

Is it OK to Sin? No!

The value of Bible doctrine was taught by R. B. Thieme Jr. and others. For some, that term “Bible doctrine” is scary. Like “dogma.” Boring and useless. It could be something that is difficult to learn and of questionable value.

However, the Bible contains answers to many questions that deal with life and its meaning. So, I like to call Bible teaching, Bible answers. Paul has helped us out in this instance by asking questions and then providing the answers. He asks questions that are asked today. One of those questions concerns the accusation that free grace theologians (“once saved, always saved”) teach that grace is a license to sin. That has been a question that plagued theologians since the reformation. The accusation goes something like, “If you can sin without losing your salvation what is to keep the believer from just sinning constantly without regard to God’s righteousness? A veritable license to sin.” Apostle Paul addresses this very question.

Romans chapter 6 consists of two questions concerning sin and their answers.

Question #1:

Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in (the) sin (nature) so that grace may increase?

There it is. Is grace a license to sin? The first question asks about the domination of the sin nature. Is the fact that our sins are paid for by Christ on the cross and that grace extends to every believer, is that a license to sin? This is the very question that those who attack free grace claim we say. We do not. Paul answers this question for us.

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Answer #1:

Romans 6:2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Verses 3-14 Expand the answer emphasizing the Baptism of the Holy Spirit which places us “in Christ.” We are to live according to our position “in Christ.” The answer here is that this grace in which we live is not a license to sin. It is a license to serve.

Remember, death is also a separation. We have been separated from the domination of the sin nature. We have a choice now: sin nature or the Holy Spirit. Paul doesn't get into the Holy Spirit aspect until chapter 8.

The second question comes in verse 15.

Question #2

Romans 6:15a What then? Shall we sin (verb: aorist active subjunctive) because we are not under (Mosaic) law but under grace?

The second question deals with the activity of the sin nature, personal sins. Again, here is the question of a license to sin because we are no longer under the Mosaic Law.

Paul, in Romans is writing to a Christian community with a strong Jewish influence. Some Jewish believers from Rome were present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2.

Acts 2:5 Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven.

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Acts 2:6 And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language.

Acts 2:7 They were amazed and astonished, saying, “Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?

Acts 2:8 And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?

Acts 2:9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

Acts 2:10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

Acts 2:11 Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.”

So a Jewish community in Rome brought back information about the new dispensation of Grace/Church. The Scriptures they had were copies of the Septuagint, a translation of the Old Testament in Greek. So there is no doubt the recipients were familiar with the Torah/Law.

Answer #2

Romans 6:15b May it never be!

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The answer is again a resounding no! This is one of the strongest negatives in the Greek language if not the strongest negative. The rest of the verses in chapter 6 answer the question from the perspective of slavery. Slavery to the sin nature or slavery to righteousness. You only have two choices.

Romans 6:15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!

Shall we sin. This is the only verb of “to sin” in this chapter. All the other references to sin are nouns. Most of those have a definite article indicating the sin nature. The verb “we sin” indicates production of the sin nature: personal sins. The answers to both questions (verse 1 and verse 15) include a reference to grace. When you think of grace as blessings, the Church Age has super grace blessings. History has passed the cross. We are on the other side of the cross and benefit from the reality of God’s promise. We are “in Christ” which provides us a plethora of blessings not available to those in the dispensation of the Law.

Paul is emphasizing the motivation to do good. The license to serve. He does not delve into divine discipline nor the sin unto death. He is only emphasizing one aspect. If time permits, we will read the last half of Deuteronomy chapter 30 to see this same principle as it applied to the sons of Israel.

Romans 6:16 Do 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?

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Do you not know. Important concept for Paul: knowledge. But we know from study that knowledge/promise must be mixed with faith.

Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

Hebrews 4:2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

Although slavery exists today in the World, even in the United States, current slavery is not much discussed. In the ancient world slavery was a way to pay an unpayable debt. From Wikipedia:

“In Ancient Greece, bankruptcy did not exist. If a man owed and he could not pay, he and his wife, children or servants were forced into "debt slavery", until the creditor recouped losses via their physical labour.¹”

The issue here in Romans is that the slave owner gave orders to a slave which had to be obeyed. Not obeying an order could result in punishments. The readers of this letter in Rome would understand that in a way we cannot.

Present yourselves. You are presenting yourselves to someone for obedience. You can obey the sin nature and sin. Or you can obey the Holy Spirit by faith and produce acts of divine righteousness. Your choice.

True story. One year, as a child, I had nothing to give my mom for mother's day. So I went to her and said I would do whatever she asked

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_bankruptcy_law

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me to do. Years later, my mother still remembered that “gift” as one she very much treasured. I had presented myself for obedience. More on “present yourselves” below.

At issue here is the choices. There are only two. Throughout Romans Paul constantly contrasts two and only two options. In some places he says “all” to indicate all of a certain category. Here in these verses Paul provides only two choices.

