

# ROMANS

## 6:1-23

### Romans 6:1-23

Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 12th March 2023 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

**Reading:** Ephesians 4:17-24

### Introduction

This morning we are studying Romans chapter 6, so please turn, tap or scroll there in your Bibles.

#### Chapter overview of Romans

- **Chapters 1-8:** Christian doctrine
  - Sin (1-3), Salvation (4-5), Sanctification (6-8)
- **Chapters 9-11:** Israel
  - Israel - Past (9), Present (10), Future (11)
- **Chapters 12-16:** Practical Christian living
  - Practical Christianity

Following Paul's introduction and greetings to the Christians in Rome at the start of this letter, we read of God's righteousness revealed, and His wrath against both the unrighteous & self-righteous revealed - because all have sinned. As we read, *there is none that does good, no - not one.*

And the law, which we might suppose would help us, in fact leaves us helpless. It shows our sin up for what it is, and reveals our desperate need for a Saviour.

The good news, of course, is that we have one - and Paul presents Jesus as our Saviour, through His death and resurrection. The just for the unjust. The righteous for the unrighteous. That we might be justified in Him - that is just as we had never sinned.

And Paul explained that we accept the grace of God through faith alone - because it is something that we could never earn through our own efforts. *"Not the work that we have done. Nothing but the blood of Jesus."* as the old hymn says.

Then last week we read in chapter 5, that since we have been justified by faith - we have peace *with* God, and hope *in* God. There is no more striving to keep the law that we might be saved, because we *have* been saved by God's *grace*, which is sufficient to cover *all* our sin.

So then, having looked at those things, there are two possibilities. That either you're a Christian, or you're not. There's no trying to be a Christian, there's no half-way point.

If you're *not* a Christian, you need to understand your predicament; that the only hope you have of eternal life is placing your faith and trust in Jesus Christ who alone can save you.

But if you *are* a Christian, how do you respond to what we've read? How do you respond to what Jesus has done for you? Living as a Christian is such an important thing, that it comes with instructions - and we need to take note of them. As Paul writes chapter 6, he's assuming those reading it *are* Christians. And he's going to ask several questions, the two primary ones being:

#### Overview of chapter six

- v1-14 - Shall we sin so that grace abounds?
- v15-23 - Shall we sin *because* grace abounds?

Shall we sin, so that grace abounds? In verses 1-14, Paul will answer this question, that is; does God show more grace the more we sin? If so, and since grace is a good thing, should we sin lots? Of course, Paul will resolutely say no.

The second major question he'll offer up, tackled in verses 15-23 is shall we sin *because* grace abounds? That is, given that Christ paid for *all* our sin, does that mean we can live how we wish? Again, Paul will say no - because sin, attractive as it is, achieves nothing but shame.

J Vernon McGee writes in his Bible commentary:

*God wants to make us the kind of folk we should be. So God also has a plan in salvation whereby He not only declares a sinner righteous, but He is also going to make a sinner righteous. That is, God provides a way that a sinner may grow in grace and become sanctified (set apart) for God.*

**J Vernon McGee**

In other words, while the gospel invites you to come as you are, it doesn't say stay as you are.

## Chapter six

We read then in verse 1:

**Romans 6:1**

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

Having been saved by *faith* in Jesus death in our place, whereby he redeemed, forgave and justified us, how do we act? Shall we habitually persevere and increase in sin, that grace may increase?

Try that if someone is buying you dinner unexpectedly. You've had your garlic bread, your burger and chips. You've had your fill of food, when you realised you left your wallet at home and you have no way to pay. And then your friend says - my shout! And you reply, "in that case I'll have the chocolate brownie sundae - oh, and make it a large one. And I'll have a coffee, and cheese & biscuits as well". Would you dare do that? Wouldn't that be incredibly rude? Of course it would!

So then likewise, we are not to sin more so that God's grace covers more sin. Indeed, He wasn't merely buying us a meal, but sent His own Son to die an agonising death in our place, for our sin, that we might go free.

Writing to Titus, Paul says grace, rather than teach us to sin, teaches us to *keep* from sin:

**Titus 2:11-14**

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

And here in Romans, Paul answers this question of whether we should continue in sin by writing:

**Romans 6:2**

Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

There's no ambiguity in this! But there are implications.

