

Romans 6:1-14 — The Gift Of A Changed Life

December 13 + 20, 2020

Good morning! I didn't grow up in a home where we waited for Santa Claus to put the presents under the tree on Christmas Eve. My parents were not Santa-friendly so I learned when I was young that he didn't exist. My parents put presents under the tree through the entire month of December. Slowly, week after week, the pile of presents grew. As a pre-teen boy, you can imagine what I did with the presents. First, when my parents were not looking, I was under the tree checking how many presents were for me. As an only child, most of them had my name. Most years, I thought I hit the jackpot. I was weighing the presents and shaking the presents trying to figure out what they were before Christmas morning. On Christmas morning, I learned some of those presents were not the things I hoped to get. Many of the presents were what parents call, "practical gifts." They were new socks, underwear, and new Sunday clothes for church. Thank you Aunt Lil for the new pair of socks. As an 11-year-old, that is what I was dreaming about for Christmas. Thank you Aunt Dot. The package of white underwear is what I was hoping to get this year. Thank you!

Thankfully, all hope was not lost. A few gifts were different. They were wrapped like the other gifts but they were not practical gifts I needed. They were the fun gifts I wanted. One year there was a remote control car. Another year there was an erector set. As a pre-teen boy, those were the gifts that made Christmas morning one of the best days of the year.

This morning, in the spirit of the Christmas season, I am going to give you a Christmas gift. It is a sermon. It won't look much different from other messages.

At first, you may think this message is nothing more than another boring practical present under the tree. This message is different. It is not just a gift you need. It is a gift each of us desperately wants.

If you take to heart what we talk about this morning, it will transform your life. It will save you huge amounts of grief, heartache, and stress. If you apply this message, it may save your marriage. This message is my Christmas gift to you. What is this message about?

I am going to tell you how to win in the struggle against sin. That is the deep struggle all of us have in life. Some of us are struggling with old sinful habits that we have fallen to for years. Others of us are struggling with new sins we only met this past week. For some of us, our greatest struggles with sin are private. For others of us, our struggles with sin are public. I don't care how tough your battle is. I don't care how powerless you feel in the face of your temptation. If you take to heart what I am about to teach you, I am confident you will have victory over that sin at the end of the day.

This Christmas, we are in a series called The Advent of The Son. We are hopping and skipping our way through the book of Romans, letting the book teach us about why Jesus came. The first two messages in the series were from the first three chapters of Romans. In those chapters, Paul told us there is one problem in the world and in us. It is not politics. It is not race. It is sin. Everyone struggles with sin. Everyone is enslaved to sin. Pastor Kris taught us that sin is always the problem when it comes to people far from God. Pastor Stephen taught us that sin is always the problem when it comes to religious people trying

to pursue God. It doesn't matter if someone is a pagan or religious. Everyone still struggles with sin.

The good news is that while sin is always the problem. Jesus is always the solution. God loves us so much. He knows there is nothing we can do to save ourselves from our addiction to sin, the power of sin, and the consequences for our sin. That is why he sent Jesus, his own son, to solve the problem of sin. In Mary's womb, the Son of God, who created the universe, fused himself with human flesh so he could be God and one of us at the same time.

The greatest gift ever given is the gift we celebrate at Christmas --- the gift of Jesus taking on human flesh to save you and me because we are hopelessly trapped by our sin. In the last two messages in our Christmas series, Pastor Jordan and I are teaching how the gift of Jesus solves the problem of sin. Last week, Pastor Jordan taught from Romans 4 and 5, which talks about Jesus giving us the gift of justification. Jesus' death pays for our sin. When we trust in what Jesus did for us on the cross and the victory of the empty tomb, our sin is paid for by Jesus. We are brought into right relationship with God through Jesus. Today, I am teaching a bit of Romans 6-8, which shows a different gift Jesus gives us. It is the gift of sanctification. When we trust in what Jesus has done for us, he changes our hearts. He changes our lives. We are not just forgiven of our sin but Jesus also frees us from the power of sin.

The big theological word that goes with Romans 4 and 5 is justification. The big theological word that goes with Romans 6-8 is sanctification. In your outlines, I put definitions of those words to help make them clear.

- Justification is being forgiven of our sin and being made right with God positionally.
- Sanctification is breaking free from the power of sin and living right for God practically.

