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Do Continuous Sins of Omission Mean You're Not Truly Regenerate?

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#STRask - Stand to Reason

Question about whether continuous sins of omission indicate that a person is actually unrepentant and not truly regenerate.

* Do continuous sins of omission mean you're actually unrepentant and your heart is not truly regenerate?

Transcript

[Music] [Bell] I'm Amy Hall, I'm here with Greg Koukl and we're here to answer your questions on Stand to Reason's #STRask podcast. We are. So welcome and thank you for sending in questions.

If you have a question, just send it in on Twitter with the #STRask. Or you can go through our website. All you need to do is go to our contact page, choose "I have another question" and then write your question.

But make sure you include #STRask. It's all one word, #STRask. It goes right into my folder and I will definitely see it.

So don't worry about that. But make sure you keep it short and you can kind of hear how short the questions are just from the show. But sometimes I think it's easy to go on and on without realizing.

It's only like two to three sentences. So keep that in mind and we'd love to hear your question. Two to three ordinary sentences.

Yeah, that's right. Not like one of my questions. I'm thinking of that.

Who is that southern writer, that famous southern writer, you know, novelist that would have one sentence that was a whole paragraph or something. Oh gosh, I can't figure it. Not some other said mom, but somebody anyway.

Alright, let's start with the question from Jordan. Do continuous sins of a mission mean that a person is actually unrepentant? For example, if you know you have a means to stop doing a particular sin but don't do what you should do, that in and of itself is a sin of a mission. And thus that sin of a mission means you're not truly regenerate.

I grew up being told that not doing what you should means your heart is not regenerate. How true is this? I don't think it's true. And it's curious.

I've been, I just read a piece that J.I. Packer was a treatment of a piece that J.I. Packer wrote many years ago. He's dead now, but many years ago about the deeper, the higher life movement, the also known as the KESIC movement, K-E-S-W-I-C-K, which is the lake region of northern England. And it's a holiness tradition.

And the idea there in this 19th century was that if you have a deep commitment to Christ, a proper surrender, then you will not be sitting anymore. Now any doctrine like that requires a modification of what it means to be a sinner. You know, as it turns out, either you have to give real sin the short-trypt or you don't tell the truth, essentially.

This is one point that Packer made. And Packer talked about embracing this idea when he was a young Christian and being utterly defeated as a Christian as a result of this. This is also called the "Exchanged Life" in writers like Hannah Whitehall Smith and Hannah Hernard, Heinz Featen, High Places, etc.

or the Christian secret to a happy life. And others promoted this notion. And it was one that I embraced as a new Christian as well and read these works.

And it didn't work. I kept recommitting, deeply recommitting my life to Christ. And it isn't like all of a sudden I just was drifting along in this power of Jesus living his life out within me.

It didn't work. And what Packer says about this is that this was not the case, even with the apostles in the New Testament, the no Christians like this, that our Christian life is always a struggle against sin, is a continuous struggle where we have to be vigilant. Now what Packer ended up adopting, he rejected that very aggressively after he viewed it and then saw the Puritan understanding of sanctification as the correct view.

And the higher life movement view is that you are saved by faith and you are sanctified by faith. And if you just trusted and surrendered enough, then you wouldn't be fighting these battles and Jesus would take over in some sense. And the Puritans view is you are saved completely by the grace of God through the faith that he gives as a gift.

And then you battle the rest of your life against the flesh to be sanctified in the power of the Holy Spirit using the means that God has. Now the reason that you battle for the rest of your life is because you are sinning the rest of your life. Now it doesn't mean that you are sinning the way you are sinning before you knew Christ.

But sin is always going to be crouching at our door. And the simplest way to understand this, and I am so thankful for Jesus giving the two great commandments in this regard. Because when he summed up the law in his two great commandments, first love God with your whole heart, mind, soul and strength, second love your neighbor as yourself.

And if you recall, the Good Samaritan parable was given in the context of these two laws. So when you read the Good Samaritan parable, forget about that section heading, it says Good Samaritan. Cross that out of your Bible and start like two or three paragraphs before that if you want to read the Good Samaritan, then you realize why Jesus said it.

Because the lawyer who asked him about what the law required, Jesus summed up the law in these two verses, I mean these two concepts, and then the lawyer, the text is seeking to justify himself, seeking to justify himself. In other words, looking for a means of self justification asked who is my neighbor. And then Jesus said your neighbor is your worst enemy, essentially, that's the whole point.

It is not principally the parable of the Good Samaritan is not principally a morality tale. It's a condemnation tale. All right, it's not about goodness, it's about badness and how our badness sinks our ship.

Now in those two, think of this friends, in these two great commandments that cover all the bases can be summed up in these two things. How are we doing with loving God? Just ask yourself, loving God with your whole heart, mind, soul and strength. Does God deserve that? Of course, does he get it? Never.

