

Romans 6:1-7 “What We Must *Know* to Overcome Sin”<sup>\*\*1</sup>Series: *No Longer a Slave to Sin (An Exposition of Romans 6)*

Main Idea: If we’re going to stop being a slave to sin, we need to know two things, according to Romans 6:1-7.

The Context: Romans answers three questions about God’s righteousness.

1. Who needs it? (chapters 1-3a)
2. How do we get it? (chapters 3b-5)
3. What difference does it make? (chapters 6-8)

## I. We must know our identity (1-4).

- A. In Christ, we have died to sin (1-3).
  1. In the legal sense, we died to sin when Christ died.
  2. In the personal sense, we died to sin when we received Christ.
  3. In the moral sense, we die to sin daily.
  4. In the ultimate sense, we will die to sin when we actually die.
- B. In Christ, we have been raised to new life (4).

## II. We must know the implications (5-7).

- A. In Christ, we can live a new life (5).
  1. You won’t experience new life if you don’t know Christ.
  2. You won’t experience new life if you don’t know God’s design for the Christian life.
  3. You won’t experience new life if you don’t live in light of what you know.
- B. In Christ, our old man was crucified (6).
  1. We will not be sinless.
  2. We have the power to sin less.
- C. In Christ, we can be set free from sin (7).

The Bottom Line: In Christ, we are no longer a slave to sin.

*Before sermon:* Redeemed people...SING THE WORD (March – Psalm 25:4-5)

Sin. We’re going to talk about sin for the next four weeks. Exciting? Not really, but more relevant and hope-giving than we might imagine.

Sin is going *our own way*, according to Isaiah 53:6. Is that a problem? Yes. We were not created to go our own way. We are created to go God’s way. When we go our own way in God’s universe, it produces a whirlwind of consequences. Is it possible to overcome this foe of sin? And if so, how? How then can we stop sinning?

I’m thankful to announce that God Himself has provided a remedy for sin, and today we’re going to begin to find out what that remedy is and how to experience its power. We are beginning a new four-part series today called “*No Longer a Slave to Sin.*” We’re going to roll up our sleeves and do what we love to do at WBC. Study the Word of God, line by line. We’re going to do an exposition of Romans 6.

We do have one more message in our previous series *Killing Pride, Cultivating Humility*. The Lord willing, that will take place next Sunday evening, March 9, and it’s entitled, “*Glory to God: The Remedy for Pride.*”

Why are we doing a series on sin? Sin is common to man. Sin is something we all face, something that is common to man. Every day. Every moment. Sin is a cruel taskmaster. It enslaves. And the solution is not merely to fight harder. The solution is grace.

But what does this mean? We finally the clear answer in Romans 6. Here’s where we’re going in this series, the Lord willing. We begin today with, “What We Must *Know* to Overcome Sin” (Romans 6:1-7). Next week, the Lord willing, “What We Must *Do* to Overcome Sin” (Romans 6:8-14). Then, “Can People Really Change?” (Romans 6:15-18). And finally, “Incentives for Holy Living” Romans 6:19-24).

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\*\* Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For a previous look at this passage, see the 2011 series at WBC.

*Scripture Reading: Romans 6:1-7*

There's a scene in the old Andy Griffith show where Barney is talking to someone about church. The person asks Barney what the preacher talked about in his sermon. Barney answered, "He talked about sin." The person then asks, "What did he have to say about it?" Barney answers, "He said he is against it."

We may chuckle at Barney's naivete, but the tragic reality is that pretty much sums up how many people (including preachers and church-goers) view sin. They're against it. But their understanding of sin is superficial. If we're going to win the war with sin, this must change.

I've been listening recently to Tim Keller's audio biography, and he made a statement that's helping me greatly. Says Tim Keller, "You do not do sin. Sin does you."<sup>2</sup>

Think about that sentence. *Doing sin* is how most people think about sin. Sin is some sort of action, doing things that you shouldn't do (like lying, or looking at pornography, yelling at your spouse) or not doing things you should have done (selfishly sitting in your easy chair when you should be helping your spouse with the dishes). Those are sins. Sinful actions or non-actions.

