

*How to Have*  
**VICTORY**  
*Over* **SIN**

A Study of  
Romans 6:1-22 & 8:1-14

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***How to Have Victory Over Sin:  
A Study of Romans 6:1-22 and 8:1-14***

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# INTRODUCTION

How does a person deal with sin in his or her life? This is an important question and one in which there is much confusion in the Church of Jesus Christ. That is why, in this booklet, I want to examine what the Bible has to say about how to deal with sin.

Any discussion that centers on dealing with sin must take us to the biblical issue of *sanctification*. This five-syllable word may seem intimidating, but it does not need not be. It is a word used several times in Scripture. Clearly, its meaning is something that God wants us to understand. So what does sanctification mean? The word, “sanctify” means “to be holy” and comes from a word that means “to be set apart.” The issue of sanctification, then, deals with how Christians can separate themselves from sin and live lives that are pleasing to God. In essence, this issue involves how Christians can live godly lives.

Unfortunately, though, the Church has all but abandoned the doctrine of sanctification. In fact, I am convinced that many of the problems in the Church today are directly linked to its failure to understand and properly implement what the Bible teaches about sanctification. The Church has not come right out and said, “We no longer believe in the biblical doctrine of sanctification.” It has, though, abandoned the doctrine by ignoring it and substituting it with other approaches for dealing with sinful behavior. These approaches, however, are not scriptural. In fact, they often contradict the Word of God.

### ***Behavioral Psychology***

The use of behavioral psychology among Christians is one example of how the world's thinking has infiltrated the Church. Put simply, the Church has adopted the world's ways of dealing with sinful behavior. The world sees man's problems as stemming from his environment and not from his sin nature. The world presents men and women as victims instead of individuals who are responsible for their actions. The world tells us that in order to help people, there needs to be multiple counseling sessions between a professional counselor and a patient. That is the pattern the world sets forth because it thinks that talking about a problem will make it go away. This thinking of the world has now become the thinking of the Church. Instead of offering real spiritual solutions to man's problems, the Church is now offering the same stuff that the world has been offering for years. By integrating psychology into the Church, however, the Church has subtly denied the Gospel and its power to set people free from sin.

### ***Demon Possession***

The current fascination in the Church with demons has also undermined the biblical doctrine of sanctification. The Bible tells us that men sin because they are sinners who have depraved hearts (see Mark 7:20-23). Thus whenever a person sins it is not due to some external influence such as demons. Christians today, though, are being told that sinful activity is often the result of indwelling demons. People are being taught that the influence of demons may, in fact, become so strong that a Christian cannot help but commit evil acts. As a result of this teaching, many Christians are buying books and rushing off to spiritual warfare conferences to learn how to deal with the demons that are supposedly causing them to sin. This approach, too, is a denial of the power of the Gospel.

As God's people, we cannot be conformed to the thinking of the world. We must be transformed (Rom. 12:1-2). God's people need to get back to what the Bible says about sanctification. To do this I believe we must go to the truths found in Romans 6 and 8.

## ***Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification***

As mentioned earlier, the subject of dealing with sin must include a discussion of the issue of sanctification. What Romans 6 and 8 has to say about this subject is particularly important. But before looking at these key chapters, I want to make some comments concerning sanctification and other areas related to God's salvation plan.

Theologians often refer to three aspects of salvation. In addition to sanctification there are also justification and glorification. *Justification* refers to the act by which God declares a believing sinner to be righteous. When a person believes the Gospel, God immediately declares that person to be legally righteous in His sight. This declaration of righteousness is based not on the inherent righteousness of the believing sinner but on the righteousness of Jesus Christ which has been imputed or transferred to the believer. It is important to note that justification is a once for all declaration by God. Though its results continue on, it is a single action that is non-repeatable. The concept of justification can be found in Romans 3:24, 28; 5:1, 9.

*Glorification* refers to the transformation of the body that will take place when Jesus Christ returns again for His own people (see Romans 8:17, 30). According to Philippians 3:20-21, when Jesus comes again, He will "transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory." At the return of Jesus, those who are believers will receive glorious bodies that will never again experience death or decay.

The salvation package of God, therefore, contains three aspects. When a person believes in Christ he is declared righteous by God (justification). The believer then begins a process of becoming more and more like Jesus Christ in his actions and attitudes (sanctification). Finally when Jesus comes again, He is given a transformed, perfected body (glorification).

## ***Does the Bible Teach Two-step Sanctification?***

I would also like to make one more point before we actually look at what God says about sanctification in Romans 6 and 8. Contrary to what some Bible teachers have claimed, there is an inseparable relationship between justification and sanctification. Those who are

justified by God are immediately put on the road to sanctification. There is no gap of time separating these two concepts. Some have mistakenly taught that a person can be justified but that his sanctification may not begin until some later point. This view is often referred to as “two-step sanctification.” This erroneous belief has often led to the unbiblical view that a person can be saved but still live according to the flesh. The Bible, however, does not teach this concept. It knows of no such thing as people who have experienced justification but who have not also been placed in the process of sanctification. The two elements go together. When a person is declared righteous by God he is automatically put on the road to sanctification. These two concepts are distinct but are necessarily related.

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### ***Romans 6***

We now come to our study of the great chapter on sanctification—Romans 6. This is a chapter that deals directly with living our lives for God. After showing that all men are sinners (chs. 1-3) and that salvation is solely by God’s grace through faith (chs. 4-5), the Apostle Paul, in chapter 6, addresses how Christians are to deal with personal sin. In this chapter we find out that those who have been forgiven of their sins and justified by faith are now set apart from sin and are free to serve God.

