

Romans 6:8-14 “What We Must *Do* to Overcome Sin”^{**1}Series: *No Longer a Slave to Sin (An Exposition of Romans 6)*

Main Idea: If we are going to go to war against personal sin and win, we need to *do* something. According to Romans 6:8-14, we have two responsibilities. We must do something with our minds *and* bodies.

- I. We need to grasp our position (8-10).
 - A. What is true of Christ? (9-10)
 1. He rose again.
 2. Death has no hold on Him.
 3. He died to sin once but no more.
 4. Now He lives to God.
 - B. What is true of us? (8)
 1. We died with Him.
 2. We live with Him.
- II. We need to change our practice (11-14).
 - A. We must reckon (11).
 1. I am dead to sin.
 2. I am alive to God.
 - B. We must reject (12).
 1. I can allow sin to rule my body.
 2. I should allow Christ to rule my body.
 - C. We must relinquish (13).
 1. We must yield ourselves to God.
 2. We must yield our members for right living.
 - D. We must realize (14).
 1. Sin is not to be our master.
 2. We are not under law, but grace.

Make It Personal: Let's ask ourselves two personal questions...

1. Am I in Christ?
2. Am I living like it?

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

We're talking about sin again today. As we open our Bibles to Romans 6, we'll hear what God says about sin, and more importantly, how to overcome this joy-stealing monster. That's exactly what sin is, a monster, and why we have so much reason to give thanks to Jesus Christ, as we'll do later in this service at the communion table.

Last week I cited Tim Keller's observation, "You do not do sin. Sin does you."² He's talking about something we see in Romans 6. Sin is not just a verb (something we *do*), but the subject of the sentence (something that *does* us). It's a cruel subject, a tyrant, a monster. It's a monster that we cannot defeat, for he's too powerful for us.

There's only one hope. Someone more powerful must defeat him for us. And He has! And if we know Him, we are *no longer a slave to sin*. That's the title of our series. This is the wonderful reality of Romans 6.

But how do we experience this reality? It begins with *knowing*. That was last week's message, "What We Must *Know* to Overcome Sin" (Romans 6:1-7). Yet knowing isn't enough. So this week it's "What We Must *Do* to Overcome Sin."

Scripture Reading: Romans 6:8-14

^{**}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.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the 2011 series at WBC.

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

It's wonderful to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, for there's none like Him. He said He came that we might have life, abundant life, life to the fullest.

So why then do we often *not* experience what He came to offer? If Christ defeated sin, why does sin still seem so powerful in our lives? No one delights in being defeated, trodden down, and enslaved by sin. But how can it be different? The Spirit of God addresses this matter for us in the passage He led the apostle Paul to write in Romans 6.

As a reminder, Romans 1-5 deals with justification (being declared right with God), and Romans 6-8 have to do with sanctification (living right with God).

Last time we focused on the first seven verses of Romans 6 and discovered that if we're going to win this battle we need to *know* something. We must know our identity (that we are in Christ) and the implications of our identity (that we can live a new life according to verse 5, that our old man was crucified according to verse 6; that we can be set free from sin according to verse 7).

Knowing then leads to *doing*. If we are going to experience the reality of *no longer a slave to sin*, we cannot be passive. We must *do* something. According to Romans 6:8-14, we have two responsibilities. We must do something with our minds *and* bodies.

I. We need to grasp our position (8-10).

Grasping involves the use of our *minds*. "We *know*," says Paul in verse 9. We know something, and this "something" is the basis for victorious living. But we must grasp it.

There are two questions that we need to address at this point in order to grasp our position. The first is *what is true of us*, and the second is *what is true of Christ*? Let's answer the second question first by looking ahead to verses 9-10.

A. What is true of Christ? (9-10) "We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him [NIV "has mastery", lit. "to be lord of, to rule"]. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God."

Don't miss this. Our power for living is linked to Christ. What's true of Christ is true of all who are in Christ. So what then is true of Christ? Notice four realities.