But there's more to it. The problem is much worse than you might think. It's not just that you do sin. *Sin does you*. In other words, sin isn't just the predicate at the end of the sentence. Sin is the subject at the beginning of the sentence. It's the actor. Or to use the biblical term, it's the *master*.

I'd like to share a lengthy section from Tim Keller's sermon *Sin as Slavery*. I'll read part now, and then the rest at the end. I think it will help us appreciate the significance of the journey we're about to take in Romans 6.

Every one of our sinful actions has a suicidal power on the faculties that put that action forth. When you sin with the mind, that sin shrivels the rationality. When you sin with the heart or the emotions, that sin shrivels the emotions. When you sin with the will, that sin destroys and dissolves your willpower and your self-control. Sin is the suicidal action of the self against itself. Sin destroys freedom because sin is an enslaving power.

In other words, sin has a powerful effect in which your own freedom, your freedom to *want* the good, to *will* the good, and to *think* or *understand* the good, is all being undermined. By sin, you are more and more losing your freedom. Sin undermines your mind, it undermines your emotions, and it undermines your will.

All sin is addiction. Whether it's bitterness, whether it's envy, whether it's materialism, whether it's laziness, whether it's impurity — every sinful action becomes an addiction. And every sinful action brings into your life a power that operates exactly like addiction cycles and addiction dynamics begin to operate. In other words, in the specific addictions of alcohol or drug addiction, or voyeurism, or exhibitionism, or sexual addictions, you actually have a microcosm of how sin works in general.

You know how addiction works. It starts like this: There's some kind of disappointment or distress in your life. As a result you choose to deal with that distress with an agent; it might be sex, it might be drugs, it might be alcohol. The agent promises transcendence. The agent promises freedom, a sense of being in control, a sense of being above all this, a sense of being liberated, a sense of escape. And so you do it. But when you do it, when you take the addicting agent as a way of dealing with life, the trap is set.

**The trap is set because three things begin to happen:**

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<sup>2</sup> I believe this quote came from his sermon on Leah in Genesis 29, "The Girl Nobody Wanted."

**1. Tolerance.** You get trapped into what the experts call the “tolerance effect.” In other words, the tolerance effect is that today *this* or *that* amount of alcohol or drugs, or *this* kind of sexual experience, will pale in comparison to your desires tomorrow. The same activity will not give you that same experience any more, and you will find you need more and more and more. What brought you joy yesterday will not be enough to give you joy tomorrow, because your emotions are shriveling and numbing. There’s a tolerance effect.

**2. Denial.** Addiction destroys because of denial. We all know part of addiction patterns is that your craving makes you rationalize and justify. It twists your thinking. You become selective in your reasoning, selective about your memory. You’ll do all sorts of tortured rationalizations, but you refuse to think clearly and objectively. You can’t.

**3. Defeat.** Addictions destroy willpower. You know you are an addict when you are trying to escape your distress with the very thing that brought you your distress. And when you are in that spiral, you are stuck forever — down and down and down and down.

Sin in general operates like that. When you think disobedience to God is going to bring freedom, the very act that promises freedom is taking the freedom. The very act that you think is putting you *in* the driver’s seat of your life is taking you *out* of the driver’s seat of your life.

The Bible defines sin as craving something more than God. Sin is making something *more* important than God. If you’re just religious occasionally, if God is on the outskirts of your life, that is the essence of sin, and that sin grows.

Jonathan Edwards says sin turns the heart into a fire. Just as there has never been a fire that said, “Enough fuel, I’m fine now,” so there has never been a sinful heart that said, “I have had enough success. I’ve had enough love. I’ve had enough approval. I’ve had enough comfort.” Oh, no. The more fuel you put into the fire, the hotter it burns, and the hotter it burns, the more it needs, the more oxygen it is sucking and the more fuel it requires.

And this is the heart of the fire. Next time you are crabby, or grumpy, or irritable, or scared to death, or in the pits, ask yourself: What am I telling myself would make me happy *if only* I had it? There is an *if only* at the bottom of this. Whatever is your *if only*, that becomes your slave master. It destroys your will.