Let's read the first 14 verses of Romans 6 as we see what Paul taught us about how God frees us from the power of sin over our lives.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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. 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. 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. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 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, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. Romans 6:1–14 (ESV)

As Paul began Romans 6, he had just finished talking about God forgiving all of our sin in Romans 5. Simply by God's grace, simply by placing our faith and trust in Jesus, we are completely forgiven of all of our sin. Jesus' death forgives us of all the sin of our past, all the sin in our present lives, and even the sin we have yet to commit in the future. Jesus' death, in one fell swoop, forgives all of it. Right now, if you have trusted in Jesus, there is nothing you can do to make yourself more forgiven by God than you already are. Even when we

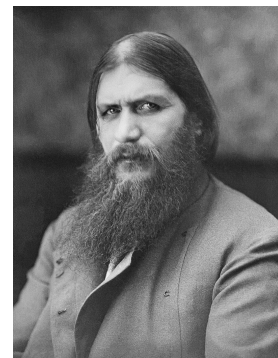
continue to sin, God continues to graciously forgive us of our sin through Jesus. That is amazing. It can't get any better!

Paul knew that as soon as he said it doesn't matter what we do or have done, that all of our sin is forgiven by Jesus, some people would misunderstand him. Some people would think since it doesn't matter how much we sin, that since Jesus always forgives sin, we should go out and enjoy sin, that we should enjoy sin as much as we can because we have a get-out-of-jail free card when it comes to sin, that the card's name is Jesus. In fact, some people might even think, why not sin more so God can show grace more? Wouldn't that be a good thing? Paul knew people would misuse what he had just said in Romans 5.

Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where [sin increased, grace abounded all the more](#), Romans 5:20 (ESV)

Some people think, if you want to experience more of God's grace in your life, it might even be a good idea to pursue more sin in your life. Who are the people who think that way? Of course, there were Paul's rhetorical opponents in Romans 5 and 6, but there are actual, real-life people who think that way.

One guy who taught we should sin a lot so we can experience a lot of God's grace was a Russian monk named Rasputin. He died in 1916. What made him famous was his influential control over the Romanov family that ruled Russia at that time. He quoted Romans 5:20, that where sin increased grace would increase. He taught the



Romanovs that it was their Christian duty to sin so they could experience more of God's grace in their lives. Sleep around, steal from the peasants, lie to the public

--- it was all good. As long as in confession they told God they were sorry, they would be overwhelmed by God's amazing grace.

While it is true that God's grace always increases in the life of a Christian when the sin in our life increases, doesn't it feel there is something wrong with pursuing sin? Doesn't it feel like Rasputin's logic was bent? What was wrong with his reasoning? There are a few things he forgot. One I want to point out is he forgot that sin always has consequences.

When we sin, we will suffer. Jesus forgives Christians of their sin, but that doesn't mean we will escape all the consequences of our sin.

Imagine you decide to sin a lot. In greed, you decide to rob a bank. As a Christian bank robber, you are not a good bank robber. You end up getting caught and arrested by the cops. The police throw you in the back of the squad car and haul you off to jail. On the way, the arresting officer sees you in the back seat with you head bowed and eyes closed in prayer. A few moments later, you look up and tell the officer you are a Christian. You confessed your sin to Jesus and you are now completely forgiven of your sin by Jesus. Then you tell the officer he should be as forgiving as God. You tell the officer to pull over and let you go because now that God has forgiven you, who is the police officer to not forgive you? What would the police officer say? "No way! Jesus may forgive you of your sin but there are still consequences for your sin. You are going to jail!" That was the problem with Rasputin's line of thinking. While it is true that no matter how much we sin, as Christians, God's grace will always cover our sin,

there are still practical, real-life consequences of sin. When we sin, we will suffer. It is the law of the jungle. There is no escape.

While most of us clearly see Rasputin as a fruitcake and we know Christians that expect to be let out of jail after robbing a bank are not playing with a full deck of cards, there are plenty of Christians who think they can escape the consequences of sin in other parts of their lives.

When I was a freshman in college, one of the exciting parts of college life was meeting girls. One of the other freshman guys met a freshman girl and they started dating. They were dating a few months into their relationship when rumors were going around that they were sleeping together. I knew the guy called himself a Christian so a friend and I got up our courage and talked to this guy about that rumor one day after a general education class. We told him the rumors we heard about him and his girlfriend and that as Christians, if this was true, premarital sex was wrong. To our surprise, he had no trouble admitting that he was sleeping with his girlfriend and he was proud of it. When I told him the Bible has verses against premarital sex, he told me, "It is OK. Jesus always forgives us." In essence he said, "Where sin increases, God's grace increases all the more." Besides, he told me they planned to get married after college so they were already committed to one another in their hearts, even though the wedding was four years away.