And on my life, I cannot even imagine a single moment in now going on 49 years as a Christian where that was true of me. Not a single moment. That means my life is a constant violation of the first great commandment.

Now the second great commandment, there are some times when I have loved my, maybe, I've loved my enemy. I love my brother as myself, including my greatest enemy. I have loved others and taken the backseat.

In generally, we could opportunities for that in our closest relationships, children, spouses, and those are hard lessons to learn to take the backseat, basically, to consider another needs more important than your own to cite Paul and Philipians too. But that's the heart of it. Love them.

Care for them the way you would care for yourself. Okay. Look after their interests, not just yours.

It's not talking about an emotional response. It's talking about how you behave. But the point I'm making is if the whole law is summed up in those two commandments and in the sum of those commandments, we certainly don't consistently keep the first one.

There are some people I think that do have moments where they're loving God with their whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. And we only in a spotty way keep the second commandment. Why? Because we are struggling in the battle against the flesh.

Read Galatians chapter 5, the end. And there it says, "The flesh walk by the spirit." Paul says, "And you will not carry out the desires of the flesh." So the point is there's a heave hoe here, which he then next describes. "For the spirit sets itself against the flesh and the flesh against the spirit, so you will not do the things you desire." And that's kind of a double entendre.

It says, "When the spirit is leading you, which has come next, those who are led by the spirit are not under the law." The concept of being led by the spirit according to Paul, it has nothing to do with decision making, being nudged here and there. It has to do with overcoming sin by the power of the spirit. It is absolutely obvious in the only two places where Paul uses the phrase led by the spirit.

Galatians 5 and Romans 8. Romans 8 says, "Pudding to death of the deeds of the flesh." And so this battle that we see in Romans, I'm sorry, in Galatians 5 is the battle of the Christian life. So if we have besetting sins, what are we to do? We are to fight against them. Will we be thoroughly and completely victorious? No.

Not until we have no flesh. And by the way, this to me is absolutely clear in 1 John chapter 2, first couple of verses. The end of chapter 1 talks about confession of sin.

I do not think that what John is talking about there is our citing our crimes against God so we can be forgiven. That is not the context of chapter 1 of 1 John. Rather, chapter 2 in the beginning, it begins talking specifically about sin in Christians.

And he says, "I write these things to you so that my little children," that's the believers. "I write these things to you that you do not sin." So here's the words of the apostle given to us to overcome sin in our life because we're battling against it. And so there's a means by which we accomplish the end.

Okay? But he says, "If you do sin," he doesn't then say, "confess it so you can be cleansed." Jesus always lives to make intercession for us. His blood is cleansing us constantly of the sin that is constantly part of our life. That's the reality of the work of the cross and justification.

No, he writes, "I write these things so that you do not sin." But if you do sin, you have an advocate. You have an advocate with Jesus Christ. And he himself is the propitiation for our sins.

And propitiation just simply means the satisfaction before the Father of his justice. Now that's not liberty to sin it up. That's not the point.

Paul deals with that in Romans chapter 6. But notice when he says, "Are we to sin more than grace would increase? May it never be." Why does he say that? Because his teaching in Romans 4 and 5 about grace is so powerful that it could be mistaken. It could be mistaken for license. And so he corrects that problem.

The point I'm making here is that, Amy, as we are, our battle against sin is going to be lifelong. And it will never be thoroughly successful. That happens in the resurrection.

And that's when the battle will be over and our natures will be changed. And so this isn't to give the short shrift to habitual sins. We're to address the sins in our life, either sins of commission or volmission.

And we are to seek to deal with them. But this is the battle. This is the battle.

Obviously Paul knew that we would still be battling sin because he spends a lot of time talking about putting aside all sorts of sins because of our salvation. And interesting to me, Jordan is that when people use the truth about regeneration as a way to condemn someone, they've got it backwards. The regeneration and being a Christian is your hope when you are a sinner.

That is your hope because, I mean, look at what Paul says. He talks about how the law cannot change us. The law does not give us the power to kill our sin.

And then he comes into Romans 8. And his whole point is that now that we have the spirit, we can put to death our sin. That is our hope. Now that we have a way forward.

It doesn't say we don't have sin. It says we are putting to death our sin. We are doing this now because we are a Christian.

It's our Christianity that gives us hope, not condemnation in our sin. You know, if I can, this is a great passage and I was very helped tremendously by Demartan Lloyd-Jones. The Welsh preacher died in the 80s, I think.

But his book on Romans, especially dealing with Romans 8 here, his books on Romans, on this particular point. Notice how Romans 8 starts, what you cited about being in the spirit and living the life in the spirit and therefore putting to death the deeds of the flesh. The chapter starts with this.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Okay? There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. So there is a bold statement by Paul of the security of the believer because of Christ.

