

Main Idea: If we are going to go to war against personal sin and win, we need to *do* something. According to Romans 6:8-14, we have two responsibilities. We must do something with our minds *and* bodies.

- I. Responsibility #1: We need to grasp our position (8-10).
 - A. What is true of Christ? (9-10)
 1. He rose again.
 2. Death has no hold on Him.
 3. He died to sin once but no more.
 4. Now He lives to God.
 - B. What is true of us? (8)
 1. We died with Him.
 2. We live with Him.
- II. Responsibility #2: We need to change our practice (11-14).
 - A. Step #1: We must reckon (11).
 1. I am dead to sin.
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 - B. Step #2: We must reject (12).
 1. I can allow sin to rule my body.
 2. I should allow Christ to rule my body.
 - C. Step #3: We must relinquish (13).
 1. We must yield ourselves to God.
 2. We must yield our members for right living.
 - D. Step #4: We must realize (14).
 1. Sin is not to be our master.
 2. We are not under law, but grace.

Response: Let's ask ourselves two personal questions...

1. Am I in Christ?
2. Am I living like it?

How can we experience victory over sin in our lives? No one delights in being defeated, trodden down, and enslaved by sin, but how can it be different? How can we win the battle involving personal sin?

God's Word gives us practical answers for this critical problem, and no portion of His Word addresses the issue more directly than Romans 6-8. We began a series on *Slaves to Sin No Longer* from Romans 6 last week. I mentioned then, by way of introduction, that Romans 1-5 deals with justification (being declared right with God), and Romans 6-8 have to do with sanctification (living right with God). We focused on the first seven verses of Romans 6 and discovered that if we're going to win this battle we need to *know* something. We need to know our identification (1-4), that is, who we are in Christ (we will develop that subject in greater detail momentarily). We also need to know the implications of our identification (5-7). Winning the war with personal sin begins with *knowing*.

But it doesn't end there. It also involves *doing* something. What do we need to *do* to go to war against sin in our lives. How can we win in the battle involving personal sin? How can we be overcomers? We'll discover the answer in this morning's text.

If we are going to go to war against personal sin and win, we need to *do* something. According to Romans 6:8-14, we have two responsibilities. We must do something with our minds *and* bodies.

^{***}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

I. Responsibility #1: We need to grasp our position (8-10).

This first responsibility involves the active use of our *minds*. “For we *know*,” Paul says in verse 9. We know something, and that “something” is the basis for victorious living.

There are two questions which we need to answer at this point in order to grasp our position. The first is what is true of us, and the second is what is true of Christ? Let's answer the second first by looking ahead to verses 9-10.

A. What is true of Christ? (9-10) “For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery [lit. "to be lord of, to rule"] over him. ¹⁰ The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.”

Don't miss this. Our power for living is linked to what Christ has done. What is true, then, of Christ? Notice four realities.

1. *He rose again.* This is in an emphatic position in the Greek text. Christ has risen! Since that is true, a second truth follows.

2. *Death has no hold on Him.* It doesn't have “dominion” over Him, as the KJV puts it. It did, for a few hours, but He conquered death!

3. *He died to sin once but no more.* In verse 10, Paul is careful to point out that Christ died for sin ONCE. Please don't miss this. This verse stands in stark contrast with the doctrine of the so-called perpetual sacrifice of Christ in the Roman Catholic mass. The payment for sin is complete, *finished*. We need add nothing to it, but rather must accept it by faith.

Please realize what this means. The remedy for sin has already been provided. One time, at Calvary. We don't need the Mass to obtain grace for sin. We don't need to “pray through” at the altar to obtain God's favor, as others would teach. The remedy for sin was secured when Christ died to sin one time, in our place.

4. *Now He lives to God.* Christ left heaven to do His Father's will, and while hanging on the tree, He bore the curse of our sin and was alienated from the life of God. Now He lives to God, in perfect fellowship with His Father, ministering as our Advocate in the presence of God (1 John 2:2).

Which prompts us to ask a question. Why is Paul insistent that we grasp what is true of Christ? The answer is that we who have been justified are in union with Christ. Our identity is connected to Him. If we have any doubt as to the authority of the Captain of our salvation, we will flounder in our own lives. Our success is linked to Him.

