

Sunday, June 14, 2026

## **When in Romans part 17: Living in Reality: Understanding Sin and Pursuing Righteousness - Pastor John Kupitz**

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### **Sermon Summary**

This message takes us deep into understanding what sin truly is - not merely rule-breaking, but reality-breaking. Drawing from Romans 6, we explore how sin represents our defiance of truth itself, our rebellion against the very fabric of how God created the universe to function. The message brilliantly unpacks the Hebrew and Greek words for sin, revealing that at its core, sin means missing the mark, failing to fulfill our purpose as image-bearers of God. What makes this particularly sobering is the recognition that we often sin while convinced we're doing good, deceiving ourselves into redefining our failures as successes. Through the fascinating story of Joseph's cellmates - the cupbearer and the baker - we discover a profound foreshadowing of Christ. These two men, responsible for bread and wine, point us toward the body and blood of Jesus. The cupbearer's restoration after three days mirrors Christ's resurrection and our salvation, while the baker's death on a tree prefigures Christ bearing our curse. This dual imagery shows us God's only two responses to sin: either it must be killed or it must be banished through sacrificial forgiveness. The message challenges us to move beyond bare minimum morality and pursue radical righteousness - not just avoiding murder but actively loving our enemies, not just refraining from theft but giving generously, not just telling the truth but boldly proclaiming the gospel. We're called to live under grace, which means doing what is unjust on the side of grace, extending unfair mercy and compassion just as God has extended it to us.

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## Scripture

- Romans 6:17-18 - About being slaves of sin and becoming slaves of righteousness
- Romans 6 (entire chapter) - Context of sin and righteousness
- Romans 7 - Mentioned as next week's sermon topic
- Mark 14:36 - Jesus praying about removing the cup
- Psalm 103:12 - Sin banished as far as east is from west
- Micah 7:19 - Sin sent to the bottom of the sea
- Luke 6:27-28 - Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you
- John 8:12 - Jesus as the light of the world
- Ephesians 6:11 - Put on the whole armor of God
- 1 John 1:7 - Walking in the light and fellowship
- 1 John 1:9 - Confessing sins and God's faithfulness to forgive
- Psalm 1:1 - Blessed is the one who doesn't walk in counsel of the wicked
- Philippians 4:8 - Think on things that are true, honorable, just, pure
- James 4:7 - Submit to God, resist the devil
- Genesis 37-41 (Joseph's story) - Baker and cupbearer narrative
- Ecclesiastes 4:12 - A threefold cord is not quickly broken
- Matthew 5 (implied) - Jesus' teaching on surpassing Pharisees' righteousness
- Matthew 5:39 (implied) - Turn the other cheek
- Matthew 19:21 (paraphrased) - Sell possessions and give to the poor
- Matthew 5:40 (paraphrased) - Give your cloak and coat

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## How This Week's Sermon Fits Our When in Romans Series

This week's message served as a bridge between Romans 6 and Romans 7. After months in Romans 1–6 (where Paul has been diagnosing the human condition under sin and unveiling God's rescue in Christ), we paused to zoom in on one crucial theme: **what sin really is and how God deals with it.**

Starting from Romans 6:17–18 (“slaves of sin” / “slaves of righteousness”), the sermon:

### Clarified what sin is

- Sin is more than breaking rules; it is breaking reality—living against the way God designed the world, against truth, life, and love. This connects back to Romans 1–3, where humanity suppresses the truth and exchanges God's reality for lies.

### Showed how God deals with sin

Using the story of Joseph, the baker, and the cupbearer (Genesis 40), we saw a foreshadowing of Christ:

- The **baker** (bread, body, hung on a tree) points to Christ's death.
- The **cupbearer** (cup, blood, restored after three days) points to salvation and restoration through Christ's blood and resurrection.  
Together, they picture God's two responses to sin:
- **Judgment** (sin must be killed)
- **Banishment/Forgiveness through sacrifice** (sin removed, the sinner restored).

### Prepared us for Romans 7

Romans 7 wrestles with the ongoing power of sin in believers' lives. This sermon laid the groundwork by emphasizing:

- Sin as a deceptive power that “lives in us”
- Our need not just to avoid sin, but to actively **pursue righteousness**.

### **Moved us from “bare minimum law-keeping” to grace-shaped living**

The Ten Commandments set a baseline: how not to be destructive. Under grace, Jesus calls us far beyond that—loving enemies, giving generously, speaking truth boldly. We're not just escaping sin; we're **chasing righteousness**.

### **Offered practical tools**

The handout (7 defensive rules and 4 offensive plans) gave concrete ways to:

- Fight temptation (accountability, wisdom about where/when we're vulnerable, watching what we consume, etc.)
- Grow in holiness (reading and memorizing Scripture, prayer, and bold witness).

All of this helps us step into Romans 7 with a clearer understanding of sin, a deeper appreciation for Christ's body and blood, and a more practical sense of how to live as people who are no longer slaves to sin but slaves to righteousness.

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## **Discussion Questions**

- The sermon describes sin as 'defying reality' rather than simply breaking rules. How does this broader understanding of sin change the way you recognize and respond to sin in your own life?
- Joseph's story presents the baker and cupbearer as symbols of God's two responses to sin: killing it or banishing it through sacrifice. How

does this imagery deepen your understanding of what Christ accomplished on the cross?

