

You Can Overcome Sin - Only God's Way Romans 6:1-4; 8:2-4

The gospel is good news, not partially but totally. The tragedy is that most Christians know only half of the good news of the gospel, namely, that Jesus Christ forgives the sins of those who repent. What most Christians do not know is that Jesus not only forgives sin but in His death, burial and resurrection, He has broken the power of sin, and imparts to the true believer the power not to sin, but to live or walk in newness of life through the power of His resurrection (Romans 6:1-4).

Historically, Christians have invented or devised ways to overcome their sins, basically through their own resolve or determination. The main approaches to handling sins have been as follows:

1. Legalism - I can be holy and please God by obeying laws. Sin is a list of "do's" and "don'ts".
2. Monasticism - Avoiding sin by seclusion from the world (monastery).
3. Isolationism - (solitude) - secluding oneself from everyone. Simeon Stylites sat atop a high pole for 30 years.
4. Mysticism - belief that God can zap you with an experience, which makes you suddenly holy.
5. Suppressionism - By sheer will power suppressing the desire until one attains a state of spiritual neutrality or passivity. Buddhist and Hindus call this the ultimate state of Nirvana.
6. Activism - Staying so busy that sin is not such a great problem. However, activism has been proven to be an anesthetic to assuage the pain of an empty life.
7. Eradicationism - The view that there is a second work of grace, whereby the believer is entirely sanctified through the removal of the Adamic nature and does not sin at all (true Wesleyans, Nazarenes, some Holiness groups).
8. Libertinism - grace bestows license to sin.
9. Moderationism - the belief that some sin is inevitable but that one should limit his sin but can commit acts of sins because of God's grace.
10. Confessionalism - the belief that sin is inevitable, the only answer being perpetual confession and forgiveness. Those who follow this approach quote 1 John 1:9 only partially, namely they claim God's forgiveness, and almost universally ignore His cleansing (the removal of the very stains of sin, so that the forgiven person will not keep on repeating the sins he confesses constantly). I call 1 John 1:9 "The Protestant Confessional."

None of the above approaches to sin are God's way of handling sin, and though sincere people do these things, none are ever free from sin in so doing. Why? Because they are following man made theories of how to conquer sin rather than God's way. Nonetheless God says, "Every true Christian can overcome sin -

God's way. If you would overcome yourself, God says there are 5 steps you must take:

1. You must **Realize** you are dead to sin's penalty (eternal death) and sin's power through your identification with Christ who paid sin's penalty, and also broke its power in His death and resurrection. Paul illustrates this glorious truth by pointing to immersion baptism, stating that the Christian is "buried with Him by baptism into death" (Romans 6:4) - death to sin's penalty and death to sin's power. This is not accomplished by the waters of baptism; the water is but the outward symbol of the reality. The actual baptism into His death is accomplished by the Holy Spirit when one is regenerated or born again. Read 1 Cor. 12:13 for further clarification.
2. You must **Reckon** - therefore yourself to be dead to sin and alive to God through Jesus Christ. (6:11) The word reckon does not mean to hope so or wish, but it means, "to account as an accomplished fact". The vb. "reckon" is present imperative, meaning the Christian should constantly affirm in his heart and thinking that he does not have to commit any sin tempting him because he is dead through Christ to that sin and alive unto God to live a holy life. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." (Prov. 23:7) Thus as long as you think you must sin, you will sin, but when you think you do not have to sin, you have laid the psychological foundation not to sin. Note this: Paul does not command us "to feel" as we are dead to sin, or even to "understand" it fully, but to act on His word. Reckoning is a matter of faith, which issues in action. Ex: it is like endorsing a check. If we really believe the money is in the bank, we will sign our name and collect the money. Reckoning is not claiming a promise. but acting on a fact. So God tells us Christians that we are dead to sin and alive unto God, then commands us to act on it. Illustration: A dead person cannot respond to sin. If a drunk dies, he can no longer be tempted by alcohol because his body is dead to all physical senses. He cannot see the alcohol, smell it, taste it, or desire it. In Jesus Christ we have died to sin so that we no longer want to "continue in sin." But we are not only dead to sin: we are also alive in Christ. We have been raised from the dead and now walk in the power of His resurrection. We walk in "newness of life" because we share His life. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I Live" (Gal. 2:20)

This tremendous spiritual truth is illustrated in the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11). When Jesus arrived at Bethany, Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days; so there was no question about his death. By the power of His word ("Lazarus, come forth!") Jesus raised His friend from the dead. But when Lazarus appeared at the door of the tomb, he was wrapped in grave clothes. So Jesus commanded, "Loose him, and let him go!" He had been raised to walk

“in newness of life.” In John 12, Lazarus was seated with Christ at the table, in fellowship with Him. Dead - raised from the dead - set free to walk in newness of life - seated with Christ: all of these facts illustrate the spiritual truths of our identification with Christ as given in Ephesians 2:1-10.

Realizing reckoning alone will not conquer sin; we must act upon what we realize is true and what we reckon is true.

3. You must **Release** the individual parts of your body to God to use as instruments of righteousness. " Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye shall obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Romans 6:12-14) Thus you are to yield your eyes, ears, hands, feet, tongues, voice, sex organs, etc. The vb. yield means, "to place at God's disposal, to present, to offer as a living sacrifice, and to do this once -for-all and continually. That "once-for-all" is described in Romans 12:1-2.

Practical application: the body is not sinful, but it is through the venue of the body that sin enters into our lives. So look at every part of your body and yield totally that part which wants to sin to God. Paul's concept of sanctification, then, is then not a daily dying to ones self. It is rather being mature enough to rest wholly on the finished work of Calvary, knowing that we have been justified there, daily reckoning that work to be finished, and constantly yielding ourselves to be used by God. When one is obedient to these commands, the believer finds himself on a road climbing progressively toward the resurrection life of the Lord. For those who seek sanctification in this manner, the Lord has a definite promise: For sin shall not have dominion over you.

4. You must **Not Rationalize** that one act of sin is tolerable. (Roman 6:15-18) "What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey: whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine, which was delivered to you. Being then made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness."
5. You must **Rejoice** in your freedom from both the penalty of sin (you can't go to hell) and the power of sin (you can live a holy life under the Lordship of Christ)

6. You must **Rely** on the Holy Spirit to liberate you. Romans 8:2-4: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Sin is so powerful that Paul calls it "the law of sin and death," meaning the tendency to sin is the abiding principle of the old nature. But in Romans 8:2, Paul says that Jesus has established through His death and resurrection a greater law, which overcomes bondage to sin.

Illustration: Bernoulli's Principle allows a plane that weighs several tons to overcome the universal law of gravity when the right conditions are met. When an airplane reaches a certain forward velocity, the airflow over the curved upper surface of a wing produces less downward pressure than the upward pressure produced by the airflow past the bottom surface of the wing. This produces "lift." Bernoulli's principle defeats the law of gravity. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus likewise sets us free from the law of sin and death!