
- v. What is the right behavior that God demands from His people? Read your Bible and do what it says – especially the New Testament. Let me give you an example from another of Paul's letters.
- vi. **Ephesians 4:25-5:4** 25 Therefore, putting away lying, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, because we are members of one another. 26 Be angry and do not sin. Don't let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and don't give the devil an opportunity. 28 Let the thief no longer steal. Instead, he is to do honest work with his own hands, so that he has something to share with anyone in need. 29 No foul language should come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear. 30 And don't grieve God's Holy Spirit. You were sealed by him for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice. 32 And be kind and compassionate to one

another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ. 5:1 Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children, 2 and walk in love, as Christ also loved us and gave himself for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God. 3 But sexual immorality and any impurity or greed should not even be heard of among you, as is proper for saints. 4 Obscene and foolish talking or crude joking are not suitable, but rather giving thanks.

- vii. That should give you plenty to work on.
- viii. The point is that Christians shouldn't live in sin because God has commanded them not to. Throughout the New Testament there are commands to repent of sin and live a holy life.
- ix. **1 Thessalonians 5:7** For God has not called us to impurity but to live in holiness.
- x. When I was a kid my dad told me to do something and when I asked why he replied, "Because I said so!" Why shouldn't Christians sin? Because God said so.
- xi. But there is a third reason.

3. To reap a better reward.

- i. **Romans 6:21-22** So what fruit was produced then from the things you are now ashamed of? The outcome of those things is death. 22 But now, since you have been set free from sin and have become enslaved to God, you have your fruit, which results in sanctification—and the outcome is eternal life!
- ii. This is not hard to understand. Why shouldn't Christians sin? Just compare the product of sin to the product of righteousness.
- iii. What is the product of sin? Shame and death. Let's look at each of these.
 - 1. Shame:
 - a. Definition: "a painful emotion caused by consciousness of guilt, shortcoming, or impropriety."
 - b. The first product of sin is shame. When you look back at your sins, you aren't proud. You aren't glad.

You are ashamed. You are filled with regret and embarrassment. You broke God's heart, you hurt others, and you hurt yourself.

2. Death:

- a. Death can refer to three things. It can refer to physical death, eternal death (separation from God), or simply to destruction.
- b. As a Christian, when you sin you don't lose your salvation and go to hell. But sin will cause destruction in your life.
- c. Choose to sin, choose to suffer.
- d. Sin promises life, but it produces death.
- e. When Adam sinned, he lost paradise. When Saul sinned, he lost the kingdom. When David sinned, he lost his child. When Moses sinned, he lost the promised land. When Ananias and Saphira sinned, they lost their lives.

iv. What is the product of righteousness?

1. Sanctification:

- a. Growth in holiness, or growth in Christlikeness.
- b. As you pursue righteousness and obey God, you become more and more like Jesus – more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled.
- c. And that is the pathway to true happiness. Everyone wants happiness, but most people don't know how to get it. Happiness is not a goal, it is a byproduct. You can't achieve happiness by pursuing it. You achieve happiness by pursuing God and righteousness, and then happiness is the byproduct.
- d. People struggle to find happiness because they are trying to get it through pleasure, possessions, power,

praise and achievement. But those things only leave you empty. Happiness is the byproduct of righteousness. You don't need to look for happiness. Pursue God and Christlike character, and happiness will find you.

2. Eternal life:

- a. Eternal life is not merely something that you experience when you die. Eternal life is something you receive the moment you become a Christian.
- b. The essence of eternal life is an intimate relationship with God. Is the best thing you can experience. It's what makes life worth living. It's what gives life meaning. It's the source of inner strength, and peace, and joy.
- c. When you live in conformity to God's will, you can walk in intimacy with God. You can have a close, intimate relationship with God.
- d. But when you sin, you lose that intimacy. You don't lose eternal life, but you lose the intimacy and fellowship with God.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. So, why shouldn't you sin?
 - i. To avoid re-enslavement.
 - ii. To be obedient.
 - iii. To reap a better reward.
2. Here's what I want you to remember about sin.
 - i. What is sin? Sin is any failure to obey God's commands.
 - ii. Who is God? God is your heavenly Father who loves you more than you love yourself, and who knows what is best for you.
 - iii. Why does God give you commands? For the same reason that any parents gives their children commands. To protect you and guide you to the best life.

- iv. When you sin, you are not merely violating God's will, you are missing out on what's best for you.
- 3. Justification is by faith alone. It's true, when you believe in Jesus, God forgives all your sins, past, present, and future. But that doesn't mean you can go on sinning. God wants you to take the same passion that you used to have for sin and direct it toward righteousness.
- 4. Is there any sin in your life that you need to get rid of?