This explains how lies necessitate other lies. Envy necessitates more envy. Racism necessitates more racist thoughts. Jealously necessitates more jealous thoughts. Bitterness necessitates more bitter thoughts. In the beginning when you first tell a lie you still have an appetite for the truth, but it won’t take long. Sin is a power. And the things you crave become your slave masters because in your heart those things burn with this idea: *if only*. Everything would be fine *if only* I had *that*. This creates a suction in your life. The more you throw in, the more it wants.

If you are a Christian and you are dealing with enslaving habits, it’s not enough to say, “Bad Christian, stop it.” And it is not enough to beat yourself up or merely try harder and harder and harder.

The real reason that you’re having a problem with an enslaving habit is because you are not *tasting* God. I’m not talking about *believing* God or even *obeying* God, I’m saying *tasting* — *tasting* God.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This is taken from the blog post by Dr. Tim Keller on How To Fight Sin, <https://lifecoach4god.life/2012/07/19/dr-tim-keller-on-how-to-fight-sin/>

Keller will have more to say at the end about *tasting God*. But we've heard enough to know why we need to pour ourselves into Romans 6. If we'll be honest about it, some of us are not doing so well. We say Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior, but it sure doesn't feel like He's the Lord of our lives. Something else is controlling us. Fear. Anxiety. Lust. Jealousy.

If you can relate, I have good news for you. The victorious Christian life isn't just for some elite group. God intends for all His children to overcome sin. And He shows us how in Romans 6.

### The Context: Romans answers three questions about God's righteousness.

Romans is the Cadillac of Paul's letters. He wrote the epistle to the Christians living in the capital city of the Roman Empire around the year AD 57. His purpose in writing was to prepare the believers for an upcoming visit he hoped to make to see them (1:10-11). Apparently, he had never been to Rome, and had not met the Christians there.

In writing this epistle, Paul explains the essential foundation stones of the Christian life. The first eleven chapters deal with doctrinal issues, namely, what God has done to provide righteousness for unrighteous people. The final five chapters deal with duty, namely how Christians should live in light of what God has done.

We won't take time to do an exhaustive study of Romans 1-5, but if we are to grasp Romans 6, we need to put it into context. Romans answers three questions for us about God's righteousness.

1. *Who needs it?* According to Romans 1-3a, everyone does. "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men... (1:18)." All people are born as sinners under God's wrath. In chapter 1 we learn that the *heathen* is under God's wrath. In chapter 2, we discover that both the *humanist* and the *Hebrew* are as well. All are born unrighteous and under the severe sentence of a holy God. We need what we do not have, *righteousness*.

2. *How do we get it?* That's the question Paul addresses in chapters 3b-5. For starters, here's how we don't get righteousness. It's not by keeping the Law. The Law could not save us (3:21). The Law is good, for it reveals the character and will of God, but the Law can't save anyone. It can't produce the righteousness we need, as 3:21 makes clear, "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known."

How then do we get righteousness? If it's not by what we do, how then? According to Romans, it's by grace (5:21). Unmerited favor. That's what the gospel is all about. Righteousness must be received, it can't be earned.

Paul made this clear in the theme verses of the letter (1:16-17), "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. <sup>17</sup> For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last."

We are not saved by what we do, but by what God did. God extended His grace toward us in Christ Jesus. So Paul could conclude chapter 5 with these words (5:20-21), "The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, <sup>21</sup> so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Who needs righteousness? Everyone does. How do we get it? We can't earn it, but must receive it. And on the basis of His grace, God gives it to those who place their faith in His Son and His work on the cross.

3. *What difference does it make?* If we do nothing to attain God's righteousness, and if it's given to us on the basis of God's grace, does it really matter how we live? Or to put

it another way, if God has saved me by His grace, can I live however I want? Certainly not, but why not? That's the question Paul addresses in chapters 6-8.

Perhaps you're thinking, "I do want to live for God. I don't want to keep sinning, but that's my problem. I keep struggling with sin. What needs to happen in my life in order to break free from the chains of sin?"