While it is true the forgiveness of Jesus would cover his sin, I reminded him that the Bible had some strong verses against what he was doing. There

would still be consequences for his sin. The relationship would probably not end well.

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Hebrews 13:4 (ESV)

In addition, Hebrews 11:25 tells us sin is enjoyable but just for a short time. How did things end up? They broke up a few weeks later and were left with pain and regret.

When we come to Romans 6, Paul was telling us why Christians shouldn't continue in sin even though Jesus will always provide grace to cover their sin. Paul was not going to talk about the consequences of sin but that when we become Christians, there is a complete change in the way we relate to sin, feel about sin, and handle the temptations of sin. Let's look at the first two verses.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Romans 6:1–2 (ESV)

Paul said, "If you think it is no big deal to continue in sin because God's grace always covers your sin, then you don't understand the fundamental change that happened in your life when you became a Christian. We absolutely do not want to continue in sin. We have died to sin. How could we long to continue to live in sin?"

The million dollar question is, "What does Paul mean when he said we died to sin?"

It can't mean that once we become a Christian, we no longer want to sin. Temptations to sin possibly are even more plentiful after we come to Christ than before. Certainly Paul didn't mean being dead to sin means we are no longer tempted to sin.

Some people think being dead to sin means we now have greater clarity and conviction on what is sin. While it is true that after coming to Jesus, we can see our sin better, simply saying being dead to sin means we can now better see our sin seems like a woefully inadequate understanding of what it means to be dead to sin.

What did Paul mean when he said that as Christians we are now dead to sin?

Paul will take the rest of Romans 6 to explain his answer in detail. Let me give it to you in a nutshell. **Died to sin means we are no longer under the reign of sin.** We are no longer under the power of sin. Sin is still attractive to us, but sin no longer has power over us. It can no longer force us to obey its desires. In Romans 1:18-32, Paul said that outside of Christ, everyone before Christ is controlled by their sinful desires. There is nothing people can do but give in to sin. Outside of Christ, people are controlled by by their sinful desires. Before Christ, even when we saw our sin, we had no ability to turn away from sin. We were under the reign of sin.

The good news is when we come to Jesus, not only are we justified before God but there is a new power in our lives. We are literally made into new people, people who are no longer under the power of sin. We are no longer under the dominion of sin's control. We are under the control of Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son... Colossians 1:13 (ESV)

Maybe the best way to think of our lives before Jesus is to compare our lives to Iraq after ISIS came in and took over control. ISIS, the invading army, took over the government. ISIS took over the country's communication. Everyone was under ISIS's control. This is what our lives looked like when sin reigned and ruled inside of us.

Then the Americans and soldiers of other countries liberated Iraq. They broke the power of ISIS that terrorized the nation. The power was given back to the people. While ISIS was out of power, it didn't go away completely. Many of the members of ISIS still lived out in the bush in border towns. They became a guerrilla force that could no longer rule the country but could terrorize and harass the people of the country. They were no longer reigning and ruling over people but were still making life difficult for people. That is a good picture of what has happened to us. When we died to sin, sin was dethroned in our lives. Christ is in our hearts. While sin no longer reigns in us, it still remains in us. We are tempted by it. We are harassed and seduced into traps. The key we must remember is that while sin still tries to lead us astray, it is no longer in control of our lives. We do not have to obey its demands.

The remainder of this chapter answers the question of how Christians go from Jesus being the victory in the center of their lives to victory over sin in the rest of their lives. How do we go from the victory of sin that is obtained for us by Jesus to that same victory being experienced in our everyday lives?

How do Christians find victory over sin?

There are three answers in the following verses. 1. We need to know the truth of our identity with Christ. 2. We need to consider that our identity in Christ is true. 3. We need to yield our bodies to Jesus and not to sin.

Victory over sin begins by knowing my identity in Jesus.

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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. 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. Romans 6:3–5 (ESV)

Baptism pictures how closely I am identified with Jesus.

Paul begins with baptism. Before we talk about what Paul says about baptism, let me take a moment to teach about baptism since we baptized Cathy this morning. The first thing we need to know is that baptism is not something that saves us. It is an outward sign of an inward decision. It is an external picture of an internal change. It is the biblical way we are to publicly proclaim on the outside of our lives the change that has happened in the inside of our lives when we come to Jesus.

