

**Romans**  
**Sin Is Not Your Master (Part 7)**  
**Romans 6:1-14**  
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Romans 6 is where I invite you to turn. We're taking our time walking through this passage. Let me assure you that I do not intend to go this slowly through the rest of Romans or I might not survive it, as rich as these things are, but this passage is absolutely crucial for us to understand. I was convinced of that before we got here, but the more I study it, the more convinced I am that there is no passage more foundational, more crucial for us to understand in the daily battle with sin than this section. And so I am taking it slowly by design; we're going to do that again this morning. And so I hope you understand my heart in that, and I hope you'll benefit as I have from the study of this passage.

This week I have read again an illustration that Martyn Lloyd-Jones uses in his commentary on Romans 6; it's on an earlier verse but it's an illustration that stood out to me, and I think it is helpful for us as we try to answer this basic question, "How, Tom, can you say that I have been delivered from the rule and reign and realm of sin as Paul says here in Romans 6? How can you say that when sin is such a struggle for me, when I am so beset by temptation?"

I think Lloyd-Jones' illustration is a good one. He said in his commentary it's one that he found helpful, and I think it is helpful to understand the basic idea of this passage. He said: Imagine two fields separated by a road between them. The field on the left is the domain of Satan; it's where sin reigns; it's where sin rules and dominates all who are in that field, and we were born into that field on the left. That's where we all began life and we lived in that field until the moment of our salvation.

But at the moment of salvation, we were transferred from the field on the left, across the road, to the field on the right as a result of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ for us and the application of that work to us by the Holy Spirit, we have been transferred, as Paul puts it in Colossians 1, from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son. We've had a change in location, if you will, a change in realms to which we belong. A change, in the illustration, in fields, from the field into which we were born to the field now on the right side of the road where grace reigns, where Christ reigns, where righteousness is at home. That's now where we reside. However, those fields are only separated by a road in this illustration. And we lived many years in that field on the left side of the road. We lived under the voice of Satan and sin, telling us what to do. We no longer live under their reign. However, they shout at us from across the road. We can still hear their voice, and they still try to give us orders; they still try to tell us what to do. And even though we're not under their dominion anymore, it's easy for us because it's such a

pattern and habit of our lives before, when we lived in that field, to think that we still have to obey them, that we still have to do what they say. I'm a Christian; I'm in this new field; Satan can't touch me; sin can shout at me from across the road all it wants, but I'm no longer its slave. And still my ear is at times tempted to listen and to give in.

Lloyd-Jones says, "The whole object of the apostle in the 6th chapter of Romans is to get us to realize that we have been translated by the Holy Spirit from one kingdom to another." You are not the person you used to be; you don't live in the realm or the sphere in which you used to live.

That's a great summary of what we're learning in this chapter. In fact, as we've discovered, Romans 6:1-14, is making one basic point: we are no longer slaves of sin. Because we have changed realms, sin doesn't reign anymore; grace reigns; our Lord reigns. We are no longer enslaved; sin is not our master. What really brings out this discussion is a question that Paul asks in verse 1. In verses 1 and 2, he raises the issue of a flawed conclusion that some might be tempted to make about the believer's sin: if grace reigns, if sin has been overwhelmed by grace, then maybe it's okay to sin. If grace abounds where sin is, then maybe I should sin more. Verse 1, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?" Is it okay for Christians to live in an ongoing pattern of sin, an unrepentant, enslaving pattern of sin? Is that okay? Paul says in verse 2, "May it never be!" That's a misunderstanding of justification. "How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" His point is that when we were saved, not only were we justified, declared to be right with God, but God also worked a change in our souls. He changed us at the most basic level, a change called regeneration. And so it can't happen. We died to sin. We died to the reign of sin; that's what we've discovered Paul means. We died to the rule of sin in our lives.