- The pastor suggests that Christians should not aim for the bare minimum of the Ten Commandments but should pursue the opposite direction of each commandment. Which commandment challenges you most to go beyond 'not doing wrong' to actively doing good?
- Jesus calls us to 'do what is unjust on the side of grace,' meaning to be unfair in favor of love and compassion. Can you think of a situation where living this way would be particularly difficult or countercultural?
- The sermon states that we easily deceive ourselves and spin illusions to redefine our bad decisions as good ones. What are some common ways you see people, or yourself, justifying sinful behavior as acceptable or even virtuous?
- The seven defensive rules include 'limit contact' with mockers and scoffers, and 'watch what you consume.' How do you balance this wisdom with Jesus' call to be in the world and reach sinners?
- Paul describes sin as a power that enslaves us, saying 'the things I don't want to do, that's what I do.' How does understanding sin as a force rather than just individual choices affect your approach to spiritual warfare and accountability?
- The cupbearer forgot Joseph for two years before remembering him, while the thief on the cross asked Jesus to remember him and received immediate assurance. What does this contrast teach us about God's timing and faithfulness compared to human faithfulness?
- The sermon emphasizes that sin against people is sin against God because humans are made in God's image. How should this truth reshape the way we view and treat others, especially those who are difficult to love?
- Among the four offensive plans for holy living—reading Scripture, memorizing Scripture, praying, and witnessing—which one do you find most challenging to maintain consistently, and why might that be significant for your spiritual growth?

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## 5-Day Devotional

### Living in Reality - Understanding Sin and Pursuing Righteousness

#### Day 1: Missing the Mark

##### Reading: Romans 6:17-18, Proverbs 19:2

**Devotional:** The Hebrew word for sin, "chata," simply means to miss the mark or fail to reach the goal. But what is the goal? God created you as His image-bearer, designed to love Him fully and honor others completely. When you fail at this, you're not just breaking rules—you're defying reality itself. Like an archer missing the target, sin leaves us falling short of our true purpose. Today, reflect honestly: Where are you missing the mark in loving God and others? The beauty of God's grace is that He doesn't leave us in our failure. Through Christ, we're not just forgiven—we're transformed from slaves of sin into slaves of righteousness, empowered to hit the target we were created for.

#### Day 2: The Two Responses to Sin

##### Reading: Genesis 40:1-23, Luke 23:39-43

**Devotional:** In Joseph's prison cell, two men faced two different fates—one restored, one condemned. The cupbearer and baker foreshadow how God deals with sin: He either kills it or banishes it through sacrifice. The cupbearer, restored after three days, points to Christ's resurrection and our restoration. The baker, hung on a tree, points to Christ bearing our curse. Jesus is both—He was hung on a tree to kill our sin, and raised after three days to restore us to the Father's presence. Like the thief on the cross who said, "Remember me," we can trust that Jesus hears our plea. Forgiveness isn't cheap—it cost Jesus everything. Today, thank God that He chose to banish your sin as far as the east is from the west through Christ's sacrifice.

#### Day 3: Beyond the Bare Minimum

##### Reading: Matthew 5:38-48, Luke 6:27-36

**Devotional:** The Ten Commandments represent baseline morality—how not to be a jerk. But Jesus calls us higher. Don't just avoid murder; actively love your enemies. Don't just refuse to steal; give generously. Don't merely avoid adultery; pursue purity in your thoughts. Grace isn't about doing the minimum—it's about being radically, unfairly generous on the side of love. This feels impossible, and it is—without God's power. The Pharisees mastered rule-keeping but missed the heart of God. You're not under law but under grace, which paradoxically calls you to a higher standard: Christlikeness. Today, identify one area where you're content with "not sinning." How can you pursue active righteousness there instead? Don't just avoid wrong; champion what's right.

#### **Day 4: Self-Deception and Reality**

**Reading: 1 John 1:5-10, James 1:22-25**

**Devotional:** The most dangerous aspect of sin isn't the act itself—it's our ability to deceive ourselves about it. Pharaoh thought enslaving Israel was good economics. Saul thought hunting David was justice. We rationalize, minimize, and excuse our failures, spinning illusions that redefine our bad decisions as good ones. This is why confession is essential. When we walk in darkness, pretending we have no sin, we make God a liar. But when we confess—when we agree with reality about our condition—God is faithful to forgive and cleanse. The mirror of God's Word shows us the truth about ourselves. Today, ask the Holy Spirit to search you. Where are you deceiving yourself? What sin are you minimizing or excusing? Bring it into the light with a trusted Christian friend.

#### **Day 5: The Offensive Strategy**

**Reading: Ephesians 6:10-18, Philippians 4:8**

**Devotional:** Defense isn't enough. Yes, flee from sin—but also chase after righteousness. Paul tells us to put on the full armor of God, which includes offensive weapons: the sword of the Spirit and prayer. Memorizing Scripture arms you for battle when temptation strikes. Prayer keeps you

connected to your power source. Witnessing boldly to Christ makes hypocrisy repulsive. You're not just running away from sin; you're running toward Jesus. Fill your mind with what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and commendable. What you consume shapes who you become. Surround yourself with believers who spur you toward holiness. Today, choose one offensive strategy: Will you memorize a verse, establish a prayer rhythm, or share the gospel with someone? Don't just avoid the contamination zone—actively pursue the presence of God.