

# Abounding Grace or the Love of Sin

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Romans 6:1-2

*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? (Romans 6:1, NKJV)*

Romans chapter 6 begins a huge section of teaching on the reality of indwelling sin in the life of those who confess the name of Jesus Christ as Lord. It is perhaps the most important section of this teaching in the whole Bible. Chapter 5 began with the great doctrine of justification by faith alone, by the free and undeserved grace of God alone, apart from works, which, **when properly understood**, gives the believer a great platform from which to gain much assurance of his eternal salvation. The freedom of God's grace to mankind is amazing, in that there is not one person born of Adam that has ever lived that deserve it, nor any person who has done anything on his own to earn it. It is the eternal plan of God, that by one man (Adam), sin entered the world, and death through sin, SO THAT, by the one Man, Jesus Christ, the gift of eternal life by the grace of God would abound to many.

Now, I said that the doctrine of justification by faith is a great platform (in fact, the only platform) from which to gain assurance.....when understood properly. But when this doctrine is abused, and misunderstood, much carnage abounds. That is where Paul is on his teaching of this great doctrine of justification by faith only....that the propensity of the fallen human mind to misunderstand and therefore abuse the doctrine of free grace is very great, and anytime we find teaching about assurance, there must also follow teaching about holiness. For there is no assurance without holiness, in fact, the clear teaching of Scripture is that, without holiness, no man shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).

So we shall not depart from the teaching of assurance, without the corollary teaching of warnings that exist to balance it. In fact, there should be more teaching on the warnings of the dangers of sin in those who profess Christ than the teaching of the safety and assurance of Grace. Paul, in chapter 5, teaches 21 verses on assurance and the absolute sovereign freedom of Grace, then follows it up immediately with 23 verses in chapter 6, 25 in chapter 7, and 17 verses in chapter 8, on the mortification of indwelling sin, and the dangers of letting it reign.

John Piper, in his preface to Justin Taylor and Kelly Kopic's reprint of John Owen's 'Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers' writes,

*"As I look across the Christian landscape, I think it is fair to say concerning sin, 'They have healed the wound of my people lightly' (Jeremiah 6:14). I take this to refer to leaders who should be helping the church know and feel the seriousness of indwelling sin (Romans 7:20) and how to fight it and kill it (Romans 8:13). Instead the depth and complexity and ugliness and danger of sin in professing Christians is either minimized – since we are already justified – or psychologized as a symptom of woundedness rather than corruption....This is tragically light healing. I call it a tragedy because by making life easier for ourselves in minimizing the nature and seriousness of our sin, we become the greater victims of it." [end quote]*

If you were to ask me what was the greatest problem in American Christianity, I would say that it lies in the church's lack of teaching of the theology behind Romans chapter 6. This lack of teaching, indeed, is what John Piper refers to as the tragedy of "healing My people lightly". If indwelling sin is indeed a reality, and if the teachings of the New Testament are true, then there is a great disparity between the teachings of the church today and the teaching of the Bible. The Bible clearly teaches that there is a **battle** with sin that exists in the life of every Christian (Romans 7:20), and that every true Christian is **actively** engaged in the battle. It is a battle **in which the true Christian has been uniquely given the power by the Spirit of God to win**. The believer knows the theological fact that he is righteous only through the righteousness of another, but, as Spurgeon prays, "but we pant and pine for personal likeness to Thee." The disparity in teaching in the modern church comes where we do not find Christian leaders teaching on the biblical reality that there is

a difference in the believer and the unbeliever...that where justification by faith is taught, leaders often skip the teaching of how **every** believer will see evidence of his justification, and find great assurance thereof, **in his daily sanctification**.

It has been said that there is little difference between the world and the church. Many surveys have been conducted, and statistics have been printed and distributed that tell the tale. It has been found by researchers that, as far as things like divorce, abortion, sexual immorality, stealing, lying, greed, abuse, outbursts of anger, etc., that there is no statistical difference between those inside the church and those outside the church. The reason for this is how the statisticians define the term "Christian." But lest we lay the blame for this at the feet of the statisticians, we must acknowledge that their definition of a Christian is no different than how much of the leadership of the modern church now defines it....if you've been baptized, are a member of a church, or even go to a church occasionally...if you've been to church at least once in your life, or know someone that has, or live in the same city as a church, if you were dropped off at VBS as a child, and led in a coerced prayer by the pastor or evangelist....if at least one time in your life, you knew when to say "uh, huh" when the evangelist asked you if you were a sinner and wanted to go to heaven instead of hell, then you're a Christian. Then it is [quote] "scientifically" observed that the behavior of these [quote] "Christians" is no different than those who do not profess to be Christians. In fact, in some cases, it is found that those naming the name of Christ actually are worse in their moral behavior than those who do not.