According to Romans 6, victorious Christian living begins right here. It starts with *knowing* (verses 1-7). But *knowing* must lead to *doing* (as we'll see in verses 8-14). Knowing. Then doing. It begins with knowing. What must we *know*? There are two subjects we must know well if we're going to stop being a slave to sin.

#### I. We must know our identity (1-4).

As Christians, we have a new identity. We are not who we used to be. We used to be in Adam. Now we are in Christ, in *union with Christ*. More about that in a moment.

If we're going to do well at something, we need some vocabulary. If you want to be a good basketball player, you have to learn some terms, like offense and defense and what a pick is and what a chest pass is, and so forth. And then you practice what you learn.

The same goes for a musician. You learn some terms, like treble clef and bass clef and scales and so forth. And then you practice.

The same is true for the Christian life. There are terms and concepts we need to learn and then put into practice. Paul introduces us to several in this letter. He teaches us about *justification* in Romans 1-5, and then *sanctification* in Romans 6-8, and *glorification too* at the end of Romans 8. Justification is righteousness imputed (put to my account), while sanctification is righteousness imparted (made a part of my life).<sup>4</sup> Justification is the foundation upon which sanctification rests.

J. Vernon McGee simplifies the distinction, "Justification is an act; sanctification is a work. Justification took place the moment you trusted Christ--you were declared righteous; the guilt was removed. Then God began a work in you that will continue throughout your life. I believe in instantaneous salvation, but sanctification is a lifelong process. In other words, justification is the means; sanctification is the end. Justification is for us; sanctification is in us. Justification declares the sinner righteous; sanctification makes the sinner righteous. Justification removes the guilt and penalty of sin; sanctification removes the growth and power of sin."<sup>5</sup>

It's not just nice to know these words. It's indispensable in this battle with sin. Look at the words Paul uses in chapter six. Don't be fooled by how small they are. *Into*, *with*, and *in*. We see "into Christ" in verse 3, then "with Christ" in verses 4, 5 (twice), 6, and 8 (twice), and then "in Christ" in verses 11 and 23. Paul is introducing us to one of the most important realities in the Bible related to our identity.

It's called *union with Christ*. If we know Christ as Savior, if we have been *justified by faith*, we are united with Christ. What happened to Christ has happened to us. Let's unpack this. This is our identity if we have been justified. Two experiences now appear on our resume that Paul mentions in verses 1-4.

**A. In Christ, we have died to sin (1-3).** Notice verse 1, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" That's the ESV. The NIV says, "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" As a brilliant lawyer, Paul poses two potent rhetorical questions. Why? The questions are designed to keep his readers from drawing wrong conclusions about what he has just

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<sup>4</sup> Wiersbe, p. 531.

<sup>5</sup> J. Vernon McGee, p. 103.

said. If God's grace is so great, and if our acceptance before God depends entirely on His grace and not our works, then we can live however we please, can't we? Not at all.

Do you know what that attitude represents? Back in the 1930s, the German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer coined a term for it. He called it "cheap grace." What is cheap grace? It's the flippant attitude that says, "I've been forgiven and I will go on being forgiven whatever I do, so I can do whatever I wish in my life."<sup>6</sup>

What is the problem with cheap grace? I've talked with non-Christians who see the problem. They've told me, "I'm not going to be a Christian if I'm not serious about living it. There are too many hypocrites who profess one thing, but live something entirely different."

Listen to Paul's answer regarding cheap grace in verse 2. "By no means!" The KJV says, "God forbid!" The words are a strong objection, "No way!"

But why not? Why is it unacceptable for a Christian to live in sin? Verse 2 tells us, "How can we who died to sin still live in it?" The NIV, "We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" This is what is true of us if we are in Christ. We are dead to sin.

To drive home the point, Paul asks another question in verse 3, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" *Don't you know?* Paul says. Do you know the reason some people flounder and fail in their Christian experience? Here it is. They lack knowledge. They don't know better.

