

Our Struggle with Sin (part 2)

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[0:00] Well, what does it mean to be in Christ? That's the aim of our study in this book, Life in Christ, by Edward Donnelly. We started out by seeing that all people are hanging on one of two men, either in Adam or in Christ.

And we've been asking, what does it mean to be in Christ? What practically does that mean? What are the blessings that come to us? And we saw that to be in Christ is to have him as our representative so that all that he did is counted as mine.

So if I'm in Christ, there's therefore now no condemnation for me, for those who are in Christ Jesus. So I'm justified. I'm right with God. That's the glorious benefit of being in Christ.

But then last week or two weeks ago, we began to see that this reality of being in Christ has ramifications for our sanctification as well and how we deal with sin in the Christian life.

Let's open to Romans chapter 6, which is the passage that we were considering and we didn't get all the way done. Whatever Christ has done, he has done not as an individual, but for his people.

[1:26] So when he died, it wasn't just for himself. It was for his people. So his death is our death. His resurrection is our resurrection. And all the way through Romans 6 here, we're met with that truth.

Christ's death for sin has forever changed the believer's relationship to sin. You're no longer related to sin in the same way that you were before you were attached to Christ.

How has Christ forever changed your relationship to sin? In what ways has it changed? Freedom from the penalty of sin.

All right. And that's that's justification. The penalty of sin is condemnation. There's therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. So to be in Christ is to be set free from the penalty of sin. What else does it mean, Raj? OK, freedom from the power of sin. And that's what we're studying in Romans 6. Freedom from the power of sin in that it no longer has any power of temptation.

[2:37] Is that what it means? That sin no longer bothers the Christian? OK. What do you mean by freedom from the power of sin then? OK.

All right. Good. We're set free from the reign, the dominion of sin. And another way then? Freedom from the penalty of sin, the power of sin.

There's another P. The presence of sin. To be in Christ is to be set free from the presence of sin. Is that benefit enjoyed here and now by the Christian?

Are you free from the presence of sin? No. Will you one day? Yes. And you will be free from sin's presence because of your union with Christ.

Because you're in Christ. So some of the blessings of salvation are for the here and now. Some are for the next life. Being united to Christ has brought you eternal life.

[3:41] We possess part of it in promise now, but there's much more in heaven. So there's the already and not yet aspects of our union with Christ.

So we're looking at that second way that our relationship to sin has been forever changed. We're no longer under the power of sin. Now that's a done deal.

That's a fact. The chains of sin have been broken. We are free to go. It no longer is our master. That's the reality.

Whether you feel like it or not. No matter how strong sin feels or how weak it feels, the reality is Christ died to sin. You are therefore dead to sin's reign. So that's the good news.

And he makes that point here in the first 11 verses of Romans or the first 10 verses of Romans 6.

[4:36] So then he comes to the application. What does this all mean to us? It's one thing to say I'm dead to the reign of sin, but I still feel the power of its temptation. What am I to do? And we found the very three R's.

The first is reckon. Reckon yourself to be dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God. Count it to be so, as verse 11 says. Count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ. So you are dead to sin's reign. So count on it as such. Reckon it as such. Think of yourself as such. That's the first and most critical thing.

And we spent most of our time there because it has to do with our whole image of ourself. How do you view yourself? I'm a dead to sin man. And we need to see ourselves as such. And then live in the light of it. Before we go on to the second R, Mark asked that question last week. That sounds like a lot of positive thinking. Just remind yourself that you're dead to sin and then live in the light of it.

[5:45] Like a lot of the positive thinking of our day. You are wonderful. You have all the abilities within you to do anything you set your mind to. Keep telling yourself that and then live.

And you'll be a much better person. And we saw that these things differ. That what we're talking about telling ourselves is true. Whereas what the world is telling itself are lies.

And we saw the one builds up God and the other builds up man. But you know they are on to something.

And this is what I want to say before we leave that question. The positive thinking gurus are on to something that is biblical. And should we be surprised at that? Do not errors and heresies often have a part of the truth?

Is that not what makes them so dangerous? That what they say sounds biblical. Because some of it is biblical. But then they give it a twist. It ends up making it diabolical.

[6:47] And so the truth that they're on to is that we need to talk to ourselves. We need to tell ourselves certain things. Now what they're telling us to tell ourselves is wrong.

But that we are to talk to ourselves is right. It's a biblical principle. You read the Psalms and David's talking to himself all the time, isn't he? Bless the Lord.

Oh my soul. He's looking at himself. Self, bless the Lord. Why? Well I'll tell you why. He forgives all your sins. And he heals all your diseases.

And he's talking to himself. And it's reminding himself of certain truths and doctrines and realities that changes his whole emotional outlook on life.

He's praising the Lord then. And he's talking to himself. You see the same in Psalm 63 when David's low. And why art thou downcast within me, O soul?

[7:46] He's asking himself that. Do you talk to yourself? Do you ask yourself questions? Why are you so depressed, John? Put your hope in God. And so the self-help, these positive thinkers are right in that they are telling their devotees to talk to themselves and tell themselves certain things.

Let us not throw that out. Let's not throw the baby out with the bathwater. The reality is that that's a biblical principle. And we need to lay hold of it. Paul is telling us, make use of that.

Reckon yourself dead to sin. See yourself as dead to sin. Any questions before we move on or comments? That's all by way of review.

It's been a couple weeks. All right. We'll shift gears then into the second R. We first reckon it to be so. We're dead to sin's reign. And now we refuse.

That's the second. Refuse. Verse 12 of Romans 6. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

[8:58] You see, refuse in there. Don't let it. Refuse to let it reign. Refuse to serve your old master. Sin used to be our master, but in Christ it's a dethroned master now.