#### **6:1**

Romans 6:1 states, **What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?** The question that first must be addressed is the relationship between sin and grace. Does the presence of God’s wonderful grace in our lives mean that we are

now free to sin? The answer to this question comes in 6:2. But first we must understand the context of this question.

Paul's inquiry at this point comes on the heels of what he has just explained at the end of chapter 5. In that chapter he declared that all people were in bondage to sin, but, in Christ, righteousness had been provided for all sinful beings. In 5:20 Paul wrote, "The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." What is Paul saying here? He is saying that the Mosaic Law functioned as a magnifier of sin. In itself the Law was not sinful, but it did show very clearly that men were violators of God's holy standard. The more commandments that God gave, the more men rebelled and showed themselves to be sinners. In spite of this, however, even when sin increased, God's grace "abounded all the more." No matter how sinful men are, God's grace is shown to be sufficient for repentant sinners.

The grace of God is a marvelous thing. It is even greater than our sin. But Paul realized that some individuals might take this wonderful truth and try to pervert it. He knew that some might say, "Well, if sin magnifies God's grace, then sin must not really be that bad. In fact, let's sin even more so that God's grace can be displayed." He knew that some people might say, "I'm immoral, I'm a liar, I'm a thief. But God forgives me. I can sin all I want." Paul challenges this type of thinking: **Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?** The answer is a strong one, as will be seen in the following verse.

### 6:2a

**May it never be!** This phrase, **May it never be!** is very strong. In fact, in Paul's day this was the most emphatic use of terms that could be used to deny something. The *King James Version* translates this phrase, "God forbid." This shows the force of Paul's denial. To Paul, the idea of sinning to make God's grace evident was repulsive and inconceivable.

### 6:2b

Paul then says, **How shall we who died to sin still live in it?** This rhetorical question is foundational to the argument he will be

making throughout the rest of the chapter: How can a person who has died to sin continue to still live in sin? The answer is that he cannot. It is no more possible for a Christian to live a life of habitual sin than it is for a person who has died physically to continue to engage in physical activity. If a person has died to sin because of his relationship with Christ, he cannot still live in sin as the pattern of his life.

### 6:3

In verse three Paul continues his point, **Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?** The reason true believers cannot continue to live in sin is because of their intimate relationship with Christ. The baptism Paul is referring to in this verse is not water baptism—it is Holy Spirit baptism. The main idea associated with baptism is identification. At salvation the Holy Spirit baptizes believers into a union with Christ. They become partakers in Christ’s death, burial and resurrection. Because of this baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit all believers are now identified with Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:13).

### 6:4

This reality of Spirit baptism must influence the way Christians live, as Paul demonstrates in verse 4: **Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life** (emphasis mine). As will become very evident in this study, death is a primary subject in Romans 6. In fact, every verse from two through thirteen uses some form of the word “death.” We could say, then, that “death” is at the heart of the biblical doctrine of sanctification. It is at the center of understanding how we, as children of God, can live free from the bondage and power of sin. Death to sin is not simply to be an end without a goal. The purpose of our baptism into Christ’s death was so that we might share in His resurrection life. This is accomplished through the **glory** and power **of the Father**. It was the Father’s power that raised Christ from the dead. It is also the Father’s power that is at work in the lives of those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ. His power

causes Christians to **walk in newness of life**. The term, **walk**, refers to the pattern or characteristic of a life. Paul is saying that our old way of living is gone. If a person has died with Christ he has received a new life, and he will inevitably display habits and behavior that are in accord with this new life.

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**6:5-8**

Paul goes on to state:

**For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.**

The word **united** in verse five denotes a personal, intimate connection. This uniting with Christ in His death and resurrection applies to every believer. No one has received salvation from Jesus Christ who has not also received new life from Him as well. In other words, God does not leave people dead if they have trusted in Christ. If they died with Christ they are also raised in the likeness of His resurrection.

Verse 6 states that, our **old self was crucified with Him**. The "old self" literally reads "old man." Some translations of the Bible even say, "old man." What is the "old self" or "old man"? The **old self** is everything we were in Adam. This **old self** is our old nature, committed to and enslaved by sinful tendencies. But the **old self** was crucified with Christ. As believers we are so united with Christ that when He died, we died. When Jesus died He was paying the penalty for our sins. As 1 Peter 2:24 states, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to

righteousness.” Second Corinthians 5:21 states that God “made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” By His death Christ paid the penalty for our sin; by our death with Him, we have been set free from the control of our old nature.

So the **old self** was crucified with Christ. Notice the result of this: **in order that our body of sin might be done away with**. What is **our body of sin**? The **body of sin** is a reference to our physical bodies as they are dominated and controlled by sin. Obviously, our physical bodies did not cease to exist when we trusted Jesus Christ. But sin, as the ruler of our bodies, was rendered powerless when we became united with Christ. This does not mean that sin was annihilated or that it ceased to exist. But its power over us was broken. We no longer have to use our bodies as instruments for unrighteousness (see 6:13).

The Greek word for **done away with** is *katargeo*. This word means “to make ineffective or powerless.” This word is used in Hebrews 2:14 to describe the devil: “Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might *render powerless* him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (emphasis mine). Because of the work of Christ, the devil was rendered powerless. This does not mean that the devil ceased to exist or that he has been removed totally. What it does mean is that his power and authority in the life of the believer has been broken. His hold over believers has ended because Christ has set believers free from the bondage of Satan.

As Romans 6 indicates, the power that sin had over our bodies, to rule and direct us, is now broken. It is not annihilated but its authority over us is forever gone. Galatians 5:24 teaches this as well: “Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” The “flesh” in this verse is synonymous with the “old man” mentioned in Romans 6:6.