First, Christian's can still sin. If that were not possible, he wouldn't be asking the question! And second, he writes that we died. What does this mean? Well, he continues...

**Romans 6:3**

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death?

That is, through the act of baptism, which we're commanded to do as an outward display of what has happened inside, we are identified with Christ *and* His death. That means we are to die to self.

Of course, that is not the prevailing view in the world today, where we're told to 'find ourselves'. Now, some of that is with good intent; it's good to know who you are, what you enjoy, what you're good at, what things help or hinder you. But there's a part of it that the world expects to find joy in finding oneself. But as we've seen, our hearts are desperately wicked. That's not a good thing to discover! And we are to die to self, for our identity is now in Christ. That means we are to kill off the old life - we're to stop following the dictates of our heart, and the lusts of our flesh.

Paul continues:

**Romans 6:4**

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Baptism is symbolic of Jesus death and resurrection. But more than just pointing to *Christ's* death and resurrection, it is symbolic of how Jesus has given *us* new life. That is, we're not only to kill off the old man, but we're to walk in newness of life. JC Ryle said this about our new life in Christ:

*To be born again is to enter into a new existence, to have a new mind, a new heart, new views, new principles, new tastes, new affections, new likes, new dislikes, new fears, new joys, new sorrows, new love for things once hated, new hatred towards things once loved, new thoughts of God, ourselves, the world, the life to come and salvation.*

**JC Ryle**

This is not something that Paul wrote uniquely to the Christians in Rome. In our reading from Ephesians 4 earlier we heard Paul say that we must put off the old man, and put on the new one. Likewise he wrote to the Corinthians:

**2 Corinthians 5:17**

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

And to the Colossians we he wrote:

**Colossians 3:1-11**

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

When a man or woman becomes a Christian, it is anything but business as usual. We read on...

#### **Romans 6:5-6**

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

So, because of what Jesus has done in dying in our place, and rising from the dead, we are no longer to be slaves of sin. In fact because of what He has done, we don't *need* to be. We're no longer controlled by sin. We don't *have* to sin.

But can we still sin? Do we have the ability to? Oh yes, we do. But there's a big difference between the ability to do so, and the compulsion or need to so.

The Greek word **Katargeo** translated here as *done away with* and in the KJV as *destroyed* implies rendered inactive, or paralysed. And think of how that works - you still hear your sin nature tempting you to retaliate, or snap at someone. You still hear your sin nature nudge you... "why don't you look take a real lustful look at that girl as she walks past", "why don't you flirt with that handsome man", or "why don't you take that thing home from the office - they don't need it anyway".

But despite all the talk, your old nature is no longer the boss. It can't *make* you do those things. Sin is paralysed in it's power toward you as a Christian. Sure, you feel the temptation. But you don't have to yield. And we'll get to that more in a moment.

#### **Romans 6:7**

For he who has died has been freed from sin.

That is, you can't lust, steal, cheat, murder, hate, fornicate, or lie if you're in a wooden box six feet underground. And we should consider ourselves that dead to sin. We read on...

#### **Romans 6:8-9**

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

So then, just as death has no control over Jesus (who rose from the dead) and is evidently not victorious against Him, neither should sin have dominion over us - because it is paralysed in its power toward us.

#### **Romans 6:10**

For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

Now, first we should note that Christ died once for all. A point Paul reiterates in Hebrews 7:27, Hebrews 9:12, and Hebrews 10:10. His blood isn't shed for us every time we share in communion.

But now He lives, not only so that we would live, but that we would live to God also. We read in 1 Peter chapter two:

**1 Peter 2:24**

who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.

So then, our lives are to be different now. Everything has changed. Paul continues in Romans...

**Romans 6:11**

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And so Paul starts with the first of what will be 4 commands in 3 verses, writing *reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin*. Now, of course it would be an awful thing, whether in our personal lives or in our jobs, to try and contact someone to find that they had in fact died. But in that situation, what response would we get from that person? Nothing. For they are dead.

Likewise that's the response sin should get; that we've cut it off so decisively, that we are dead to sin, and there's no answer when temptation comes calling. But how do we do this? Well, not by our own efforts. We need help. And the very good news, is that we have it.