He then goes on, just having said that in verse 2, to give us a detailed explanation of it in verses 3 to 10. In these verses, he explains that what happened to Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection has happened spiritually to us. His work has been applied to us. At the moment of regeneration, your old man, the person you were before Christ, died spiritually with Christ just as Christ had died physically. And just as God raised Christ from the dead physically, you were raised at that moment of salvation to new spiritual life. You are, Christian, a new person in Jesus Christ. And the result of that is that the dominion or the rule of sin in your life was permanently broken; it was shattered. You now have a new power to overcome sin, both in its individual acts, and in its habits and patterns in your life.

Now that's the detailed explanation, verses 3 to 10, but we're considering the third part of this paragraph, and that is the practical application of the believer's death to sin. Paul, having explained the doctrine in verses 11 to 14, applies that truth. He gives us the implications of it in terms of how it should affect us.

Now, Paul's practical application of our death and resurrection with Christ comes in verses 11 to 14 in a series of five commands or imperatives. Let me show them to you so you see the flow of his thought. First of all in verse 11, here's the first imperative: "consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." That is not so much what you need to do; it's how you ought to think in light of the theology of the first ten verses. We looked at that in detail last week.

The second imperative comes in verse 12, and this is the primary command of what we are to do: "do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts." You say, "Well, how do I do that?" Well the next three, the final three imperatives here in this section, tell us how we should so act as to not let sin reign.

Notice the third imperative in verse 13, "do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness." There's imperative number three, and it's explaining how not to let sin reign.

The second imperative in verse 13 and the fourth altogether in this passage says, "present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead." And then verse 13 ends with this, present "your members as instruments of righteousness to God." So the three imperatives in verse 13 really explain how to do the imperative back in verse 12. That is, how not to let sin reign in your mortal body.

And then verse 14, you'll notice begins with the word *for*. This is the reason that this approach will work. It will work, verse 14, because "sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace." So that's the flow of Paul's thought; five imperatives and a reason.

Now last week, we examined the first of those imperatives. It's in verse 11, "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." Now as I noted for you last time, it's remarkable that that is the very first imperative, the first command in the entire letter to the Romans. And it is a foundational one. Understanding what Paul means here is absolutely crucial to the Christian life.

So we started last week by looking at what Paul does not mean, and let me just remind you in the broadest possible terms of what we discovered. We learned that Paul does not mean that you must deny reality. In other words, he's not urging you to play some sort of Christian mind game in which you pretend that you're dead to sin. And if you pretend it, then you can sort of live that way. It's not that. He's also not teaching that you create reality by your thinking. He is not saying if you will consider yourself to be dead to sin, then as a result, you will be dead to sin. That's not what he's saying. Nor is he saying you create reality by your actions. He's not saying, in this verse, it's your duty to die to sin. That's not what he is teaching.

So what does Paul mean in verse 11? Well, we looked at that verse in detail. Let me just give you the outline to remind you. We looked as we worked word by word, phrase by phrase through it, we looked first at the theological foundation behind verse 11. And that is what Paul had taught in the first 10 verses; that's why he begins verse 11, "Even so." In light of everything I've just taught you in the first 10 verses, even so, that's the foundation. Who's he talking to in verse 11? Well, I noted for you that in the Greek text it says, "even so you (plural) consider yourselves." Now, in context, the 'you' he's addressing are Christian people, those who have already been justified, those who have already been regenerated. This verse is for believers only, all Christians.

Then we looked at the command itself. It comes in the word *consider*. "Consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God." I noted for you the word *consider* is the word that's translated *credit* in chapter 4, and it's a word that speaks of reality. It's not pretend; it's something that's true, and you are simply to post it in your ledger because it is true, because it really exists. So what Paul is saying in verse 11 is this: as a result of the truth that I've explained to you in verses 1 to 10, I want you to come to this factual evaluation about yourself. Because it's true; you are dead to sin, dead to the reign of sin, dead to the rule of sin in your life. Sin is no longer your master, Christian.