What do we need to know if we are to be fruitful as Christians? We need to grasp our identification with Christ. We have been placed in Christ. In Christ, we have died to sin. What does that mean? Some use this verse and others like it to teach perfectionism, that a Christian will never sin. Such teaching misses the fact that there are actually four different senses in which we have died to sin.<sup>7</sup>

1. *In the legal sense, we died to sin when Christ died.* Two millenia ago when Christ died, we too died. In God's eyes, it was as if we were there on the cross. Christ made a decision to take our sin upon Himself when He hung on the tree (2 Cor 5:21). In this legal (positional) sense, we died to sin when our Representative, Jesus Christ, died. By the way, as verse 4 indicates, the same goes for His resurrection. When He rose again to new life on the third day, in God's mind, so did we (see Col 3:1).

2. *In the personal sense, we died to sin when we received Christ.* When as an eleven year old boy, I knelt next to my pastor in his study, confessed that I was a sinner and received Christ as my Savior and Lord, I died to sin. As far as our omniscient God was concerned, I died to sin legally twenty centuries ago when Christ died, but in the personal sense, I died to sin when I received Christ. That was the day the Spirit of God applied to my life what Christ had done. I became a new person (2 Cor 5:17).

3. *In the moral sense, we die to sin daily.* Here's where passages that tell us to "put to death" the flesh enter (like Colossians 3:5, "Put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature"). We see the same here in Romans 6:11, "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin." And in verse 12, "Do not let sin reign in your mortal body." And in verse 13, "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin."

Here's a question. If we have already died to sin, why does Paul give us these commands to "put to death" sin? It's because what is true in the legal sense—we have died to sin—must be realized in the moral sense. We need to learn to live in light of what God says is true of us in the legal sense. Ephesians 4 puts it this way—we must put off the old man, and put on the new. Will the battle ever end? Yes...

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<sup>6</sup> Briscoe, p. 130.

<sup>7</sup> Cranfield, pp. 128-9.

4. *In the ultimate sense, we will die to sin when we actually die.* Our struggle with sin will end the day we breath our last breath, and enter the presence of our Lord.

Several years ago I had a graveside service for a man who had no church or family. As I stood there looking at the vault containing his casket in the ground, one thing was for sure. Before me was the body of a man who was no longer sinning. A dead body does not sin. It sins when it's alive. I do not know the spiritual condition of that man, but this I know. There are only two places for our sins. Either they were on Christ when He died 2000 years ago—because we have trusted Him as our Savior—or they are on us, and judgment is ahead. There is no third place for our sins.

May I ask you something. Where are your sins? Can you say with confidence that Christ died for *your* sins? This brings us to a second reality relating to our identification with Christ which we see in verse 4. The first was that in Christ, we have died to sin.

**B. In Christ, we have been raised to new life (4).** Notice verse 4, “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”<sup>8</sup> What does that say about the identity of a believer? If we are in Christ, we have been *raised to new life*.

In verse 3, Paul says we were “baptized” into Jesus' death, and now in verse 4 he relates that we were buried with Him by “baptism” into death. What does he mean? The Greek word has two basic meanings. Literally, baptize means to dip or immerse. But figuratively, it means “to be identified with.” For example, 1 Corinthians 10:2 says this of the Israelites, “They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” Is Paul saying the Israelites got wet in the Red Sea? Were they immersed? No, when they crossed the dry ground, they were “identified with” their leader, Moses.

In which sense is Paul using the term baptism in Romans 6, literal or figurative? There is difference of opinion, but I think that the apostle had *both* in mind. It's through water baptism that a person is publicly identified with Christ.

Though it may sound strange to us, Paul's readers, particularly the Jews, could grasp this. In that day, when a Gentile wanted to become a Jewish proselyte, he had to go through the rite of baptism. The candidate changed his old clothes, and got completely in the water. While in the water, he gave testimony to his confession of faith. Once he emerged from the water, in the eyes of the Jewish people, he was regarded as a new man.

The same was true in Christian baptism. Baptism was a serious matter in the first century. When a person was baptized, he was giving public testimony that he was turning from his old life and giving allegiance to Christ in his new life. He was identifying with Christ.