Now in virtue of the fact that we are in Christ, our regenerate, have the Holy Spirit. We can wage a battle that is successful. He says those who are in the flesh, that would be unregenerate according to Paul's take there on Romans 8. Those who are in the flesh

cannot please God.

It is impossible for them to do that. But you are not in the flesh if indeed the spirit of Christ dwells in you. And if he doesn't, you are none of his.

That's why it's clear in the passage that being in the spirit means being regenerate, having Christ and being in the flesh means you don't have Christ. But if you have Christ, if you have the spirit, there is no condemnation. And now you are in the process of fighting against the flesh to put to death those deeds.

Which brings me to my second point, perfectly, Greg. And it's the idea that, like I said, Paul talks a lot about putting her sin to death and about sin and changing. But he always does this in the second half.

He always starts his letters with a discussion of theology. The theology always comes first because our sanctification, our killing of our sin, follows from our being grounded in this theology of there being no condemnation. And so he gives all sorts of, you mentioned Greg that he says, should we sin now so that grace may increase? Because his description of grace is so strong that you could think, well, maybe I just don't need to sin.

But as Christians, what we need to do is understand the reasons why we don't sin. We don't sin that the Bible says we're to be holy as he is holy. It says that we're to proclaim his excellencies.

We do that through our behavior through reflecting him to the world. We represent him to the world. We died to sin.

We're raised to righteousness. And therefore we're supposed to set our mind on things that reflect God and we're supposed to reflect him to the world. First Peter says we're to act as freemen.

We're not under the law. But he says, to not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondservants of God. So there's a whole logic here to the reasons why we are doing good.

And this all comes down to our desire to represent Christ well to the world. And so when we are fighting our sin, there are certain things we need to remember. First of all, we need to cultivate our love for God because as our love for him increases, our distaste for sin will also increase.

Because we love who he is and all the things that are opposed to him will start to seem not as enticing. So that's one way to work at killing your sin. And I think the other thing that's really important to understand because a huge driver of sin is the idea that if I don't take this thing, maybe it's a good thing in the wrong way, or maybe it's the wrong

thing, you think you will miss out on something good.

So therefore you need to take it when you can and however you can. But I think as soon as we realize that the only way to miss out on life in any situation is to be disobedient in that situation. That's actually missing out.

Even if it means giving up things that you want, as long as you're being obedient, whatever situation you're in, you are not missing out. You're living the life that God wants you to live in that moment. And it's the second you become disobedient, now you start to miss out.

Because now you're missing out on what God wanted you to do for your good and for his glory. This is one reason why it's safe to say that disobedience reflects a lack of faith. Because what we think we're doing when we disobey is we're going to get something that God is keeping from us that's going to be more satisfying or better our situation.

Instead of trusting that God's ways are the best ways and having faith in that, expressing that faith by obeying him. Now, we are not speaking at all in a cavalier way about this whole process. This is a fight.

I've been a Christian almost 49 years and I have been fighting for 49 years. This is the reality of living in this world, which is why there are so many scriptures that talk about this struggle. And the affliction and difficulties that are associated with living a righteous life.

In 1 Peter, the end of chapter 2, and then at the beginning, let me just think, no, at the end of chapter 2, he's talking about slaves being submissive to their servants or whatever. And even those who are not very pleasant. He said, because if you bear up under suffering for doing good, this finds favor with God.

If you do what's right and you suffer for it and you bear up this finds favor with God, and then he gives Jesus as the example. Now, when reviled did not revile in return, etc., but he kept entrusting himself to him who judges righteously. And then the next line says, in his body, he bore our sins on the cross.

He himself bore us in his body on the cross. So you have Jesus, in a sense, in a circumstance like we would be tempted to do the wrong thing, and that would be natural in a moment satisfying for us, retaliate. But instead we do what's good and right, we obey God and we trust God, and there's a consequence that comes from it.

And in Jesus' case, the consequence was the salvation of the world. It's the point that Peter's making there. We should be like Jesus in that regard.

So even in this short term, if it feels like sinning is going to get us ahead, then that just shows we are not entrusting ourselves to a faithful creator in doing what is right. Okay?

And just to reiterate one more time, the difference between what is described in Romans 7 where you cannot kill your sin by the law, and Romans 8 where you kill your sin by the Spirit, remember we are not fighting this battle just by looking at laws and trying to force ourselves under those laws. We're fighting this battle by looking at Christ, by loving Him more, by praying for the Spirit's help, by getting the Spirit's help and putting our sin to death.

We have... Don't just think about the rules. The way to fight your sin is to think about God and to become more like Him as you look at Him and as you follow Him. So don't ever neglect that and don't get so focused on your own sin.

Look at God first. Just as Paul wrote about God in the first half of all's letters and then talked about behavior. So hopefully that will help you, Jordan and all of you listeners.

We'd love to hear from you. Send us your questions on Twitter and hopefully we'll get to yours. This is Amy Hall and Greg Koko for Stand to Reason.

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