And then he says, and you are "alive to God." You're no longer spiritually dead. God has given you life; it's the very life of God that's in you. And He has set his love upon you, and He's adopted you, and He will have you with Him eternally. You are alive to God. And I ended verse 11 by bringing out the only basis on which all of this is possible. He ends verse 11 with that little phrase, "in Christ Jesus." All of this is possible because of Christ.

Now verse 11 is foundational. That's a very brief review of what we looked at last week. If you weren't here last week, let me encourage you to go online and listen because verse 11 is really foundational to everything else we're going to learn in verses 12 to 14.

But today we come to Paul's second practical application of our union with Christ in His death and His resurrection. Notice verse 12, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body." Do not let sin reign in your mortal body. Now notice first of all the word *therefore*. It's one of Paul's favorite words. It's a word which tells us that he is about to draw out the logical implications of the doctrine he's been teaching. Now, what does *therefore* refer back to? *Therefore* in light of what? Well, he could simply be pointing back to verse 11. He could be saying something like this, "In light of the fact that you are to consider yourself as dead to sin and alive to God, therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body." That's possible, but I think it's more likely that the word *therefore* points back to the entire doctrinal foundation of verses 1 to 10. Paul is saying, "In light of your actual position – the fact that you are no longer a slave to

sin – do not let sin reign in your mortal body.” Now, before I unpack all that that means for us, I want to first, for a few minutes, step back from our text itself, and I want to give you some general considerations, some general observations or I could even say, general propositions about sanctification.

It occurred to me this week that it's been a long time since I've done something like this. And yet for us to really understand what Paul wants us to do here, you've got to understand a little more about sanctification as a whole. I'm going to give you several general propositions about sanctification. They're propositions that are actually in this passage; they're also in the entirety of Romans 6 and 7, I'll refer to those larger chapters as well, and they represent truths found throughout the New Testament. But I think again to fully appreciate what Paul is telling us to do in verses 12 to 14, we first have to have this framework. So let me give you a larger framework for understanding sanctification.

Number one, sanctification always grows out of an understanding of doctrine. This is clear here in this very passage. Verse 11, “Even so,” in light of all that I've taught you in verses 1 to 10, that rich profound, at times hard-to-grasp doctrine, in light of that, here's what I want you to do. Verse 12, “Therefore” in light of all of that doctrine, here's how I want you to act. Now, I hope you understand that what Paul does here in Romans 6 – that is drawing out several imperatives in verses 11 to 14 from a rich doctrinal discussion in the first 10 verses – this is Paul's normal method. This is what he always does.

So, Christian, let it sink into your head that this is the God-ordained way for Christians to grow. Sadly, there are Christians who think doctrine is worthless. Just give me the five steps. That's never the New Testament's way, and it will never be the way you grow either. The New Testament way is for you to understand the truth first and then to understand its implications and how you're to respond. This is always how sanctification works. If you doubt that, read the rest of Paul's letters; read the rest of the New Testament. Again and again you see that pattern. Ephesians: the first 3 chapters, doctrine. In the first 3 chapters of Ephesians there is one command: remember. And then the final three chapters, chapters 4, 5 and 6, are filled with commands, filled with imperatives – the implications of what he taught in the first three. This is Paul's method; this is God's method; this is the New Testament way. So let it sink into your head; you will never grow until your understanding of the truth grows.

Number two, sanctification is made possible by the work of Christ. It is of grace; we never earn sanctification; we never get there; we never earn it by our obedience or our efforts. At the heart of verses 1 to 10 is what? Christ! Christ's death, Christ's burial, Christ's resurrection. He's dealing with our growth as Christians and yet it's all tied back to Christ. It's only because we are united with Him in His work that freedom from the slavery of sin is possible just as freedom from the guilt of sin is possible through His work as well. Christ is responsible. His work lies

behind everything that happens to us: our regeneration, our receiving new spiritual life, as well as our justification, as well as our sanctification. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 1:30, Paul says, Christ has been made to us (what?) sanctification.

