

FIGHTING SIN IN A SIN CURSED WORLD



Part 3--Romans 6:1-14

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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.

*5 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. 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. 7 For one who has died has been set **free** from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has **dominion** over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

*12 Let not sin therefore **reign** in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 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, and your members to God as **instruments** for righteousness. 14 For sin will have no **dominion** over you, since you are not under law but under grace.*

Let's start with a history lesson. What year did slavery end in the United States? Well let's see. The Civil war ended in 1865. Later that year, President Lincoln got the 14th amendment passed through Congress. however, it was not ratified by the State until 1868. So is 1868 the year slavery ended in the U.S.? Officially it ended in 1868 but unfortunately, it still continues today. In fact, it is estimated that there are still 60,000 slaves in our nation of liberty.

It's much, much worse than this throughout the world. Listen to this recent article from the Washington Post.

We think of slavery as a practice of the past, an image from Roman colonies or 18th-century American plantations, but the practice of enslaving human beings as property still

exists. There are 29.8 million people living as slaves right now, according to a comprehensive new report issued by the Australia-based Walk Free Foundation.

This is not some softened, by-modern-standards definition of slavery. These 30 million people are living as forced laborers, forced prostitutes, child soldiers, child brides in forced marriages and, in all ways that matter, as pieces of property, chattel in the servitude of absolute ownership. Walk Free investigated 162 countries and found slaves in every single one. But the practice is far worse in some countries than others.¹

Most people who are slaves are fully aware that they are living as slaves. You may be able to convince a slave that they have a pretty good life. In other words, you might be able to convince them that being your slave is better than starving to death. But what if a society or a nation was able to enslave its people but make them think they were free? Even more than that, what if this same society was not only able to make the enslaved people think that they are free but also paint true freedom in such a way as to make slaves believe that freedom was actually slavery?

I think you know where I am going with this, don't you? The vast majority of people in the world believe that they are free when they are actually slaves--slaves to sin. Let's just take people from the U.S. What most people call "freedom" is simply having the ability to do whatever they want. Let's say that you are a typical college student who engages in serial sexual immorality. To that guy or to that girl, they absolutely believe that they are free--free to pursue whatever and wherever their passions and desires take them. But that it is not freedom-it is slavery to sexual sin. But you see, not only do they believe that they are free, but if someone down the hall in the dorm is living a sexually pure life, they look at that person as if they are in prison. They joke with their friends, "How can John live with so many rules. He never has any fun. It's like the guy is living in a prison of stupid rules."

This is the culture in which we live. In fact, this has been the essence of every culture and nation throughout history. Enslaved people have no idea that they are enslaved and they see true freedom as a type of slavery. Everything is turned on its head.

What is the remedy for such an upside down, twisted kind of world? What is the remedy for fighting sin in a sin cursed world? Here are three basic steps from this passage and ultimately from all of Scripture.

1. An enslaved person has to recognize their slavery and seek to be freed.
2. Free people have to know that they are free.
3. Free people have to live as if they are free.

1. An enslaved person has to recognize their slavery and seek to be freed.

This is rather obvious, but an unbeliever, by definition, cannot be free from sin. Though Paul does not deal directly with this in chapter six, he does deal extensively with it in the first 3-4 chapters. Romans 3:21-22--*But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.* Unless a person has undergone the Great Exchange--unless their sins have been transferred to Christ and the righteousness of Christ credited to their account, they will be a slave to sin. They can never be free.

2. Free people have to know that they are free.

This is where Paul spends the bulk of this section of Romans 6. As unbelievers, we were not free but as believers we are. But it's as if we have little to no grasp of this fundamental truth. This is clearly Paul's goal--to make us aware that we are free--and *why* we are free so that we can *live* as if we are free. He does this by using kingdom language and kingdom realities. The big idea here is that there are two kingdoms in conflict with one another. But if you are not aware that there is an epic battle raging all around us, if you do not see the two kingdoms in conflict, you will not be effective in your fight against sin. Let me show you this kingdom language.