1. *He rose again*. This is in an emphatic position in the Greek text. Christ has been raised from the dead! Since that is true, this follows.

2. *Death has no hold on Him*. It doesn't have "dominion" over Him, as the ESV and KJV put it. Oh, it did, for a few hours, but then He conquered death!

3. *He died to sin once but no more*. In verse 10, Paul is careful to point out that Christ died for sin ONCE. Please don't miss this. In stark contrast with the doctrine of the so-called perpetual sacrifice of Christ held by some, this word indicates that the payment for sin is complete, *finished*. We add nothing to it, but rather must accept it by faith.

Please realize what this means. The remedy for sin has already been provided. One time, at Calvary. We don't need the Mass to obtain grace for sin. We don't need to "pray through" at the altar to obtain God's favor, as others would teach. The remedy for sin was secured when Christ died to sin one time, in our place.

4. *Now He lives to God*. Christ left heaven to do His Father's will, and while hanging on the tree, He bore the curse of our sin and was alienated from the life of God. He now lives to God, in perfect fellowship with His Father, ministering as our Advocate in heaven (1 John 2:2).

Which prompts us to ask a question. Why is Paul insistent that we grasp what is true of Christ? The answer is that we who have been justified are in *union with Christ*. Our identity is connected to Him. If we doubt the authority of the Captain of our salvation, we will flounder in our own lives. Our success is linked to Him.

Now let's address the second question pertaining to our position.

B. What is true of us? (8) Paul affirms two realities in verse 8, saying, "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him."

1. We died with Him. The "if" could well be translated "since" for Paul is talking about a certainty. "Now if we died with Christ," and we have. How do we know? Verse 3 indicates he is talking to people who were "baptized into Christ Jesus" and thus "baptized into His death." Verse 6 says, "For we know that our old self [*palaios anthropos*, old man] was *crucified* with him." This is the truth, gospel truth. When Christ died on the cross, in God's eyes, we died too. Positionally. Legally.

I'm convinced that the battle with sin for the Christian is won and lost in the mind. He who wins this battle is he who affirms this truth in his thinking. *I died with Him.*

But wait. To affirm something, it must first be true. We cannot say that we "died with Christ" if indeed we have not died with Him. Paul is writing to Christians, to people who truly have identified with Christ. "*You can overcome sinful patterns,*" he says.

What about non-Christians? Can non-Christians overcome sin? The answer is *no*, he cannot defeat this master.

You say, "Wait a minute. I have a friend who kicked a nasty habit and he doesn't believe in Christ. Explain that."

Okay, so your friend eliminated a sin from his life. Is he now free? No, he's still enslaved to sin. The first sin was alcohol. Now it's pride. But he's still a slave to a Monster that keeping him from living for glory of the One who gave him life.

Suppose you built a beautiful house, and suppose right after you built this house you discovered something about its location you did not know before. Your house is sitting on an *active* fault line. Not long after you move in, you feel earthquake tremors shaking your house violently. The house doesn't fall, but the damage is significant. The quake causes pictures to fall from the walls, ceilings to crack, and books to tumble off shelves. Again, your house hasn't collapsed, not yet. But it will. It's on an active fault line.

Answer this. Could you fix this problem? You say, "Sure, I can take my tools and spackle that crack in the ceiling, and rehang those pictures and reshelv those books. I can make that house look like new again!"

Wait. Have you really fixed the problem? No. You've merely patched up something that's going to be completely destroyed soon. What would you need to do to fix the problem? You'd have to get rid of the fault line and give the house a new foundation. And that's something you lack the power to do.

In fact, your cosmetic changes may be contributing to the problem. How so? Because now you're deluding yourself into thinking that everything's okay. But it's not. The longer you stay in that house, the closer you are to total destruction.

So, can a sinner solve the sin problem? No. He can move the furniture around a little bit, but he can't begin to rectify his real problem. Only the Master Builder can do that.

And He does. When we believe in Jesus Christ, something happens to us, something that happened to Him, something that we need to affirm. *We died with Him.*

2. *We live with Him.* Notice verse 8 again, “Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.” Think about it. If death didn't master Christ, it need not master us either for we are connected to Christ. In Christ, we have the power to live, and to live *victoriously*.

