

Sin and the Christian Life  
The Cross and Freedom from the Power of Sin – Part I

Author: Patrick J. Griffiths ©  
Date: November 12, 2006  
Title: “What does it mean to be ‘freed from sin’?”  
Text: Romans 6:1-14  
Theme: Freedom from the Power of Sin

Who am I targeting?

Hebrews 12:1 speaks of “lay[ing] aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us.” Galatians 6:1 speaks of being “caught in a trespass.” Today, many of you are still submitting yourself to the authority of sin when it has no legal right over you. Today, I am speaking (1) to those of you who find yourself caught in the web of sin or (2) to those of you who are beginning to listen to the seductive voice of the deceiver.

Why study this idea?

This study is necessary because sin is wrecking our relationships in marriage, in parenting, at school, and at work. Until we see ourselves in union with Christ, we will continue to be in bondage to the destructive consequences of sin.

This is the truth that liberates us to live and die in peace.

ILLUSTRATION:

What would you rather have?

- Adultery or monogamy
- Deception or honesty
- Hypocrisy or transparency
- Instability or faithfulness

The contrast between these ideas is the difference between living in bondage to the power of sin or living in union with Christ.

The purpose of this study is to . . .
---------------------------------------

The purpose of this study is to . . .

- Help you **understand** the power of the cross and its impact against the power of sin.
- Help you **choose** Christ instead of sin.
- Help you **love** Christ more than sin.

It is the freedom from the penalty of sin that now affords me freedom from the power of sin. Sin’s authority over a people marked by the cross has been completely removed. This is the argument presented in the first handful of verses in Romans 7. Our death to sin has freed us from sin. Sin is no longer to rule over us. Sin once reigned and its reign resulted in death (Rom. 5:21), but sin’s reign has come to an end (Rom. 6:12) and grace now reigns.

**The reign of sin speaks of its authority or power over its subjects.** Sin was once a king but has since been dethroned. Our Lord Jesus Christ led an insurrection against it and won. Sin no longer has authority over the people of God. It is hard for us to process the idea that sin no longer has authority over us when it would appear that we sin so easily. Yet, sin has no power over us because of Jesus Christ.

Think about what this means to be free from the power of sin. To be under another person's power places you in bondage. Thoughts of cowering under the dictates of a tyrant and a bitter task master makes us shutter with weakness and fear. Sin as a task master has no pity. There is nothing within it that would offer any kind of sympathetic expression. It has nothing to give that would edify or encourage. It exists only to take. It pulls from what we are everything that is godly. It seeks to extinguish the flame of God's image within us.

Sin pulls relentlessly at the hem of our garments. It leans against us ever so slightly but persistently until we bow under its enduring weight. This is the power of sin. It makes us doubt the goodness of God. It wants us to believe that His love for us is conditional and His acceptance of us is performance based. It delights in keeping us in bondage to its residue. It wants us to believe that God's forgiveness, although complete, is still qualified. This is the power of sin. And this is what that the power of the cross has destroyed. As His people we have freedom from the power of sin.

How do I break the power of sin in my life?

**In Romans 6, Paul attempts to help his audience move from living in freedom from the penalty of sin to living in freedom from the power of sin.** Both are non-negotiable. Both are irrefutable and both are unchanging. **Nothing we say or do can alter either truth.** Listen to the emphatic nature of this event from New Testament commentator William Newell:

“Let us never forget, that this crucifixion was a thing *definitely done by God at the cross*, just as really as our sins were there laid upon Christ.” (William Newell, Romans, 212).

As a believer you are free from the penalty of sin and as a believer you are free from the power of sin. This is why our present sanctification is called progressive sanctification. Because the power of sin has been broken, we are always advancing in our Christian walk.

“The decisive and definitive breach with sin that occurs at the inception of the Christian life is one necessitated by the fact that the death of Christ was decisive and definitive. **To equivocate here is to assail the definitiveness of Christ's death.**” (John Murray, “Definitive Sanctification,” in Collected Writings, 2:289, 293).

**In Romans 6, Paul provides three action steps or thoughts that help us live in the divine reality of the cross against sin.** I am trying to be careful with my terminology. When I speak of three action steps, I am not saying these three steps are the key to living the victorious Christian life or that these three steps will give you power over sin. These three action steps are simply different aspects of faith.

I am saying this because you already *have* victory over the power of sin, not in order for you to *gain* victory over the power of sin. You are working *from* victory not *for* victory. You do not have to die to sin because you are already dead to sin.

I am not speaking of an illusion. This is not a mental magic trick. I am not asking you to deny your reality, but I am asking you to believe the truth of God's word and then see it transform your life by renewing your mind.