Galatians 6:14 reads, “But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” Note how completely Jesus Christ’s death on the cross and His resurrection to new life has dealt with the effects of sin for those who believe in Him. Sin is no longer master. The devil is taken care of. The power of the world is

broken. All of these things are accomplished for the believer who is identified with Jesus Christ. The last part of Romans 6:6 states, **In order that we should be no longer slaves to sin.** This is a tremendous and exciting truth. Christians are set free from the power and dominion of sin. We no longer are bound to serve sin.

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Romans 6:7 reads, **for he who has died is freed from sin.** This is put in a beautiful way. The Greek word translated here as **freed** is a word that is usually translated as “justified.” Literally it reads, “He who has died is justified from sin.” The picture here is that of a courtroom scene. We are standing before a holy God and the penalty for our sin is eternal death. But we have died with Christ, and in Christ He has declared us righteous. God therefore pronounces us not guilty. We have been set free. Why? Our penalty has been paid in full by Jesus Christ who is our righteousness.

As I analyze these great truths of Scripture I become alarmed at what is happening in the Church of Jesus Christ. Today we have many people in the Church who claim to be saved but are controlled by sin. Christians today are saying that they are enslaved to sin because of how they were raised or because of some indwelling demons. But in claiming these things they have denied the very Gospel of Jesus Christ. They have denied that identification with Christ results in being raised to newness of life. There are only two possibilities open to us: If a person has believed in Jesus Christ, he has been set free from the power of sin. Conversely, if a person is controlled and dominated by sin, then he must not have been set free by Christ. We need to leave the issue as black and white as Romans 6 does. I am not saying that believers never sin or that they never struggle with sin. At times we still find sin alluring and appealing. And occasionally we do indeed sin. But since the power of sin has

been broken in the life of the one who has believed, there must be a changed life. The point of Romans 6 is that we never *have to* sin. If we do sin, it is not because we could not help ourselves. It is because we have willingly chosen to do so.

When we sin we have no one to blame but ourselves. This is a liberating truth. There are many things about us that we cannot control. I cannot, for example, do anything about the way my parents raised me. But if what happened to me in the past determines how I act now, then I am a helpless victim who cannot control my actions. But the issue of sin is something we now have control over. In Christ we can say “no” to sin.

The solution to sin is believing in Jesus Christ. When you do this you become identified with Him and the stranglehold of sin is broken. Now the battle with sin will go on. But anytime you are faced with the temptation to sin, the reality of the matter is that you do not have to submit. It is an exercise of your will.

### **Does God have Different Plans for Different Sins?**

In the world it is common for specific sins to be treated in a special way. Notice in Romans 6, though, that there are no instructions for dealing with special or specific sins. There are no special instructions for dealing with homosexuality, bulimia or drunkenness. God does not say, “This is how I want the homosexuals to deal with sin.” Or, “Here is the special plan for dealing with drunkenness.” The answer is the same for all sinners—die to sin. If someone claims they are a homosexual, what is the answer? Die to sin. What if someone is immoral? Die to sin. What if a person has trouble with stealing? Die to sin. Identification with Christ takes care of the sin issue. This truth is both beautiful and liberating. In spite of what the world is telling us, Christians do not have to search for “experts” to help them deal with certain kinds of sins.

Too often we have people in the Church who are living in habitual sin, but we do not give them the right solution to their problems.

We get them signed up for multiple, drawn-out counseling sessions. But that is not the true answer. Instead of taking them to a psychologist and the empty philosophies of the world, we should take them to the cross (see Colossians 2:8-10). When the person trusts in Jesus Christ, God will nail the old man to the cross. He will bury the old man and raise up a new person. That is why Christians do not need to delve into their past. Our past life is left behind at the cross. There is no need to go rummaging around in the garbage cans of the past. We can leave all of that behind. As 2 Corinthians 5:17 states, "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

### **6:9-10**

In this next section, Paul is talking about Christ's life on earth and His dealing with sin.

**Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, he died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.**

Christ died for our sins. The penalty for sin is death and Christ paid that penalty. Christ came under the authority of death when He bore the penalty for our sins. But now that He has been raised, He will never die again. There was one death and one resurrection. That dealt with all sin for time and eternity. When we became identified with Christ through faith, our sins were also dealt with for time and eternity. If you have believed in Christ you have been permanently set free. This does not mean that sin does not have its allurements or attractions, even to the believer. Hebrews 11:25 states that Moses chose not to enjoy what are called "the passing pleasures of sin" (emphasis mine). Sin is enticing and, even for a time, pleasurable. But it is not an overpowering force to the believer. When you do decide to sin, it can only be concluded that it was your own wilful choice.

How do we practically apply Romans 6 to our lives? When the temptation to sin arises we must remind ourselves that the authority of sin has been broken in our lives. Because of our identification with Jesus Christ we do not have to respond to those temptations. We need to tell ourselves that we are dead to sin and walk away

from it. When we choose to give in to the temptation we rebel against God. In essence we are saying, “God I know I am free from the power of sin, but I have chosen to rebel against you with this particular sin.” We are not victims. We cannot say, “I just could not help it. I had no control.”

**6:11**

Paul continues, **Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.** We are to face sin with this formula: We have died to sin; we are dead to sin—now we are alive to God in Christ Jesus.

**6:12**

The fact of the matter having been stated, the application now comes in the form of a command: **Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts.** This is given as a strong directive, with a personal responsibility implied here. According to Paul, if sin reigns in a believer’s life it is because he allows it. It is not because the power of sin is so uncontrollable that he can do nothing about it. Sin can only use our bodies if we give it our permission. But Paul says that this permission is something we should not grant.

