

Romans 6:12-23

Freed from the Power of Sin

The New Testament believer is no longer enslaved to the power of sin. Reference Circle Diagrams 7 and 8, *Sin in Control* and *Spirit in Control*, as we continue.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, (Romans 6:12)

The word “*sin*” in Romans 6:12 refers to the power of sin. If we are not careful, we will allow this power to “*reign*” in our bodies. When this predicament occurs, we have believed the power of sin’s lie and responded accordingly. The behavior which follows resembles that of the unredeemed, for Satan, the power of sin’s boss, knows no truth. Thus, when we sin, we respond to the variables of life much like the lost respond to these same variables. Yes, sin can “*reign*” if we refuse to remain alert (1Peter 5:8). When we allow this situation to transpire, we should immediately confess our sin, set our mind on truth, and walk in the truth that the Spirit supplies. It takes “*good*” to “*overcome evil*” (Romans 12:21), and nothing can “*overcome*” the power of sin but the “*good*” truth of the Word of God empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Romans 6:13 holds the key to victorious living:

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. (Romans 6:13)

While under attack, we are to “*present...[ourselves] to God as those alive from the dead*” (Romans 6:13) by first recognizing that we are powerless against the enemy’s schemes. After acknowledging this fact, we then yield to the only Source of deliverance, the “*God*” Who lives in us (Romans 6:13). Because we are “*...seated...in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus*” (Ephesians 2:6) with the “*old self*” (Adamic nature) eradicated (Romans 6:6), the power of sin has lost its grip on our lives. Consequently, the physical “*members*” of our “*body*” (hands, feet, eyes, etc.) are free to respond “*as instruments of righteousness*” as we “*present*” ourselves “*to God*” (Romans 6:13), the Omnipotent Creator. This sequence of events describes what it means to be “*saved by*” Christ’s “*life*” (Romans 5:10), Jesus being “*God*” (Hebrews 1:8). Truly, what a wonderful adventure awaits those who choose the road less traveled.

When we commit sin we have presented “*the members of*” our “*body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness*” (Romans 6:13). In other words, we have submitted our hands, arms, legs, feet, eyes (our entire bodies) to sin’s authority—to the power that longs to destroy us.

Satan desires to control our minds, for faith dwells in the mind. We must, therefore, guard our thoughts; the power of sin does not slumber when left unattended. We are holy and blameless saints. But even so, “*...when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin...*” (James 1:15), “*sin*” that must be confessed for fellowship to be restored.

In Romans 6:14, Paul verifies why “*sin*” (the power of sin) is no longer “*master*” over the New Testament believer:

For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace. (Romans 6:14)

“*Sin*” holds no mastery because we are “*not under law, but under grace.*” The power of sin responds to “*law,*” by gaining strength! In other words, its power intensifies. Thus, before we were saved, the harder we strove to keep the Law the more the power of sin increased in strength. Finally, when the Law had accomplished its purpose, we saw (while depraved) our need for a Savior, surrendered to Christ, and were justified (saved) by the God of “*grace.*” We then began living under “*grace,*” and sin’s power was broken. The power of “*sin*” can still “*reign in*” our “*body*” (Romans 6:12), but only when the new man is caught off guard. In fact, we commit acts of sin because we choose to sin, not because sin is a natural act. This topic will be discussed in more depth when we study Romans 7.

Paul next presents a question that his enemies frequently posed:

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?
May it never be! (Romans 6:15)

Paul’s critics not only rejected his theology but also accused him of granting believers a license to sin (much the same as in Romans 6:1). Paul again uses the strong Greek expression, “*May it never be*” (Romans 6:15), proving that these accusations were totally unjustified. He wrote in Colossians 3:25 that we suffer consequences in this life from the sins committed as believers:

For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality. (Colossians 3:25)

Paul makes a statement in Romans 6:16 that entirely settles this issue. As we study this passage, we must keep in mind that New Testament believers are made totally righteous in their person at the point of justification/salvation but become increasingly righteous in their behavior as they mature in the faith.

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? (Romans 6:16)

New Testament believers are the “*slaves of the one*” they “*obey,*” whether it is “*sin,*” which leads to “*death,*” or “*obedience,*” which results “*in righteousness*” (v.16). Therefore, if “*sin*” brings “*death,*” why would Paul preach a gospel that promotes disobedience? He couldn’t, and that is his point! Note: The word “*death,*” as it relates to New Testament believers, can point to physical death as in 1Corinthians 11:30 and other similar passages. It can also describe the emptiness experienced by believers while

walking in unconfessed sin. Sin can cause believers to live as though they are dead (spiritually dead) for short seasons of time, but as was the case with David, once repentance and confession are exercised, a zest for life is restored.