That's the point in Romans 6. In Christ, a believer has died to sin and been raised to new life. That is his identification.

If a cocaine addict dies, he is no longer tempted by cocaine. Why not? Because his body is dead to all physical senses. He can't see the drug, smell it, or desire it. He's dead. In Christ, we have died to sin. Sin does not have the same hold on us it once had. But there's more. In Christ, we've been raised to new life.

It was the second quarter of the basketball game, and the home team was getting trounced 35-17. The starting point guard wasn't getting the job done. He kept missing shots, throwing passes out of bounds, and ignoring the coach's instructions. Guess what the coach did. He put in a substitute. And when the new floor general entered the game, things changed. He turned the tide. He hit his shots. He made the right passes. He did what the coach asked him to do. And the team won the game.

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<sup>8</sup> NIV “We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

In the game of life, we were losing big time. We needed help. We needed a sub to enter the game. And God sent us His Son, the perfect substitute. The key to getting right with God is Christ's substitution. But it doesn't stop there. The key to *living* right before God is also Christ's substitution.

This simple truth can transform your life. The key to the Christian life is to learn to live in light of the work of Christ. Every day I must affirm these realities. When Christ died, I died. When He was buried, I was buried. When He was raised, I was raised and given the potential for new life! John Stott draws this conclusion, "A Christian is not merely a justified believer. He is someone who has entered into a vital personal union with Jesus Christ."<sup>9</sup> That's right.

We use the phrase, "He's into heavy metal." Or "He's into classic." That means that's where he finds his identity. The Christian is *into Christ*.

Is that true of you? Are you into Christ? You say, "How can I know if I am?" To identify with Christ (to be *into Him*) you must repent of your sin and trust in Him.

What about baptism? Baptism will not save you, but it is vital as a step of obedience. Here's why. When you enter the water, you are saying, "I am identified with Christ. I have died to sin, and have been made alive." If you have never been baptized and you are a Christian, you need to be. Why? First of all, to obey Jesus (Mt 28:20), and secondly to let the world know of your identification with Christ.

If we're going to stop being a slave to sin we need to know two subjects well. The first is our identification. We must see ourselves as united with Christ.

## II. We must know the implications (5-7).

When I was in elementary school, my father was a High School principal. That occupation affected my identity in some interesting ways. When it came to athletic events, for instance, that identity was my ticket to a free pass inside. That identity also had something to do with what was expected of me in the area of behavior. There are implications related to a person's identification.

The same holds true for the Christian life. In light of our identification with Christ, there are some clear implications. Paul highlights three in verses 5-7.

**A. In Christ, we can live a new life (5).** Verse 5 says, "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his."<sup>10</sup> What's this saying? If we have experienced the benefits of Christ's death, namely justification, we certainly are entitled to experience the benefit of His resurrection, namely sanctification. Simply put, we have the potential in Christ to live a new life!

Is that true, or is Paul just teasing us? Can we really live a *new life*? Yes, it's true. Why then don't some people? Why are some church-goers paralyzed by old habits they just can't seem to shake? I want to suggest three possibilities. You won't experience *new life* if any of these is true.

1. *You won't experience new life if you don't know Christ.* Religion can't give you the kind of new life we're talking about. Only a relationship with Christ can do that. Some people don't change because of a fundamental problem. They don't know Christ.

2. *You won't experience new life if you don't know God's design for the Christian life.* There are a lot of unbiblical notions these days about the "successful" Christian life. Here are two common errors being promoted.

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<sup>9</sup> Stott, p. 34.

<sup>10</sup> NIV "If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection."

One is what I'll call the "holy zap" mentality. "Let go and let God," is the counsel given. The reason you still struggle with sin is that *you* keep getting in the way. You need to surrender your life to God. And so you walk an aisle and "rededicate" your life. You get a "zap" from God. You do okay for awhile—until the zap wears off—and then you have to repeat the process. Another walk down a church aisle, another rededication, another zap. That's how sanctification works, according to this view, one emotional high after another.