Number three, sanctification is completely a work of God. The New Testament again and again says this is something God has to do. It's said to be a work of the Father. In fact, that's hinted at even here in chapter 6. You'll notice in verse 4, "Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father." God is at work in Christ whose work becomes ours as part of regeneration and through justification and sanctification. So, the Father's work. In fact in John 17:17, Jesus prays to the Father and asks Him to sanctify us, so clearly it's the Father's work.

It's also the work of the Son. It's said to be His work in Hebrews. It's also here in this passage. What lies behind our regeneration and our sanctification in this passage is Christ. It's also the work of the Spirit. The Spirit isn't said to be doing this work, but notice verse 3 of chapter 6, how did we get immersed into Christ Jesus? How did we get united to him so all these things became ours? It's because we were immersed into Christ. Who did that? 1 Corinthians 12:13, "by one Spirit we were ...baptized into" Christ Jesus. It's a work of the Spirit. That's why there are passages like 1 Thessalonians 5:23 which says, "Now may the God of peace... [God in the entirety of His person] sanctify you entirely."

Folks, understand this: we cannot produce true biblical change in ourselves. You can modify your behavior. You can adjust your behavior. Unbelievers do that. But you can't change who you are. You can't change yourself at the most basic level. Only God can do that. Philippians 1:6 says, "He who began a good work in you" will be faithful to complete it (or to perfect it) "until the day of Jesus Christ."

Number four, and this is going to seem to contradict, but stay with me. Number four, sanctification always requires maximum human effort. Unlike salvation, sanctification is a synergistic work; salvation is monergistic, God alone works; He saves us. He raises us from the dead, gives us life. Sanctification is a synergistic work; I work and God works. So the way to pursue personal holiness is not some of the ways that you have heard. It's not to just to 'let go and let God; my problem is I'm working too hard, I just need to let God do this.' That's not a biblical mode of sanctification.

Nor is it the sort of popular idea right now of cross-centered sanctification, made really popular through the writings of Tullian Tchividjian. It is not that 'I just need to think about the cross more; that's all I need to do.' That's not what the New Testament says. You do need to apply the work of Christ; you do need to think about what he did, but that's not all you need to do. There are other commands.

Nor is sanctification something to just pray about. You know, I talk from time to time to believers who just, 'you know, I am just praying for God to take away this desire; I'm praying and praying and praying.' It's like, well, that's important, prayer is crucial. But that's not all that Scripture commands you to do about sanctification. In fact, here in this very text, Romans 6:11-13, there is a series of five imperatives. Sanctification is not a gift we receive without any effort on our part. Yes, God does it, but we must expend maximum effort. You say, "How do those two work together?"

Well, Paul has described it beautifully. Look at Philippians 2:12, "So then, my beloved," this passage is addressed to Christians; that's Paul's normal way of writing to those who are already saved, those who are already Christians. "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence." Here's our responsibility in sanctification; remember these are people who have already been justified, already saved; he's not saying work for salvation; he's saying work out your salvation, work out the implications of what God has done in you in salvation. In other words, he's talking about our sanctification. You're to work it out.

How do you work it out? You obey the commands of Scripture; you seek to live in obedience to the commands of Scripture; you expend maximum effort in pursuing obedience. Why should you do that? Verse 13, "for," here's why you should work at obedience; "for [because] it is God who is at work in you." You see how they fit together? You work; you expend maximum effort to seek to obey what God has told us to do; and as you do that, God is at work in you and what's God doing? Verse 13 says He "is at work in you both to will and to work..." You know what that means? God is working on your will, your desires, your resolve, your decisions, and your work, your capacity to do what you choose to do and resolve to do in the path of obedience, according to "...His good pleasure." You see, our effort doesn't earn or achieve our sanctification; it's still a work of God's grace. But as we expend maximum effort, God does in us what we could never do. God changes us at the core level.