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. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 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, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

The word reign is very important. It is literally the reign of a king within a vast kingdom. The word dominion is the same and means lordship. Just as death no longer has dominion or lordship over Christ (v. 9), so sin no longer has dominion over the believer (v. 14). The words enslaved and free are part of the kingdom language. So here is what we have.

2 KINGDOMS	Death	Life
2 KINGS	Satan	Christ
2 MASTERS	Law	Grace
2 WAYS TO LIVE	Slave	Free
2 USES FOR WEAPONS	Unrighteousness	Righteousness

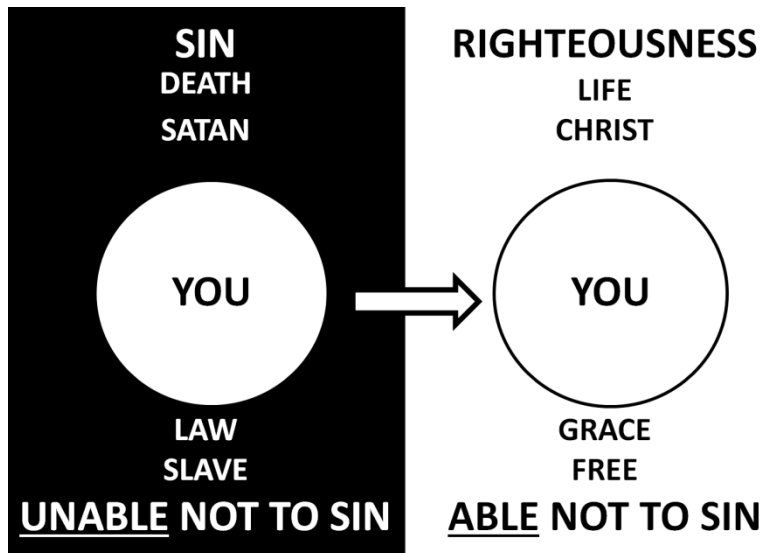
We live in the midst of 2 kingdoms--death and life. As believers, we have been moved from the kingdom of death into the kingdom of life. Col. 1:13-14 tells us that *He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.* Likewise, Jesus said, *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life* (John 5:24).

So we are moved from death to life by belief in Christ. But Paul took it even further.

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.

5 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. 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. 7 For one who has died has been set **free** from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

Is this passage telling us that baptism saves us? It says, *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death.* Does that mean that baptism is the means by which we were united with Christ in death? Many who call themselves Christians believe this, even some who would otherwise be conservative evangelicals. There are two things being described here. First, there is the reality that we died with Christ. We died to sin. *Our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing.* As this diagram shows, we have literally been transferred from death to life. We have a new King, Jesus. We have a new master, grace. We are no longer slaves to sin but we are free.



This has happened through faith in Christ but if you are not careful, you might conclude that baptism was the means by which this happened. The best answer to such a question would be to look at all of the rest of Paul's teaching? As Paul laid out justification by faith thus far in Romans, did he ever once mention baptism? Anywhere else in all of his writings does he ever state that baptism is a means to salvation? Baptism as a means to salvation goes

completely against everything Paul taught. One might as well say that circumcision saves a person as to claim that baptism does.

Baptism is not a means of salvation but it is a powerful symbol of salvation. It is powerful in the sense that it represents an actual event. We actually did die with Christ. We actually were raised with Christ so that we might walk in newness of life. God did this to us and for us and baptism is far and away the most powerful symbol for this literal event. What does the word baptism mean? It means to immerse. So Lighthouse Baptist church in town should be called Lighthouse Immersionist Church, right? We cannot be immersed and buried in dirt, as a dead person would be so water is the best way to symbolize our death and burial. This is why when I baptize someone I always say, "Buried in the likeness of his death; raised in the likeness of his resurrection." The irony is that prior to salvation, we were spiritually dead but we had to die to sin in order to be made alive. It is kind of like taking the cancer out of a dead body so that they can live again.

