When Sin Is Allowed to Stay

Text: Romans 6:16–23; Judges 16:20

Series: Sermons That Preach

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Thesis

Sin is no respecter of persons, and whatever it has done to the worst sinner in town it will do to us if we live in it, because it enslaves, defiles, scars and finally separates a man from God.

Hook

We are quick to see what sin has done to somebody else. We can point to the drunk who lost his family, the gambler who lost his paycheck and the man who traded his marriage for an affair, and we shake our heads at the wreckage. What we are slow to see is that sin plays no favorites, and the same thing it did to him it will do to us if we give it a home.

There is an old Arab fable about a camel on a cold night that asked to put only his nose inside the tent. Then he wanted one foot in, then the other, and before the night was over the camel was inside and the man was complaining that it was crowded, and the camel told him that if he did not like it he could leave. A man may think he is master of his habits when he first begins to play with sin, but the longer he lets it stay, the less room there is for him.

Introduction

1. Paul wrote Romans 6 to Christians who had been freed from sin and who needed to understand why they could never go back to it as a way of life.
2. He reasons from a principle every man understands, that you belong to the master you obey.
3. The Bible describes sin as a power that rules, not as an isolated mistake that leaves no mark.
4. When we look honestly at what sin does, we find four things that it does to anyone who lets it stay.

Primary Text: Romans 6:16–23

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?
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,
18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.
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.
20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.
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.
22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.
23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I. Sin Enslaves the One Who Serves It (Romans 6:16; John 8:34)

A. You are the slave of the one you obey.

1 Paul asks, "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?" (Romans 6:16).

1 There is no third master and no neutral ground; a man is serving sin or he is serving righteousness.

2 Peter says the same thing in plain terms.

> **2 Peter 2:19** promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.

2 Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin" (John 8:34).

1 The Lord is describing the man who goes on practicing sin, not the Christian who stumbles and repents.

2 A habit that is practiced day after day becomes a chain, and the man wearing it is the last one to admit that it is there.

3 Israel in Egypt served a hard master, and the man who lives in sin serves one just as hard.

B. We can see the chains on others more easily than on ourselves.

1 The drunkard did not set out to become one, yet he keeps throwing good money after bad until he loses his name, his work and his family.

2 The covetous man has a good house and money in the bank, yet he works every waking hour and has no time for God, for the Bible, for the church or for his own children, because money owns him.

> **Matthew 6:24** “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

3 Gambling feeds on the desire to take what belongs to another man, and it breaks the rule our Lord gave.

> **Luke 6:31** Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.

4 The man who says he can take it or leave it is still taking it.

C. Freedom is found in Christ and nowhere else.

1 Jesus said, "and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32).

1 Christ is the truth: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6).

2 The word of God is truth: “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth” (John 17:17), so a man is freed from sin when Christ, as He is revealed in His word, rules his life.

2 Paul spoke of liberty in Christ.

> **Galatians 2:4** But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.

3 Paul shows how a man comes into Christ.

> **Galatians 3:26** For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

> **Galatians 3:27** For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

1 Faith and baptism bring a man into Christ, and in Christ the chains of sin are broken.

II. Sin Defiles the One Who Lives in It (James 1:27; Psalm 51)

A. The world leaves its stains.

1 James describes pure religion as keeping oneself unstained by the world.

> **James 1:27** Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

2 Under the law the leper cried “Unclean! Unclean!”

> **Leviticus 13:45** “As for the leper who has the infection, his clothes shall be torn, and the hair of his head shall be uncovered, and he shall cover his mustache and cry, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’

> **Leviticus 13:46** He shall remain unclean all the days during which he has the infection; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.

That cry describes every sinner who has never been washed.

3 When Jesus wanted to show where sin takes a man, He described a son who left his father's house and ended up feeding pigs in a far country.

> **Luke 15:13–16** And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him.

B. David knew what it was to feel dirty before God.

1 After his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, David prayed.

> **Psalm 51:2** Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity And cleanse me from my sin.