Now let's address a second question pertaining to our position. The first was, what is true of *Christ*? The second...

B. What is true of us? (8) Paul affirms two realities pertaining to our position in verse 8.

1. *We died with Him.* Consider the first words of verse 8, “Now if we died with Christ.” The “if” could well be translated “since,” for Paul is talking about a reality. Verse 3 indicates he is talking to people who were “baptized into Christ Jesus” and thus “baptized into His death.” Verse 6 says, “For we know that our old self [*palaios anthropos*, old man] was *crucified* with him.” The truth is, when Christ died on the cross, in God's eyes, we died too. We died with Him, positionally.

By the way, I'm convinced that the battle for the Christian life is won and lost in the mind. Christians who win in the battle with sin are those who affirm this truth in their thinking. We died with Him.

But wait. To affirm something it must first be true. We cannot say that we “died with Christ” if indeed we have not died with Him. Paul is writing to Christians, to people who truly have identified with Christ. “*You can overcome sinful patterns,*” he says.

What about non-Christians? Can non-Christians change? Can a person who doesn’t know Christ overcome sinful patterns in his life? The answer is *no*, he cannot experience God-honoring change. Oh, he can “rearrange the furniture” in his life, so to speak, but he cannot truly change to become a person that pleases God.

Let me illustrate. Suppose you built a house. It’s a beautiful house, one that’s loaded with ornate furnishings. But suppose right after you built this house, you discovered something about its location you did not know before. It happened to be located on a fault line, an *active* fault line. One day shortly after you moved in earthquake tremors shook the house violently. It didn’t fall down, but it did significant damage. The quake caused pictures to fall from the walls, ceilings to crack, and books to tumble off shelves. Again, the house didn’t collapse. From a distance you couldn’t see too much damage, but it was there.

Answer this. Could you fix the problem? You say, “Sure I could. I could take my tools and spackle that crack in the ceiling, rehang those pictures, and resshelf those books. I could make that house look like new again!”

But wait. Have you really fixed the problem? No. You’ve merely patched up a house that’s going to be completely destroyed soon.

What would you need to do to really fix the problem? You’d have to do something you don’t have the ability to do. You’d have to get rid of the fault line and give the house a new foundation. If all you do is fix the crack in the ceiling and ignore the crack in the earth on which the house stands, you haven’t really changed anything.

In fact, by “rearranging the furniture” in the house you may be contributing to the problem, because now you’ve deluded yourself into thinking that everything’s okay. But it’s not. In reality if you stay in that house you are one second away from total destruction.

Can a sinner “clean up his life” without Christ? No. Oh, he can “move the furniture around” a little bit, but without Christ he can’t begin to take care of his real problem, a *cracked foundation*. Only Jesus Christ can do that because He is a Master Builder. And that’s why only believers can truly change in a way that pleases God.

We need to affirm the truth—we died with Christ. Here’s a second reality...

2. *We live with Him.* Verse 8 again, “Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.” Why is that true? Think about it. If death didn’t master Christ, it need not master us for we are identified with Christ. In Christ, we have the power to live, and to live *victoriously*.

I must hasten to say this again. We are talking about how to go to war against personal sin and win. You will never win the war if you are not in Christ. You might be able to “rearrange the furniture,” but no more. If you don’t know Christ, Romans 6 isn’t for you. You need to take heed to Romans 1-5. You need to be justified before you can experience the power of God in sanctification. You must be IN Christ before you can experience the power OF Christ.

I talked to a person a while back whose life was crumbling because of sinful choices he’d made. But before he could overcome sin, he needed to be in Christ. Tragically, he wasn’t sure he was ready for that. Yet the truth is this. If we are to win in the war against sin, we need to settle the issue of our position. Are we in Christ?

That's responsibility #1. We need to grasp our position. Our first responsibility involves our *minds*. The focus of the second is on our *bodies*.

II. Responsibility #2: We need to change our practice (11-14).

You'll notice verse 11 begins, "In the same way ["Likewise"]." That is, in light of what is true of Christ (as we've seen in verses 9-10), here's what should follow in us (verses 11-14). This is a very practical section. In it we learn that if we are to overcome sin in our lives, we must take four practical steps.