Our church is obviously not a Baptist church. We do not emphasize baptism as much as most Baptist churches and in some ways, that can be a good thing. But it also means that as a denomination, we tend to underemphasize baptism. Let me ask a simple question. If you are a believer and have not been baptized, why not? Have you been buried with Christ, immersed in his death? Have you been raised up with Christ in order to walk in newness of life? Then why not be baptized? We say often say that baptism is a command. Jesus said, "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..." The command is to make disciples by baptizing them and teaching them to obey. The command is not to be baptized per se, but it is certainly assumed. The Bible just assumes that a genuine believer will be baptized--not that they have to be baptized, but that they want to be baptized.

If you have not yet been baptized, I would like you to go home and put this sentence in writing. "I have not been baptized because..." Write that down. Maybe there is more than one answer. Maybe you have a good answer--you're not sure if you are a born again believer. If that is your answer, I would love to talk to you about it. Maybe your answer has to do with fear or uncertainty. Are you OK with just letting those fears and uncertainties rule your life?

So practically speaking, what does it mean that we have died with Christ? How does this help me to fight sin in a sin cursed world? There is a three-part phrase which is common in the Christian world.

Justification- I have been saved from the penalty of sin.
Sanctification- I am being saved from the power of sin.
Glorification- I will be saved from the presence of sin.

Everyone is in agreement on the first and last phrase. There is no longer any penalty of sin for the believer and one day all presence of sin will be gone forever. A few years ago I preached a message on Romans chapter six and drew a new conclusion. Based on my understanding of the passage, I changed the second phrase to past tense: I have been saved from the power of sin. After all, this passage is quite clear that we are dead to sin. Verse 11-- *So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.* So if we are dead to sin, it must be true that we have been saved from the power of sin. It was done away with in the past just as certainly as the penalty of sin.

But then I began to reason it out further. If I have been saved from the power of sin--if that is a done deal, why does it so often feel like sin still has such power in my life? Is it because I allow sin to have this power? When I give into temptation, does it somehow strengthen the power of sin in my life so that I in fact do sin? But that doesn't make any sense, because if I have been saved from the power of sin, sin would not have any power over me. Ever. It would be impossible for sin to hold sway over me.

You see, on paper it seemed to make sense. If I have died to sin it seemed to reason that I had also died to sin's power. But I confess to you that I believe I was wrong in understanding and expressing this passage in this way. First of all, let me stop and ask--can you handle that? Are you OK with your pastor being wrong? Part of the problem here is not only am I saying that I am

wrong, but I am admitting that I taught you wrongly. Are you OK with that? I am after all, just another guy, right? Yes, part of why you pay me is to study and give a sermon every Sunday. You have no idea how grateful I am for this--not just that you pay me, that's great all by itself, but that you pay me to study and preach. It is an immense privilege for me to do this, as well as all of the other parts of my job. So I do spend more time than the average guy studying the Bible, but I am still just a guy, as every bit as fallible as you. So to use this 3-part phrase, I could say.

I have made mistakes.

I am making mistakes.

I will make mistakes.

Many of you know what it means to be a good Berean, but let me take a moment and explain it if you don't. When Paul was planting churches in Greece, they came to the synagogue in Thessalonica. The Jews in that city caused an uproar that was so dangerous, Paul and Silas had to leave. Even to this day many missionaries flee a given country when it becomes too dangerous to continue serving there. It reminds us that even though we should be willing to die for our faith in Christ, we don't necessarily have to be in a hurry to be martyred. So Paul and Silas left Thessalonica and came to Berea. In Acts 17, Luke tells us that "these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." Now in context, these Jews were still unconverted. They searched the Old Testament Scriptures to see if what Paul was saying about Jesus Christ was true.

The end of the book of Acts gives us a good picture of how and what Paul would teach. *From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets* (Acts 28:23). I doubt Paul has access to OT scrolls while he was in prison, so all of what he taught would have been from memory. So how did the Bereans "examine the Scriptures daily"? They didn't go home, pour themselves a cup of tea, sit in their recliners and start reading their Bibles. The only copy of the scrolls would have been at the synagogue. They would have had to go to the priests and rabbis and ask permission to unroll a large scroll and check out what Paul had just taught them. It would have been very communal. It was something that several of them did together, kind of like a large Bible study. They were the world's first investigative reporters. They knew they had to depend upon original source material.