Is it true, that there is no difference between the unbelieving world and the church? If it is, then I am wasting my entire life in the study and the preaching of the Scriptures and so are you. If these things be true, that the world is just as moral (or immoral) as the church, then Christianity is a lie and Jesus was the person that he is made up to be by the Discovery channel....just a guy who had some good teachings, but very mysterious and suspect. Is it true that the Church, the bride of Christ, has defiled herself, and is not ready for her Groom? Certainly not! If there is nothing more blasphemous coming from the mouths of men today I do not know what is. No, there IS a difference between the world and the Church. There is a difference between the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ and that hideous bride of the Devil. For the Bride of Christ is glorious, and chaste, and prepared to meet her Groom. The true Church is holy, and separate from the world. The true followers of Jesus crucify the flesh daily, and though they battle, and battle long and hard, and get cut up and shot up and wounded and broken in the battle with the sin that dwells in them, they do find victory. By the Spirit of our God they slay one Goliath after another, as David, who *"...killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine [of sin] will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God....The Lord, who delivered [David] from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver [you, believer] from the hand of this Philistine [of sin]."* (1 Samuel 17:36-37, NKJV)

The difference that exists between the believer and the hypocrite is, that although both have within them the reality of indwelling sin, the believer feels it hot in his veins, as poison, and desires with all his strength to rid himself of it, but the hypocrite feels nothing at all, except to state that the presence and practice of sin is normal and natural, and that striving for holiness is but legalism, and a vain effort to do what cannot be done. In a sense, the hypocrite is correct. For as the Puritan John Owen writes, *"To kill sin is the work of living men; where men are dead (as all unbelievers, the best of them, are dead), sin is alive, and will live."* There is most definitely a difference between the true Christian and the hypocrite....and that difference is found in the way each deal with the presence of sin in their life (Thomas Watson):

*"There is as much difference between sin in the wicked and sin in the godly—as between poison being in a serpent and poison being in a man. Poison in a serpent is in its natural place and is delightful—but poison in a man's body is harmful and he uses antidotes to expel it. So sin in a wicked man is delightful, being in its natural place—but sin in a child of God is burdensome and he uses all means to expel it.....**Grace and sin may be together—but grace and the love of sin cannot.**"*

*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? (Romans 6:1-2, NKJV)*

What Paul is dealing with here is the issue that is called 'antinomianism'. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: "...*antinomianism [is] a dangerous perversion of the gospel's teaching that has often troubled the church. The antinomian says, 'Ah, this gospel is a wonderful message of salvation by the free grace of God. Therefore, it doesn't matter at all how you live as a believer; you are saved once and forever'.*" [end quote]. Antinomianism: The word comes from the Greek anti, against, and nomos, law. It is the unbiblical practice of living without regard to the righteousness of God, using God's grace as a license to sin, and trusting grace to cleanse of sin. In other words, since grace is infinite and we are saved by grace, then we can sin all we want and still be saved. Antinomianism is condemned by the Apostle Paul as **heresy**:

*If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, **and to the doctrine which accords with godliness**, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. **From such withdraw yourself.** (1 Timothy 6:3-5, NKJV)*

Those who teach such things are to be seen as what they are.....false prophets who proclaim "Peace, peace" when there is no peace. They paint the Christian life as one that is easy and simplistic, that the free grace of God will cover all sin, therefore the believer has no responsibility to fight against it. But what these teachers paint up as Christianity is oftentimes really just an age-old heresy of delusion, prettied up in new colors. These are false teachers, and according to Paul, heretics, who, as Thomas Brooks writes:

*"As harlots paint their faces and adorn and perfume their beds, the better to allure and deceive simple souls, so false teachers will put a great deal of paint and garnish upon their most dangerous principles and blasphemies, in order that they may better deceive and delude poor ignorant souls. They know that sugared poison goes down sweetly; they wrap up their pernicious, soul-killing pills in gold."*

Now, what I am attacking today, and what the Scripture will attack in these coming chapters, is a teaching of the modern church called "once saved, always saved". To be clear, I do believe, and the Scriptures do teach, that those who are true Christians are indeed secure in their salvation, their salvation being something that they had no part in, it simply having been received as a free gift, and according to the promise of our Savior, "*And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.*" (John 10:28-29, NKJV). No, I agree with the teaching of Scripture, that all true saints will persevere to the end. What I disagree with is the one teaches that someone who calls himself a Christian, but remains in his sin, assuming that grace may abound, will be saved by his confession. **This is nothing less than a teaching and practice that the Apostle Paul very clearly decries as heresy**, something from which we as true Christians are to withdraw from, for such a one who teaches this is one who offers sugared poison to those who are helpless to know the danger of taking it in.