We read in Hebrews chapter four:

**Hebrews 4:14-16**

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

So then, having taken a moment to pause in our thoughts, we seek God's help in dealing with the situation. We ask for God's help in keeping from sin. That indeed, we may be no more led by it than a dead man would be. And in doing so, we *bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ* - as Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 10.

But also, Paul writes, we're to live for God - walking with God. We read in Galatians this verse that is read out at our baptism services:

**Galatians 2:20**

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

This is nothing like our old lives when we were slaves to sin, and enemies of God. And this first command is to recognise this all-encompassing change in our relationship to sin, AND in our relationship to our God who has saved us.

The second command then, says, having recognised that sin is no longer king, we're no longer to let it reign like one. We read...

### **Romans 6:12**

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

This is a choice. A choice you have to make. As, evidently, it *is* possible for sin to reign in the life of a Christian - though it doesn't have to. Nor *should* it do so, for this is a command, an instruction. *Do not* let sin reign - either in one part or the the whole of your life.

As JC Ryle put it:

*Do nothing that you would not like God to see.*

*Say nothing you would not like God to hear.*

*Write nothing you would not like God to read.*

*Go no place where you would not like God to find you.*

*Read no book of which you would not like God to say, "Show it to Me."*

**JC Ryle**

We read in the next verse...

### **Romans 6:13**

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

This is a progression, whereby Paul has first said that there has been a fundamental change in our relationship to sin - that is is no longer king. Then, as a result, we should no longer let it reign as one. And furthermore, we read here, we should not yield to it in the moment, we should not make ourselves available to sin. How do we avoid doing that? There's a lot we can learn from Proverbs chapter 7.

We read there, in verses 6-23, the account of a young man who ends up in an adulterous relationship with a married woman. How does that happen? We read first that he was devoid of understanding. Next, that he passed along the street near her corner - that is, he walked too close to those who might influence him to sin. Then, he took the wrong path, in this case to her house - and it's there that he was tempted. She made him feel wanted, she made sin seem attractive, and she suggested there was no risk - that only good would follow (that should be familiar to us from how Satan approached Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden!). And finally, we read in verse 21 that *with her enticing speech, she caused him to yield*.

How could that have been avoided? Well, that's what Solomon starts the chapter with - and says; keep my commands and live. Bind them on your fingers, write them on the tablet of your heart. That they may keep you from the immoral woman.

In similar manner, we need to keep God's Word in our heart; for our understanding, to instruct us in how we ought to act, and to keep us from sin. David wrote in Psalm 119:

### **Psalm 119:9-11**

How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.

We need to be regularly and diligently reading God's Word, not to tick a box, but so that it guides our hearts, so that we find ourselves with understanding, that we might not yield to sin, but yield to God and His will for our lives.

As Paul will later write in chapter 12, using the same word as translated *present* in chapter six:

**Romans 12:1-2**

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Having said we should not yield to sin, but to God, Paul continues by saying:

**Romans 6:14**

For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

That is, you are not a passenger in your life. You are no longer controlled by sin - it no longer has position of authority over you. However, this isn't about keeping the law to please God, to earn His favour - but rather, having been shown such grace, we want to please our Saviour. And thus, we are to make an active choice to yield to righteousness, and not yield to sin under the guise that it produces more grace.

However, since grace *is* sufficient for *all* our sin, does that mean that we can continue in sin knowing that we're forgiven? That's what Paul now asks rhetorically:

**Romans 6:15**

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

So whereas Paul's opening question in this chapter was to ask if we should sin so that God shows *more* grace (to which the answer was no), he now asks if we should sin because of the grace God has *already* shown. And of course, his answer is the same - "Certainly not!".

He then says:

**Romans 6:16**

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

Paul is saying here is that if you yield to another's will, you're obeying them. So who will you yield to? I beg you, don't be so foolish as to think that the freedom the world and sin promises is actually that - it's not. Does drinking solve anything? Does free sex really satisfy? Does pornography help? Do drugs solve our problems? Does wagging our tongue angrily improve the matter?

