

FREEDOM FROM SIN

Like any Christian, we identify with the struggle that Paul describes in Romans 7:19-20, ***“For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.”*** These verses, along with Romans 6:12, refers to sin as something that resides in your physical body when it says, ***“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts.”*** Giving in to temptation is not only frustrating, but it can rob you of the freedom and victory that is yours in Christ. Being tempted is not a sin, but how you respond to temptation may be sin. You can make a choice to not listen to the voice of temptation. God provided a way for you out of temptation by creating a new identity, a new character and nature at the core of your being, which is not inclined toward sin, but is inclined toward walking in righteousness and victory over sin. As a Christian you can experience the victory over sin that you have because of your new identity in Christ. The key is to walk dependently on God, relying on Him to act according to who we really are.

The world’s concept of sin, and victory over it, is different from God’s view. The world calls sin by many names; anti-social behavior, corruption, criminal activity, shortcomings, or mistakes and bad choices. It attempts to change people from the outside, relying on the use of rules and regulations, law enforcement, behavioral therapy, twelve-step programs, and the myriad of self-help and how-to books so widely available. Does all of this work? Can you and I really change from the outside?

Here are some ***deceptions*** about victory over sin:

- Victory over sin happens simply because of my belief that Christ died upon the cross to save me from my sins.
- Victory over sin *only* comes with old age/maturity; in the meantime, we are sentenced to a life of strife and struggle.
- Victory over sin comes *just* by my not sinning, *through* laws and self-discipline, regardless of what control Christ has in my life.

So, how do we find the victory that God describes in the Word? If I’m going to experience victory, then I need to be familiar with the obstacle of the law of sin and death. Romans 8:2 says, ***“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”*** A law is a rule or principle that always works in the same way under the same conditions. Let’s look at a couple of physical laws of the universe as a way of understanding God’s laws about sin and victory over sin. First, the law of gravity reveals that if I drop something, it will be attracted to the earth—today, tomorrow, and next year. Second, the law of aerodynamics reveals a higher law than the law of gravity, and it can, therefore, overcome the law of gravity. For example, though the law of gravity remains in effect pulling on an airplane flying through the air, it is the law of aerodynamics that keeps the airplane from falling.

With regards to God’s spiritual laws about sin and victory over sin, let’s also compare two kinds of laws. First, the law of sin and death says that sin produces death in every person. Everyone (believer or non-believer) has experienced this principle. However, in Romans 8:2, we’re told that ***the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*** is the higher law that sets us free from the law of sin and death. Just as the law of aerodynamics doesn’t remove the law of gravity, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus does not remove the law of sin and death, but it sets us free from it!

So, if a Christian has been set free from the law of sin, what place does sin still have in our lives? Why do we still struggling with it? Romans chapters 6, 7, and 8 reveal sin as an unholy power or force which is ***in me but not me***. It is the enemy’s agent within me tempting me to sin. Paul does not mean we are free from the presence of sin, but from its rule and domination over us. Paul reveals that we can have victory over the power of sin in our lives. Romans 6:11-12 says, ***“...consider yourselves dead to sin (to this power or force called sin)”*** and ***“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts.”*** Notice that we have a choice whether to let sin reign in us or not; whereas, as an unbeliever, I was a slave to this power of sin, now I am enslaved to righteousness and a slave of God (Refer to Romans 6:13, 14, 17, 18, 20, and 22). Sin is in me, but is not me. Look again at Romans 6:12, ***“Do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts.”*** Whose lusts should I not obey? The body’s lusts or, more precisely, the lusts of another power within me that is not me. Paul even says in Romans 7:20 that if he is doing the very thing he does not want to do, that it is no longer he doing it, but the power of sin which dwells in him.

So, where is sin located? Sin entered man with Adam. When Adam sinned in the garden, sin came to dwell within him; and from then on, man came to be tempted from within himself rather than from without (as Adam was originally tempted from without by Satan). When Adam sinned, he was separated from God with no higher power to overcome the power of sin. He was unregenerate (corrupt) in his spirit. In Romans 7:23, Paul writes, “...**but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.**” Notice this power or law of sin is not in the believer’s mind where his thoughts are generated, but in his body. It is very much like a foreign agent which indwells his body, but not his soul or spirit. Your mind is at war against this power. “**But I am afraid lest, as the serpent deceived Eve...your mind should be led astray,**” 2 Corinthians 11:3. However, many Christians have been wrongly taught that our war within is a civil war, that you fight against yourself, as if an “evil” side of the believer fights against his “good” side. This isn’t true as a regenerate believer has no “evil side.”

When a non-believer trusts Jesus, then he becomes regenerate by the work of the Holy Spirit. The sin nature is removed and righteousness is his new nature; he now has a power greater than sin. Man, apart from Jesus, doesn’t have the power or intellect to overcome sin. This is why victory over sin is not a matter of will power or self-discipline.

By studying Philippians 3:4-8, one can discern that the Bible calls the old ways you and I have learned through walking in the world “flesh.” When we engage in thoughts/memories about how we lived before Christ, in our old fleshly thinking, we can set our mind on sinful things and accept them as our thoughts and we’re deceived into “doing the very thing I hate” (Romans 7:15). In Romans 6:14, where Paul writes, “**Sin shall not be master over you,**” sin is a noun; while in 6:15, “**Shall we sin....?**” sin is a verb. In Romans chapters 6-8, the word “sin” appears once as a verb, yet dozens of times as a noun. Why is this important? Because if one interprets the word “sin” in Romans 6 through 8 as a verb, he will never understand these chapters which are so vital to walking in victory. Paul teaches us that sin is a noun, a thing, something in us but not us. Sin is NOT just an action word. It’s a thing that generates thoughts and presents them to your mind for your consideration as if they were your own thoughts! So, how is the power of sin involved in your sinning? The same way wind is involved in a windmill, electricity in a light bulb, water in a hydroelectric generator, or gasoline in an engine. It’s a power. If you let it, it will control you and you will sin (verb). In the same way, Christ is your wind, electricity, water, or gasoline for righteous behavior, if you will believe He is and act like He is by faith. He, Himself, is the power in the Christian life.

In 2 Corinthians 10:5, Paul writes, “...**we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.**” We have three sources of thought: our sound mind, the Holy Spirit, and the power of sin. The thoughts from the Holy Spirit and our sound mind are godly. 1 John 3:9 says the new man cannot sin. This means the new man’s mind cannot generate sinful thought, but it can surely receive sinful thought from the power of sin and put it into action. To prevent this we must “**take (sin’s) thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ**” and act like we are dead to them (Romans 6:11-12) but “**alive to God**” (Romans 6:13).

“**For sin** (the noun) **shall not be master over you,**” Romans 6:14. “**He who has died is freed from sin**” (the noun) (Romans 6:7). “**So consider yourselves to be dead to sin** (the noun), **but alive to God,**” Romans 6:11. It is only in following the imperative of these verses that we can realize consistent victory over sinning (the verb). Sin cannot master you (Romans 6:14). It cannot make you sin. Jesus said, “**A house divided against itself cannot stand,**” Luke 11:17. You are not divided against yourself! God has not set you up to guarantee

failure! You have one Master (Jesus). Ignore sin's thoughts which seek to control you and by Christ's life, walk in victory.