



Lesson 7

Freed from Sin's Enslaving Power *Romans 6*

But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become *obedient from the heart* to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

Summary

These truths are absolutely essential for people who have a right standing with God – to please and glorify God in every aspect of life – that is, they are growing in grace. The gospel with its saving and sanctifying power causes us by faith to have hope while living in a fallen world. It tells us how, though we are in the presence of sin, we are not subject to its power.

Here are the questions that plague us and are answered here:

CAN I continue to sin since we are under grace?

More frequently this is, “Sin doesn’t matter since I am under grace.” So people think or say, “If I keep on thinking, wanting, doing or feeling this way, God will forgive me regardless.” We are thinking of grace only as the benevolence of God and not thinking of grace as a realm or sphere in which salvation places us.

MUST I continue to sin since we are under grace?

More often this is stated as, “I can’t seem to stop sinning.” What is being thought or said is, “Sin is too strong and powerful for me.” We are not thinking of grace as an enabling power received by faith.

What is fascinating here is that both become excuses for my sin: (1) because sin doesn’t matter and (2) because I can’t help myself. Paul’s responses to these questions, statements or implications are emphatic. Christians *ought not to sin* and Christians do *not have to sin*. You ought not sin because of your union with Christ (v.1-14) and you do not have to sin if you yield to Christ (v.15-23).

Here is the i n c o n g r u i t y, but not the i m p o s s i b i l i t y of ongoing sin.

Issue 1 – Do we continue in sin?

The answer is one of identity and location

Key motif - d e a t h a n d l i f e

I n d i c a t i v e s - **What is true of us (v.1-11)**

Key question here is in verse 2: “How can we who have died to sin still live in it?” Something is true of us, we died to sin, with implications for us, we no longer live in the realm of sin.

Its I n i t i a t i o n - How it Begins (v.1-3)

The word baptize is to *immerse* or *immersion* or *place into*. The text tells us we were united with Christ when we were placed into Christ. We were placed into Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit at our conversion.

Its I n s t r u c t i o n – What it Means (v.4-9)

You were born *in Adam*. You were in the realm or sphere of sin and darkness, occasionally called the flesh. In that realm you had what is called the old self, the person you were as spiritually dead and training yourself in habits of sin. Then, when you were converted/saved, God placed you *in Christ*. You were transferred into the Christ’s kingdom and spiritually united to His body through the Spirit. These are the invisible (and admittedly, difficult) spiritual reality. When you were placed into Christ and united to Him, you were joined to His death and resurrection.

You have physical life here on earth experienced in your body and through your five senses.

It is real and authentic. It is not normal in the sense that we live in a fallen cursed earth with bodies that will decay and die with all its attendant difficulties and hardships.

You have spiritual life in the heavenlies and that spiritual life is hidden in Christ and will be unveiled when He comes.

You are now seated in the heavenlies and have access to the throne room through Christ. However, this reality is only experienced by faith – not by sight (or our physical senses). When Jesus comes and we are glorified, our spiritual life in heaven will be reunited with our glorified physical bodies. This life in heaven is just as real and authentic as your life on earth – it is just invisible to you.

You have been separated through the cross from the old person that you were, the old self.

You have a new identity in Christ. The old creation is gone and all is made new. But not completely. Remember that realities (1) and (2) are not yet joined in our physical bodies. So the old inner person that we were has been crucified and we have a new person.



You have a physical body that is living in the presence of sin.

But the power of sin in your soul and body has been broken because of the death and resurrection of Christ. You have trained that body into habits of sin that you must now retrain into habits of righteousness. You do this, not by mere human willing and power, but by believing truth and God's promises and receiving enabling grace.

The point and purpose is that we may w a l k in newness of life and not be e n s l a v e d to sin.

These great and wonderful truths are all aimed the sanctification, the growth in grace, the practical holiness of believers. The principle here is demonstrated in Christ, His death and resurrection. His death and resurrection breaks sins dominion over Him. Since we are placed into Him and united with Him, sin does not have dominion over us.