A. Step #1: We must reckon (11). That's the verb the KJV translators used in verse 11, "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin [NIV, "Count yourselves dead to sin"], but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." In the first section of this chapter, Paul taught us information about our union with Christ, three times using the word "know" (3, 6, 9). Now he uses a follow-up word: "reckon" (or "count").

In some parts of our country, "to reckon" means "to think or guess" (like "I suppose so"). That's not the sense behind the Greek word used here. The word *logizomai* appears 41 times in the New Testament, and 19 times in Romans alone. In Romans 4, it was translated as "count, reckon, impute." It denotes "to take into account, to calculate, to estimate, to put to one's account." It simply means to believe what God says in His Word is really true in your life.¹

This is critical. Paul didn't tell his readers to "feel" a certain way, nor to work up their emotions. He told them to reckon, that is, to claim the truth of God's Word for themselves. It's like endorsing a check. If we really believe the money is in the bank, we'll sign it and collect the money. If we really believe we are in Christ, we'll act like it.

What must we reckon if we are to overcome sin? We must make two declarations.

1. *I am dead to sin.* I need to see myself that way, as *dead to sin*.

2. *I am alive to God.* Here is the paradox of the Christian life. At the same time a believer in Christ is both dead and alive, dead to sin but alive to God. We need to see ourselves that way. I should give no more attention to sin than a dead man can give. Rather, I should contemplate the fact that I am alive, and have the potential to live a godly life.

I can't underscore this enough. How we *think* affects how we *function*. That's true in sports. If you go to the line thinking, "I can't make this foul shot," you probably won't. But this is more than a call for positive thinking—"I just know I can kick this habit!" This is a command for *truth thinking*—"In Christ I *can* overcome sin!" Jesus said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

I am dead to sin. I am alive to God. If I'm a Christian, that's the truth! And if we're serious about changing, here's where we must begin. We must *reckon*.

Let me show you something else we must reckon. Verse 6 tells us this. Our "old self" ["old man"] is crucified with Him. Commenting on the "old man" Stuart Briscoe suggests, "We should not assume that the 'old man' is anything more than 'the man of old' or the pre-regenerate person. A friend of mine always refers to his life as A.D. and B.C. B.C. is the 'old man'; A.D. is the regenerate man raised in Christ. The person you were 'before Christ' has been judged, condemned, sentenced, executed, buried, and finished with forever. The new man lives."²

¹ Wiersbe, 532.

² Briscoe, p. 135.

This is why sin is so unacceptable in our lives. Our position should determine our practice. Our old man has been crucified with Christ, so we should live like it. The old Puritans used to say, "God does not take away our ability to sin; He gives us the power not to sin."³

Think of what happened to Neil Armstrong on July 20, 1969. When he stepped out of "Eagle" onto the moon's surface, and said, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind," he entered a hostile environment in which it was impossible for him to survive without his space suit and its support systems. Yet he did live. Why? Because of his identification with his space suit. In that suit, he was able to regard himself as dead to his dangerous surroundings, and alive to his experience of walking around the moon.⁴

So it is with the Christian. A person "in Christ" is no longer at the mercy of his hostile environment of sin but is alive to all the power and life of God Himself!

In his helpful commentary on Romans 5-8 entitled *Men Made New*, John Stott writes, "I find it helpful to think in these terms. Our biography is written in two volumes. Volume one is the story of the old man, the old self, of me before my conversion. Volume two is the story of the new man, the new self, of me after I was made a new creation in Christ. Volume one of my biography ended with the judicial death of the old self. I was a sinner. I deserved to die. I did die. I received my deserts in my Substitute with whom I have become one. Volume two of my biography opened with my resurrection. My old life having finished, a new life to God has begun."⁵

If Jesus Christ is your Savior, that is true of you. And verse 11 calls you to *reckon* it. It's a fact which we need to affirm and live in light of what is true of us. When Satan tempts us to sin, and temptation whispers, "Oh, it's a little sin, and God will forgive you anyway," we need to say, "No! Volume one is closed! I am living in Volume 2!" If we are to win in the war with sin, we must *reckon*. Then comes a second step.

B. Step #2: We must reject (12). "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires." Notice this is a command. Don't let sin reign in you. The command implies it's possible. God enables what He expects. Sin ought to have less a hold on us as we grow. The present tense verb suggests, "Stop letting sin reign." Reject it.