Number five, sanctification is a process. It doesn't happen suddenly. Sanctification is not an event; it's not an experience. I grew up in a kind of teaching where you were saved, and then you sort of wandered around for a while until you reached a point your life where you were willing to surrender, to surrender yourself to God. And at that point of surrender, it's almost like a kind of a Methodist idea that you are sort of catapulted to a new level of spirituality. So you go from being a weak wandering Christian to boom, you know, in a moment's decision, you're now at a new level. That's not a biblical model of sanctification at all. It's not an experience. If you doubt that, trust me, you won't when we get to Romans 7:14 and following. Think about this. That describes, as I will argue, Paul's experience as he wrote the letter to the Romans, his struggle with sin was a current struggle. You and I resonate with that, don't we?

And yet think about it. Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ. And by the time he writes Romans, he had been a Christian for thirty years. No, it's not an event; it's not experience; it's a slow process. In fact, you know the most common metaphor in the New Testament for spiritual growth? Physical growth! It doesn't happen overnight; it is slow, at times imperceptible. Yes, there are spurts that happen just like physical growth can, you know, appear not to be there for a time and there's a spurt. But it's a slow gradual process, becoming a spiritual infant, to becoming a spiritual young man, to becoming a spiritual father, 1 John 2. It's a process.

Number six, sanctification is a constant, lifelong battle. It's not something that happens without a fight. In fact, I hate to tell you this, but let me be the bearer of some bad news: you will struggle with sin your entire life. That's why the commands in verses 11 and 12 here in Romans 6 are present tense imperatives. By the way, I don't mean you'll struggle at the same level you do now. You can grow in holiness, and you must grow in holiness, and there will be a decreasing pattern of sin. But the reality of sin, the battle with sin, will be there your entire life. The fact that the commands in verses 11 and 12 are present tense imperatives implies that these are not one-time events. It's not one and done. These are commands that you have to obey constantly throughout your Christian life. And again, Romans 7 will make this clear when we get there.

Number seven, sanctification is only complete when you die or Christ returns. In other words, get over the idea that there's going to be perfection in this life. This is not only the logical conclusion of the previous proposition that it's a lifelong battle, it's clear in verse 12. Look at verse 12 of Romans 6, Paul says, "Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts." You see the implication of that? As long as we are in this mortal body, the body you sit in right now, its lusts are going to try to make you obey, and you're going to have to fight that. That's why Hebrews 12:23 says it's the saints in heaven who are called "the spirits of the righteous made perfect." And of course, eventually we get our glorified bodies as well. It's only complete, you're only made perfect, when you die or Christ returns.

Number eight, sanctification must be pursued solely from the right motives. This is so important. Let me say it bluntly; we are all tempted, when it comes to the sin in our lives, to want it out of our lives for wrong reasons, and those reasons are often all about us. Listen, you shouldn't pursue holiness or sanctification in general – nor should you pursue getting rid of a specific sin in your life – simply for your happiness or for your personal comfort, to make your life an easier one, or because you don't like the shame that that sin brings into your life, or because you just want to be in control and you feel out of control because of the nature of that sin. Those are all bad reasons to pursue sanctification.

The proper motives for sanctification are motives like gratitude. Romans 12:1: I urge you, brothers because of the mercies of God (all the things he's talked about in the first 11 chapters)



to present your body and your mind to God. In other words pursue sanctification, pursue holiness out of gratitude.

Secondly, in this passage and I'll make more of this next week, because of service to God. Verse 13 says, "present yourselves to God." Do you realize the reason that you should pursue holiness and the reason you ought to have that sin out of your life is so that you can be a clean and fit vessel to serve God? It's not all about you and me; it's not all about our comfort and our happiness and our sense of well-being. It's also for the glory of God. Romans 11:36, as Paul finishes up the huge sweeping doctrinal plan of salvation in the first eleven chapters he says, "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things." And then he ends it this way, "To Him be the glory forever" and ever. Listen, your salvation, and your sanctification, is about God and bringing glory to God. 1 Peter 1:16-17 says, you ought to be holy. Does it say for your comfort, so you feel better about yourself? No, you ought to be holy because He is holy.