On my finger, I have a wedding ring. This ring doesn't make me married. It is an outward sign of the inward pledge I made to my wife to be her husband for better or worse, richer or poorer, in sickness and health, until death do us part. In the same way, baptism is an outward sign of the relationship we have in our hearts with Jesus as our savior. When someone is plunged under the water, it pictures them dying and being buried with Christ. When they are raised out of the water, it pictures them being raised to new life with Jesus. Baptism is an outward

picture that illustrates the reality of the inward change that happens when we become a Christian.

Even though baptism doesn't make us a Christian, it is something all Christians should follow. Just as a married person refusing to wear a wedding ring is odd, a Christian that refuses to be baptized is odd. The Bible tells us that after people come to faith in Christ, they are to publicly proclaim that faith by being baptized into the name of Christ.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19–20 (ESV)

What must happen before someone is baptized?

1. One needs to repent of one's sin.

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38 (ESV)

Becoming a Christian involves repentance of our sin. If we have not repented of our sin before we are baptized, then our baptism is just a bath without the soap.

2. He or she needs to trust in Jesus to pay for his or her sin.

And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Acts 8:36–37 (ESV)

When Phillip explained the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch, the eunuch trusted in Jesus. The next thing the eunuch wanted to do was be baptized. They stopped the chariot. They went down into a body of water, and Philip baptized him.

Two things we see that must precede baptism are that people must repent of their sin and believe in Jesus to save them from their sin.

There is a great application here for us. If you have repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus, but you have not been baptized, get baptized! The constant refrain in the Bible is people believed and were baptized.

Maybe you were baptized as a baby. I am not here to get into a debate over the merits of infant baptism compared to adult believer baptism. The challenge with infant baptism is there is no way for a baby to repent of sin and believe in Jesus. If you were baptized as a baby, maybe you should be re-baptized as an adult so you have the choice to publicly proclaim the decision of your heart to repent of your sin and trust in Jesus.

Let me encourage you. Baptism is a wonderful event in life. When someone is baptized, he or she can always look back in his or her mind and remember the day he or she went public with his or her faith through baptism. I still remember being baptized at summer camp as a junior high student. I chose to be baptized. I took ownership of my faith. I stepped out in courage and publicly stated through my baptism what happened privately in my heart with Jesus. My parents didn't make that decision. I made that decision for myself. That is why it is special to me.

When Paul talked about baptism in this passage, he was not emphasizing that we should be baptized. He told us baptism physically pictures the spiritual reality that takes place in our lives when we trust in Jesus. When we baptize someone, that person goes under the water. That pictures that when we trust in

Jesus, our old selves die with Christ and are buried with Christ. When we come out of the water, that pictures that just as Jesus was raised to new life, we too are given a new life when we trust in Jesus. We are born again. Just as Jesus rose to new life to never die again, when we trust in Jesus, we are given a new life that will never die. Baptism pictures our old selves dying and being buried with Jesus. We are then made into new people, just like Jesus. Just as Jesus' new life was not under the power of sin because he died to sin, our new lives are no longer under the power of sin because we also died to sin and now have new lives not under the reign of sin.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

To emphasize how united we become to Christ as a Christian, Paul used a botanical term. When Paul said we are "united with him," that literally means grown together with Jesus. It pictured two trees growing together so close to one another that they eventually become one plant. That is us. As Christians, we are so joined with Jesus as Christians that Jesus' death to sin on the cross was our death to sin. Jesus' resurrection to new life was our resurrection to new life.

Many Christians do not know this is what happened to them when they became a Christian. Before Christ, everyone lived in solidarity with Adam and made sinful choices. After Christ, we are now fused together with Christ and sin has no power over us. We begin making godly choices because of this supernatural change. Look how Paul said it:

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me... Galatians 2:20 (ESV)

Practically, this means while we are still tempted to sin, but we no longer have to give in to the power of sin. We can say, “No.” We can turn away. Our new hearts are still tempted by sin but we are not under the control of sin.

In the following verses, Paul took this idea and went deeper into it.

Jesus’ death to sin killed the power of sin in my life.

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. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Romans 6:6–7 (ESV)

Paul used language from the slave market. We are no longer enslaved to sin. Sin is no longer our master. We are set free from sin’s power.

Let me say again that while sin is no longer in control of us, as Christians, it will still tempt us and call out to us. We do not have to obey it. It can no longer force us to obey its will.

Jesus’ resurrection to new life was my resurrection to new life.