The truths of Romans 6:16 can also apply to the lost (depraved). So long as they continue in rebellion, they remain sin's slave and are spiritually dead (separated from God). However, those who choose to repent and believe (obey) are made totally righteous.

Paul continues by teaching that while we were without Christ, we "...were slaves of sin..." (Romans 6:17):

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, (Romans 6:17)

In our lost state, we loved sin, basked in sin, submerged ourselves in sin, sinned in many ways and on a variety of occasions. We did so because we were the old self, and sin came as natural as breathing. This sinful state doesn't mean that we were incapable of repenting and believing while depraved, but rather that we were sin's slave so long as we refused to repent and exercise faith. We will discover shortly that we as believers are slaves of righteousness, yet sometimes sin. Therefore, we are capable of acting against (contrary to) our strongest inclination, a subject examined in more depth in Romans 7.

Paul, in Romans 6:17, continues by writing: "...you became obedient from the heart..." Some individuals who have not become "obedient from the heart" claim to know Christ and are, therefore, lost. All who are born of God's Spirit receive a new "heart," a new nature, and desire to obey their Master. As a result, they possess a transformed attitude regarding sin. A person who has "become obedient from the heart" experiences a radical change of lifestyle.

When we became "obedient from the heart" (Romans 6:17), we were "freed from" both the power and penalty of "sin" (Romans 6:18). We also "became slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:18):

*and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.
(Romans 6:18)*

Be sure to understand Paul's point here. The power of sin can control us only if we are caught off guard, for we have become "slaves of righteousness" due to our new nature. Consequently, the "members" of our body should behave more righteously—not as they behaved prior to our being made new (Romans 6:19):

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. (Romans 6:19)

Paul states that if we “*present*” the “*members*” of our bodies “*as slaves to righteousness*” (on an ongoing basis), then “*sanctification*” results. However, Romans 5 tells that our spirits and souls were sanctified (made holy and perfect) the moment we were justified/saved. Is Romans 6:19 a contradiction? Of course not! In verse 19, Paul is saying that we will progressively live out in our experiences what has already taken place in our spirits and souls. In other words, we will start to behave in a more sanctified (holy) manner due to having already been sanctified in our spirits and souls at the point of justification/salvation. Hebrews 10:14 addresses this subject as well as any verse in the Scriptures:

For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified [being sanctified]. (Hebrews 10:14 NASB—emphasis added)

Because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy (Hebrews 10:14 NIV—emphasis added)

The word “*sanctified*” in the NASB actually means “being sanctified.” The NIV’s rendering is, “*being made holy*,” since the terms “*holy*” and “*sanctified*” are synonymous. Yes, our souls and spirits are made perfect forever at the point of justification, but our behavior is “*being made holy*” (being sanctified) on an ongoing basis. Thus, you can be perfect and holy (sanctified) in your person before your behavior lines up with who you are. Isn’t it wonderful to know that we are not on a performance-based acceptance with God, and that what we sometimes do (when we commit acts of sin) is not who we are? In other words, if you tell a lie, you are not a liar. You are a saint who has told a lie, for you have acted in an unnatural manner. Believe me, a tremendous difference exists between these two mind-sets. In fact, what we do is not who we are, even though who we are has a tremendous impact on what we do.

Paul’s words of Romans 6:20-21 are extremely convicting:

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. (Romans 6:20-21)

We were without “*righteousness*” while in our lost state (Romans 6:20), “*deriving*” no “*benefit...from the things of which we are now ashamed*”—grossly ashamed (Romans 6:21). (Would it not be wonderful to apologize to the many before whom we played the fool while lost and void of wisdom?) “*But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God*” [being enslaved to God means that you desire to serve Him with all your heart], we “*derive*” the “*benefit*” of “*sanctification*” and “*eternal life*” (Romans 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. (Romans 6:22)

Great news isn’t it!

To be “*enslaved to God*” does not mean that we cease sinning now that we are believers. We will commit sin to the grave, although we were “*freed from*” the power of “*sin*” the moment we repented and believed (Romans 6:22). Consequently, just as being “*enslaved to God*” does not mean that we (as believers) totally cease responding to the power of sin’s influence, being enslaved to sin in our lost state did not mean that we were incapable of exercising repentance and faith while depraved.

We can now shout at the top of our voices Paul’s words of Romans 6:23:

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

Clearly, “*the wages of sin is death,*” but did you notice that God’s “*free gift...is eternal life,*” and that this “*life*” is found “*in...Jesus*”? We should be motivated to communicate these wonderful truths to anyone and everyone who will listen. However, God must instruct you in how to say what is addressed here before you begin instructing others. Many people have jumped the gun and suffered horrendous consequences. Once you are ready, God will give you ample opportunity to spread this magnificent news to a hurting and dying world.