To put it another way, when it comes to what is going to be king in our lives, there are only two options...

1. *I can allow sin to rule my body.* That's option #1. Here's what I should do.
2. *I should allow Christ to rule my body.* I cannot serve two kings. I'm either going to let sin take the throne of my life, or Christ. If Christ is going to rule our bodies, we must reject sin.

We must *reject*. In practical terms that means we need to take precautionary steps to avoid sin. Take, for instance, the area of sexual purity. A great man of God made the following observation about sexual temptation. Though lengthy, it's deserving of our careful attention:

"A deception may affect the mind, but an obscenity must affect the mind; it is a violence. It may do one of two things equally direct and instinctive: it may shock purity or it may inflame purity. But in both cases the process is brutal and irrational. A picture or a sentence which shocks sensibility or sharpens sensuality does not offer itself for

³ Briscoe, p. 137.

⁴ Briscoe, p. 137.

⁵ Stott, p. 49.

discussion. It is no more open for argument than a squeaking piece of chalk is open to argument, or the choking smell of ether is open to argument. The human victim is drugged--or he is sick.”

“Therefore, I think we may speak of vulgarity as an assault. In the matter of traditional public decency, I am entirely with the Puritans. The ordinary argument that sex can be treated calmly and freely like anything else is the most loathsome irrationality in this irrational age. And parallels from other crimes are deviously false. A man reading about a burglary is not any more likely to commit a burglary. A man who has seen a pocket picked is not in the least more likely to become a pickpocket.”

“But there is one evil which, by its hold on the imagination (the creative and reproductive part of man), can reproduce itself even by report. We have a right to protect ourselves and especially our unstable and vulnerable children against startling and uncivilized appeals to this instinct.”⁶

Those are the words of G. K. Chesterton. And by the way, guess when he wrote them? They appeared in the London Daily News on February 19, 1910!

Chesterton was a man who knew that those who will survive in the battle with sin must reject sin. Every day. We can't cuddle temptation. We must flee from it! We must teach our children to flee from it, too.

I couldn't believe my eyes when awhile back as I was watching CNN news, on the screen before my eyes flashed a news story covering pornography. Frankly, CNN didn't do too much editing, either. I was reminded that it's risky even to watch the news these days if you're concerned about personal purity.

Men, what do you do when you're watching the sprint car races on ESPN, and at the commercial break a scantily clad woman flashes suggestively across your screen? You say, “Well, I just look down and read my newspaper.” Fine, what do you do about your children's eyes?

Friends, we are in a war and drastic action is needed. If we are to win the war with sin, we must *reckon*—that requires the aggressive discipline of our minds. Then we must *reject*—that requires the aggressive discipline of our bodies. Thirdly...

C. Step #3: We must relinquish (13). Verse 13 contains two more imperatives, the first telling us what not to do, and the second telling us what to do. We must not yield to sin (that's what we saw in verse 12). What then are we to do? The positive responsibility involves a twofold surrender.

1. *We must yield ourselves to God.* Verse 13 begins, “Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life.” The KJV renders it, “Yield yourselves unto God.”

The term “offer” [KJV “yield”] is the same word in Romans 12:1 where Paul says, “I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to *offer* your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.” To offer, then, means to present yourself, to completely surrender your body to Christ. You say, “Why does He want my body?” For starters, it’s His. He purchased with the price of His own blood. What’s more, your body is His temple (1 Cor 6:19). And He wants to use it for holy purposes. If that’s to occur, we must *surrender* it to Him. We must yield ourselves to God. The second responsibility is even more specific.

⁶ G. K. Chesterton, *The Messenger*, Vol.3, No.2, p. 8

2. *We must yield our members for right living.* Verse 13 concludes, “And offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.” To surrender to God I must give Him my body. I must also give Him the very parts of my body. My tongue. My eyes. My feet. My hands. I must offer them to Him.

Offer them as what? As *instruments of righteousness*. That’s key.

Did you realize it’s possible to want to get rid of sinful habits for the wrong motive? “I’ll do anything to get control of this terrible temper I’ve got,” a man says. A good thing to do, right? But when you probe further you discover the man’s reason. He’s afraid he’s going to lose his wife if he doesn’t change, and that wouldn’t be good for his image. So he wants to get control of his temper for a selfish reason.

