

# Mastering Sin; Or, Whose the Boss?

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Romans 6:12-14

It is a keen eye to notice that in Romans 6 through 8, there is a significant absence of commandments. All of these three pivotal chapters focus upon who and what we are as Christians, who have experienced the grace of Jesus. The gospel has made you – by its righteousness and power in Christ – to be free from both sin’s guilt and sin’s power and dominion.

What summarizes the first 11 verses of Romans 6 is your new life under King Grace – every Christian is dead to sin and alive to God. How? In Christ’s death, you died to the old person you were before conversion; and in Christ’s resurrection, you are made anew and alive to God with Christ above.

Now in the second half of Romans 6 – you are no longer slaves to sin; but rather, slaves to righteousness, obedience, and sanctification. And again, all this is of grace, under grace, because of grace.

But here in the middle we find the rare demand and exhortation to not sin! This is where the battle is joined and engaged.

How are we to overcome and master sin in our lives? How are we to show sin that we are the boss? Paul thunders forth these lines in 12-14: “Let not sin reign in your mortal body so as to obey its lusts – stop presenting the members of your body to sin – begin presenting yourselves to God as alive from the dead!”

Our **first point** is to see that this command is only for the Christian. No unbeliever can possibly do battle with sin in this way. If sin is still on the throne and death with it, then we have already lost before we fight! It is because of the great relationship you have with God through the cross and resurrection of Jesus that you can enter this battle. Since sin is no longer in dominion, we can fight and we must fight.

That battle with sin begins, not with us but with Jesus as our Captain and Warrior. Sin shall not have dominion over you because of your Savior and His grace.

So here are **three really big things** for us:

1. The importance of *remembering who you are in Christ*. You will not live or fight or master sin if you continue to think of yourself without who you are in Jesus! Here is the importance of living daily by faith in His Word. You are get dressed every morning in the mirror of who and what you are in Christ your Lord! You are alive from the dead! You deserved God's curse and banishment; instead you his child, his friend, his reconciled bride! You deserve hell but you are rescued to heaven! And that can never change!
2. Secondly, I cannot emphasize enough here *the importance of your minds, your thoughts, being renewed* and changed by the Word of God. We are only half Christians if we are not being sanctified in our thoughts about ourselves, our world, our life, and especially about our God and Savior? How often a day do you think of God? Are they deep thoughts? High thoughts? Great thoughts which inspire your heart and soul? Or are they shallow? Few? Little thoughts of Him? Is your God too small?

3. Thirdly, the importance of *ownership* is keen here. Your doing battle in your bodies with sinful desires demands your self-dedication to the Lord. And that self-dedication hinges on your surrender to His rights over you! If sin is not to be your master, if you are not to be slave to sin, you overcome by being a slave to Jesus, a servant to His obedience! You get nowhere until you are bowing the knee to Him. Get this – at the very heart of all biblical sanctification is what is found in the Lord’s Prayer: “NOT MY WILL, BUT YOUR WILL BE DONE!” You live by and for Jesus, your Lord, your King, your Master. “You are not your own,” says Paul, “but you have been bought with such a price!” Until you are not your own, and until you see that you have no right to sin and do what you want, you will not glorify your heavenly Father as you should. He has made you His very own son or daughter – and yet we act like we have been freed to do whatever we want to do! Our prayer should constantly be, ‘deliver me from myself! Help me to be the person You want me to be!’ Amen?

What does it involve, then, to present yourselves and your members to God and not to sin? How do we practically offer all of our lives – every part to the Lord – and not to the world, the flesh and the devil? In a nutshell, we fight this good fight, brothers and sisters, by putting off sin and putting on godliness. This is how Paul puts in the great letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, and this forms our second point. Here are four parts to Paul’s instructions – Paul’s war-room plan.

**Number One** – know your enemy. What specifically is the sin in your life that you are fighting? Sin has a plan against you; Satan looks for

your weaknesses; this world knows right how to tempt you. Sin has a plan – do you have one to defeat it? This is a real fight that you can win, that you must win, that you will win with God’s help! Begin by knowing you are in a fight and with what.

**Number Two** – as your enemy is very strong, you will have to overcome sin with a superior strength and ability. Spurgeon asked, “How do you defeat a lion?” His answer: “Get a bigger lion!” Your lion is the Spirit of Jesus, the King! The strength of sin in your life is how it has gotten into your heart and life, and tugs at you. The battles with sin are fought largely within in our hearts and minds, looking to Jesus and trusting in Him and His grace, as we seek to obey Him.

**Number Three:** You cannot master sin or show it who is the boss by weak weapons. The Bible does not tell you to slap sin on the back of its hand, or trim this weed in your life. No. You are to strangle sin like a mortal enemy! You must pull it up by the roots! You are to put sin to death! Kill it! Crucify it even! Drive nails through it! How do we do that?

*First*, deal with your sins at the cross. Take your sins to Jesus, confess them, repent of them, and be forgiven of them. All of our battles are fought at the foot of the cross! We do this not in our strength but his.

*Second*, you put these sins off by making it hard to sin. Jesus said to pluck out your eye that offends God, and chop off your hand that sins, and cut off your foot when it goes astray! Well, if He meant that literally, then the church would be a pretty maimed body! What Jesus means is that we are to make it very hard in our lives to sin. We so discipline our lives to avoid temptation, and to flee from it when we

are tempted. It is hard to look at pornography if your eye is plucked out! Don't be on the internet alone if you have a problem with lust of the eye. It is also hard to steal if you don't have a hand! Recognize approaching temptation and ready yourself against it! And it is very tough to run after anger and evil if you have only one foot! With God's help, discipline your life in such a way that you are not putting yourself into temptation.