***There is nothing that goes down sweeter to a carnal, self-loving soul than the sugary poison of the teaching of "once saved, always saved" when mixed with antinomianism.*** If a man can sin all he wants, and all he has to do to have heaven too is to perform some form of religious rite, to pray some prayer at some time in his life, or have some form of religious experience, then that is a win-win situation, a sweet morsel....let's go find ourselves a prayer to repeat, and let us eat, drink, and be merry. But in the last day, the condemnation of those who teach this will be greater than the people they have deceived, and the truth of this Scripture will cry out against such a person,:

*If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:6-7, NKJV)*

My friends, Jesus Christ came to save His people from their sins: *And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.*" (Matthew 1:21, NKJV) If you who name Jesus as savior are not being saved day by day from the dominion of sin in your life, then let it be said, both in truth today, and let it be so at the great judgment of Christ, that you are not one of His people! I am not saying that if you are struggling with a sin that you are not His...what I am saying, and what the teaching of Scripture is saying, is that if you DO NOT struggle with sin, then you are not His. If you name the name of Christ, and continue in sinful habits, assuming that the grace of God will forgive you and it does not matter how you live because you're saved, then you can be sure of one thing.....you have never known the grace of God, nor shall you see the grace of God, until you begin to fear God and fear sin. Grace is amazing, in that it saves even the vilest of sinners.....but it is even more amazing that it takes even the vilest of sinners and transforms him before the eyes of a watching world into a man of God who lives and walks in holiness and the love of God. As Leonard Ravenhill once said, *"The greatest miracle that Almighty God can do is to take an unholy man out of an unholy world, make that unholy man holy, put him back in an unholy world and KEEP him holy!"*

Paul is teaching this here, and he will continue to do so for two more chapters. The clear teaching of the Bible is that there are two groups of people. Those who are slaves of sin, and those who are slaves of righteousness: *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?... 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.* (Romans 6:16, 22 NKJV)

There are those who are slaves of sin, and those who are slaves of righteousness. There are those who hear, and those who do not hear. Jesus – *"He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."* (John 8:47, NKJV)

There is a spirit of truth, and a spirit of error: *"He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.* (1 John 4:6 NKJV) The spirit of truth teaches that those who hear, obey. And those who do not hear, are not of God, and therefore do not obey God, but led by the spirit of error. Jesus: *But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*

Many false teachers will criticize the teachings that we will embark on over the next several weeks. I will simply refer them to the notes of the greatest sermon ever preached, by Jesus Himself, we call it "The Sermon of the Mount". His teaching literally astonished the people. Remember how it ended? With an astonishing comparison between two groups of people (Matthew 7:13-27, NKJV):

*"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*

*"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.*

*"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"*

*"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.*

*“But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”*

Even in the very words of our Lord Jesus Christ, there are two groups of people. Those who hear the truth, and do it, and those who hear the truth, and do not do it. One will be saved, then other will be damned. Jesus teaches that in Him, and only in Him, that there can and will be victory over sin. For as John Owen says, “....*there is no death of sin without the death of Christ.*” And we will see that for the one who is laboring to kill sin without Christ, he labors in vain, for again, Owen, “*To kill sin is the work of living men; where men are dead (as all unbelievers, the best of them, are dead), sin is alive, and will live.*” I want to teach you over the next few weeks from these precious Scriptures that if you are in Christ, it is not only your duty to fight against sin, but also that you have within you the power to kill even the most pressing sin. To choke it down to the point where even when it raises its head to breathe, that you may by the Spirit of God step on its neck in victory. To learn to see sin as the very instrument that brought suffering and death n our Savior. And in that knowledge, to say with Thomas Watson:

*Under the Law, if an ox gored a man so that he died—the ox was to be killed, Exodus 21:28. **Sin has gored and pierced our Savior! Let it die!***