And number nine, finally, sanctification is guaranteed. It's guaranteed. Why is it guaranteed? Because it's the goal that God had in mind when He saved us! A very familiar text and I take us there often, but I want you to see it again. Romans 8:29, "For those whom [God] foreknew," that is those with whom He predetermined to have a relationship. That's the idea behind that word *foreknew*: those with whom He predetermined to have a relationship. This is election. Why? Why did He choose? Well, those whom He predetermined to have a relationship with, "He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His son."

Listen, when God decided to have a relationship with you, when God decided to save you, He had this purpose in mind, that you would exactly resemble ultimately the moral character of His own Son. Why? So that forever you would reflect His glory. You're a love gift from the Father to the Son, and the design is that you would perfectly reflect His moral character. Do you think God had that purpose and He's not going to accomplish that? It's guaranteed. It's going to happen. If you're a real Christian it will happen, as physical growth happens in this life. It will be a slow process that will happen, and some day He will bring it to perfection. When you die or when Christ returns, but it will happen. God will not let you, if you're a true Christian, He's not going to let you not be sanctified. That's the goal for which He saved you.

Now, as we walk through the specific commands that Paul lays out in Romans 6:12-14, you have to understand these commands in light of those nine propositions about sanctification. All of those are true as we look at these verses. But they provide the framework, the sort of structure, in which these commands make sense. So now, with that basic understanding, let's go back and look at our text.

Romans 6:12, and this is as far as we'll get today, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body." Therefore, in light of the truth that you're dead to sin, you're alive to God, that that's real,

that your life was radically altered at the moment of regeneration, “do not let sin reign in your mortal body.”

Now, notice Paul doesn't say *sins*, plural, he says *sin*, singular. He's not talking about individual sins. Instead, he personifies sin as a king. The king under whose sovereignty we all used to live. He says, “don't let sin reign.” The verb translated *do not let reign* simply means ‘to exercise authority, to be king, to rule.’ So he says don't let that former king of yours, don't let that king exercise authority over you; don't let him be a king in your life; don't let him rule you. And yet that is exactly what sin used to do to us. Look back at chapter 5, verse 21, before Christ sin reigned in our lives, where now grace reigns. Look at chapter 6 verse 17, “thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin,” When? Before Christ you were slaves of sin.

Do you understand that, Christian? You were a slave of sin. You thought you were free. Unbelievers think they're free; they think they're doing what they want. They're slaves. Jesus said the one who is committing sin is a slave of sin. They're slaves. They're kidding themselves. If you're here this morning and you're not in Christ, you've never repented of your sins and believed in Christ, listen, you can think you're as free as you want, but you're a slave. And if you doubt that, just try to change those sinful patterns in your life, and you will discover all too clearly how much of a slave you are. We were slaves of sin; the only hope is Christ. Look at verse 20, “For when you were slaves of sin,” this is all unbelievers, without exception. You say, “Well, what does that look like?” Well, in some peoples' lives, it looks more polite. Their slavery to sin may be self-righteousness. It may be thinking pretty good of themselves, trying to be generous, but being filled with pride, self-rule. For others, it might be the lowest of the low, living in the worst sins, the sins that even unbelievers look down on. It doesn't matter; slaves of sin.

But in regeneration, our slavery to sin was broken. Look at chapter 6, verse 6, our old self (the person that we were) was crucified with Christ at regeneration “in order that our body of sin might be done away with [and here was the reason God did all of this] so that we would no longer be slaves” of sin. God regenerated you. He devastated, shattered, the power of sin in your life so that you would no longer be a slave of sin. Verse 14, “sin shall not be master over you.” That's not a command; that's a promise for every Christian. It shall not be. We are dead to the rule of sin, and so Paul says, listen, if you're dead to sin, then don't let it reign as if it were still your king. Don't listen to it shout to you from across the road in that field where you used to live. Don't let it command you as though it still had some authority in your life; it doesn't. You know without this promise that the power of sin has been broken in our lives, the command in verse 12 would be a ridiculous command. As one commentator says, it would be like telling a drowning man, ‘simply swim to the shore and you'll be okay.’ It's impossible! You can't tell a person who is still a slave to sin, “don't let sin reign.” Verse 12 is only possible in the lives of Christians who have died to sin, for whose reign and in whose slavery they no longer dwell.