1 He also prayed.

> **Psalm 51:7** Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

2 A man may whitewash his sins before his neighbors, but only God can wash them white.

C. The blood of Christ cleanses, and baptism is where the sinner meets that blood.

1 John praises the Lord.

> **Revelation 1:5** and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—

2 Ananias told Saul.

> **Acts 22:16** Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.’

1 The same Spirit wrote both verses, and we do not have to choose between them.

> **Romans 6:3** Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

2 It was in His death that His blood was shed, so the sinner's guilt is washed away not by water but by the blood of Christ when he goes into the water.

III. Sin Scars the Soul Even After It Is Forgiven (Luke 22:61–62; 1 Timothy 1:15)

A. Forgiven men still remembered what they had done.

1 Peter denied the Lord three times, and when the rooster crowed the Lord looked at him.

> **Luke 22:61** The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, “Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.”

> **Luke 22:62** And he went out and wept bitterly.

2 Years after his conversion Paul still called himself the foremost of sinners.

> **1 Timothy 1:15** It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.

1 Paul was forgiven, and he was a faithful apostle, yet he never forgot that he had fought against God and His people.

> **1 Timothy 1:13** even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;

B. Some things cannot be undone, even when they are forgiven.

1. A young man and a young woman who give away their purity may later repent and be forgiven, but they cannot get back what they gave away.
2. A man who would not encourage his wife to obey the gospel when she wanted to may later obey it himself, and still have to live with the fact that she no longer cares to come.
3. No one has ever regretted a pure and godly life, and many have lived to regret the other kind.

IV. Sin Separates a Man From God (Isaiah 59:1–2; Judges 16:20)

A. The problem is never on God's side.

1. Isaiah told Judah that the problem was not weakness or deafness on God’s side.

> **Isaiah 59:1** Behold, the LORD’S hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear.

> **Isaiah 59:2** But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.

2. The people thought God had grown deaf or weak, and God told them that their sins stood in the way.

B. Samson did not know what he had lost.

1. Samson was strong enough to kill a lion with his bare hands and carry away the gates of Gaza, but he would not keep himself from Delilah (Judges 14–16).
2. Three times she tried to learn the secret of his strength, and three times he played with the danger instead of leaving.
3. When he finally told her and his hair was cut, he rose to fight as before.

> **Judges 16:20** She said, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” And he awoke from his sleep and said, “I will go out as at other times and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.

1. Sin had cut him off from God before he felt anything, and that is the danger every sinner lives in.

C. A life without God ends in an eternity without God.

1. The man who lives in sin still eats God's food and breathes God's air, so he does not feel the separation yet.
2. Paul describes those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel.

> **2 Thessalonians 1:8** dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

> **2 Thessalonians 1:9** These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

3. If a man lives without God, he will die without God, and he will be without Him forever.

Application

God hates sin, and the Scriptures say of Jesus that He loved righteousness and hated lawlessness.

> **Hebrews 1:9** “YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS.”

Yet the same God loves the sinner enough to give His Son. We need to be hard on sin and tender with sinners, and we need to begin by being hard on our own. The habit you think you can keep under control, the stain you hope no one sees and the drifting you have not admitted are doing to you exactly what they did to everyone else who let them stay.

Some of us have never obeyed the gospel and are still wearing the chains. Some of us obeyed it once, then let sin back in a little at a time, and like Samson we have not noticed that the strength is gone. Either way the answer is the same God who freed us the first time, and He has not shortened His hand.

Conclusion

1. Sin enslaves, defiles, scars and separates, and it does those things to anyone who lets it stay.
2. Christ frees, and His blood washes, so no one has to stay where sin has put him.
3. The question is whether you will keep sin or let Christ have you.

Invitation

If you have never been born of water and the Spirit, you can come now, confess with your mouth the faith that is in your heart, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

> **John 3:5** Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.
> **Romans 10:9–10** that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

> **Acts 2:38** Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

If you are a Christian who has drifted away, you can come home now, confess the sin that has separated you from God, and ask the church to pray with you and for you.

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