“I’ll do whatever it takes to kick this habit of smoking,” a woman says. “I want to stop drinking,” a teen says. “I’ve got to cut this noose of pornography that’s around my neck,” a man in his midlife says. All good intentions, but motive is key. Why do you want to get rid of anger, smoking, drinking, and pornography? It’s possible to stop for self-focused reasons. I’m doing it to get peace with *my* spouse, to improve *my* health, or to save *my* reputation.

Listen carefully. God isn’t interested in blessing self-focused agendas. Why does He set us free from sin? It’s not just so we’ll stop serving sin. It’s so we’ll start serving *Him*. Don’t let sin reign—that’s verse 12. Offer your body to God—that’s verse 13. Reject, then relinquish.

Have you offered your body parts to God so they can be used as *instruments of righteousness*? Short and simple, the Christian life is to be lived for God, not self. Do you want to know why there are a lot of miserable, frustrated, and defeated Christians in our day? It’s because they are living for themselves, and not for God.

You may wonder, “How can I tell if I am using my body for God or myself?” A good indicator is to look at how you are spending your time and your money. What we do with these two commodities reveals our values, namely who we value in life: God or self.

When a man says no to overtime so he can minister to his Sunday School class, his actions reflect his values. When a woman declines a job opportunity outside the home so she can invest her time into the spiritual development of her family, she’s revealing her values. When a teen refuses to go with the crowd, even though it costs him a few “friends,” he’s saying that he’d rather live for God than for self. When a senior citizen decides to get involved in discipling children at church instead of RV’ing around the country, it reflects his values.

Paul says we need to relinquish the control of our bodies, even the very members of our bodies to God. Make a daily decision, “Here I am, Lord. I belong to You.”

D. Step #4: We must realize (14). Realize what? Realize that there are reasons why we should follow the commands of verses 11-13 and reckon, reject sin, and relinquish our lives to God. The reasons appear in verse 14.

1. *Sin is not to be our master.* “For sin shall not be your master [“shall not have dominion over you” in the KJV].” The words “over you” are emphatic in the Greek text. “For sin OVER YOU shall not rule.” If we are in Christ, we have no business flirting with sin.

J. Vernon McGee tells the story about a little girl who fell out of bed one night and began to cry. Her mother rushed into her bedroom, picked her up, put her back in bed, and asked her, “Honey, why did you fall out of bed?” And the girl replied, “I think I

stayed too close to the place where I got in.” And McGee says, “And that’s the reason a great many of us fall, my friend.”⁷

Are you living too close to the edge? Realize that sin is not to be our master.

2. *We are not under law, but grace.* “*Because* you are not under law, but under grace.” Paul’s not saying we don’t have to obey God’s commands. Notice he says we are “under grace.” The Law is not bad, but it can’t produce righteousness in us. It condemns us as lawbreakers. But since we are under grace, we have God’s unmerited power. We have the strength we need to overcome sin.

I can still remember an event that occurred when I was about 8 or 9 years old. We had some shrubs growing around our house, and we discovered a huge, colorful spider situated on its web in the bush. I was fascinated by it, and remember watching that creature go about its business. It was constantly on the lookout for unsuspecting prey that would get caught in its web (we even helped it out by tossing flies, even grasshoppers into the web). Once a victim was caught, the spider would rush to the scene, paralyze the insect with its deadly poison, and wrap it up with its silk. Later it would return and literally suck the very life out of it.

That scene represents what sin does. Sin deceives, enslaves, and destroys, particularly those who are unsuspecting. My friend, we need not be victims of sin this morning. There is hope in Christ. By putting to practice what we’ve learned this morning, we can go to war with personal sin, *and win!*

The bottom line is this. Who are you going to allow to rule in your life? Will it be Christ or the sinful members of your body?

If we are going to win this war against sin, we need to *do* something. We need to grasp our position and then change our practice. That being the case...

Response: Let’s ask ourselves two personal questions...

1. *Am I in Christ?* To change, you must be in Christ. There is no other way. Are you?

2. *Am I living like it?* I challenge you today to surrender your body to Christ. Follow the counsel of Charles Wesley, “Soldiers of Christ, arise and put your armor on, strong in the strength which God supplies through His eternal Son.”

⁷ McGee, p. 112.