Another unbiblical view of the Christian life suggests that sanctification is an event subsequent to justification. In other words, you get saved and then at a later time, probably during a crisis, life-changing experience, you get "sanctified." Once sanctified, you stop struggling with sin and start overcoming it.

Both of these views fail to see that according to the Bible sanctification involves a process, not just an event. And until you learn what the Bible says about God's design for the Christian life, you won't experience new life. A third possibility...

3. *You won't experience new life if you don't live in light of what you know.* It's true. You can know Christ and the truth about the Christian life, and still live a defeated life. There's nothing magical about *knowing* truth. We must *appropriate* truth. We must do it, and if we do we will experience new life.

Yes, in Christ we can live a new life. That's implication #1. Here's a second...

**B. In Christ, our old man was crucified (6).** Notice verse 6, "We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin."<sup>11</sup>

This raises the question, "Just what is this 'old self?'" The KJV refers to it as the "old man." But what is it? It refers to what we were in Adam, our old identity—the old ego.<sup>12</sup>

Actually, Paul helps us understand what the "old self" is by using another phrase in the next clause. "For we know that our *old self* was crucified with him so that the *body of sin* might be done away with." Apparently, the "old man" is either identical with or closely related to the "body of sin."

Now, the body itself is not sinful, but neutral. Scripture is clear that sin comes from where? Not the body, but from the heart, the inner life (Mk 7:21). The problem is that the body becomes the vehicle of sin. It's what our heart commands to do its bidding. The heart works through the eye to lust after a woman, through the hand to shoplift, and through the tongue to spew forth bitter words on our neighbor.

Is there hope? Yes! If we are in Christ, what has happened to the "old man?" It was "crucified" with Christ. And what happened to the "body of sin"? Paul says it was "done away with" [KJV, "destroyed"]. The term means to render inoperative, to make of no effect. Don't miss the strong words here. The old man was killed at the cross. The body of sin was rendered inoperative at Calvary. Legally, that is.

Why do I say legally? Because though we have died to sin in one sense, we still battle with sin in another, don't we? Both are true. On the one hand, the Bible says the old man has been crucified (Rom 5:6), but on the other hand, we read exhortations like the one in Ephesians 4:22 that tell us to put off the old man.

What does that mean practically? Two things.

1. *We will not be sinless.* Not in this life. John says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8)." We will not be sinless

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<sup>11</sup> NIV "For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin."

<sup>12</sup> As Wiersbe suggests.

this side of heaven. We must battle with sin day by day, and hour by hour. On the one hand, yes, the old man was nailed to the cross, but on the other hand, he keeps raising his ugly head. We will not be sinless in this life. Having said that, we must hasten to affirm the following.

2. *We have the power to sin less.* Why is that? Because of our identification with Christ. We have resurrection power available to us. Before we were justified, we didn't. We sinned because it was our nature to sin. We were powerless NOT to sin. But in Christ, that changed. Now in Him we have the capacity to say no to sin and do right. We have the power to sin less. Which brings us to implication #3.

**C. In Christ, we can be set free from sin (7).** This is verse 7, “For one who has died has been set free from sin.” The NIV says, “Because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.” Here’s the KJV rendering, “For he that is dead is freed from sin.” Again Paul isn't talking about sinless perfection. Everett Harrison explains, “What he does present here is not the impossibility of committing a single sin, but the impossibility of continuing in a life dominated by sin.”<sup>13</sup> That's it. In Christ, we can be set free from sin—by the grace of God.

Grace is wonderful, isn't it? Haldor Lillenas penned the familiar words, “Wonderful grace of Jesus, greater than all my sin; How shall my tongue describe it, where shall its praise begin? Taking away my burden, setting my spirit free, for the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me.”

Julia Johnston pondered the subject, “Marvelous grace of our loving Lord, grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt! Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured--there where the blood of the Lamb was spilt. Grace, grace, God's grace, grace that will pardon and cleanse within, grace, grace, God's grace, grace that is greater than all our sin!”

Yes, God's grace is great! By God's grace, we can live a new life. Our old man was crucified. We can be set free from sin. Those are the implications of our identification.