I must hasten to say this again. You will never overcome sin if you are not in Christ. Cosmetic changes, perhaps. But not God-exalting victory. If you don't know Christ, the solution for you isn't Romans 6. You need to take heed to Romans 1-5. You must experience justification before you can experience sanctification. You must be *IN* Christ before you can experience the power *OF* Christ.

Al Mohler said something about our union with Christ that has helped me. First, he confessed, “To be fair, it's just a hard idea to get your head around. I mean, what does it mean exactly to be *in* Christ, or for that matter, in anyone? If someone tells me I *follow* Christ, I get that. *Under* Christ? Yes, I know what it means to be under someone. *Saved* by Christ? Got it. *Inspired* by? Check. And so on. They are concepts I understand: Christ as a leader, a lord, a saviour. But ‘*in* Christ’ almost seems to portray Christ as a place, a sphere, a location. How does that work?”³

Then Mohler shared this illustration:

Imagine yourself at the airport, about to board a plane. The plane is on its way to sunny Melbourne, and Melbourne is where you want to be. What relationship do you need to have with the plane at this point?

Would it help to be *under* the plane, to *submit* yourself to the plane's eminent authority in the whole flying-to-Melbourne thing? Or would it help to be *inspired* by the plane? To watch it fly off and whisper “One day, I hope to do that too”. What about *following* the plane? You know the plane is going to Melbourne, and so it stands to reason that if you take note of the direction it goes and pursue it then you too will end up there.

Of course, the key relationship you need with the plane is not to be under it, behind it, or inspired by it. You need to be *in* it. Why? Because, by being in the plane, what happens to the plane will also happen to you. The question “Did you get to Melbourne?” will be part of a larger question: “Did the plane get to Melbourne?” If the answer to the second question is yes, and if you were in the plane, then what happened to the plane will also have happened to you.

I think, at heart, the biblical idea of being in Christ is something like that. According to the New Testament, to be in Christ is to say that, by union with him, whatever is true of him is now true of us. He died, we died. He is raised, we are (and will be) raised. He is vindicated, we are vindicated. He is loved, we are loved. And so on, all because we are in him.⁴

I talked to a person a while back whose life was crumbling because of sinful choices. I shared that before he could overcome sin, he needed to be in Christ. Tragically, he wasn't sure he was ready for that. He wanted to keep living on the fault line.

Friends, if we are going to overcome sin, we must be in Christ, and affirm this reality every day, moment by moment. According to Romans 6, this is our first responsibility, and it involves our *minds*. We need to grasp our position.

³ [Union with Christ | The Briefing](#), June 1, 2011

⁴ [Union with Christ | The Briefing](#), June 1, 2011

II. We need to change our practice (11-14).

Practice involves, not just our minds, but our bodies. Notice how verse 11 begins, “So you also.” In the NIV, “In the same way.” In the KJV, “Likewise.” In other words, in light of what is true of Christ (as we've seen in verses 9-10), here's what should follow in us (verses 11-14). This is a very practical section and it shows us that if we're to overcome sin, we must take four practical steps.

A. We must reckon (11). That's the verb the KJV translators used in verse 11, “Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin [NIV, “Count yourselves dead to sin”], but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”⁵ In the first section of this chapter, Paul taught us information about our union with Christ, three times using the word “know” (3, 6, 9). Now he uses a follow-up word: “reckon” (or “count”).

In some parts of our country, “to reckon” means “to think or guess” (like “I suppose so”). That's not the sense behind the Greek word used here. The word *logizomai* appears 41 times in the New Testament, and 19 times in Romans alone. In Romans 4, it was translated as “count, reckon, impute.” It denotes “to take into account, to calculate, to estimate, to put to one's account.” It simply means to believe what God says in His Word is really true in your life.⁶

This is critical. Paul didn't tell his readers to “feel” a certain way, nor to work up their emotions. He told them to reckon, that is, to claim the truth of God's Word for themselves. It's like endorsing a check. If we really believe the money is in the bank, we'll sign it and collect the money. If we really believe we are in Christ, we'll act like it.