#### ILLUSTRATION:

Many of us have heard stories of those who have been victims of horrific crimes. The criminal has been caught and sentenced and eventually they are put to death. Their death allows the victim to move on. But let us say that the victim of the crime is still living in fear of the criminal. Let us say that they believe the criminal is alive although they have been put to death. Their non-acceptance of the fact of his death keeps them in bondage to him even though the threat is not real. The criminal who has perpetrated acts against us is dead. We can believe him to be alive, but we will not change the fact of his death.

How do we go from believing to behaving? This demands that we understand the nature of faith.

A.H. Strong in his work Systematic Theology defines saving faith as "knowledge of (intellectual), assent to (emotional), and unreserved trust in (volitional) the finished work of Christ as declared in the Scripture (837, 838)." These three expressions are no less true of all faith. To define faith as powerful is to see faith as having these three expressions. For faith to be efficacious, these three expressions cannot be separated. Each is a part of the whole.

#### TRANSITION:

This is what Paul does for us with three defining words: "knowing," "considering," and "presenting." The first of Paul's ideas is knowing our position in Christ.

- I. The power of sin is broken by knowing our position in Christ (vv. 6-10).

<sup>6</sup> “**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; <sup>7</sup> for he who has died is freed from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, <sup>9</sup> knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. <sup>10</sup> For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God” (Rom. 6:6-10).

I want to be careful here and not make more of a word than is necessary but there are two different words being used in our text. The first word for “knowing” in verse six speaks of an experiential knowledge, a knowledge that communicates intimacy and relationships. Whereas, the second word for “knowing” in verse nine speaks of cognitive knowledge, a knowledge that is more information based. The relationship between the two is that the extent of our knowledge allows us to have a more intimate and personal relationship with the object known.

#### ILLUSTRATION:

In any relationship, the more I know about you the more intimate our relationship can become. The two work in tandem. I cannot have an intimate understanding of an individual without knowing the individual. It is possible to have information without intimacy, but it is impossible to have intimacy without knowledge.

Here Paul wants our information to be factual and deep, but he does not wish for us to stop there. He desires for us to enter into an intimate and personal relationship with this knowledge. Our union with Christ is intimate and personal and the more we understand this relationship the more prized it becomes.

There are three thoughts we are to know about our union with Christ. The first thought centers on death and dying.

#### A. Death and dying

You have died with Christ (Rom. 6:6). Your old man has been crucified with Christ; that which you once were you no longer are, but still have. Your old self is no longer your defining identity.

You have been united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:1, 2). Our union with Christ is real and the reality of this union is manifesting itself in our daily behavior.

The idea of death and dying is found throughout the sixth chapter of Romans. As believers who have been united with Christ and His death (Rom. 6:2, 3, 4, 5, 8).

<sup>2</sup> “May it never be! How shall we who **died** to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup> Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His **death**? <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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, <sup>6</sup> 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; <sup>7</sup> for he who has **died** is freed from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we have **died** with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him” (Rom. 6:2-8).

<sup>55</sup> “O **DEATH**, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O **DEATH**, WHERE IS YOUR STING?” <sup>56</sup> The sting of **death** is sin, and the power of sin is the law” (1 Cor. 15:55, 56).

We have died with Christ to sin. As such sin no longer has mastery over us. Its authority has been broken.

**What is this old self that causes us so much concern?** The old self or nature was once our identifying characteristics and qualities. It is what made us who we were. When I was saved, this old self was crucified with Christ. It was put to death. It is what I was in Adam. My old self hates God and was always in continuous rebellion and deviance against Him. This thing, this old self, has been put to death.

The second thought that we must know concerning our union with Christ centers on life and living.

#### B. Life and living

Your death to sin has made you alive to God. In His death my old self was killed and in His resurrection I received my new self, my new nature, my new man. This new man is who I now am. This new self determines my new characteristics and qualities. **It is God who defines me.** He shapes my words and my actions.

- We are raised to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4).
- We are raised with Him in the likeness of His resurrection (Rom. 6:5).
- We are alive unto God (Rom. 6:10, 11).
- We are alive from the dead (Rom. 6:13).

The third thought that we must know concerning our union with Christ centers on master and mastery.

### C. Master and mastery

Because of this exchange from my old self to my new self, sin no longer has mastery over me. I have a new master and His name is Jesus, and He is loving and kind and merciful and gracious.

- He has done everything for me.
- He has paid my debt,
- He has spanned the gap,
- He has born my burden,
- He has passed my tests,
- He has adopted me into His family,
- He has given me an incorruptible inheritance that can never be taken away,
- and He has raised me from the dead.

This is the one to whom I am now a slave. The word “mastery” in verses 9 and 14 speaks of “authority” and “lord.”

“Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion [**mastery**] over him” (Rom. 6:9).

“For sin shall not have dominion [**master**] over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14).

“Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion [**authority**] over a man as long as he liveth?” (Rom. 7:1).