As a young Christian, Pastor BJ had struggles with going back to drinking too much. He would try to live for the Lord all week, but when Friday came around, there was not much to do, and going to the local bar became attractive. Boredom more than anything opened the door to sin. So it wasn't until he found a Bible study and fellowship on Friday nights that this cycle of sin was put out of his life.

This brings us to **Number Three**. The strength for putting sin out of your life is not merely a matter of discipline and avoiding temptation. It is a matter of the Spirit working in your heart to hate sin and love holiness. Now the Spirit moves your spirit, but it is not your will-power that can win this fight and master sin.

Ask the Lord for a flood of His grace and love and power in your life to cast out all evil and to bring in all good.

Imagine a beautiful rock garden with a nice plant at its center. But beneath all the pebbles dwell every kind of bug, spider, ant and creeping insect. How do get them out? Pick up each rock and remove them one by one? The way to oust them all is to flood that garden with pure water, and the crawling bugs can do nothing but flee!

Fill your hearts, your minds, your lives with Christ – Christ and His Word, Christ and His grace, Christ and His mighty Spirit – and sin is no match! This is the dynamic for putting sin off and putting holiness on! Jesus is your Hercules who can clean out the barns of our lives! Pray, Lord, make me holy, make my heart pure and true, make my mind quick and alive to your ways and not mine, pleasing You! And make this life filled with the fruit of the Spirit, for your glory, not mine! Pray for humility, for self-surrender, for a heart for God, for feet that are swift to love and be kind and good!

George Whitefield, the famous 18<sup>th</sup> century Evangelist, once burst into tears at the sight of some sinners pursuing evil. His friend asked, ‘are you heartbroken to see such terrible and destructive people, George?’ He replied, ‘no, but I am so ashamed that sinners are so eager for sin, and I pursue holiness so sluggishly!’

Now one more as promised – **Number Four**: you must not only put sin and evil away, and put off the old person – oh, how high a time it is for that to be done! But you are incomplete if you do not also PUT ON the opposite virtue of what you put off. Paul doesn’t merely say stop presenting your body as instruments to sin, but present your body as instruments to God for righteousness!

Think about it – this is such an important and vital replacement that has to take place for this all to work. If you just sweep the room clean and leave it empty, the devil comes back. But if you fill your lives with opposing godliness, there will be no room for his re-entrance!

As an example: do you have a problem with stealing? Then you must not only put off theft, but *put on* working hands – keep those hands busy doing good and they won't be taking what is not yours!

Have you a problem with the sin of worry, anxiety, fear? The remedy there after repentance for these sins, is to grow in faith, trust, confidence in Christ!

As there is an opposite virtue to every vice you must throw off, there are promises made go give you those virtues, those strengths in your life! God is never reluctant to make you holy! Amen?

God wants you to be holy, Christian. The gospel is not the good news that God doesn't care about your sins. Oh, no. He cares very much about them, and would have you be holy, for He is holy! Jesus does not save us in our sins; He saves us from our sins! And it is by looking to Him and following Him that our sins are mastered, are shown who is boss.

He is your Lord, your gracious Friend and Redeemer. Not the Law. The law can only show you what you are supposed to be, and condemn you when you fail. But Jesus forgives you faithfully when you fail, and empowers you to obey the law of God, because he has written that law on the tablets of your hearts!

Well, there's the strategy, the biblical blueprint, if you will.

As we **close**, be reminded that you will battle sin until the very end. This is no perfectionist view of the Christian life. One day, oh blessed day, we will be perfected, in glory. And the reality of that, the power of that coming change, helps us in the fight today as well. God is working on us all! And He will complete what He started, no matter

how weak we presently are! God does not give up on those who are truly His. He cannot!

And secondly, Christianity is a fight. There is no such thing as an easy, floating, cotton-candy eating Christianity. We want easy and immediate sanctification. We want God just to zap us and we are made holy! Put sanctification in a bottle, a spray! But no holiness comes that way. And truly, if you are not fighting to be godly, to live for God, how can you call yourself a Christian? Romans 8:13 seems to say that those who are living according to the flesh and not the Spirit must die! Whoa!

Lastly, Christ and the gospel bring real help and powerful growth in grace. But now is the time to be in the fight. Not tomorrow, not the next day. Satan says, “take aim” today; so must you! You will only be weaker and colder tomorrow! Come, pick your battles, and take up the whole armor of God. The two worst responses to this message are: 1<sup>st</sup>, well, this is not for me, I am fine the way I am. If that is how your reply, you need to ask, am I truly a believer? And 2<sup>nd</sup>, I cannot overcome my sin, I am too bad. Oh, dear brother, there is hope and help for you indeed! Both of you, come afresh to Jesus today! Listen to this sermon again!

**Pray:** Holy Spirit, fill us with your presence, bring us to the Lord Jesus, lift us heavenward to the sunshine of the Resurrected One, and keep our hearts in the love of God. We are your planting; produce fruit unto eternal life we pray. Forgive us for our sins; displeasing and grieving You to the heart; and for not bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, meekness, faithfulness, self-control. Lord, keep us from idols. Amen