What must we reckon if we are to overcome sin? We must make two declarations.

1. *I am dead to sin.* I need to see myself this way, as *dead to sin*.

2. *I am alive to God.* Here is the paradox of the Christian life. At the same time a believer in Christ is both dead and alive, dead to sin and alive to God. We need to see ourselves that way. I should give no more attention to sin than a dead man does. Rather, I should contemplate the fact that I am alive, and have the potential to live a godly life.

I can't underscore this enough. How we *think* affects how we *function*. That's true in sports. If you go to the foul line thinking, “I can't make this shot,” you probably won't. Yet this is not simply a call for positive thinking, but a command for *truth thinking*. It's not, “I just know I can kick this habit!” but rather, “In Christ I *can* overcome this sinful habit!” Jesus said, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

I am dead to sin. I am alive to God. If I'm a Christian, this is the truth. And the implementation of this truth begins right here. We must *reckon*.

Let me show you something else we must reckon. Verse 6 tells us that our “old self” [“old man”] is crucified with Him. In his commentary Stuart Briscoe suggests, “We should not assume that the 'old man' is anything more than 'the man of old' or the pre-regenerate person. A friend of mine always refers to his life as A.D. and B.C. B.C. is the 'old man'; A.D. is the regenerate man raised in Christ. The person you were 'before Christ' has been judged, condemned, sentenced, executed, buried, and finished with forever. The new man lives.”⁷

This is true, and this is why sin is so unacceptable in our lives. Our position should determine our practice. Our old man has been crucified with Christ, so we should live

⁵ ESV “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

⁶ Wiersbe, 532.

⁷ Briscoe, p. 135.

like it. The old Puritans used to say, “God does not take away our ability to sin; He gives us the power not to sin.”⁸

To borrow an illustration from Briscoe, think of what happened to Neil Armstrong on July 20, 1969. When he stepped out of Eagle onto the moon's surface, and said, “That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind,” he entered a hostile environment in which it was impossible for him to survive without his space suit and its support systems. Yet he did live. Why? Because of his identification with his space suit. In that suit, he was able to regard himself as dead to his dangerous surroundings, and alive to his experience of walking around the moon.⁹

So it is with the Christian. A person “in Christ” is no longer at the mercy of his hostile environment of sin but is alive to all the power and life of God Himself.

In his helpful commentary on Romans 5-8, *Men Made New*, John Stott writes, “I find it helpful to think in these terms. Our biography is written in two volumes. Volume one is the story of the old man, the old self, of me before my conversion. Volume two is the story of the new man, the new self, of me after I was made a new creation in Christ. Volume one of my biography ended with the judicial death of the old self. I was a sinner. I deserved to die. I did die. I received my deserts in my Substitute with whom I have become one. Volume two of my biography opened with my resurrection. My old life having finished, a new life to God has begun.”¹⁰

If Jesus Christ is our Savior, this is true of us, and we are to *reckon* it. When Satan tempts us to sin, and whispers, “Oh, it's a just a little sin and God will forgive you anyway,” we need to say, “No! Volume one is closed! I am living in Volume 2!”

This is what overcoming sin looks like. First, we must *reckon*.

B. We must reject (12). “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.” This is a command. The command implies it's possible, for God enables what He requires. Sin should have less a hold on us the longer we live the Christian life. The present tense verb suggests, “Stop letting sin reign.” Reject it.

In every situation there are two options.

1. *I can allow sin to rule my body.* That's the first option.

2. *I should allow Christ to rule my body.* I cannot serve two masters. I'm either going to let sin take the throne of my life, or Christ. If Christ is going to rule our bodies, we must reject sin.

Reject is a strong word. If you reject a job offer, you're saying no to it. If you reject someone's counsel, you're not giving their words any attention. If you reject sin, it's the same. You're saying no to it. You're refusing to give it any place in your life.

