

If salvation is by grace, can we keep sinning?

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[0 : 00] Well, I want to ask you a question this morning. It's a question that often bugged me when I was a child, when I was growing up. And that question is, why on earth do parents never give pudding before supper?

Why do parents always give pudding after supper? Because wouldn't it have been great growing up in a house where you got pudding before supper? I mean, to me, I would have loved that, but I didn't have that privilege of growing up in a house like that.

But you know what? I don't hold that against my parents because now that I'm a parent, I get it. I get why they did that. And the reason is, pudding is the only reason that kids eat supper.

And so if you gave pudding before supper, then they wouldn't ever eat the food that's good for them. They'd have no incentive to do that. I remember growing up, the only thing often that got me through supper was the promise of pudding to come.

And that if I ate my supper, I would get pudding. It's a concept which children learn from an early age. It's a concept called incentive reward. And it's very useful in parenting, I must say.

[1 : 09] But this concept is, we see it elsewhere in the world, this concept of incentive. It's how the world works in a lot of areas in work, employment. Employers get incentives.

Employers give incentives for their staff to work well, bonuses at the end of the year or whatever. We see it in economics. Countries, governments often give producers incentives to produce a particular type of good that the country needs.

And we also see it in the world of religion and faith. A religion seems to be, if we look objectively at it, whatever religion, it seems to be in the business of giving people an incentive to live a good life and to do the right things.

And that incentive is called heaven or paradise or whatever else you might want to call it. And no matter what religion you look at, generally the idea is the same. If you get through living a good life, then you can get eternity in heaven.

That's what people tend to think. Very much like if you get through supper, you get to have pudding. And people see life and eternity that way as well. But then what happens is that we open up our Bibles and we see something very different.

[2 : 19] When we consider Jesus and understand what Jesus came to do and what Jesus came to tell us, Jesus puts that whole idea of incentive reward on its head. Because while every other religion teaches us to live a certain way of life in order to be saved to get right with God, Jesus says salvation is already guaranteed for anyone who trusts in him, not because of anything they do, but because of what he did.

In other words, you get pudding before supper. You see, Jesus doesn't give us an incentive to live a good life and promise that we'll get it if we do. It's in reverse. Jesus offers us salvation just by coming to him based on nothing that we do.

And so as Christians, Christians really, if you think about it, Christians are the only people on earth who can know for sure where they are going in the life to come because it doesn't depend on anything that they do.

If it did, it would never be sure. Muslims and other religions are never quite sure if they're going to make it. Christians can be sure because it has nothing to do with our works. It has nothing to do with us.

It's got everything to do with Jesus. That is the gospel message. That is the gospel message that Paul, as he's writing Romans, has been explaining to us over all these chapters.

[3 : 36] But that creates a problem, doesn't it? If you think about it, I wonder if you've spotted the problem of that gospel message of free grace. The problem is, if salvation is already guaranteed,

then what real incentive do we have to live a good life?

Think about it. Or in other words, can a Christian live however they want and still go to heaven because they believe in Jesus? It's a good question, isn't it? Especially when the Bible says things like in Romans 5.20, where sin increases, grace increases all the more.

In other words, as a Christian, the more you sin, the more God will forgive you. And so why not just carry on sinning? Why not just live the way we want to and then go to heaven one day?

The famous poet, W.H. Auden, once put it this way. He said, I like committing crimes. God likes forgiving them. Really, the world is admirably arranged.

And the question we really need to tackle this morning, and that we may be asked by people who are skeptical of the Christian faith, is what is it that prevents us from taking advantage of this grace and living how we want?

[4 : 45] And that's exactly the question Paul now gets to in Romans 6. After he's explained the gospel of free grace, Romans 6 is in our Bibles to answer that single question.

Why don't we just carry on living the way we want if grace is free? And so that's what Paul goes on to answer. And it's such an important question that he actually answers it twice.

Have a look in your Bibles in Romans 6. So first in verse 1, Paul summarizes this question like this. He says, shall we go on sinning that grace may increase?

That's the question we're looking at this morning. And then he goes on to answer that question emphatically. No, no ways. By no means, he says. And let me tell you why, which he then goes on to explain in the next 10 verses, which we'll look at.

But then you'll notice in verse 15, he starts again. In case you missed it, he asks the same question in a different way. Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?

[5 : 39] Same basic question. And again, he says, no ways. By no means. You can't do that and let me tell you why. And then he goes on to explain why. So that's the structure of Romans 6. It's in two halves and both halves are explaining basically the same question but looking at it from slightly different ways.

