

Salvation And Sin (Part I)

Romans 6:1-14

Series: Book of Romans, #08

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Theme: **Salvation Breaks Sin's Reign.**

Introduction

We return to Romans today after our break for Advent. Remember that this book helps us understand much of the truth of our faith. The reformer John Calvin wrote that understanding this letter gives us “an open door to all the most profound treasures of Scripture.”¹ And James Montgomery Boice states that studying Romans “will change us profoundly and unalterable.”²

Paul states the central message or theme of this letter in verses 16 and 17 of the first chapter,

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘But the righteous man shall live by faith.’”

His theme is the gospel—the good news of Christ Jesus.

After the opening section stating his theme and showing us what it means to be a good and faithful servant of Christ through his own example, Paul moved on to the bad news of sin followed by the good news of justification, of salvation. Everyone stands guilty in their sin before God. But God’s provides that we can be saved by His grace through faith in Christ. Paul lays out the principles and then illustrates salvation by faith through Abraham. In chapter 5 he details some of the benefits of being justified by faith. Then he tells us that being related to Christ makes all the difference as he draws the contrast between being related to Adam by birth and to Christ by the new birth.

Paul has established the basics of salvation, of being justified before God through Christ. Now, as chapter 6 opens, he turns his attention from justification to sanctification. In justification God declares a sinner who believed in Christ righteous because of what Christ has done. Once a person is declared righteous positionally—that is, before God in Christ—God begins working in that person to make him or her righteous practically, or experientially. This process of sanctification, of being set apart for God as those who are holy, is a life-long process. It will not be complete until we see Christ face to face in heaven. As one writer succinctly states, “Whereas justification deals with the *guilt* of sin, sanctification deals with the *power* of sin.”³

Paul addresses *Salvation And Sin* in this chapter. The chapter is in two parts. Both have the same basic core truth that *Salvation Breaks Sin's Reign*. In both sections Paul uses a question and answer approach to presenting the truth. The overall question is "Does salvation affect sin's reign?"

Does Salvation Affect Sin's Reign?

His first question is "Are we who are in Christ, who believe, have been pardoned of our sin, have been justified, to continue in sin?" Look at the opening verse, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?" The last part of chapter 5 drew a strong contrast between being *in Adam* and being *in Christ*. There Paul said in verse 20, "The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more."

Some could say, "If God's grace increases where sin increases, why not continue in sin so we can receive more grace?" That would mean that sinning isn't a big deal because it leads to the blessing of more grace from God. If that sounds crazy, you need to know that some people have followed this idea down through the years. Of course, this misses the point, which is that while the Law points out the great extent of sin, no matter how much one has sinned, God's grace is greater. His grace is more than adequate to pardon.

The issue here is *continuing in sin*. The action word here is the word *continue*, which has the idea of staying, remaining, *continuing*. Are we to stay where we were in Adam, dominated by sin, in order to receive more grace from God?

Paul's answer is emphatic. Verse 2, "May it never be! How shall we who have died to sin still live in it?" "No! Never! No! No! No!"

Jacques Plante was the first player to wear a goalie mask in a regular season NHL game. He and some other goalies had been lobbying to wear them, but the coaches thought the masks would limit their vision. In a game on November 1, 1959, Plante was hit in the face by a puck which required seven stitches. With no backup goalies, the game was held up while he was treated. Then he refused to go back into the game unless he could wear his mask to protect the injury. Now, fifty years later, it is unthinkable to have a goalie play in an NHL game without a mask.⁴

Infinitely more unthinkable is that anyone who has died to the control of sin, who has been rescued from the domain of sin and darkness, who has been redeemed, forgiven, justified by the blood of Jesus Christ and transferred to God's kingdom should continue in the realm, under the domination of sin.

Salvation affects sin's reign. *Salvation breaks sin's reign*. No, we don't have to continue in sin. No, we shouldn't continue in sin. Yes, God has provided the escape from sin's reign.

Paul immediately goes on to support this by explaining...

Why Salvation Breaks Sin's Reign.

First, believers have died to sin in Christ. Verse 2 states that we have died to sin. Note that it does not say that sin died, but that we died to sin. Paul is not talking about the presence of sin in a believer, as we will see something about his own struggle with sin in chapter 7. And the writer of Hebrews spoke of "sin which so easily entangles us" (12:1). Nor is he talking about the penalty of sin, which is a different aspect of our redemption. He is talking about the power of sin. Christ saved us, verse 6 says, "so that we would no longer be slaves of sin." We live under grace, verse 14 tells us, so now sin shall not be our master.