**6:13**

**And do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness.** As unbelievers, all we did was use our bodies for sinful purposes. We used our lips to lie, our hands to steal, our bodies for immorality. Simply put, we used our physical members as instruments for unrighteousness. Now that we are saved, though, we do not do that any longer. From now on we are to present ourselves to God as those alive from the dead (see Romans 12:1).

**6:14**

**For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.** The Mosaic Law had the ability to reveal sin, but it did not have the power to enable anyone to live a holy life. It exposed man as a sinner, but was unable to free him from his sin.

But now Christians are no longer under the Law because we are under grace. In grace, God took us to the cross with Christ and nailed us there. He then buried our wretched selves and raised us up as new people. He now empowers us to live for Him. We are totally different. A changed nature is the solution for sin.

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We should not be surprised that the people of the world are dominated by sin—that is the mark of unbelief. The solution, though, is not to try and clean up the world, as if the real problem was environmental rather than spiritual. In fact, if we were to take an individual lost in his sin out of a negative environment and transfer him to a positive one, he would still be just as lost in his sin. The only solution is the power of God, which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ (see Romans 1:16). Why? Because, through the Gospel, God takes the sinful person and nails him to the cross. It executes him and in doing so breaks the power of sin and Satan. When we tell the people of this world to live good and righteous lives apart from the Gospel, we are telling them to do what God says they *cannot* do. Instead, we must tell them that apart from the Gospel they are lost and on their way to hell. They are enslaved to sin and without hope unless they believe in Christ. Only in Christ are they free to do what is righteous.

### **Taking Responsibility for Sin**

I once read a magazine article called, "Help For Sexually Addicted Clergy." In it the author described sexual addiction as "a sickness involving any type of uncontrollable sexual activity." Note that in this article sexual addiction is described as a "sickness." It is not considered a sin. Why is this important? It is important because a "sickness" is something that people have no control over while "sin" implies responsibility and accountability. When I get the flu, for example, the members of the Board of Elders at Indian Hills Community Church do not place me under church discipline. Why not? I am not responsible for getting the flu. We usually are not held responsible for things we have no control over. When "uncontrollable sexual activity" is deemed a sickness instead of sin it is implied that the person has no control over his behavior. He is a victim. This thinking, however, goes contrary to Scripture, which tells us that we are responsible for *all* of our actions.

The author of this article went on to state that there are certain "building-block behaviors" that contribute to sexual addiction, such as sexual fantasy, pornography and other things that can create a vicious cycle and trap the addict. These insights, though, are not profound at all. If a person does not think on pure things and allows himself to be caught up in immoral thoughts, he will inevitably become consumed by lustful thoughts, and will most likely end up committing immoral acts. As Galatians 6:8 states, "The one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption."

This writer of the article, who has a doctorate in religion, states that sexual addiction has existed since the beginning of history, but that "it has been misnamed, mistreated, ignored, or completely undiagnosed." He believes that most sexual addicts have been abused and are responding to their abuse with destructive activities. To escape the shame that accompanies their immoral behavior, addicts attempt to escape the realization that their behavior is bad or harmful. The author then proposes a twelve-step process for recovery.

Does the Church need books and articles like the one just mentioned to help Christians deal with immoral behavior? If we believe the Bible the answer must be, no. These kinds of books are destroying the Church's concept and understanding of sin. Of course sin is addictive. The Bible calls it being *enslaved* to sin. Any sin is addictive from the standpoint that it has the potential to control and dominate a person. A few years ago the former mayor of Chicago admitted that he was addicted to sex and drugs. He said his addiction was something he could not control. He served some jail time but after he was released he was promptly voted into another office. After all, he was viewed not as a responsible sinner, but as one suffering from a "sickness" beyond his control. It should not be a surprise to see where the world stands on these issues. The real tragedy, however, is that the world has greatly influenced the Church's thinking on this issue.

I believe that the Church is on the verge of totally discarding the Bible on the issue of sanctification. If the Word of God does not provide the solution for dealing with sin, it is a totally worthless book. From Genesis through Revelation, the Bible claims to be sufficient for dealing with the issue of sin. But now we are being told that it is neither adequate nor sufficient.

In today's church, the Bible has been relegated to a supporting position. It has not been completely discarded, but it is not the primary source to which people look. If present trends continue, it will not be too long before the Church will try to operate without the Bible altogether.

### **6:15**

**What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!** Again we are told in clear language that believers are no longer under the Mosaic Law. This truth, though, brings up an interesting question: Does this freedom from the Law now mean that we are free to do whatever we want? The response Paul gives is strong—"May it never be!" The very thought is repulsive. No matter how it is presented, any talk about a Christian being free to sin because he is no longer under the Mosaic Law is repulsive. The idea that grace encourages us to sin is abhorrent.

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**Sin and God are *mutually exclusive* masters.  
We cannot be the slave of both.**

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**6:16**

**Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or obedience resulting in righteousness?** As Jesus said in Matthew 6:24a, “No one can serve two masters” (see also Luke 16:13). When a person has a master, he is under the total control of his master. And, in a real sense, the master we obey shows whose slave we are. We cannot say, “I’ll serve one master part of the time and another master the rest of the time.” It does not work that way: “For either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other” (Matthew 6:24b). The same principle holds true in the spiritual realm. If a person is a slave of sin, he will serve sin. If he is a slave of God, he will serve God. Sin and God are *mutually exclusive* masters. We cannot be the slave of both.