Its I m p l e m e n t a t i o n – How it Acts (v.10-11)

These verses then call for us to c o n s i d e r carefully these truths about Christ (v.10) and then c o u n t them to be true for us (v.11).

The call here is not to imagine something not so or to conjure something that does not exist or to put something to our account that is not ours. The clear call here is to believe these facts about the death and resurrection of Christ and then, knowing we are in Him and united to Him, believe, trust and count them to be true for us because they are. So, because Jesus is dead to sin through the cross and alive to God through the resurrection, so are we dead to sin and alive to God because we are in Christ.

So here is what you have to know and believe:

You have to know that you have been placed into Christ.

You have to know what Christ's death and resurrection mean.

You have to know how being placed into Christ and thus His death and resurrection applies to you.

If we do not know the truths we need to know, and we do not believe them, then we cannot have the power of grace that comes through believing those truths. So, I challenge you to think deeply about all this, believe God's Word.

Teacher: Press home that *if someone does not actually believe and trust and rest in these truths then they will struggle against sin*. What God has done as defined by these truths and our faith in them ***is how enabling grace causes active obedience.***



Imperatives - What is required of us (v.12-14)

What is true of us leads to what is required of us. The Bible grounds its commands in doctrine; since these things are true, then you must do these things. Isolating commands from their context will lead to the futility and frustration of obedience in the flesh.

Don't Allow Sin to Reign (v.12)

Though we are not in the realm of sin we can allow it to extend itself into our lives so that it rules and governs us and eventually enslaves us all over again. How does sin attempt to assert its rule and governance over us? In the part of our soul that *WANTS*. It strives to take our God-designed wants and Biblically informed desires that were made to serve our pleasure in God and to turn them into that which we serve. Sin reigns through wrong desires: wanting something so much you'll sin to get it or will sin when you don't have it. The more you allow you wants and desires to control you, the more control they will have over you. And through those wrong desires, sin rules and reigns over you.

Do not allow sin to rule you through l u s t s.

Don't Make Yourself Availa ble to Sin (v.13-14)

Here is the second and very important precept. This is the realm where our thinking about *putting-off* and *putting-on* operates. This is where we don't give room to the devil. This is where we do not put ourselves in temptation's way. This is where we flee from evil in all its forms.

Notice that there is a *stop* and a *start* in this text. You must do both or you will succumb to sin. You must stop presenting the members of your body for sin's use and start presenting yourself for God's control. You do so as those who are dead to sin and alive to God. So the indicative is the backdrop for the imperative.

Don't l e t sin master you because sin w i l l n o t master you.

Now that might sound odd to us, but it does because we come to the Bible with the error that if we are commanded to do something, then we alone are responsible to do it. But the Bible does not reason in this way. The Bible says here is the command from God: obey it because God is enabling you to obey it. So I choose not to allow sin to reign in my body because God is at work not to allow sin to reign in my body.

Now this works out in all the wisdom decisions of life and Christian growth in grace. You do not want to commit sin, so you guard against those things that tempt you to sin. You do not make opportunities to sin. You observe patterns and habits of life that make you vulnerable to sin and you break those patterns and habits. If you have a hard day at work, you don't rehearse all the badness of the day on the way home so that you arrive grumpy and angry. If you struggle with sexual temptation, you don't get suggestive movies and don't read secular magazines (the ad industry may as well be called the lust industry). If you are tempted to have a beer because



you stop on the way home to chat with the guys, then you stop driving home that way. If you lose your temper while playing sports, you stop playing sports until you identify and repent of the issues of the heart.

Now on the surface, most of this sounds either stunningly simple or frighteningly legalistic. Understand this. Sometimes we sin just because we are stupid. What is causing us to sin is right in front of us plain to us and easily changed if we are not allowing our desires to master us. These sorts of things are legalistic only if you mistake the doing of them for being spiritual and use them as measuring standards over others lives. So you don't listen to jazz because when you do you smell a bar or taste a beer. But don't tell me then that not listening to jazz makes you spiritual and makes me a sinner because I do.

