

R o m a n s S I N S p e a k s a b o u t : a n d J e s u s

Romans 2:12-16 (Peterson's Wild Paraphrase)

If you sin without knowing what you're doing, God takes that into account. But if you sin knowing full well what you're doing, that's a different story entirely. Merely hearing God's law is a waste of your time if you don't do what he commands. Doing, not hearing, is what makes the difference with God.

When outsiders who have never heard of God's law follow it more or less by instinct, they confirm its truth by their obedience. They show that God's law is not something alien, imposed on us from without, but woven into the very fabric of our creation. There is something deep within them that echoes God's yes and no, right and wrong. Their response to God's yes and no will become public knowledge on the day God makes his final decision about every man and woman. The Message from God that I proclaim through Jesus Christ takes into account all these differences.

FROM JD

When PWP says God will take those deeds done in ignorance into account, it doesn't mean they have any meritorious value in defending them against the punishment they deserve, they STILL deserve it. Deeds done willfully will receive a greater punishment, but all will be condemned because of their sin, whether they ever heard the name Jesus Christ or not.

These Romans 2 verses have been used by some as a means to try and soften the need for a gospel message, as if natural revelation, general revelation will be enough if the person has never had a "chance" to hear the gospel. No one is good, and no one believes without God in His grace regenerating them, they will not call on God unless they hear, and they will not hear and have faith unless a preacher is sent to them (Romans 10). it isn't about their chance it is about God's choice. Yes God will get the gospel to them if they are being led to be saved (Acts 10). God's sovereignty doesn't lessen our responsibility to evangelize on bit, it enhances its value. I am sure you might already understand all this, but it must be emphasized again and again as it is brought up, because our flesh naturally wants to "help God out", or "defend God's plan", or lessen our embarrassment when someone might point out what they think is unfair about some supposed poor little sinner in the jungle who never heard, who must not be guilty because it isn't their fault, after all. I understand the compassion, in a sense, but the Truth must guide our convictions, and I will never allow someone to misunderstand these verses or misuse them so as to give God an excuse when what they are trying to do is let their own ideas of what is right and wrong but against God's Word guide them, if I can help it.

Romans 3:5-8 (Peterson's Wild Paraphrase)

But if our wrongdoing only underlines and confirms God's right doing, shouldn't we be commended for helping out? Since our bad words don't even make a dent in his good words, isn't it wrong of God to back us to the wall and hold us to our word? These questions come up. The answer to such questions is no, a most emphatic No! How else would things ever get straightened out if God didn't do the straightening?

It's simply perverse to say, "If my lies serve to show off God's truth all the more gloriously, why blame me? I'm doing God a favor." Some people are actually trying to put such words in our mouths, claiming that we go around saying, "The more evil we do, the more good God does, so let's just do it!" That's pure slander, as I'm sure you'll agree.

Romans 6:15-23 (Peterson's Wild Paraphrase)

So, since we're out from under the old tyranny, does that mean we can live any old way we want? Since we're free in the freedom of God, can we do anything that comes to mind? Hardly. You know well enough from your own experience that there are some acts of so-called freedom that destroy freedom. Offer yourselves to sin, for instance, and it's your last free act. But offer yourselves to the ways of God and the freedom never quits. All your lives you've let sin tell you what to do. But thank God you've started listening to a new master, one whose commands set you free to live openly in his freedom!

I'm using this freedom language because it's easy to picture. You can readily recall, can't you, how at one time the more you did just what you felt like doing— not caring about others, not caring about God— the worse your life became and the less freedom you had? And how much different is it now as you live in God's freedom, your lives healed and expansive in holiness?

As long as you did what you felt like doing, ignoring God, you didn't have to bother with right thinking or right living, or right anything for that matter. But do you call that a free life? What did you get out of it? Nothing you're proud of now. Where did it get you? A dead end.

But now that you've found you don't have to listen to sin tell you what to do, and have discovered the delight of listening to God telling you, what a surprise! A whole, healed, put-together life right now, with more and more of life on the way! Work hard for sin your whole life and your pension is death. But God's gift is real life, eternal life, delivered by Jesus, our Master.

O u r f r i e n d m a r t i n L u t h e r

Sin in the Scriptures means not only external works of the body but also all those movements within us which bestir themselves and move us to do the external works, namely, the depth of the heart with all its powers. Therefore the word do should refer to a person's completely falling into sin. No external work of sin happens, after all, unless a person commit himself to it completely, body and soul. In particular, the Scriptures see into the heart, to the root and main source of all sin: unbelief in the depth of the heart. Thus, even as faith alone makes just and brings the Spirit and the desire to do good external works, so it is only unbelief which sins and exalts the flesh and brings desire to do evil external works. That's what happened to Adam and Eve in Paradise (cf. Genesis 3).

That is why only unbelief is called sin by Christ, as he says in John, chapter 16, "The Spirit will punish the world because of sin, because it does not believe in me." Furthermore, before good or bad works happen, which are the good or bad fruits of the heart, there has to be present in the heart either faith or unbelief, the root, sap and chief power of all sin.