The Bible tells us that those who are enslaved to sin are on the way to death. In Romans 6:23 Paul wrote, “The wages of sin is death.” James 1:15 states, “When sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.” Death includes three elements: (1) spiritual death, which is the alienation from God experienced by an unbeliever; (2) physical death; and (3) eternal death, which is final separation from God in the Lake of Fire.

Sin and death go together. They entered the world through Adam (see Rom. 5:12). The moment Adam rebelled against God and ate of the tree, the process of death set in. When Adam disobeyed God, he died spiritually and the process of physical death began. Apart from the intervention of God, he was also on his way to an eternal death in the Lake of Fire.

### Slave of Sin or Slave of Obedience?

There are only two categories of people, and every person falls into one of these two categories. Every person is either a *slave of sin* resulting in death, or a *slave of obedience* resulting in righteousness. Regarding the latter designation, one might have thought that Paul would have said, "You are a slave of God resulting in eternal life." But Paul wanted to draw our attention to the basic issue he has been focusing on in chapter 6—our *conduct*. What we do is either sinful or it is righteous. We are either serving sin and thus rebelling against God, or we are serving obedience which produces righteousness in the life. Thus Paul inseparably identifies true believers with obedience, because the one who serves sin is in rebellion against God. Sin is a transgression against God's law, and so it is rebellion against Him. Those who are the children of God are slaves to obedience.

The obedience resulting in righteousness begins at the moment of salvation. We obey God by believing the Gospel. We believe that we are sinners and that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died to pay the penalty for our sins. But that is not the end. In fact, it is only the beginning. We are set free at that point from slavery to sin, and we become a slave of obedience. It is not possible to say, "Oh, I have believed in God—now I can go on and live in rebellion against Him." Or, "I have believed God, but I'm still a slave to sin." A saved person has become a slave of righteousness. His life, then, must be characterized by obeying God and living under His authority.

### 6:17-18

**But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.** Notice the contrast, you were **slaves of sin** but now you are **slaves of righteousness**. There is no such thing as a person who has been set free from sin so that he can now follow sin as he pleases. We are set free from sin so that we can serve the living God and do righteousness. That is very encouraging. It does

not leave us in limbo concerning what we should do. This does not leave us on the edge wondering if we might fall back into continual sin. We have been set free from the power of sin. **“But thanks be to God!”** Paul says. This is God’s work alone. No credit is given to man.

### The “Decision” Mentality

Part of our problem in the Church today is that we present a gospel that is flawed and unbiblical. We present the Gospel as though God were hanging on the edge of His seat just hoping that we would give Him a chance. Today we give people the idea that all they have to do is make a “decision” for Christ. Terminology such as this indicates to some that they are in control from the beginning. Scripture, however, presents the fact that a person must be beaten down with the reality of his sin. He is in despair and must cast himself upon the mercy and grace of God for deliverance from his sin. Salvation involves a radical submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. I fear that many today have made a “decision” but they have not recognized the reality of their sin and the need for God’s grace and mercy in their lives.

People may claim to be saved, but are their lives characterized by obedience to the Word of God? Are their lives characterized by righteousness? Is there evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work in them? If these indications are not present, then you can put their “decision” right next to being baptized as an infant. It means nothing and has no more ability to save than does infant baptism.

The salvation the Bible talks about transforms lives. It kills the old man. It produces new life. It makes the believer a slave of righteousness. **You were slaves of sin but you became obedient from the heart.** On the inside you were changed by the work of the Spirit of God.

As verse 18 has stated, believers become slaves of righteousness by **having been freed from sin.** How are we freed from sin? By obeying the Gospel. Is the act of obedience a human work? No—it is

a free gift from God. But that free gift is not experienced in the life until a person obeys the Gospel by believing in Jesus Christ as Savior. Behind all of this is the work of the Holy Spirit which is discussed more fully in Romans 8.

The fact that Christians are freed from sin should be fixed in our minds. This truth is simple and clear and leaves no room for excuses. Anyone who says he is a believer but says he cannot do anything about his sinful conduct is deluding himself—he is an unbeliever. When an unbeliever says he is controlled by sin he is telling the truth since he cannot do anything about his sin. But for the true Christian that is not the case. The Gospel has set him free from the power of sin.

### **Should We Try to Reform Society?**

Too often, the Evangelical Church of today is caught up in trying to change society through political and social means. But true transformation only takes place through the Gospel. That is why trying to reform society by means other than the Gospel is so futile. It is a waste of time to try to clean up the lives of unbelievers. What they really need is the Gospel, not some personal or social reform.

I see many Christians today who get upset over the actions of political leaders who are immoral, or with politicians who are pushing legislation making homosexuality more acceptable. I do not deny that these things are awful. But that, however, is not the real tragedy of our society. The real tragedy is that men have rejected the living God. They are consumed by their sin—and given the opportunity they will immerse themselves in sin. What do we need to do? Do we need to convince them of how terrible homosexuality or abortion is? No. Even if we successfully convince them in those areas, it will not change the fact that they are still headed to hell. What we need to do is present them with the power of God. It is the Gospel that changes lives. True reform occurs when people are changed from the inside by the power of God. When people are freed from sin and have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit within them, only then will they evidence true righteousness in their lives. That is why we must

preach the Gospel, and not political and social reform.

### 6:19

Verse 19 states, **I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh.** Put simply, Paul is using human analogies because we need help in understanding these truths. **For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.** Notice the contrast between **just as you presented** and **so now present**. It is a contrast between the past and the present. We *were* slaves to sin but now we *are* slaves to righteousness. The unbeliever is powerless. He is bound to all types of impurity and lawlessness. We should not be surprised when he acts sinfully.