“For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be **Lord** both of the dead and living” (Rom. 14:9).

Sin no longer has mastery over me. The authority of sin has been broken. He is no longer my lord.

How can we break down this idea?

#### ILLUSTRATION:

Let us picture ourselves hungry. Let us also picture ourselves sitting before a banquet table filled with healthy and good tasting food. Your knowledge of the table and of the food items will not satisfy your hunger. More is needed than just information. Yet if you do not know that the table exists and that the table is for you, it will never do you any good.

#### TRANSITION:

This is what we are to know: In His death my old self was killed and in His resurrection I received my new self, therefore, sin no longer has mastery over me. This is step one. The second of Paul’s ideas is to consider our position in Christ. We will now consider step two.

- II. The power of sin is broken by considering yourself dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ (vv. 11, 12).

<sup>11</sup> “Even so **consider** yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. <sup>12</sup> Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts” (Rom. 6:11, 12).

The word “reckon” or “consider” means “to take inventory of.” The idea is making a mental note of the object being considered. There is an assessment, an evaluation.

When we sin, do we make an evaluation of what we are about to do? Do we take inventory of the consequences of the cross against the penalty of sin and our glorious position in Christ? Why is this important? It is important because it puts all our choices in perspective.

When we do this, **we are choosing** not to obey the lusts of our mortal bodies and **are choosing** to see Jesus as enough in this life and in the life to come. This is a matter of faith. We believe the record given to us by God in the Bible. William Newell correctly notes how “the path of faith is always against appearances.” (Newell, 225).

#### ILLUSTRATION:

Let us go back to the picture of ourselves hungry. Let us again see ourselves sitting before the banquet table filled with healthy and good tasting food. We now have knowledge of the table and we have been informed that the table has been spread for us. We can eat if we wish to. But until we eat, mere knowledge of and considering will not stop our hunger pains. We need more than just information and consideration. Something else has to happen.

#### TRANSITION:

The third of Paul’s ideas is presenting our members to God. We will now consider step three.

- III. The power of sin is broken by presenting the members of your body to God (vv. 13, 14).

<sup>13</sup> “and do not go on **presenting** the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but **present** yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. <sup>14</sup> For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. <sup>16</sup> 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 of obedience resulting in righteousness? <sup>19</sup> I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. 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” (Rom. 6:13, 14, 16, 19).

It is the same word used in Romans 12:1.

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present** your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship” (Rom. 12:1).

We have made the idea of “yielding” or “presenting” yourself to God as something mystical or mysterious and in so doing have missed the bigger picture. This is not something that is magical. It is not the switch that must be flipped in order for the power of God to work in you and through you to those around you. All it is addressing is the idea of faith.

Do you trust God or yourself for victory from sin? If you are trusting God, you are working *from* victory. If you trust self, you are working *for* victory. In whom does your faith rest? Do you believe He is enough for this life and for the life to come?

Because faith is “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1), we struggle with the transfer. Herein is the danger of the doing. I can tell you to do these six things, but I would only be deceiving you and you would trust a lie.

#### ILLUSTRATION:

Let us go back to the picture of ourselves hungry. Let us again see ourselves sitting before the banquet table filled with healthy and good tasting food. We now have knowledge of the table and we have been informed that the table has been spread for us and it is at this point that we finally take the food and begin to eat it. Perhaps initially we gobble it up and over eat, little realizing that the table will always be there. So in time we begin to slow down and really enjoy what we have. The table is always before us and always available; we no longer crave the empty husks of this world. Everything we could ever hope for and wish to have we now possess. This is the power of the table. It controls our lusting after lesser things. The power of unhealthy objects and poor tasting items has been broken.

APPLICATION: (Where do we go from here? What is the next **action step**?)

Sin is no longer our master. We no longer have to obey its dictates. We can and should and must say no to sin. Its voice has been silenced. What and when we do hear from it, it is but a whisper of its former shout.

To submit to sin is like offering to pay the tip when the entire meal was free. It is trying to “do” something . . . anything . . . so that a sense of personal worth and accomplishment can be embraced. But to refuse the rest that is ours in Christ Jesus as it relates to our battle against the power of sin is to refuse rest. It is to work when there is nothing more to do.

1. Go and sin no more.
2. What are you doing to increase your knowledge of your union with Christ? What are you reading and/or studying that is increasing your understanding of the cross and its benefits?
3. What is your besetting sin? What are you doing to feed your sinful habits? Ask yourself why this sin is controlling you? What is it about this sin that is attractive? What is it about this sin that Jesus Christ proves deficient in?
4. Do you need help through accountability? Are you willing to become accountable to another believer? Who would you ask?
5. My desire is that you do not sin. But when you do, know you have an unconditional advocate before the Father (1 John 2:1, 2).