Take, for instance, sexual sin. What does it mean to reject sexual sin? Listen to this rather lengthy but insightful observation about sexual temptation by G. K. Chesterton.

“A deception may affect the mind, but an obscenity must affect the mind; it is a violence. It may do one of two things equally direct and instinctive: it may shock purity or it may inflame purity. But in both cases the process is brutal and irrational. A picture or a sentence which shocks sensibility or sharpens sensuality does not offer itself for discussion. It is no more open for argument than a squeaking piece of chalk

⁸ Briscoe, p. 137.

⁹ Briscoe, p. 137.

¹⁰ Stott, p. 49.

is open to argument, or the choking smell of ether is open to argument. The human victim is drugged—or he is sick.

Therefore, I think we may speak of vulgarity as an assault. In the matter of traditional public decency, I am entirely with the Puritans. The ordinary argument that sex can be treated calmly and freely like anything else is the most loathsome irrationality in this irrational age. And parallels from other crimes are deviously false. A man reading about a burglary is not any more likely to commit a burglary. A man who has seen a pocket picked is not in the least more likely to become a pickpocket.

But there is one evil which, by its hold on the imagination (the creative and reproductive part of man), can reproduce itself even by report. We have a right to protect ourselves and especially our unstable and vulnerable children against startling and uncivilized appeals to this instinct.”¹¹

Well said. And you might be interested in knowing that these words by G. K. Chesterton appeared in the London Daily News on February 19, 1910. Chesterton was a man who knew that those who will survive in the battle with sin must *reject* sin. We can't cuddle temptation. We must flee from it. We must teach our children to flee from it, too.

Men, what do you do when you're watching the car race on television, and at the commercial break a scantily clad woman flashes suggestively across your screen? What do you do with your eyes? What about your children's eyes?

Friends, when you're at war, you don't sit down for lunch with the enemy. We are at war. If we are to stand in this relentless battle with sin, we must *reckon*, which requires the aggressive discipline of our minds. But we also must *reject*, which requires the aggressive discipline of our bodies.

C. We must relinquish (13). In verse 13 Paul gives us two more imperatives, the first telling us what *not* to do, and the second telling us what to do. Notice verse 13, “Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life...”¹² Relinquishing involves a twofold surrender.

1. *We must yield ourselves to God.* The word “present” in the ESV [NIV “offer”; KJV “yield”] is the same word in Romans 12:1 where Paul says, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to *present* your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.” To present, then, means to completely surrender your body to the Lord.

You say, “Why does He want my body?” For starters, it's His. He purchased with the price of His own blood. What's more, your body is His temple (1 Cor 6:19). And He wants to use it for holy purposes. If that's to occur, we must *surrender* it to Him. We must yield ourselves to God. The second responsibility is even more specific.

2. *We must yield our members for right living.* Verse 13 concludes, “And [present] your members to God as instruments for righteousness.”¹³ To surrender to God

¹¹ G. K. Chesterton, *The Messenger*, Vol.3, No.2, p. 8

¹² In the NIV, “Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life.” The KJV renders it, “Yield yourselves unto God.”

¹³ NIV “And offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.”

I must give Him my body. I must also give Him the very parts of my body. My tongue. My eyes. My feet. My hands. I must offer them to Him.

Offer them as what? As *instruments for righteousness*. This is key. Did you realize it's possible to want to get rid of sinful habits for the wrong motive?

A man says, "I'll do anything to get control of this terrible temper." A good thing to do, right? But when you probe further you discover the man's reason. He's afraid he's going to lose his wife if he doesn't change, and that wouldn't be good for his image, and his bank account. So he wants to get control of his temper for a self-focused reason.

"I want to get rid of this nicotine," a woman says. "I want to cut back on the alcohol," a teen says. "I've got to get rid of the pornography," says the man. All good intentions, but motive is key. Why do you want to get rid of anger, nicotine, alcohol, and pornography? Again, it's possible to stop sinning for self-absorbed reasons. I'm doing it to get peace with *my* spouse, or to improve *my* health, or to save *my* reputation.