There is a cycle of deterioration with sin. This is evident from the example of our society. As people turn their bodies over to sin, the result is more and more lawlessness and more open displays of rejection of God and His authority. Sin is their lord and master—they serve it with one-hundred percent of their being. We, as believers, should not be shocked with what we are seeing in our society.

### 6:20

**For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.** This verse describes our lives before we were saved. When we were enslaved to sin we were free *from* the things of righteousness. We never did anything that was truly righteous in God's sight. Being a slave of sin meant that we were not even *able* to do anything righteous.

We often forget how awful our sin really is. We act like something unusual has happened when people go on television and parade their sin. We say, "How can they do this?" But we should not expect fallen, sinful beings to do anything but sin.

### 6:21

**Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.** The ultimate end of sin is eternal death in the Lake

of Fire. This eternal death is contrasted with the “eternal life” that is spoken of next in verse 22.

**6:22**

**But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit resulting in sanctification, and the outcome eternal life.** Praise God! That is the process. His salvation provides His righteousness. It provides deliverance and forgiveness. It provides new life and freedom from the domination of sin. We need to be preaching and teaching this doctrine of biblical sanctification. We need to put it into operation in our lives. We do not need any counseling system that has been borrowed from the world. Our real need is to implement the truths found in Romans 6.

**Practically Dealing with Sin**

Before ending this discussion on Romans 6, I would like to say a few words about sin and the Christian. First, Christians do sin—to deny this would be to deny the Word of God. Christians, though, do not live in sin as a way of life as the unbeliever does. If a person claims to be saved but sin still dominates his life, then that person has not experienced the transforming power of the Gospel.

Second, even for the Christian, sin can be an entangling venture. That is why believers must be careful. A Christian should not say, “I am free in Christ, therefore I’ll dabble in some sin and then step back from that sin.” When we willingly step over the line to the old master of sin, it is as if he puts a little rope around us. If we back away from sin but then come again to him, he puts yet another rope around us. Pretty soon we may find it harder and harder to step away from sin because we have willingly chosen to allow ourselves to be entangled by this old master.

If you have fallen into this trap the solution is still the same. You do not have to be under the authority of the old master. You can take the ropes off and be free again. Sin has no power over us, but often the problem is that we have become so ensnared that we

do not want to leave our sin. The pleasure begins to consume us. The solution is to go to Romans 6 and say, “God, You have said that I am free. But by my foolishness and the exercise of my own will, I have willingly ensnared myself to sin. By Your grace and strength I will not indulge in sin any more. I will say ‘no’ to sin because I have died to it.” That is the answer. This is not to say that it will be easy or that sin will not still be alluring. But we can have the victory.

The Puritans called those sins that we hold dear to us, “bosom sins.” Bosom sins are those sins that we most cherish and tenaciously cling to. Even when we have rid ourselves of most other sins, there may be some that we like to hold on to. But do not be deceived. Sin is a terrible master, even though it is a master whose power has been broken. You do not want to go backwards and give him any rope to entangle you.

The answer to sin is simple. It is black and white. Die with Christ. Live in light of that fact. You have died with Him and have been raised to newness of life. That is the message of Romans 6.

### ***Romans 8:1-14***

At this point we will turn our attention to what Paul has to say about sanctification in Romans 8. In our survey of Romans 6 we saw the liberating truth that all Christians have died to the power of sin because of our identification with Christ. Though we did not look specifically at Romans 7, Paul makes clear in this chapter that believers have died to the Mosaic Law (Rom. 7:6). Thus we are freed from both sin and the Law.

When we come to Romans 8 we come to a section of Scripture that is absolutely essential for understanding the doctrine of salvation. In this chapter Paul discusses the role of the Holy Spirit in regard to our salvation. In fact, the Holy Spirit is referred to about twenty times in this chapter. Thus, this is a chapter about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the lives of true believers.

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**There is no condemnation of any kind for  
the person who has believed in Jesus Christ.**

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**8:1**

Romans 8:1 states, **Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.** Let's focus on the word, **condemnation**. This word was used twice previously by Paul in Romans (5:16, 18) when we were told that all mankind is condemned because of our identification with Adam and his sin. But in contrast to this, Romans 8 tells us there is now **no condemnation** of any kind for those in Christ Jesus. In the original Greek word order, the term **condemnation** is emphatic. Thus, there is no condemnation *of any kind* for the person who has believed in Jesus Christ. This is one of the most encouraging verses in the Bible. We who are fallen, guilty, and sin-cursed people, can now have the comfort and assurance of knowing that we are no longer under any type of condemnation from God. This is all because of Jesus Christ, the One who loved us and died for us.

**8:2**

Verse two states: **For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.** Note that the term, **law**, used here, is not the usual reference to the Mosaic Law as seen throughout most of Romans 6 and 7. In this verse it is used of a *governing principle* that is the authority in a person's life. In this case, the law that controls us is the **law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus**. It is a reference to the work of the Holy Spirit in our sanctification. In Romans 6 we were told that we were identified with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, resulting in newness of life. Now we are told that it is the Holy Spirit of God who has given us that new life. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us an existence in Christ and also sets us free from the law of sin and death. In sum, this includes freedom from the Mosaic Law and the bondage to sin that goes back to Adam.