It is like the movie, The Matrix. There were only two choices: the blue pill and the red pill. Paul speaks in terms of absolutes.

Romans 6:17 But 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,

Romans 6:18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

There are only two options in the Christian life: slavery to the sin nature or slavery to righteousness via filling of the Holy Spirit. Just two.

The believers in Rome apparently had chosen obedience to the Word of God. Paul already told us that in the beginning.

Romans 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

That is high praise coming from the Apostle Paul. For Paul, faith is the issue.

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Romans 6:19 I 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.

Paul is using an example from human experience to illustrate a spiritual lesson. Slavery was something that was on display in the ancient world. There was legal slavery which was a substitute for bankruptcy. It might have been voluntary or not. That is how you paid a debt you could not pay with money. So you worked off your debt. Then there was involuntary slavery. In the Roman empire, a conquered people were taken as slaves. Today, slavery is still around. The media just does not cover it.

Romans 6:19 (KJV) I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

The King James translates the word “present” as “yield.” A story that R.B. Thieme Jr. told was that as a young believer, he asked a more mature believer what he should do as a Christian. The answer was “Yield, brother yield.” This was not helpful. Yield requires an object. What are you yielding to? If you go to an intersection and the sign says “yield,” the implication is to yield to traffic from merging traffic. Give precedence to the other traffic.

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In the case of a Christian you yield to the power of the Holy Spirit. However, in current day English, yield is probably not the best translation. “Present yourself” is not bad.

This word was used in the Septuagint (LXX) to translate a word for “stand.” But this standing is one of subordination and obedience. The early Christians only had the Old Testament in Greek translation, the Septuagint (LXX) as their Scripture. So they would understand this word from Biblical usage.

Genesis 18:22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the Lord.

Standing. In the LXX the Hebrew word for standing is translated by our word for “present.”

The context of this verse is that the Lord appeared to Abraham. This is the passage in which the Lord tells Abraham He is about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. When two angels left, Abraham was standing before the Lord. In the context you see that Abraham was very hospitable to the angels and the Lord. This word for present is a word for service. You might think of it in military terms. The officer over you gives you a command and you obey. If not, you suffer the “consequences.”

This is sometimes applied in the LXX to angels.

Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.

I am making a big deal out of this word since it applies to us and “present yourselves” doesn’t necessarily portray the intensity, the formality of this

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action we are to take. We are presenting ourselves as slaves to either the sin nature or to God the Holy Spirit.

Members. Interesting that Paul uses this word. He didn't say your body or hand or feet, but "members." I think we answered the question as to what the members are last week. Remember the worst sins from God's perspective?

Proverbs 6:16 There are six things which the Lord hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:

**Proverbs 6:17 Haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
And hands that shed innocent blood,**

Proverbs 6:18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil,

**Proverbs 6:19 A false witness who utters lies,
And one who spreads strife among brothers.**

Members are all the parts of your body involved in sinning.

**Romans 6:20 For when you were slaves of sin,
you were free in regard to righteousness.**

It is interesting to note the words that have some idea of "separation." Holy and sanctification are words that indicate a separation to God. Death as a result of sin indicates a separation from God. "Present yourselves" indicates a separation to someones in authority. Freedom indicates a separation from. That would be an interesting study with illustrations to show relationship of those who we are separated from and those who we are separated to.

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Romans 6:21 Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.

Another pastor observed that sin often brings transitory pleasure. But it is only transitory. And there are always consequences.

Remember, sin leads to death.

Romans 6:22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

Eternal life. Remember, you have already started your eternal life.

True story. My father loved flying. Once he retired from the Navy, he bought a used prop plane which was in poor repair. Being a master mechanic, he put it back into flying order. He got his pilot's license and started flying his pride and joy. One day he asked me to accompany him on a flight. Flying in a single engine two seat airplane is very different from a commercial jet. You can look out the window and see the ground below. It is not for someone who is afraid of heights. All of the sudden, at about 3,000 feet, my father took his hand off the "steering wheel" and said, "OK, you are now flying the plane." I am not a pilot and never took flying lessons. I understood the basics of flying and let my father talk me through some basic maneuvers.

In our Christian lives, we may wake up one day and realize we are "flying" at the controls of our lives. You won't have anyone to talk you through the basic maneuvers. You will need to rely on what you learned in Bible class.

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**Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death,
but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ
Jesus our Lord.**

Wages of sin is death. We have heard this phrase many times. We should concentrate on the rest of the verse.

Free gift. This is a single word. The translation is apt in context. It emphasizes that we do nothing (except faith) for it. There are no strings attached.

Have you given a child a gift that you thought they wanted. And then they say, “This is not what I wanted!” Just imagine God tapping his foot waiting for us to get with His plan of blessing. And then we tell God we would rather sin.

Here Paul returns to “in Christ Jesus.” Our position in Jesus Christ is secure.