Don't Because You are Under G r a c e, not L a w (v.14)

Paul says that we are to know doctrine, personalize it and make application because we have been transferred from the sphere of Law to the sphere of grace. Outward obedience must arise from the heart that is enabled by grace. When we try to live by Law, we go backward to being under the law, in the realm of the flesh and thus we deny the cross and that we are in Christ dependent on His grace.

Issue 2 – Must we continue t o sin?

The answer is in imperatives and actions

Key motif - m a s t e r a n d s l a v e

P r o b l e m – free from law means free to sin? (v.15)

Paul now deals with a misunderstanding of his teaching. If (or really, since) we are no longer under the Law, then are we free to do whatever we want? This is a common question posed among Christians. Paul recognizes that human tendency to live by rules not grounded in truth. He wants us to live by faith in truth.

Paul’s assertion here cuts two ways and leads to what follows:

Those under law are under the dominion of sin.

Those under grace are not under the dominion of sin.

In other words, here is part of the good news of the gospel – since you have been moved to a different realm, a different sphere of authority, sin no longer is your master.

So, what happens then when Christians sin? Christians do sin – why?

P r e s e n t a t i o n - who we yield to rules us (v.16-19)

Using the illustration of masters and slaves, Paul argues that we will become the slaves of whomever we choose to serve. Before our salvation, we always presented the members of our bodies for sin in the realm of law with the effect that we were enslaved to sin. We first gladly choose our sin and then become its helpless slaves.

The true transformation for which Paul gives thanks (v.17-18) is “obedience from the heart to what they were taught”. So it is a “both...and”. They believed what they were taught in a way that worked itself out into real obedience. Having been freed from sin’s dominion, they had become slaves to righteousness.

How was this carried out then and needs to be continued now? According to verse 19, by presenting their members as slaves to righteousness leading to the outworking of their sanctification.

Teacher: stop and challenge the class at this point – do they understand and affirm these truths? Do they understand that true holy living is enabled by heart obedience?

Teacher: develop some illustrations to show how these principles work out in your own life. Ask for examples from the class.



Product - what it creates in our lives (v.20-23)

This paragraph deeply challenges many people's casual indifference to real holiness. While there are our responsibilities, there is also God's initiative. He unites us with Christ and places us in the realm of grace so that we do not have to sin. Being in the realm of sin leads to death. Being surrendered to God, being God's slave yields the fruit of growing in grace and sanctification.

Paul wants us to see the terms of our slavery so as to motivate us to serve God. When we were in sin, we were without righteousness. That produced all kinds of fruit, evil thoughts, desires and actions of which we are ashamed now and resulted in death. But now, having died to sin, we are truly alive for righteousness. Its final outcome is life eternal.

Further, there is the great paradox here, as Stott points out. Each freedom to sin has its corresponding slavery. And our slavery to God has its corresponding freedom to live and please God.

Lessons for Living

We have true u n i o n with Christ by being placed in Christ.

We may not live as though sin d o e s n o t m a t t e r.

We may not live as though sin has c o n t r o l.

We have been d e l i v e r e d from the old life and are e m p o w e r e d for the new life (v.4-11).

We have been delivered from the c o n d e m n a t i o n of the law to the freedom and power of g r a c e (v.14ff).

We must not l e t sin master us because sin i s n o t g o i n g to master us (v.13-14).

We must o b e y from the h e a r t, having been freed from sin and become God's slaves (v.17-18).

We must p r e s e n t ourselves to God for His use, rather than presenting ourselves to sin for its use.

We must understand that we may not live as though sin were not d e a d l y and transformation were not d e m a n d e d.

Justification always brings sanctification leading to glorification. Our sanctification is decisively God's work and dependently our work. So, those who have been justified by grace will grow in grace. Sin is deadly and holiness is demanded. Isn't it glorious



then 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.

Points to Ponder – Applications, time permitting.

How We Confront Ourselves and Others

Examine thoughts and wants behind choices and emotions.

Teach or remind the truths that we must know and believe.

Apply and personalize truth through dialog – questions and answers.

Surrender and yield in practical ways so as to overcome sin.