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VICTORY OVER SIN



What habits have you been happy to leave behind?

QUESTION #1

#BSFLvictory

THE POINT

Sin is no longer my master—Jesus is.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

I've been married for over 35 years, and that's been plenty of time for me to mess up. I mean really mess up. When I do make mistakes, I apologize and ask my wife to forgive me. Of course she forgives me, but there's more to it than that. She wants more than an apology. She wants my assurance that I'm not going to repeat the stupid thing I did in the first place. She wants repentance.

The term *repentance* literally means to "turn around" or "to change direction." Repentance is that U-turn in life when you realize you're headed in the wrong direction and you turn around to head back the way you should be going.

The Christian life is a life of repentance, but that repentance is so much more than just being sorry for what we've done! Seeking forgiveness is only the beginning. Christ has far more in store for us than a repeating cycle of failure and apology, followed by more failure and apology.

Christ gives us more than just forgiveness for sin. He gives us victory over sin. In Romans 6, Paul wrote about the difference.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Romans 6:4-7

⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. ⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— ⁷ because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

Baptism by immersion is important. We value it not because it's necessary for salvation, but because it symbolically expresses the deepest meaning of our salvation. In baptism, we are symbolically buried with Christ. Just as Christ died and was buried, we also "die" and are buried in at least two ways:

- ▶ We "die" because we recognize the penalty of our sinfulness. As Paul will point out later in this chapter, "The wages of sin is death" (v. 23).
- ▶ We "die" because we give ourselves totally to Christ. We place all our dreams, our hopes, and our plans on the altar before Him, dying to ourselves (see Luke 9:23).

Paul made an insightful application of these truths in verse 7: "Anyone who has died has been set free from sin." In other words, the wages of sin is death, but we have died with Christ; therefore, we are free from sin's debt. Dead people don't pay bills.

Dead people also don't respond to outward stimuli. In the same way, followers of Christ no longer respond to the pressure of temptation. We are now dead in Christ, and the enticements of temptation have no effect on us. Dying, however, is just the first step.

Which statements in this passage do you find most encouraging? Why?

QUESTION #2

THE POINT

Sin is no longer my master—Jesus is.

PICTURING SIN

Which of the following images best illustrates how sin impacts your life? Once you've selected your image, use the margins on this page to record why you made your choice.



What's one way Jesus has helped you gain victory over sin?

Romans 6:8-11

⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰ The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹ In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Christ calls us not only to die to our old lives, but also to live fully for Him in our new lives. Just as we're buried with Christ in our baptism, we're raised to our new life in Him. This new life in Christ is modeled on His new life after His resurrection from the tomb. Death is a major consequence of sin, but in Christ we are free from death!

In a sense, Paul repeated himself throughout this section, which is what good teachers often do. Paul desired for this incredible truth to sink in: that Christ died once and for all, covering by His sacrifice the sin debt every human owes. His death made our life possible, and His gift of life is richer and deeper than we could imagine.

Because of Christ's death and subsequent resurrection, "he lives to God." Absolutely everything in Christ's life is God-focused. Jesus is the complete victor over our sin and over death, so He now lives in constant, unbroken fellowship with God the Father.

And here's the best news: thanks to Jesus, we can also live in unbroken fellowship with God, as well.

Unfortunately, we often find it hard to live like Jesus. In Christ, we're dead to sin, but sin doesn't always seem dead to us!

When Paul told us to "count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus," he used a legal and business term. To "count" is simply to deal with the facts. An accountant doesn't balance a spreadsheet as she wishes; she considers the numbers in front of her and renders a truthful "bottom line" based on those numbers.

Disciples of Jesus are dead to sin. Why, then, do we still struggle with sin?

QUESTION #3

The bottom line for disciples of Jesus is that we're dead to sin but alive to God in Christ. Those are the facts. Therefore, sin no longer has any authority over our lives. Sin can't make us do anything. We no longer have to be trapped in this endless cycle of guilt and shame, of promising to do better only to fail again.

We are free!

Romans 6:12-14

¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³ Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

All of this begs an important question: why do we still sin? The answer is that knowing we're dead to sin and living like it are two different things.

In verses 12-13, Paul instructed us on how to act on the knowledge that we are dead to sin. He was essentially saying, "Quit choosing to sin!" We're not to let any part of ourselves—our bodies, our minds, or our hearts—harbor desires for things that are not of God.

Paul wrote this partly to correct a false teaching in the early church that totally separated the body from the spirit. According to these false teachers, only the spiritual life was important; the body didn't matter. Consequently, if a person was really spiritual, then he could do whatever he wanted to do in his physical body without affecting his spirituality.



***As believers,
what help can we
expect to receive
when fighting sin?***

QUESTION #4

In today's world, a lot of Christians still live that way. For instance, many people try to justify viewing pornography by saying: "I'm not hurting anyone. No one will ever know. This is my little private sin." That just isn't so. Sin's effects and consequences are both incremental and deadly:

- ▶ What the eyes see, the mind remembers.
- ▶ What the mind remembers, the heart desires.
- ▶ What we desire becomes what we do.
- ▶ What we do determines who we are.

Sin, no matter how private we think it may be, always has public consequences. And sin—no matter how "small" we convince ourselves it is—affects our relationship with God. For this reason, Paul said we are not to offer any parts of our bodies or our lives for sin's use.

Instead, Paul instructed us to "offer yourselves to God ... and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness." As we daily surrender ourselves to Christ, He not only gives us the power to overcome temptation; He also continually works in us to heal our desires. He makes us more like Himself.

Of course, we're called to do more than avoiding sin as we make our way through life, which is why Christ offers us more than forgiveness. Christ died not only for our forgiveness, but also for our freedom—freedom from condemnation, from our past, from our sins. We're now free to love, forgive, and serve as He did. We're free to have His joy.

Christ has so much in store for your life. Make sure you get it all!

How can we help one another live out the freedom Jesus has made available to us?

QUESTION #5

LIVE IT OUT

Through Christ, we have victory over sin. How will that be evident in your life this week? Consider taking one of these steps:

- ▶ **Confess.** Give your sin to Christ—no matter how small you consider it. Acknowledge that Christ is your Lord and Master, and choose to live in victory in Him.
- ▶ **Remove.** Evaluate your life for habits, routines, or relationships that pull you into sin. Create a plan for removing them or limiting their power over you.
- ▶ **Team up.** Partner with another believer and support each other in saying “no” to sin and “yes” to Jesus. Make a practical plan to connect regularly and remind each other that sin is no longer the master; Jesus is.



We're all going to make mistakes as followers of Christ. We're all going to struggle against the corruption of sin until we see Him face-to-face. Yet we're no longer defined by that struggle. We are victorious over sin because we ultimately belong to Jesus.

My thoughts

Share with others how you will live out this study: **#BSFLvictory**