Paul uses the analogy of baptism to paint a picture of what happened when Christ saved us.

- Verse 3, "we have been baptized into [Christ's] death."
- Verse 4, "we have been buried with Him through baptism into death."
- Verse 5, "we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death."
- Verse 8, "we have died with Christ."

The basic concept of death is separation. Physical death is separation from our body. Spiritual death is separation from God. The death here is separation from the control of sin. If we have died to sin as lord and master, and we have, then sin has no right to rule over us.

Just as Christ "is never to die again," just as death is not master over Him, just as He died to sin once for all and triumphed over death and sin, so we, having died with Him, have freedom from sin's tyranny (9, 10). Verse 7, "for he who has died is free from sin." Backing up to the previous verse,

"our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with [or, rendered powerless to reign], so that we would no longer be slaves to sin."

Yes, the old hymn was right on target, "He breaks the power of cancelled sin, He sets the prisoner free!" We have died to the control of sin. *Salvation breaks sin's reign.*

But we also need to see the positive side of this. Believers have risen to new life in Christ. We died with Christ and we have been raised with Christ. Look at verse 4.

"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. 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." (4-5)

You see the analogy of baptism: going down under the water, dying with Christ; being brought up from the water, being raised with Christ. Dying to the control and domination of sin. Being raised up to a new and different life.

Every believer has been rescued from Satan's domain of darkness and been transferred into Christ's kingdom of marvelous light. That is is an infinite difference! (Colossians 1:13; 1 Peter 2:9). Now we have a life with all the wonderful potential, fellowship, fullness, meaning that God created for us! Some of you may recall the words of an old chorus. "New life in Christ, abundant and free! What glories shine, what joys are mine, what wondrous blessings I see! My past with its sin, the searching and strife, forever gone — there's a bright new dawn! For in Christ I have found new life!"⁵

Why does salvation break sin's reign? Because believer's have died to sin in Christ, because believers have risen to new life in Christ. But we know that believers, including each one of us, still sin. We know that some believers are caught in the clutches of some persistent sin. So a very practical and essential question is "How does this truth become real in our lives?" God tells us how through Paul as he writes about...

The Believer's Escape From Sin's Reign.

There are four factors God gives us here that we need to understand and put into practice. The first is God's expectation for all believers. We find it in verse 2. "May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" And again in verse 14. "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace." When Paul writes

- "May it never be!", who is he talking about? *All believers.*
- When he writes "We who died", who is he talking about? *All believers.*
- When he writes we are "under grace", who is he talking about? *All believers.*

This is not just for some Christians or for some times. It is for all Christians and for all times. This is not just God's desire, but also His expectation... for each and every believer.

Secondly, we must recognize the choice to be made. Drop down to verse 11. "consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." The word *consider* should be an old friend by now. Paul has used it 14 times in Romans before this verse.⁶ The basic idea is to reckon, count, take into account, consider, calculate.

It has to do with reality, not fantasy. I might *consider* myself to be a virtuoso at the piano, violin, trumpet, oboe or any number of other instruments, but that would be sheer fantasy, or perhaps even lunacy. This word refers to the state of things as they really are, to the facts. In this setting it also refers to a thoughtful, considered, decisive choice rather than an impulsive one.

Consider what? There are only two options from which to choose. Either I consider myself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ or, I choose to consider myself dead to God and alive to sin by allowing, as verse 12 states, sin to reign in my body and obey its lusts. The

latter choice would, in the *technical theological language* of the late and brilliant New Testament scholar Leon Morris, be “stupid.”⁷

Question: Who, what is reigning in your life? What choice have you made? Postponing or deciding not to make a choice after becoming aware of this truth is making a choice: a choice to allow sin to continue to reign in your life.

The next factor is to stop playing games. That is strong language. Strong language that comes from the substance of what Paul writes here. Look at verse 11 again.

“consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts.” (11-12)

We are all in this struggle of life together. As Paul testifies in 7:15, “what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.” We can identify with this.

But we can be serious about our spiritual life and still play games with sin in general, or with some specific ones.

When Paul writes “do not let sin reign in your mortal body,” his force is “do not let sin go on reigning...” Christ has dethroned sin. If it rules you, it does so as a usurper, as one who has no right to rule. If sin reigns in us, we will obey its lusts. Paul is not speaking of perfectionism, but the control and rule of our lives.