Do you see the problem? I'm basically replacing sin with sin. I'm getting rid of a self-absorbed activity with a self-absorbed motivation.

Please know this. The wonderful loving Savior who gave His life for us isn't interested in blessing our self-focused agendas. To do so would *not* be loving, would it? Why does the Lord set us free from sin? It's not just so we'll stop serving sin. It's so we'll start serving *Him*. Don't let sin reign, that's verse 12. Offer your body to God, that's verse 13. Reject, then relinquish.

Have you offered your body parts to God so they can be used as *instruments for His righteous purposes*? Friends, the Christian life is meant to be lived for God, not for self. There's no true joy in living a godly life for self-exalting reasons.

Think about it. Do you want to know why there are so many frustrated and defeated Christians sitting in church (or not sitting in church) this morning? It's because they are living for themselves, and not for the Wonderful God who gave them life and salvation.

Paul says we need to relinquish the control of our bodies, even the very members of our bodies to God. Let's make a daily decision, "Here I am, Lord. I belong to You."

D. We must realize (14). Realize what? Realize that there are reasons why we should follow the commands of verses 11-13 and reckon, reject sin, and relinquish our lives to God. The reasons appear in verse 14.

1. *Sin is not to be our master.* "For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace." In the NIV, "For sin shall not be your master ["shall not have dominion over you" in the KJV]." The words "over you" are emphatic in the Greek text. "For sin OVER YOU shall not rule."

J. Vernon McGee tells the story about a little girl who fell out of bed one night and began to cry. Her mother rushed into her bedroom, picked her up, put her back in bed, and asked her, "Honey, why did you fall out of bed?" And the girl replied, "I think I stayed too close to the place where I got in." And McGee says, "And that's the reason a great many of us fall, my friend."¹⁴

Are you living too close to the edge? Friends, if we are in Christ, we have no business flirting with sin. Let's realize that sin is not to be our master.

2. *We are not under law, but grace.* "Since you are not under law but under grace." When Paul says, "You are not under law," he's certainly not saying we don't have

¹⁴ McGee, p. 112.

to obey God's commands. The Law is not bad, but it simply can't produce righteousness. It reveals sin, yes. It even condemns us as lawbreakers. But it can't set us free from sin.

What can? Grace. Paul says we are "under grace." It's as if we've changed residences. We used to live under the law-roof. Now in Christ we live under the grace-roof. When you live under the grace-roof, you are living under the constant provision of God's unmerited favor, power, and help. In Christ we now have the strength we need to overcome sin.

I can still remember an event that occurred when I was about 8 or 9 years old. We had some shrubs growing around our house, and we discovered a huge, colorful spider situated on its web in the bush. I was fascinated by it, and remember watching that creature go about its business. It was constantly on the lookout for unsuspecting prey that would get caught in its web (we even helped it out by tossing flies, even grasshoppers into the web). Once a victim was caught, the spider would rush to the scene, paralyze the insect with its deadly poison, and wrap it up with its silk. Later it would return and literally suck the very life out of it.

That scene represents what sin does. Sin deceives, enslaves, and destroys, particularly those who are unsuspecting. But if we're in Christ, my friends, we need not be victims of this cruel monster. We have access to the grace of God.

But what we have, we must appropriate. How? By waiting for a holy zap? No. Here's how. We must reckon, reject, relinquish, and realize. Action is needed. This is what we must be doing day by day, and doing it together, until we see Christ.

Make It Personal: Let's ask ourselves two personal questions...

1. *Am I in Christ?* To change, I must be in Christ. There is no other way. Are you? Do you want to be? Then ask Him. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

2. *Am I living like it?* I challenge you today to surrender your body to Christ. Charles Wesley gives this helpful counsel, "Soldiers of Christ, arise and put your armor on, strong in the strength which God supplies through His eternal Son."

Communion Song: "*Keep The Feast*" (this is new to WBC)

Communion (Karen playing while elements distributed by deacons)