And Paul really wants to make a point of making sure that you and I understand just why we can't continue to sin. If we've been saved by grace.

And that's what we're going to discover this morning. And there are two very important reasons we see in this chapter. The first reason is that being a Christian means starting a whole new life.

We see we've got to understand what being a Christian means if we're going to answer this question of why don't we just carry on sinning. And the first reason is because being a Christian isn't just taking on a new belief or saying a prayer.

Being a Christian is starting an entirely new life. And so let's see the argument that Paul makes from verse 1. He says, what shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

[6 : 44] By no means. We are those who have died to sin. How can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Okay, so let me tell you the basic idea of what's going through Paul's head here. The basic idea is a human being lives for a set period of time and then they die.

That's how human life ends. That's where it gets to. Sorry to spoil your Sunday morning if you weren't expecting that. But that's what happens. You're born, you live, and you die. And people die, the Bible says, because they've sinned against God.

Verse 23 onwards in chapter 6 says the wages of sin is death. Okay, death is the consequence of us sinning against God. That is the normal process for all people who have sinned against the Creator.

[7 : 50] You live, but you don't live forever. You die. And by the way, that proves that no person in history has yet lived a sinless life because everybody has died.

Except, of course, Jesus. But his death wasn't for his sin. It was for ours. But you see, the point is death is not a natural thing. We think death is natural. It's just the circle of life.

But it's not. Death is not natural. Death is not what it was meant to be. Death is always the result of sin. And that's what each person is set to face. You have to face death one day because you've sinned against God.

But here's the difference if you're a Christian. According to this passage, if you're a Christian, you've already died as a result of sin.

You've already died a death for sin. See, verse 2, we are those who have died to sin. More technically, Jesus died for your sin in your place.

[8 : 51] But through faith in him. You see, faith is not just saying, I believe. Faith is uniting yourself to Christ. Literally, it's uniting to him like a marriage.

That's why the church and Christ relationship is described as a marriage. Two people uniting into one. And we unite into Christ when we put our faith in him. And when we do, when we put our faith in Christ, God, get this, God considers that death of Jesus on the cross as your own death. He sees that death as your death. Essentially, if you're a Christian, when Jesus died 2,000 years ago, you were there with him. You were there in him. And that's what Paul means when he says in verse 3, When you were baptized into Jesus, i.e. when you became a Christian, which is signified in baptism, you were baptized into his death.

When you were baptized, you participate in the death of Christ. You go there and you die there on the cross with Jesus if you're a Christian.

And if that's the case, if you've already effectively died as the penalty for sin, you can now move on from that life where sin used to hang over you to a new life where it doesn't.

[10 : 11] And you can already do that. You don't have to wait for heaven to start your new life because you've already died to your old one. That's what Paul is saying here. You've already died.

Now, to illustrate, who's seen this movie? Anyone? Put up your hand. Adrian has. Yeah? Good, good. It's a fairly oldish movie.

It's got Sean Connery still, Connery, when he was young and handsome. And what is it called? You Only Live Twice. Interesting title. And the reason that the movie is called You Only Live Twice, I saw this movie quite a few times growing up.

It was one of the few VHS cassettes that my parents owned. And so I used to watch, you know, if you've got VHS, you don't have the conveniences that children have today of YouTube and DVDs. You just watch the old VHS over and over again until it wears out. And I watched this one until it wore out. So I can tell you the story from back to front. But it starts, the movie starts with James Bond faking his own death.

[11 : 10] And you wonder, what's going on? Has James Bond died? And then you realize, oh, he's all faked it. But the movie starts with him dead and he gets buried. And the reason he fakes his own death is because he's being hunted all over the world by Spectre, the guy with the cat, you know?

And anyway, Spectre is hunting for him. His enemies are hunting for him. And the only way they would stop hunting for him is if he died. And so, to all intents and purposes, he did.

He faked his own death. He was declared dead. To the world, James Bond had died. And because of that, do you know what happened? His enemies stopped hunting him. It worked. His enemies were fooled. They didn't hunt him anymore.

And so, he could then move about freely and carry on his mission without worrying about his enemies breathing down his neck. He effectively began a new life, did James Bond. And that was the whole point.

And the reason I talk about that is because in a similar way, that's a Christian's relationship with sin because of our death that Jesus died on the cross. Before that, we were hunted down by sin.

[12 : 13] Before you put your faith in Christ, if you're a Christian this morning, sin is hunting you. It's breathing down your neck. It's willing to have you and destroy you. But now that you've died, sin is satisfied and it's not going to hunt you anymore.