It's foolishness to play with a lit stick of dynamite, awed by the glow of the flame - because you know how that will end. Likewise, if you play with sin, enticed by all it offers - you'll find that the ending of that is no better. Paul warns in his letter to the Galatians:



### **Galatians 6:7-8**

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

To put it simply, kill sin - or it will kill you. Ultimately, we see that in death. But oh, how we see it in our lives too - indeed we cannot overestimate the problems sin will cause in our lives.

When you walk outside of God's will, you'll find time and again that there are consequences, which often you'll need to live with for the rest of your life. Sometimes very tangible consequences - a broken marriage, parenting on your own, poor health, sleepless nights, wrecked friendships, broken family ties. But also, it will wear away at you in guilt, in regret, in distance in your relationships - especially your relationship with God. Charles Spurgeon said:

*A little sin, like a little pebble in the shoe, will make a traveller to heaven walk very wearily.*

**Charles Spurgeon**

And let's not forget, that our sin affects others too. Not only those in our homes, but in our churches. Consider the example of Achan in Joshua chapter 7. God had given an incredible victory to Israel over the city of Jericho, but contrary to what he knew he should do, a man called Achan took spoil from that city and buried it under his tent. The result? Israel were defeated in their next battle at the city of Ai, and people died. And likewise our sin can cause God to remove His hand from ministries, from churches, from any endeavour we might do in service to Him.

So note - your secret sin affects others. Your watching of pornography in your bedroom, your heavy drinking in your home, your anger at work, your dabbling with drugs while on holiday - such sins have an impact beyond who knows about them.

So kill sin, before it kills you. Before it leaves you with long lasting, even eternal consequences. Before it affects those around you, and those closest to you.

However, let me remind you once again that you are not slaves to sin any more. You don't *have* to obey it. We read on...

### **Romans 6:17**

But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

We have been delivered and justified by Jesus death and resurrection in our place - and we are no longer slaves of sin. There is a great change because of the great exchange of Christ in our place. We read in 1 Corinthians 6:

**1 Corinthians 6:9-11**

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

Oh, indeed - God be thanked for this!

And accordingly, may there be change in us... just as we read...

**Romans 6:18**

And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

We've been set free from sin, and we can now live the Christian life, pleasing God. It doesn't mean that we don't sin, but that it's no longer calling the shots.

Paul writes:

**Romans 6:19**

I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.

Once we sinned, and that led to us wanting to sin more - just as drinking salt water makes us thirstier. But now we are to yield to God's will for our lives, which will in turn produce holiness in us.

**Romans 6:20**

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

As a non-Christian, you could do anything you wanted to. However, as Paul points out in verse 21:

**Romans 6:21**

What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

All the world promised to us was not what it was cracked up to be. And rather than rejoicing in our decisions, we find regret. As we look back, we see how our sin has already brought death - perhaps to our marriage, or relationships, or friendships, or health or sanity. What promised freedom, resulted in shame.

**Romans 6:22**

But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

That is, we have been set free from the thing that leads to death, and now if we use that freedom to yield to God and His will, we will have fruit that leads to holiness, with the sure hope of eternal life.

## Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What a gift indeed. The only thing we'll ever earn is the punishment due to us. But praise God that he paid for our sin through Jesus' death on the cross. And through that incredible gift, we now have eternal life, and a relationship with Christ.

## Conclusion

As I wrap up this morning, I want to say once more; sin is a wretched thing. The reality and result of sin was so severe, that it required Jesus to die on the cross in our place that we might be saved. But that wonderful act of God means we are free from the penalty of sin. And furthermore, now that we are saved, we are no longer under the power of it. We don't have to sin.

However, although sin is no longer king, you and I do have the choice as to whether we let it reign like one. But we must not - rather we need to consider ourselves dead to it, that when our sinful nature calls us, we don't answer - and instead go to our Saviour who will help us in our time of need.

As Elisabeth Elliot helpfully said:

*His commands are always accompanied by power to obey.*

**Elisabeth Elliot**

## Application questions

This week, I urge you - look carefully at your lives. Seek the Lord and ask Him to not only reveal your sin to you, but to help you flee from it.

Here are some questions to consider this week:

- What are you going to do next time you're tempted to sin?
- What are you doing to avoid temptation?
- How are you pursuing righteousness?

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