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. Romans 6:8–10 (ESV)

When Jesus died, he died to sin once and for all. That is a technical term used in the book of Hebrews to emphasize the finality of Jesus’ work. Jesus will never again come under the power of sin or death. Since we are united to Jesus, we will also no longer come under the power of sin and death.

Let me reemphasize that this doesn’t mean we will never sin. It means we will no longer fall under the reign or the control of sin. John said it this way in his first letter:

No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. 1 John 3:9 (ESV)

John was not saying Christians will not commit sin or that they will not struggle with sin. Christians can even struggle with habitual sins. He was saying those who are Christians cannot continue in sin without repentance and battle against sin.

Those who claim to be Christians and think that sin is no big deal so they just live in it, like my college friend who felt it was no big deal to sleep with his girlfriend, are showing no evidence of being a Christian in the first place. They are making a regular practice of sin with no sense of guilt, repentance, and battle against sin. Remember that sin doesn't reign in our lives. As Christians, we will struggle with sin, but it should not reign and rule over our hearts and lives.

The first way to break free from the power of sin is we must know how closely identified we are with Jesus, his death for sin and his resurrection to new life. Now we take this a step further.

Victory over sin happens when I consider myself dead to sin and alive to God through Jesus.

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Romans 6:11 (ESV)

Paul said we must not just know what is true of us and Jesus but we must consider it to be true. The old King James says we must reckon it as true. This word *consider*, or the King James Word *reckon*, is one of the most important words in the book of Romans. Paul used it 19 times in this letter. If we do not understand this word, we cannot understand this letter.

Consider is a commercial term which means the act of putting something in a financial account. It is like having a check for \$5,000. We may have a check for \$5,000, but it doesn't do us any good to know we have a check. It only works when we deposit the check. Then the check turns into cash.

Paul said we may know what is true about us and that sin no longer has power over us because the life of Christ is now in us, but knowing that truth and believing that truth in life are two different things.

Maybe the sin you struggle with is anger and fits of rage. Before Christ, you didn't have much of a choice when you felt anger rising inside of you. All you could do was give in to the sin. Now you are a different person. Now you feel your anger starting to rise. Stop and consider — remember — what is true. Your sinful desires may tell you that you have to yell, you have to whine, you need to be griping and negative. Stop listening to that old master! The power of sin over you is dead. It is broken. You now have a new heart and new life. What is our new nature? It is the fruit of the spirit. It is love, joy, peace, gentleness, kindness, goodness, patience and self-control. All of those things are what comes out of us under pressure from our new nature. Stop listening to sin and following your old nature and have a fit of rage. You are not who you were. You are a new person. Constantly remind yourself you don't have to yell and scream. That is your old dead nature calling out to you. It is not the new nature God planted inside of you.

I like the way Martyn-Lloyd Jones illustrated this in his commentary on Romans. He talked about slavery in America. Some slaves served as slaves their entire lives. When the Civil War was over and slavery was abolished in the

United States, all slaves, young and old, were given their freedom. Many of the older ones found it difficult to understand their new status and live their new lives. They knew in their heads they had freedom but they didn't believe it in their lives that their masters were no longer their bosses. Many older slaves, when they saw their former masters coming toward them, they instinctively began trembling and listening to his voice and obeying his words because they feared being beaten. While they were no longer slaves legally, and they knew that in their heads, they had a hard time living out the truth. They kept giving their old masters over their lives, a power they no longer rightfully possessed, a power they could instantly take away.

As Christians, many of us are in the exact same situation. We are so accustomed to obeying our sinful desires, we don't realize we no longer need to obey their commands.

As a Christian, if I find myself continually giving into sin, it is because I either don't know the truth of who I am in Jesus or I don't believe the truth of who I am in Jesus. We have the check of God's victory over sin in our hands, but we have not deposited that truth in our hearts. Sometimes we need to redeposit that check on a daily basis because we keep forgetting the amazing truth that is ours. Even the tense of the verb in this verse tells us to keep reminding ourselves of the freedom from sin that Jesus has obtained for us. It literally says "Keep on counting yourselves as dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

Victory over sin happens when I make choices in line with my new identity.

Now that we know our identity with Jesus, we consider our identity with Jesus to be true. The third thing we must do is make choices that are in line with our new identity if we are going to experience victory over sin.