Because we've already died to sin. You see, verse 7, anyone who has died has been set free from sin. And so now you know what? We can move about freely because we've started a new life where sin is not ruling over us.

But what needs to happen first for that to happen, for you to experience that new life, is that you need to die to your old life on the cross with Jesus. Here's another simple picture to illustrate the concept.

The first line that you'll see up there, that represents a normal life. Okay? So, you're born, you live, that's the bar, you live your life and then you die.

But then, look at the Christian life. That's the second line. The Christian life is that you're born the same way, you start to live. But then you're converted, you come to Christ, you realize what he did

on the cross, you put your faith in it.

[13 : 20] And that's when, according to God, that's when you die, when you put your faith in Christ. But from that moment, you begin a new life, that green bar that carries on into eternity.

Even when you're still in this world, you've just got to, of course, get over that little speed bump of physical death later on. But for a Christian, all that is, if you think about it, all your physical death is at the end of your earthly life.

If you're a Christian, that's like stepping off a train in a new country, but that you've already been traveling in for quite a while. You know, if you enter a country, you've already crossed the border and you look out the window and you see the fields of this new country.

You're already in the country, but you're still on the train. You've still got to step off the train to officially enter the country, but you're already in the country. That's what a Christian is. We're already in the new life. We're still on this earth and we've still got to step off the train when we physically die, but we're already here.

We're already in the new life. A Christian has already crossed into their eternal life, even though we're still in this world for a while. The movie title, *You Only Live Twice*, is exactly right for a Christian.

[14 : 27] You do live twice and only twice because your second life never ends. And we start to live that new life now. What better reason to become a Christian if you're not a Christian?

I don't know what you're doing with your life, but if you're not a Christian, your life is the top one. You're going to die. You're going to face God in judgment with all your sins still.

But if you become a Christian, you start a new life that never ends. A Christian lives twice. And we start that new life now. But the problem is, now here's the problem.

This is why Paul writes these chapters in Romans. We keep gravitating back to the old life. We're in the green line, but we keep going back to the red one, don't we? Because the red one's here on earth, and we keep on slipping back to this life on earth and not living our eternal life that Jesus died to give us.

Which is quite silly, really, because it's as if James Bond, after faking his own death so his enemies stop hunting him, it's as if he always has this kind of urge to call him up and say, Ha ha, I'm actually alive.

[15 : 35] Come hunt me again. But you see, it sounds silly, but that's what we do with our sin, don't we? You know, we've started this new life where sin doesn't hang over us anymore. We can be free of it, and yet we want to call it up.

And we want to keep going back to it when we should be going forward away from sin. See that diagram again at the bottom? We keep on going back to the red line when we should be going forward, forward to eternity, preparing for heaven.

That's what Christians are called to, to start living our new lives. But that doesn't happen naturally. We need to make a concerted effort to start living our new lives. And that's the challenge that Paul gives us in verse 11.

See what he says? He says, count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Here's a comfort for you. He wouldn't have to say, count yourselves dead to sin, if you didn't constantly feel tempted to go back to it.

He wouldn't have to tell you that. So he knows, he's a human being himself. He knows that we constantly want to go back to sin, that our sins pull us back. And so he says, this is what you've got to do, Christian. You've got to count yourself dead to sin.

[16 : 42] You've got to wake up every morning and realize that you've started a new life. Verse 12, therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any of yourselves to sin, any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life.

And offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness, for sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. In other words, what this is saying is if you are a Christian, not only must you realize that you've started a new life, not only must you see the world in that way, see your life in that way, but you must make a concerted effort to offer, to present yourself to God every day to live this new life.

Present to him all of your resources and faculties and say, I want to use all that I have to live this new life, not this old life. But you've got to do that. You've got to make the effort to do that.

You present yourself to God. Offer yourself to God daily. It's like starting a new job. If you've started a new job recently, you'll know what I'm talking about. Leaving an old job and starting a new one. The first day of a new job, what do you have to do? You have to present yourself to your new boss. And you commit to him by signing your contract. You commit to him that you're going to use all the hours of your day and you're going to use your faculties and your resources to do the work for him, to do the work for your new job, right?

[18 : 17] That's what going to a boss and starting a new job is about. And when you sign the contract, normally there's this line in the contract that says, during your working hours, you will commit to using everything that you have to that effect, to carrying out your job and that you won't be distracted.

And so you're not going to go to your new desk and then carry on doing your old job that you quit from, are you? No. You've left that job and now you must focus all your resources and faculties on your new job.

And that's what a Christian is to do. You've got to realize that you've left the life of sin behind. Yet sin will still tempt you and it may still trip you up from time to time because you're still in a sinful world.