Romans 8:1-11 (Peterson's Wild Paraphrase)

With the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, that fateful dilemma is resolved. Those who enter into Christ's being-here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud. A new power is in operation. The Spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of sin and death.

God went for the jugular when he sent his own Son. He didn't deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In his Son, Jesus, he personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. The law code, weakened as it always was by fractured human nature, could never have done that.

The law always ended up being used as a Band-Aid on sin instead of a deep healing of it. And now what the law code asked for but we couldn't deliver is accomplished as we, instead of redoubling our own efforts, simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in us.

Those who think they can do it on their own end up obsessed with measuring their own moral muscle but never get around to exercising it in real life. Those who trust God's action in them find that God's Spirit is in them— living and breathing God! Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life. Focusing on the self is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God, ends up thinking more about self than God. That person ignores who God is and what he is doing. And God isn't pleased at being ignored.

But if God himself has taken up residence in your life, you can hardly be thinking more of yourself than of him. Anyone, of course, who has not welcomed this invisible but clearly present God, the Spirit of Christ, won't know what we're talking about. But for you who welcome him, in whom he dwells— even though you still experience all the limitations of sin— you yourself experience life on God's terms. It stands to reason, doesn't it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, he'll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus), you are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ's!

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John MacArthur <http://www.gty.org/Resources/Transcripts/80-86>

The old self got crucified; the old man was crucified. We have a similar statement in Ephesians 4:22-24. The old man is dead. It's gone. What we were we aren't and again that's why I say it's so silly to have some counselor or whatever try to go back in your life from before your redemption and exhume the old man and all of his attitudes and impulses as if they could make a contribution to who you are now. The old man is dead.

Now notice the effect. In order that our body of sin might be done away with - ooh - wait a minute. You say now wait a minute, now you're really - you're walking on the edge of heresy here. Are you saying we don't sin? No, it doesn't say that. It says our body of sin. What do you mean body? Entity, it doesn't mean your physical body. The entity of sin. The entity of sin might be - and the Greek word is kotergetto. Kotergetto. Well, just what does that mean? It means a number of things. It's used 27 times in the New Testament. Paul never uses it to mean eradication. It isn't saying sin has been eradicated. He's not saying that; the verb doesn't mean that.

It means basically to be deprived of its strength. In fact you could translate it this way. Deprived of its controlling influence. But then he defines exactly what he means in the next phrase, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, that's the issue. It is rendered inoperative only as the sovereign of our lives. It loses not its influence all together but its controlling influence, its sovereign influence, its mastery, its dominion. You remember how he says in 7 that sin will no longer have dominion over us? He's not saying there won't be sin; he's saying sin isn't in charge any more. The tyranny of sin is broken.

Sin's not the controller any more. And he defines exactly what he means in verse 6 when he says that we should no longer be slaves. The slavery is broken; we're out from under that master. And somebody says do I sin? Yes. Must I sin? No. Its dominion is broken. So we affirm then that in salvation you died. And you can therefore look forward to your next death, not really as a death at all but only as a way to escape your unredeemed human flesh and to enter into the presence of Jesus Christ and therefore you have no fear of death and Jesus as it says in Hebrews 2 has removed the fear of death which held you in bondage. ...

And if I am struck over and over by besetting sins, the problem is with me not with my salvation. Right? It is not that something is missing unless I'm not truly saved at all and that may be the case. If I have unbroken patterns of sin as I did before whatever spiritual experience I had, there's evidence to indicate that I was never really saved. But if my salvation is real, besetting sins don't speak against the newness of my life, they don't speak against the broken power of sin, they speak against my own commitment to holy things and the responsibility is mine. So I need to know that sin does not have dominion over me. ...

Let's bow together in prayer. Father, we thank you this morning that you've encouraged our hearts so greatly to know that we're not under the power of sin, the unbroken dominant dominion of sin. It does not control us. You do. It is not the truest expression of our new self. Righteousness is. It's a present enemy to the new man.

We thank you, too, Lord that because we're not under the dominion of it we can trust Your power for victory. We thank You, too, Lord that we're not under the penalty of sin even when we do fall. That You're not counting up our sins and should we get so many all of a sudden we cancel out the death of Christ and have to pay ourselves. No. We're not under that penalty. Lord, we thank You, too, that You've given us the promise of victory even in the difficult struggle. May we live, Lord, knowing what is true about us in Christ and longing to be all that You want us to be. Give us victory.

And then, Father, we pray for those here this morning who've never committed their life to Jesus Christ. Who have not had the mastery of sin broken, who have not come under the sovereign savior. Maybe somewhere in the past there was a time, a place, an experience but never a transformation, never the death of the old self and the resurrection of the new. Lord, may this be the day, may this be the day that the old man dies and the new is born. Risen in Christ. No more under the power and penalty of sin, set on a course of righteousness and eternal glory. Amen.