Drop down to verse 13.

“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.”

This word “present” was used for bringing offerings or sacrifices to God, or to manmade gods. The force of “presenting” is that of an ongoing or regular action. It includes a pattern of sin, persistent sin.

The fact is that sin’s domination over us is broken. Examine your actions and motives as you ask the God to shine a floodlight on any deception or game playing.

A woman in the audience of a television program tackling the subject of women having affairs with married men identified herself as a Christian. But, to the applause of the audience, she said that God wasn’t concerned about her affair with a married man. God wanted her to be happy. If she knew anything at all about the Bible’s teaching on morality and marriage, she was playing games. She was in Leon Morris’ words, again, being *stupid* to allow sin’s pleasures to have the upper hand.

The fourth and final factor in escaping sin's reign is to commit yourself totally, decisively to God. Let's go back to verse 13.

“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.”

When Paul wrote “but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead,” his force was “make a decisive, once for all time, once for all things in your life decision to present yourself to God as instruments of righteousness in His service.” It is much like his call which opens chapter 12. “Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”

Put all the debating and or procrastinating behind! Settle this once and for all! We will see something about living out this commitment later. It requires continual dedication but, with this decision made, the fundamental question has been answered. When we do get off track, when we sin, as the apostle John tells us, “If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). But, sadly, some Christians do not come to this point of commitment, which is the starting point to true service and fulfillment. *Salvation breaks sin's reign*. Sin reigns only as a usurper in the Christian.

Conclusion.

Is sin a usurper in your life? God gives us pictures of various usurpers in the Bible. We see one in the book of Judges. Gideon had served God and the people faithfully. God used him to deliver Israel from their oppressors. The people offered to make him king, but he refused. But after his death, his son Abimelech had different ideas. He killed his possible rivals and then had his family and friends declare him king. But one brother and potential rival escaped. When he heard of this he told an interesting parable about Abimelech.

“Once the trees went forth to anoint a king over them, and they said to the olive tree, ‘Reign over us!’ But the olive tree said to them, ‘Shall I leave my fatness with which God and men are honored, and go to wave over the trees?’ Then the trees said to the fig tree, ‘You come, reign over us!’ But the fig tree said to them, ‘Shall I leave my sweetness and my good fruit, and go to wave over the trees?’ Then the trees said to the vine, ‘You come, reign over us!’ But the vine said to them, ‘Shall I leave my new wine, which cheers God and men, and go to wave over the trees?’ Finally all the trees said to the bramble, ‘You come, reign over us!’ The bramble said to the trees, ‘If in truth you are anointing me as king over you, come and take refuge in my shade; but if not, may fire come out from the bramble and consume the cedars of Lebanon.’” (9:8-15)

The point was that Abimelech had no more right to reign over Israel than a bramble, a thistle bush, had to reign over the trees. He was a usurper.

As you reflect on this truth with God now, thank Him, praise Him that you have died with Christ and have been raised with Christ. Sin no longer is your master. Don't let sin rule over you. Commit to begin, or to keep living in a pattern of victory not defeat by walking continually according to these four factors God has given us through Paul. Remember, Jesus said,

“He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.”

(John 14:21)

It is as we do this we can join Paul's shout of praise after he discusses his struggles in chapter 7, “Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (24b-25a). The victory comes as we live with and serve God in love by faith.

¹ John Calvin, *The Epistles To The Romans And To The Thessalonians*, trans. Ross Mackenzie. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1960, p. 5.

² James Montgomery Boice, *Romans, Volume 1, Justification by Faith, Romans 1-4*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1991), p. 9.

³ Alva J. McClain. *Romans: The Gospel of God's Grace*. Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1981, p. 141.

⁴ Shawn P. Roarke. *Fifty Years Behind The Mask*. <<http://www.nhl.com/ice/news.htm?id=503855>>. Accessed 23 December 2009.

⁵ John W. Peterson. *New Life In Christ*. John W. Peterson Music Company, 1963.

⁶ λογίζομαι. 2:3, 26; 3:28; 4:3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 22, 23, 24.

⁷ Leon Morris. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992, p. 257. His statement, from which this use is applied is: “Sin's pleasures take place in a body which is at best mortal and will soon pass away, whereas Paul has been speaking of the life in Christ that brings eternal joy. It is stupid to allow that which will die to have the supreme position.”

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