And that's where the confusion comes in, which in fact Paul addresses in the next chapter, Romans chapter 7, come back next Sunday for that. But that's why all the more, because we're still in this sinful world, all the more you need to realize that you've started your new life already.

You've started it. To God you've already died and you've already started your new life. Even while you're still in the old world and you've got to commit in this old world to living your new life now by daily presenting yourself to God, giving Him your body, your members, your faculties, and saying, Lord, use this for my new life.

[19 : 37] Help me to direct these thoughts and these passions and these desires to living my new life. Help me to direct my skills and my gifts to living my new life.

Help me to direct my money and my resources to living my new life and leaving my old life behind. And that's the first reason Paul says, if you've truly been saved, you cannot continue to live a life of sin, a life under sin.

That's the first reason. But then he goes on to give us another reason why we can't carry on sinning, not only because being a Christian means starting a new life, but secondly, because being a Christian means following a new master as well.

And that's the second reason Paul gives in the second half of this chapter. See what he says from verse 15. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means. Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone who is obedient, slaves, you are slaves to the one you obey, whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness.

[20 : 45] Now, this is a very important truth that Paul wants us to understand here. And it's a shocking truth, because what he's saying here is you're going to be a slave to something in your life.

You are going to be a slave to something. You're never truly free. You're either going to be a slave to sin or a slave to righteousness.

You choose. Famous philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau said, man is born free and everywhere he is in chains. And he almost got it right, but he didn't quite.

Because the Bible says man is even born in chains. We're born into slavery. Because of Adam and Eve, our forefathers, because they entered into the slavery of sin by choosing to turn away from God.

We, everybody who's been born since then, has been born into that slavery. Just like in history, sadly, the history of slavery. We see slaves going to America or Europe or wherever it is from Africa.

[21 : 50] And when they're there, their children who are born don't have a choice. They're born into that slavery. And they're going to grow up and be slaves as well. It's the same with us. We're born into the slavery of sin.

But it doesn't seem like it. We don't tend to think like that. Because we're free to move around. And we're free to do what we want. And we can go to the shops when we want. And go to the movies when we want.

And it seems that we're free. And we're living free. But we're actually not as free as we think. Not nearly as free as we think. And you know how you can prove that? Do you know how you can prove that you're actually a slave?

Try keep the Ten Commandments for one week. Try not to sin for one week. Resolve not to sin. You won't be able to.

It's out of your control. Because you're a slave to sin. You're not free. You're not as free as you think. We're always under a stronger master than ourselves.

[22 : 44] And we hate that thought. I mean, as human beings, we want to be independent and self-determining. But the truth is, the Bible says quite clearly, you are always under a stronger master than yourself.

And sin is a very strong master. As anybody knows who's struggled to break out of the destructive cycles of alcoholism. Or pornography. Or drugs.

Or hatred. These are all things that can rule over us. That we can have no control over. But now, what Jesus has done for us, is if we come to him, he offers us a new master to serve.

A new master to live under. He rescues us from our old master so that we can live under a new good master. We will still live under a master because we will always live under a power greater than ourselves.

But now, because Jesus came, we get to choose which master we want to live under. There's a story that comes out of the American Civil War, which you may know a bit about.

[23 : 45] The American Civil War happened when there was still slavery. And the South, they had slaves on their cotton fields and stuff. And the North wanted to kind of do away with slavery.

And so, they had a war, as people tend to do when they disagree. But there was a story of a man who came from the North. And he visited the South. And he went to a slave market.

Slave markets were horrendous things. They literally put people up like cattle. And they sold them off. And so, he went to the slave market. And he actually had some money with him. And he bought a slave woman.

And then he took her and walked away with her. And as they were walking away down the street, he turned to her. And he said, You're free to go.

And she didn't understand. She had been born into slavery. She didn't understand what it meant to be free. And she looked at him, dumbfounded. And he said, No, you can go.

[24 : 41] You can go. You're free to go. And she says, What do you mean? And he says, No, I bought you to set you free. And now you can go where you want. And a smile grew on her face.

And she looked around. And she breathed the fresh air of freedom. And then she looked at this new man. And she said, Well, then I'll go with you. I want to come serve you and your house. And she did.

She went off with him. But she went off serving him in freedom. And which really was the only logical choice, if you think about it. Because if she had left him and gone off by herself, she probably would have been snapped up into slavery again.

And so she chose willingly to serve this man who had bought her freedom. You see the picture? That's what the truth is for a Christian. A Christian is a person who has been bought by Jesus when he died on the cross.