So all of that is to say that if the Berean church searched the Scriptures daily to see if what the apostles were teaching was true or not, how much more do you need to good Bereans and do the same. We are no longer like the medieval Catholic Church who did all they could do to withhold the Bible from their people. Just the opposite. We want to read and dig in, and read some more and dig some more and draw conclusions and then dig some more and then maybe even change your mind. And we can do this because of one little word--the perspicuity of Scripture. Let's say that word together. Pers-pi-cu-ity. ;-) Maybe you would prefer a more simple term--clarity. I am not being very perspicuous about the word perspicuity, am I? The Bible was intended for us to read and understand. God did not write it to confuse you or overwhelm you. By its very nature, the Bible is clear and understandable.

In fact, it is so clear that we allow children to read it and draw their own conclusions. Here is a little advertisement for tonight's study in Ephesians. Tonight, the teens start a new study in the book of Ephesians. They will be doing an inductive Bible study. This is a simple three part process of Observation, Interpretation and Application. This is what we used for the James study this past year. I had a group of mostly Jr. High boys. Now some might say that Jr. High boys can't really engage very well in a Bible study, especially a deep one like an inductive study. When we started, the process was a bit bumpy, but I was so very impressed with their progress. By the end they would fill their sheets with observations. They would be able to create their own interpretive questions and take turns answering them. They did an amazing job. So if you would like to learn the skill of inductive Bible study through a great book like Ephesians, plan to be here tonight at 6:30 pm.

So that was a long side note, but an important one, I think. Let me get back to why I think what I taught you before was wrong. I had taught that we have been saved from the power of sin, but the reality of sin's power continued to slam this message in my face. I recall a rather lengthy conversation with a man over that very sermon in Romans 6. He kept saying something like, "But how can the power of sin no longer be an issue. It just doesn't feel like that." And I kept saying, "But it says right here--we are dead to sin. We just need to believe that it is true."

Here is where I went wrong. The text does say that we are dead to sin but nowhere does it say that we have already and finally been saved from the power of sin. It doesn't say that. I mistakenly inserted something that I now think is foreign to the text. But here's what it does say. *For sin will have no **dominion** over you, since you are not under law but under grace.* The key word there is dominion. If we wanted to add a phrase to our trio, we could do this.

Justification- I have been saved from the penalty of sin.

(I have been saved from the dominion of sin.)

Sanctification- I am being saved from the power of sin.

Glorification- I will be saved from the presence of sin.

Remember that this is kingdom language. There are two kingdoms, two kings, two masters and two ways to live. Dominion is not a word that describes power as much as it describes authority. Sin no longer has authority over me. Sin does not rule over me as master as it did before. I am no longer under its authority. It is like being released from prison in a foreign country. Let's say I spent ten years in a Mexican prison. Once I was released from prison and crossed the U.S. border, the prison no longer has authority over me and the Mexican government no longer has jurisdiction over me. In every possible way, I am free from their authority. I am a free man living in a free country. This is a picture of our freedom in Christ. Does sin still have power over me? As we grow in conformity to the likeness of Christ, the power of sin will begin to fade over time. It is true that we are, progressively and step by step, being saved from the power of sin. Unfortunately, it will be present with us until death or the return of Christ.

With this as a picture, do you see what sin looks like? To use our illustration, I would have to willingly--and that's the key word, willingly--cross back over the Mexican border. No one is making me leave my freedom behind. I am not under any authority. I have to willingly cross the

border and commit a crime worthy of being thrown back in prison. There are several steps that I must willingly do in order for me to commit a sin.

This is the second point in our outline: Free people have to know that they are free. Next week we will look at point #3: Free people have to live as if they are free. Lord willing, we will work through some steps to learn how to do this effectively and consistently.

Rich Maurer
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¹ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/10/17/this-map-shows-where-the-worlds-30-million-slaves-live-there-are-60000-in-the-u-s/>