However, and here's the key, the reign of sin is over in our lives, but sin still dwells in us. Go over to chapter 7, verse 17, so now, Paul says, “no longer am I the one [sinning] but sin which dwells in me.” As a Christian, sin dwells in me. Verse 20, “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.” So while the reign of sin has been broken, the presence of sin is still a reality; sin is in me. Paul, by the way, is not excusing his sin; he’s not saying it’s okay because it’s not really me. He’s saying, no, it’s not my new self, the person that I’ve been made in Jesus Christ; it’s the part of me that remains unredeemed. But it’s still there; sin is still present.

Now if you're thinking with me, and I hope you are, you ought to be asking yourself this question: Tom, how can that be? How can sin still dwell in me – theoretically; we know that it does practically – but theoretically, how can sin still dwell in me if our souls have been made new?

Well, the answer is that sin’s base of operations is now our physical body. Look at verse 12, “Therefore do not let sin reign [what?] in your mortal body.” The word *mortal* simply means that which is subject to death. Every other place Paul uses that word, he's referring to these bodies that will die, the body you sit in right now. And the word *body* is the normal Greek word for the human body, the physical body. So, Paul here is telling us not to let sin reign in our physical bodies.

Now, hit the pause button for a moment; I need to remind you that our bodies are not inherently sinful. Jesus was born with a human body just like ours except for sin. Jesus now has a glorified body and always will. Someday we will get a glorified body like His. As humans, we were designed by God to be a two-part being, body and soul. And after our glorification, we always will be; we’ll never be separated again as death will do. So there's nothing fundamentally sinful about the body. In fact, even in this life in 1 Corinthians 6:20, Paul says we can glorify God in our bodies. But because sin now has its base of operations in our physical bodies, we must not let sin reign.

I love the way Morris says it in his commentary, “It's stupid to allow that which will die to have the supreme position in my life.” Don’t let sin reign in your mortal body. But specifically, what does that mean? What does he mean, “We should not let sin reign in our mortal body?” Well, the final line of verse 12 explains what he means. “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body [and this is what I mean] so that you obey its lusts.” Clearly he's talking about the lusts of the mortal body, or the lusts of the physical body. What is the word *lust*? Well, the Greek word is not like the English word in some ways. The word *lust* in Greek, *epithumia*, simply refers to a strong desire; it's a longing for what will give delight. It's a word that can be used positively; it's a word that is used of a longing for God. But most often it refers to sinful desires. So it's a word

that just means craving. So when you see the word *lust* in the New Testament, it usually does not mean only sexual lust; it can include that, but it doesn't just mean that. It's broader than that most of the time. Most of the time, it's any sinful craving. It's a craving for what God has prohibited or currently withheld. It's interesting, in fact, in the Septuagint, in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament in Exodus 20, the 10th commandment is translated with this word, "You shall not crave" or lust. We translate it *covet*.

So Paul then is not talking here about the normal desires of the body that are satisfied in God-honoring ways. For example, God gave you the desire for food. He gave your body a desire for sleep, for drink, for air, for sex in marriage. All of those things are good things and can be satisfied according to God's law. That's not what Paul is talking about here. He's talking about when the normal desires of the physical body become sinful lust. For example, when you desire something good but in excess. The normal desire for food can become the sin of gluttony. The normal desire for drink can become the sin of drunkenness. The normal desire for sleep can become the sin of laziness.