And he shed his blood, the valuable blood that bought your life out of slavery, out of the slavery to sin that you were born into. And a Christian is someone who was bought, and now who willingly chooses to serve the master who bought them their freedom.

[25 : 48] And so Paul says in verse 17, Have a look. Thanks be to God that though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance.

You have been set free from sin, and you have become slaves to righteousness. And when you do that, when you become a slave to righteousness, when you submit out of the heart to your new master, something amazing starts to happen to you.

You find that you no longer desire sin like you used to. Rather, you begin to desire righteousness, and holiness, and the things of God, as the Holy Spirit works in your heart.

Because as Christians, we're no longer under the slavery to sin. It loses all its power over us when we willingly submit to our new master. Our old master has no power over us anymore, and your desires literally start to change when you submit to your new master, Jesus Christ.

And you come to obey God from your heart, verse 17, not because you have to. And it's an amazing miracle, and it is a miracle. It's a miracle of miracles. That when we submit to God, He changes our desires inside to want new things, to want what He wants.

[27 : 12] And that, let me tell you, that is true freedom. True freedom is when your desires are not shackled and bound to desiring sin anymore. That is true freedom, and that is the miracle that God works in your heart when you submit to your new master.

You know, going back to the picture that I started with of giving children supper before pudding just so that they eat their supper, imagine parents, imagine that you could actually change your child's desires to want healthy food rather than junk food.

And so you don't have to give them an incentive. Imagine that. Imagine you could change your child's desires to like broccoli and lettuce and carrots and things. So you don't have to dangle pudding as an incentive.

They'll say, No, I don't want pudding. I want the salad. Yummy, Mom. You know, and that would take a miracle. I'm a father. I know that would take a crazy miracle. But that's the miracle God does to us.

Even more so, He doesn't do that with food, but much more importantly, He does that with righteousness. And that's why He doesn't have to dangle salvation as a reward based on whether we've been good or not.

[28 : 18] Rather, He first saves us and then makes us want to do good, want to live under His rule because He saved us. He liberated us from slavery. And do you know how you know that you want to live under His rule?

Because let me ask you, do you? Do you want to live under Christ's rule this morning? Well, do you know how you know if you do? You'll want to read your Bible regularly.

Because look at verse 17 again. You have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. In other words, where do we find the pattern of teaching? It's in the Bible. That's where we find God's rule for our lives. But if we have no interest in opening and reading our Bibles and obeying what it says, then it means we're still obeying sin and we have no interest in obeying God.

And that is a really good test to see which master you are serving under. Sin or righteousness? Do you read your Bibles? Are you interested to know what your new master has to say and how he wants you to live?

[29 : 24] See, one of those is going to be your master. Which one is it? Is it sin or is it righteousness? Ask yourself this morning, which rules your thoughts and your actions day to day?

Sin or righteousness? Which do you desire from your heart? Have you come under the mastery of righteousness and are you opening Scripture daily and resolving to obey it or are you still a slave to sin?

You must ask yourself that question this morning. Are you still ignoring Scripture and rather obeying your own desires when you think you're free but you're actually a slave to sin? Which one are you? Because if you are still and you know that you're still in slavery to sin, then I invite you this morning to come to Jesus. Come to Jesus because He has come to offer you freedom from that slavery. He has come to liberate. He came to earth to die to liberate you from the power of sin in your life. His death on the cross, you see, it doesn't only take away the penalty of sin, which is judgment in hell, from someone who comes under His rule, but it also takes away the power of sin from your life as well.

[30 : 39] And that's a really good way to look at it when you read the book of Romans. Paul starts with sin to help us understand just what sin is, falling short of God's righteousness, and then he describes how we've been rescued from the penalty of sin in three and four and five chapters, and then he goes on to describe how we've also been rescued from the power of sin.

And you must realize that as a Christian as well. And if you're not, if you haven't come to Christ and you're still under slavery, know that in a moment as you put your faith in Jesus and resolve to follow Him as your new master, you will be rescued, taken away, both from the penalty of sin in eternity and the power of sin today.

You need to come to Him, though, to do that. And you need to make His death your own death. You need to die to your old life, your old master, and you need to submit to your new master by presenting yourself daily for His service and glory from now on and into a glorious eternity.

Because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. And the question is, have you died yet?
Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we just meditate and think about what we've learned this morning from Your Word, that You have called us out of slavery to live a new life.

[32 : 09] And so we have one prayer this morning, and that is that You would help us to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to righteousness and help us to present ourselves daily to You to live the new life that You sent Your Son to give us.

We do pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.