**8:3**

**For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.** The Law in this verse now refers to the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law demanded and required perfection. There were no flaws in the Mosaic Law, but the problem (as far as we were concerned) was that it did not provide us with the power to keep its commands. All the Law could do was reveal our sin, but it could never help us break free from the power of sin. But God intervened with His Son. God sent Jesus Christ in the likeness of sinful flesh. And in doing this, He condemned sin in the flesh. Jesus did not come in sinful flesh because He was without sin. But He was real flesh. He was truly human and was born into the human race. Thus He was truly human flesh, though He, Himself, was not sinful. The reason He came in the likeness of sinful flesh was for the purpose of dealing with sin. First Peter 2:24 states, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness." That is how He condemned sin in the flesh and dealt with sin.

**8:4**

**So that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.** Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law on our behalf. The Law demanded perfect righteousness. And because we were sinners we could not live up to the perfect requirements of the Law. But Jesus Christ, through His death, met the perfect demands of the Law. He was the Lamb of God without spot or blemish. He paid the penalty for our sin which was death.

Note that there are two purposes for Christ dying for us. One, obviously, was to save us from hell. But in the immediate context of Romans 8, Christ's death was a provision for us so that we could live new and transformed lives, different from what we were living before. In other words, Christ's death not only saves us from hell, it provides for us the ability to live godly lives. Before we believed we used to **walk according to the flesh**. Our lives used to be under the domination of sin. But now we **walk according to the Spirit**. Our lives are now characterized by the righteousness that the Holy Spirit produces in us.

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**There are not two kinds of Christians—those who have trusted Christ but walk in the flesh and those who have trusted Christ but walk in the Spirit. Only those who walk according to the Spirit have truly trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation.**

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The righteous requirement of the Law is met for those whose lives are under the control of the Spirit. Thus a true Christian is not only one who has believed in Christ as Savior—a true believer is also one who is walking according to the Spirit. This is an important principle to grasp. This must mean that those who walk according to the flesh are not truly saved and have not had the requirement of the Law fulfilled for them. There are not two kinds of Christians—those who have trusted Christ but walk in the flesh and those who have trusted Christ but walk in the Spirit. Only those who walk according to the Spirit have truly trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation.

**8:5**

Verse five states: **For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.** Paul makes a clear contrast here. There are people who live sinful lives according to the flesh and those who live righteous lives according to the Spirit. How can we tell the difference between people who set their minds on the flesh and those who set their minds on the Spirit? After all we cannot read people's minds. The answer is simple: Look at the life. Look at how a person lives. That reveals where their mind is.

**8:6**

**For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.** Paul now furthers his description of the two different types of people. There are those whose minds are set on the flesh and those whose minds are set on the Spirit. For the former

there is only **death**. For the latter there is **life and peace**. The Holy Spirit gives life, and that includes life in all its dimensions—spiritual and physical. We have spiritual life which is a relationship with God. We are assured of eternal life in the presence of God. Ultimately even physical death will be taken care of. That is what Paul will discuss in Romans 8:18 when he addresses the issue of glorification.

Notice that Paul, in this verse, is drawing special attention to the **mind**. When God brings new life to a person He also brings His peace to the mind of that person. Isaiah said, “There is no peace says my God for the wicked” (Isa. 57:21). But the child of God who has been given new life in Christ has the “peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension” (Phil. 4:7).

### **8:7**

**Because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so.** This is a very important verse to understand but it is also one that has been misinterpreted. Some have erroneously taken this verse to mean that there are two kinds of Christians pictured here—Christians who are in the flesh and Christians who are in the Spirit. But that interpretation is totally contrary to the context. Examine the first part of this verse: **the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God**. The word, **hostile**, is a strong one. The person who is **hostile**, in this context, sees God as his enemy. There is an active hatred toward God. The person who is hostile has an attitude that says, “I am opposed to Him; I stand against Him.” This is a description of every person who is in the flesh.

Now there are some people who, humanly speaking, are very nice. They may even be religious. But when you share the truths of the Gospel with them—that they are sinful and need to believe in Jesus Christ to avoid an eternal hell—all of a sudden a hostility surfaces. They begin to see you differently. Their resentment toward God becomes manifest. Much of the time this hostility and resentment is kept below the surface but when they are confronted with God’s truth it quickly arises.

The unbeliever has a mind that is **hostile** toward God. He is in a constant state of rebellion against God. He does not subject

himself to the righteous demands of God. He does not and will not. If he did, he would no longer be in the flesh. He would be in the Spirit because he would have placed his faith in Jesus Christ.

Notice, also, that the unregenerate man is **not even able** to subject himself to the law of God. He does not even have the capacity to serve God on his own. That is why I think it is futile to tell unregenerate people to do things that are pleasing to God. They are not even capable of doing that. The unregenerate person is still accountable to God, but he does not have the ability to obey God because he was born in sin and he has willingly submitted himself to the servitude and lordship of sin. The unbeliever is in a desperate, hopeless condition apart from Christ.

**8:8**

Verse 8: **and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.** We know from this verse that the unbeliever never does one thing in his life that is pleasing to God. He never does anything that is done in true submission to God.

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**How can a sinner become right with God?  
He must bow his heart and mind before the  
living God as an undeserving sinner. He must  
call out for mercy through Jesus Christ.**

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We must be clear on this issue. We do not want to give the unsaved person any ideas that he is a Christian simply because he gave up drinking, quit performing abortions, or stopped committing immorality. Now, I am not saying that there are not benefits for stopping these activities, for certainly there are; but we do not want to give him the idea that quitting those things automatically puts him in a right relationship with God. Only belief in the Gospel can do that. It is never an act of submissiveness to God for a sinner to stop a certain sin apart from repenting and believing the Gospel.

How can a sinner become right with God? He must bow his

heart and mind before the living God as an undeserving sinner. He must call out for mercy through Jesus Christ. This is the very message, though, that draws out the antagonism of those who refuse to serve our God—those who are **hostile toward God**.

