

Breaking the Bonds of Sin

While every person born has entered a sinful world, no one is born *into* sin or *as* a sinner. Everyone *becomes* a sinner in exactly the same way- by *committing* or *walking* (living in) sin, cf. Ephesians 2:1-3. But, since everyone except Jesus Christ has *committed* or *walked* in sin, how we *become* sinners is not really as important as how we *get out of* sin. Thus, how we break free from the reign of Satan and sin over our lives is of paramount importance. As always, God's word does not leave us without the necessary information and assistance....

"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lust" is the imperative command of Romans 6:12. Sin is like an addictive drug that, if given the opportunity, becomes all consuming. It often begins as a recreational attempt to have a little fun. But soon, again like a drug, more and more of it becomes necessary to achieve the desired effect. Before we know it, the full-blown addictive properties of sin have taken over our lives because of its habit-forming and pervasive powers. We become *servants* or *slaves* of and to sin who are no longer in control of our spiritual lives, Romans 6:16, or at least so it seems. How can we be freed from these shackles of sin and escape the downward spiral of its spiritual destruction and condemnation?

Stop obeying your own lusts, Romans 6:12. You don't *have to* sin- it is a choice. "The devil made me do it" is a lie we tell in a futile attempt to mitigate the culpability of our own choices. James 1:14 sets the record straight on this point, *"But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust."* Sure, Satan will assist us by providing opportunities and encouragement to give in to these lusts (cf. Matthew 4:1-11), but the choice is still ours. We choose to either obey our own desires or God's will. Perhaps the underlying problem in this area is our unwillingness to sincerely pray as Jesus did, *"not My will, but Yours be done,"* Luke 22:42.

Stop presenting the members of your own body as instruments of sin, Romans 6:13. If the previous point deals with the *thoughts* and *intentions* the *heart* and *mind*, and it does, then this one confronts the inevitable coercion and control these manifest over the *body*. Let's face it: the members of our bodies rarely act in ways that aren't dictated by our hearts and minds. If our will, as a product of the emotions of our hearts and the thoughts of our minds, is not bent, molded, shaped, and made to conform and subjugate itself to that of God's, our bodies will certainly follow it into the disobedience of sin. But, there is a remarkable connection between our hearts, minds, and bodies with which our Creator endowed us. We are, largely and most often, creatures of habit. In spiritual matters especially, this is to our advantage. If we will simply change our activities, consistently, our hearts and minds can be favorably altered. If we will commit ourselves to changing the sinful behavior of our bodies into the consistent practice of righteousness, our hearts and minds- and thus our desires and will, conform themselves to our practice. Thus, to at least some degree, we can change our *desires* by changing our *practices*. So, *"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,"* Romans 6:13.

Appropriate the grace of God for yourself, Romans 6:14. The previous two points, from the previous two verses in the text, contain what we need to do to break the reign of sin in our lives. This final verse of our present consideration points us to what *God* has done toward this objective. In a word, it is *"grace"*! Though it is our responsibility to change our *hearts*, *minds*, and *activities*, it is what God has done that allows and enables these changes. This sixth chapter of Romans was introduced by the notion that *"grace might reign"* over and control us instead of sin, Romans 5:21. This transfer of sovereignty in our lives is accomplished *"through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* God's *gracious* provision of salvation, which enables our freedom from sin's reign, is accomplished through the *death, burial, and resurrection* of Jesus Christ, Romans 6:5-11! So, the question becomes: How do we *appropriate* (receive the benefits of) God's provision by grace? Romans 6:3-4 tells us that by being *"buried with Him through baptism"* we are resurrected with Him to *"walk in newness of life."* By belief in Jesus as God's Son, and by baptism into His death, we are saved, Mark 16:16. This salvation is the basis for our complete freedom from the *reign of sin* in our lives, but we must continue the process by also changing our *will* to sin, and our *practice* of it! (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)