Also lust or desire, normal physical desires, can become lust when desired contrary to God's law. For example, there's nothing wrong with the desire for physical intimacy in marriage. God made us to have that desire. But when we seek to satisfy that desire outside of God's prescribed means for satisfying that within the constitutes of marriage, then it becomes lust; it becomes sin. Desire becomes lust when it's contrary to God's providence. For example, when you desire something that God hasn't chosen to give you. The children of Israel in Numbers 11:4 craved meat. This word, they craved it. It was sinful because that wasn't God's design for them at that time. Desire becomes lust, even an idol, when the thing craved becomes more important than God. So – the lusts of the body.

Now understand this: Paul has to mean more here than the sinful craving for food and sleep and sex; the sinful craving for those things. Or craving them in a sinful way. He has to mean other things. Why? Because, what about other sinful cravings, which we're tempted by, that have little relationship to the body? Sins like coveting, or the desire for personal glory, or the desire for status and power. Those don't appear to have any relationship to the body. Or what about other sins we struggle with that have little relationship to the body, such as worry or fear, anger, bitterness, envy, jealousy, selfishness? If our souls were made new in Christ, where do those sins come from within? And why does Paul say in 2 Corinthians 7:1, that we must "cleanse ourselves from all" filthiness of the body and spirit? How do you reconcile that with the fact that we're new in Christ? Here's the key. Our problem is that our regenerated souls are still attached to our unredeemed bodies. And what's the point of connection between the material part of you and the immaterial part of you? What is it? It's that piece of flesh between your ears, your brain. Your brain is the connecting point between the immaterial part of you and the material part of you. And your brain is physical. And, before Christ, our sinful souls etched sinful patterns of

thinking and behavior into the physical neural pathways of our brains. Sinful patterns that were part of us both through original sin and by our own thinking and behavior before Christ.

Let me see if I can illustrate this. And by the way, this is only to give you the big picture; don't press the details of this. I just want you to get the big idea. Imagine that you inherited a computer disk from wicked, ungodly parents. A computer disk. Of course the disk itself was not inherently bad; it's just a piece of equipment. But they had filled that disk with files and images and websites and music and movies and malware with all kinds of wickedness. When you were born you got your own computer, but they copied much of the content of their disk to your new computer. And as you grew, you turned out to be just like them, and so you enjoyed what they had downloaded onto your disk. But then you added your own sin to your computer. Then one day, you were wonderfully redeemed; you became a new person in Jesus Christ. But you have to use that same computer every day. And everywhere you look on that computer it's filled with patterns of your past sin, both in content and in the operating system. And although you are a new person, you are desperately trying to clean that computer up. It is a daily battle and it serves as a constant source of temptation. That computer is your physical brain. You inherited original sin including certain propensities from your parents. When you were born, that corruption was already permanently burned into your brain. Then over time, you added your own sinful patterns of thinking and behavior. And now your soul has become redeemed. You are a new person in Jesus Christ, but you're stuck using the same body and the same unredeemed brain filled with the corruption you inherited and the corruption you yourself added. Someday, God is going to give you a new body with a new computer. But until then you have to battle and work to clean that old disk day by bloody day, and you have to make sure you run it and it doesn't run you.

That brings us back to Paul's command. Look again at verse 12, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts." Make it your constant practice not to let sin reign again. Don't submit to the cravings of your physical body. Instead do what Paul did, 1 Corinthians 9:27, see how he turned the tables. Listen to this, "I discipline my body and make it my slave." These commands build on each other. Lord willing, next week we will see how we can "not let sin reign" in our mortal bodies, because Paul explains how in verse 13 which we will look at next week.

Let's pray together. Father, thank you for the amazing truths in this passage. We confess to you that these are mind-stretching truths for us. They are difficult at times for us to fully come to grips with, but I pray that you would help us to meditate on these things; to come to understand them, and then to believe you, and to act as Paul is encouraging us to act here, as you are encouraging us to act, through Paul. Father, help us. Help us to get it and help us to live in light of it. Father, I pray for the person here this morning who is still a slave to sin. Lord, help them to see the only freedom is in Jesus Christ because if your Son sets them free, they will, as He

said, be free indeed. May they come to you for cleansing, for forgiveness, for freedom, today.  
We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.