

SESSION 3

VICTORY OVER SIN

▶ **The Point**

Sin is no longer my master—Jesus is.

▶ **The Passage**

Romans 6:4-14

▶ **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.

▶ **The Setting**

In Romans 6, Paul related what Christ has done for us in His atoning death and glorious resurrection with what believers are then to do—prevent sin from reigning over them and live their lives for God. What believers are in *position*, they are to become in *practice*. Through union with Christ, we no longer are dominated by sin. We now share in the resurrected life of Christ.

What does the Bible say?

Baptism into death (v. 4)—Describes the believer's total identification with Christ's death for sin. Believers are baptized into Christ's death so they "may live a new life."

Count (v. 11)—The Greek word is a bookkeeping metaphor; it invites reasoning and refers to making a calculation. It is to count on something as a fact.

Reign (v. 12)—Meaning "to rule" or "to have dominion." Paul used the term metaphorically of the reign of sin (see v. 12), grace (see 5:21), and righteousness (see v. 17).

Romans 6:4-14

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.

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.

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.

GET INTO THE STUDY



10 minutes

Notes



DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 29 of the PSG: **“What habits have you been happy to leave behind?”**

GUIDE: Call attention to “The Point” on page 30 of the PSG: **“Sin is no longer my master—Jesus is.”**

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Remind group members that the term *sin* literally means “to miss the mark.” To illustrate that definition, set up a target

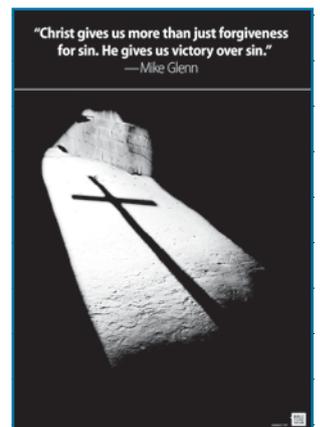
in one corner of your meeting space. Challenge group members to line up away from the target and attempt to hit it with a projectile of your choice—a soft ball, paper airplanes, crumpled up pieces of paper, and so on.

Note: If the above activity would not be appropriate for your group members and/or your meeting space, you could also illustrate the concept of “missing the mark” by asking trivia questions of your group members.

GUIDE: Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 30 of the PSG. Introduce the importance of repentance by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read on their own.

LEADER PACK: Display Pack Item 3, “Christ Gives Us More,” to help illustrate the truth that Jesus gives us victory over sin.

PRAY: Transition into the study by confessing that you “miss the mark” of God’s standard many times each day. Ask for conviction from the Holy Spirit as you and your group members take a deeper look at Christ’s victory over sin.



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Romans 6:4-7 Commentary

Jesus frees us from slavery to sin.

[Verse 4] Paul asserted that believers had died to sin because of their identification in their baptism into Christ's death (see Rom. 6:1-3). Such a **baptism** burial marked both the end of the old life and the start of a new way of life in which believers are to walk or conduct themselves.

This **new life** is a life no longer dominated by sin, but rather a life lived empowered by God's Spirit (see 7:6), based on the spiritual power derived from Christ's resurrection. Believers are both summoned to a new way of life and empowered to live such lives because we have participated in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Both Christ's past resurrection and believers' future resurrection are the result of God's power (**the glory of the Father**).

[Verse 5] Being **united** with Christ indicates that the believer's new life is derived from Christ. That we **have been united** further emphasizes that such was not our original condition but what we have become. The Greek perfect tense of the verb indicates such union is permanent. While the believers' **death** is not the same as Christ's, it is **a death like his**, or similar to it. Christ's death was real and so is our death. Our union with Christ involves a real death to our former manner of life and a real resurrection to a new way of life.

[Verses 6-7] All the **old self** stood for (what we were before our conversion) and over which sin ruled has been defeated. The past tense of the term in the Greek emphasizes the decisive end of the old self. It was not just a part of our old nature that was **crucified with** Christ; it was our complete old self—the whole of it!