**8:9**

**However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.** As we have seen, those who are in the flesh walk according to the flesh. They set their minds on the things of the flesh. They are hostile to God and do not submit to Him. But in contrast, those who are in the Spirit walk according to the Spirit. Their mind is set on the Spirit. Only this group of people can be said to **belong** to God. The indwelling of the Spirit is what sets them apart. It is this same work of the Spirit which enables them to *believe* the Gospel. Without the **Spirit of Christ**, however, it is impossible to truly believe in Him, let alone belong to Him. We can conclude, then, that a person who does not walk after the Spirit is an unbeliever.

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**Being a Christian and living according to the flesh are mutually exclusive. . . . Those who live according to the flesh are not of the Spirit.**

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Being a Christian and living according to the flesh are mutually exclusive. The failure of many Bible teachers to be clear on this issue has led some people to base their assurance of salvation on a “decision” they made in the past instead of a Spirit-led life. They may say, “I know I am not living for the Lord now but I did make a decision for Christ when I was a child. So then, I have assurance that I will go to heaven when I die.” But this type of thinking does not line up with Romans 8. Those who live according to the flesh are not of the Spirit. No matter what they think, they are not going to heaven.

Now I am not saying that Christians never sin because, as we

have seen earlier, they clearly do. When a Christian does sin he does not cease to be in the Spirit, but he sins while he is in the Spirit. That sin stands out as an irregularity—a blot or a black mark against the backdrop of his overall character. When a Christian sins he is acting against his nature. David, for instance, committed adultery and murder. But when we look at David's life we see those actions as being out of character with who David was. The basic trait of his life was that he was a man after God's own heart. Yes, Christians may sin, but that sin is wholly out of character with who they are in Christ.

### **8:10**

Verse 10 states: **If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.** Notice that Christ is now described as being **in you**. Earlier, in verse nine, the Apostle stated that the Holy Spirit is in us. I do not think that Paul is equating Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, though their ministries are inseparably related. They are distinct members in the triune Godhead. All members of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—can be said to indwell the believer. Usually the Holy Spirit is the focal point for the indwelling presence of God, but it is also true that Christ abides in us as well.

In this verse Paul is telling us that our physical, mortal bodies are in the process of dying. This is similar to what he wrote in 2 Corinthians: "though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16). We know that our physical bodies are dying. In fact, if Jesus Christ does not return during my lifetime, I will die and my body will be buried. In that sense the impact of sin is still felt within us. Believers over the last two thousand years have died physically. At Indian Hills, for instance, we have had funeral services for many precious saints.

I want to draw attention to one detail about this verse. I think that the New American Standard translation of **spirit** with a small "s" is a poor one. A capital "S" should have been used, designating the Holy Spirit. The verse should really read: "the Spirit is life, because of righteousness." Paul is saying that even though our bodies are experiencing the process of physical death, we have the Holy Spirit, who is life itself, within us.

**8:11**

**But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.** Here is the good news. Though our present physical bodies are in the throes of death, there is coming a day when the Holy Spirit will overcome death and this physical body will be raised and transformed. This is the third aspect of salvation that we call “glorification” (justification and sanctification being the first two).

**8:12-13**

What is the significance of all this? Verses 12-13 tell us: **So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.** Notice the pattern here. Paul again shows us that the penalty for sin is death. If a person is living according to the flesh, his mind is set on the flesh. The mind set on the flesh is the enemy of God. It is not subject to God, and is not even able to be subject to God. We who are in the Spirit, though, have no obligations to the flesh. We do not have to live according to the flesh or be controlled by our sins and our passions. As Colossians 3:2 states, “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”

There is a balance in these verses. I do not live the Christian life in my own strength but neither do I live the Christian life passively and have a “let go and let God” mentality. That may sound spiritual but it is not biblical. We are called to an active obedience. The Spirit of God indwells us. He is our sufficiency. He is the power of God in our lives and now we are able to *apply ourselves with all diligence* to deal with sin as it confronts us. We are to be **putting to death the deeds of the body**. We refuse to sin. We are dead to sin. When we are tempted to sin we say, “I’m dead to that sin.” We put into practice the reality of what has happened to us.

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**Salvation is not by works, but those who are truly saved will give *evidence* of their salvation by doing good works.**

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In this section Paul has consistently identified God's children by how they live their lives. I am amazed that the Evangelical Church has accepted the foolishness that people who are living in the flesh can rightfully be called Christians. Salvation is not by works, but those who are truly saved will give *evidence* of their salvation by doing good works. Those who do not show good works have no reason to believe that they are saved.

**8:14**

Verse 14: **For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.** Who, then, is a Christian? According to Romans 8:14 it is those who are being led by the Spirit of God. How does a person get to the point where he is a son of God who is being led by the Spirit of God? Is it by the power of positive thinking or by enrolling in a 12-step program? It is not. A person becomes a son of God by being born again—by believing the Gospel. Believing the Gospel means turning from your sin and placing your faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is hard for human beings to humble themselves and to admit that they are sinners deserving of God's wrath. Most people think they are just fine the way they are. They do not want to admit their sin and embrace Jesus Christ.

### ***Conclusion***

The salvation that God gives does more than save a person from hell—it transforms his life. The Spirit of God indwells the believer giving him the ability to live for God. At times we will sin, but that sin will not characterize our lives. Praise God that He has provided for our deliverance not only from the penalty of sin, but also from the power of sin! We have died to sin. We are free from sin's dominion and mastery. This is the clear message of Romans 6 and 8.

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