I am to stop making choices that let sin reign in my life.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness... Romans 6:12–13 (ESV)

Paul said we are not to let sin reign in our bodies so it makes us obey its passions. Some of us have sin in our lives right now that is in control of an area of our lives. Kick that sinful habit out of your life today. Don't let sin reign in your life. Don't let sin set up shop. That is not who you are. If you are a Christian, sin setting up control in you is who you were.

What does sin reigning in the life of a Christian look like today? For some of us, that sin is social media. We watch the news like crazy. We read social media posts and write nasty social media posts. This summer, many of us became bitter, nasty people on social media. The ugliness of social media began coloring all of our interactions. Instead of being a Christian known for grace and truth, we became known as Christians focused on hatred instead of love. As Christians, we should be known for loving our neighbors, not hating our neighbors. For some of us, we have let social media and the news cycle begin to control our lives and embitter our hearts. Don't let that sin reign in your life. Stop it. Kick it out. Don't let it have control. For some of us, we needed to get off social media for a period of time.

In addition to kick out patterns of sin that were reigning in our heart, Paul also said we must make choices with our bodies that do not give opportunities for sin to retake control in our lives. He said, “Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness.”

We need to carefully choose what we do with our bodies and where we go with our bodies so we do not allow sin to retake ground it has lost in our lives. We need to be careful what we do with our eyes. We need to be careful what we choose to look at on the Internet so we don't give sin an opportunity to entice our sinful desires. How many of you are waging that battle right now? Don't put in front of your eyes things that entice you back into sin.

Maybe the part of your body you struggle with is your ears. You love to listen to gossip. Don't put yourself around the people or situations where you hear those things.

Maybe the part of your body you struggle with is your mouth. It is the food you put into your mouth or the unkind words that come out of your mouth. Don't put yourself in a situations where you will start sinning with food or drink. Don't put yourself around people where you find yourself imitating the swearing, unkindness and hate you hear from others. Maybe you need a different group of friends.

Maybe the part of your body that you struggle with is your feet. Don't let your feet take you places you shouldn't go, to be with people you shouldn't meet, to do things you shouldn't do.

Don't make choices that allow your body to be used for sin. That is not who you are. It is who you were.

I am to pursue choices that lead to honoring God with my life.

...but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. Romans 6:13 (ESV)

I like the way Paul ended this. To beat sin, we do not just focus on what we must NOT do with our bodies. We must focus on what we should do with our bodies.

The first thing we must do is give our lives to God and ask him to use us for his honor and glory. We are people who were brought from death to life by Jesus. How can we now live for Jesus? We must begin by telling God our lives are not about ourselves. We want to use our lives to serve Jesus and not to serve sin. Jesus is our master, not sin.

Paul also said we are to use our bodies as instruments of righteousness. Instead of using our lips for gossip and slander, we use our lips to build people up. Instead of using our feet to bring us places we shouldn't go, we use our feet to bring us places where we can do spiritual and practical good for ourselves and for others. Go to church. Go to Life Group. Help people when they are in need. We don't use our eyes on the Internet to look at sin. We use our eyes to see needs and our hands to meet needs. That is what honors God.

Conclusion

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, when he preached on Romans, used this illustration. He said, "Imagine two fields side by side, both surrounded by high rock walls so there was no way to cross from one to the other and no way to escape. The one

field was named sin. All of us started in that field. Satan and sin were our masters, and they enslaved us. Imagine one day that God picked us up and brought us from one field to the other. The other field was named the good field. It was farmed by Christ and God the Father. The problem with being in the field of Christ and is that Satan's field was right next to it, just on the other side of the wall. Some days, we can still hear Satan barking his orders at us across the wall. Out of old habit, we sometimes still obey his voice, even though we don't have to."

How do we find victory over our old habit of obeying Satan's voice and our sinful desires?

1. Know the truth of what happened to us when we became Christians. Our old lives died with Jesus. We now have a new resurrection life with Jesus. We are dead to sin and alive to Christ. We no longer need to obey our sinful desires. Their power over us is broken.
2. Consider the truth we know in our lives. We need to constantly keep telling ourselves the truth of what has happened to us. It is so easy to forget. It is easy to return to old habits and think we need to obey our old sinful desires.
3. Make choices in line with our identities. We need to turn away from sinful choices that entice the sinful desires that still remain, and we need to replace those sinful patterns with God-honoring choices that help us to express the new people Jesus has transformed us to be.

When we do these three things, victory over any sin will be found.

I began by telling you I was giving you a gift. This is the best gift I can give you this Christmas --- the secret to victory over sin and a transformed life.



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