Now we come to the nitty gritty. Do you see this happening in your life? Is there any sinful habit in your life that is enslaving you? Perhaps it's profanity, or maybe it's nicotine, or pornography, or laziness. Is there any activity in your life that Jesus wouldn't do? You may be thinking, “Yes there is, but I've struggled with this sinful habit for years. Is there hope for real change?”

The answer is absolutely *yes*. How does it happen? How can the old patterns of sinful behavior be broken in our lives? It starts with *knowing*. We must know Christ and the truth about the Christian life. If we want to win the war with sin, we must go to work on *knowing*.

Here are three practical suggestions to help. First, memorize verses that speak to your identity (Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:4; Romans 5:1-2; 1 Peter 2:24).

Second, sing a gospel-affirming-hymn as you begin your day. Don't just listen. Sing. And make sure you sing songs that express not merely your feelings but first and foremost the truth about what Jesus Christ did for you. I recommend “Jesus Paid It All,” and the second verse of “It Is Well with My Soul”.

Third, research the doctrine of our union with Christ. Read the transcript on our website of our sermon we did in 2014 on 1 Peter 1:3-9, “A Living Hope Through a Risen Savior.” If you want to go deeper, read John Stott's *Men Made New: An Exposition of Romans 6-8*.

Knowing is vital. But knowing is not an end, but a means to something. Let's go back to Tim Keller's sermon. Again, these are his words:

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<sup>13</sup> Harrison, p. 68.

If you are a Christian and you are dealing with enslaving habits, it's not enough to say, "Bad Christian, stop it." And it is not enough to beat yourself up or merely try harder and harder and harder.

The real reason that you're having a problem with an enslaving habit is because you are not tasting God. I'm not talking about believing God or even obeying God, I'm saying tasting — tasting God.

The secret to freedom from enslaving patterns of sin is worship. You need worship. You need great worship. You need weeping worship. You need glorious worship. You need to sense God's greatness and to be moved by it — moved to tears and moved to laughter — moved by who God is and what he has done for you. And this needs to be happening all the time.

This type of worship is the only thing that can replace the little if only fire burning in your heart. We need a new fire that says, "If only I saw the Lord. If only he was close to my heart. If only I could feel him to be as great as I know him to be. If only I could taste his grace as sweet as I know it to be."

And when that if only fire is burning in your heart, then you are free.<sup>14</sup>

The Bottom Line: In Christ, we are no longer a slave to sin.

We'll learn more about the process involved in changing next time, the Lord willing. But for now, two questions. One, are you in Christ? Two, are you living like you believe it? If you are in Christ, my friend, sin is no longer your master. You have a new master, and what a wonderful, loving, wise, powerful master He is! And He invites you this morning, indeed, He commands you to affirm that sin is no longer your master, for that position belongs to Him.

**Closing Song:** #198 "*Wonderful Grace of Jesus*" (all three verses)

Community Group Discussion:

1. We began a new series today, *No Longer a Slave to Sin*. What do you think of when you hear the words "sin" and "slave"? What image comes to mind when you think of the phrase "slave to sin"? Is there a difference between *sinning* and being *a slave to sin*, and if so, what's the difference?
2. Read again today's passage, Romans 6:1-7. In verse 2 we are told that we have "died to sin" if we know Christ. What does this mean? If it is true that we have died to sin, what are some reasons we still struggle with sin?
3. In this passage we are introduced to the wonderful reality of our *union with Christ*. What does it mean to be "united with Christ"? Feel free to use your Bible study tools to explore this doctrine and share your findings with the group.
4. In verse 6 Paul says that "our old self was crucified with him" so that "we would no longer be enslaved to sin". Is it possible for a Christian to be sinless? If not, what is the point of this verse?
5. We have a new identity if we belong to Christ. List several things that are true of us if we are *in Christ*. What does affirming our new identity have to do with our battle with daily sin?

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<sup>14</sup> This is taken from the blog post by Dr. Tim Keller on How To Fight Sin, <https://lifecoach4god.life/2012/07/19/dr-tim-keller-on-how-to-fight-sin/>