This death of the old self was **so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with and that we should no longer be slaves to sin**. Human bodies are not in themselves sinful, but sin so dominated our fallen beings that our bodies belonged to sin. We were enslaved to sin. **No longer** emphasizes what we were until we died with Christ—but also reminds us of the great deliverance we have experienced since coming to Christ.

In dying with Christ, the believer **has been set free from sin**. Being crucified with Christ has disabled our sinful self and resulted in our rescue from sin's slavery. When Paul wrote that such a person has been set free from sin, he literally wrote, "has been justified [or acquitted] from sin." Christ's death was atoning and justifies all who believe in Him.

It is this justification that frees us from slavery to sin. Those who have died with Christ are no longer answerable or obligated to their old master—sin. The believer is now free to live for God. He or she can still *choose* to sin, but the believer is no longer a *slave* to sin.

mean we will no longer commit sins, but that we are no longer enslaved to sin or dominated by it.

Second, believers are to count themselves **alive to God**. The believer's life is now redirected, focused on God in service and in a desire to please Him. All of this is possible because believers are **in Christ Jesus**, an expression that again recalls the union believers have with Christ (see Rom. 6:5). It reminds us our new life is not due to ourselves but because of Christ.

Jesus not only frees us from sin, He makes us spiritually alive!

Romans 6:12-14 Commentary

Our lives are to reflect that we are in Christ.

[Verse 12] Paul exhorted his readers, **do not let sin reign in your mortal body**. That sin can **reign** over believers may seem strange in light of the fact that Paul had just stated that believers were set free from sin's power (see v. 7) and that believers could now live a new life (see v. 4). But **sin**—as a power—can still reign in the lives of believers if they allow it to. That believers are united with Christ, that believers are buried and raised with Christ, does not mean they are freed from either the temptations of sin, their own spiritual limitations, or their own fallen desires.

By speaking of the body as **mortal**, Paul subtly hinted that, in contrast to the life lived for God, this body that responds to sin is passing away. It also reminds us that as long as we are in these mortal bodies, we are susceptible to **desires**. The word is neutral, being used of good desires as well as evil desires. Obviously, Paul had evil desires in mind here.

[Verse 13] Paul also commanded believers not to **offer** any parts of their bodies **to sin as an instrument of wickedness**. **Offer** was used of sacrificial offerings. **Instrument** could be translated as “weapon” or “tool.” **Wickedness** refers to unrighteousness. Instead, believers were to offer themselves and all the parts of their bodies to God **as an instrument of righteousness** because they were **brought from death to life** spiritually. The Greek verb tense in Paul's exhortation for believers to offer themselves to God indicates a decisive act, a deliberate commitment.

[Verse 14] **Sin shall no longer be your master** is not a command; it is an assurance based on everything Paul had stated to this point. Sin will not rule over believers because they are not under **law**, trying in their own power to do right and be righteous before God. Rather, believers are under **grace**. The two are mutually exclusive. Grace is God's free gift, unmerited and undeserved. It is not earned. We contribute nothing to experiencing it. Grace enables the believer to live a life devoted to God and His ways. Grace includes all the believer has experienced through Christ—justification, baptism into Christ and His death, and new life.

With these words, Paul ended the argument he had begun in Romans 6:1. There, the question was asked if being under grace encouraged sin. Now Paul came full circle. He wrote that, to the contrary, grace opposes, discourages, and overcomes sin. Those born of God, those who have experienced the death of their old sinful self, are new creations who live new lives seeking to glorify God and not themselves. This is what grace does in the lives of believers. It allows us to live lives that reflect who we are in Christ. As believers, we are to live as Christ-followers—freed from sin, spiritually alive, denying our old sinful self, and obeying God. In Christ, we have victory over sin.

To learn more about this topic, read “A New Way of Life” and “Slavery in the First Century” in the Spring 2017 issue of Biblical Illustrator. Previous Biblical Illustrator articles “Mortality and Immortality in First-Century Thought” (Winter 2013-2014) and “Baptismal Practices in the Early Church” (Summer 2004) relate to this lesson and can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at LifeWay.com/biblicalillustrator.