It's been torn from the throne. Verses 6 and 7. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with.

That is rendered powerless. That we should no longer be slaves to sin. Because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

That's the reality. We're no longer slaves. But sin still tries to usurp the authority in our life. It still tries to play the master. It's like someone that has been put off the throne, but he keeps fighting to get back on the throne.

And so he keeps acting like a king and acting like a master and treating you like a slave. And we must continually say a sharp no to sin as it comes around, commanding us to give it obedient service.

[10:14] Titus 3, 11 and 12, for the grace of God that brings salvation, teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions.

That's what the grace of God will teach you. It will teach you first that sin is not your master. And then it will teach you, therefore say no, when sin comes knocking. Refuse it. That's like Joseph when Potiphar's wife said to him, come to bed with me. But he refused. Genesis 39, 8.

He refused. That's exactly what Paul is talking about. Don't let it rain over you. He refused. And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even to be with her. So Christ within us, the one I'm attached to, enables me to say no to ungodliness and temptation and worldliness.

[11 : 15] And the quicker we say it, the less power the temptation will have over us. You've seen that? You give in a little bit and you linger. Sin's temptation's power grows.

So the quicker we refuse, the better off we are. So don't let sin reign such that you obey it. Rather, be who you are. You're not a slave to it, so don't behave like one. Don't live as if you were. John Murray says that to tell a slave who has not been set free, do not behave as a slave, would be to mock his enslavement.

There he is. He's a slave. You can do no other. And to tell him, don't behave as a slave. It's just to make fun of him. See, you can't do anything but behave as a slave.

But to say the same to a slave who has been set free is the very thing that he needs to put into effect the privileges and rights of his freedom.

[12 : 21] In Christ, we've died to sin. We've been taken out of the realm of sin's reign. And so we're told, behave like it. Imagine a slave in the South just days after President Lincoln declared that the slaves were forever free.

What is reality? Objective reality. Whether the slave knows it or not. He's a free man, right? Emancipation proclamation.

He's a free man. He can come and go as he pleases. That man is no longer his master. So that's reality. But one day as he walks across the street, he sees his old master.

And he raises his hand and says, come here, boy. And he immediately jumps and starts to come across the street to his master.

Why? Why does he do that? He's been set free. The proclamation has been made. Well, he's had a whole life of saying, yes, sir. Yes and no, sir.

[13 : 24] And doing whatever his master says. And so there's that knee-jerk reaction. Yes, he's ready to do what his master says.

But then he remembers Lincoln's proclamation. This slave has heard of it. He's read it. Or someone's read it to him. And so he stops and says to himself, wait a minute.

That man is no longer my master. I don't have to obey him. And so he says, no. And he turns around and walks away. He's a free man. And he acts like one.

He's no longer a slave to that master. And he no longer kowtows to him. He refuses him. Now that's it. When sin comes calling, you must remember who you are in Christ.

You're no longer its slave. You're dead to him as a master. So refuse him. That's verses 12 and 13. Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

[14 : 27] Do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness. And all because of who you are in Christ. A free man. So let's refuse.

Reckon yourself to be dead into sin. Do you see why it's important to know Bible doctrine? To know the Emancipation Proclamation? To know I'm free in Christ?

How important would that be to that slave to know that? Well, it's the difference between him saying, yes, sir, and following his master's commands. And the difference between him saying, no. I'm not going to obey you anymore.

And so with the Christian, doctrine is so important. We need to know. Union with Christ sets us free from sin's reign. So that we can refuse sin when it comes calling. Reckon, refuse.

And then thirdly, Donnelly says, rededicate. Rededicate. It's not just something negative to do. Just refuse sin. No, there's something positive as well.

[15 : 24] Verse 13. There's the negative and then there's the positive. Do not. Here's the negative. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness. That's refuse. But rather, offer yourselves to God.

As those who have been brought from death to life. And offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. When a slave dies, he no longer needs to obey his master, obviously.

Does he? He's free then from his master. Well, we've died, you see, to sin. When Christ died, we died. So we no longer have that obligation to sin.

But we've been raised again. Now to live for God. For a new master. And so, offer the parts of your body to him.

And offer yourself to God. As those who have been brought from death to life. In death, we died to the old master. In being raised to new life, we've been raised to a new master.

[16:34] Even our gracious God. So, rededicate yourself to him. Offer yourself to him. That's the idea of rededication. It's the idea of sacrifice. You make an offering to him.

And Romans 12 reminds us that the offering is you. Your body. All that you are in your redeemed humanity. In light of God's mercies. Offer yourselves to God as a living sacrifice.

Place yourself and all that you are on the altar. In glad submission to your merciful new master.

Lord Jesus, here I am. I'm no longer sin's slave.

I'm now your slave. To serve righteousness. Here are the parts of my body. That once served sin. Now they're there to serve you. My tongue.

My eyes. My ears. My feet. My hands. My all. Let it be for your service. So, that's something that you do. You offer yourself to God.

[17:34] Now, do you do that once? Or do you not need to do it every day? Here I am, Lord. Take me. Use me. It's not something we do once or twice at a special meeting.

Some theologies would teach that. That you become a Christian. But if you really want to go deep in your Christian life, you need to rededicate your life to Christ at some point. And many testimonies go that way.

And it's like you come to the altar and you rededicate your life. But we keep crawling off the altar, don't we? And we keep grabbing things for ourselves.

And so this is something we do continually. Yes, there's a definitive once for all in which we offer ourselves. But then there's that over and over giving ourselves up to God.

And the passage then ends with a liberating promise. And I remind you it's a promise. It's not a command. Verse 14. It's not a command.

[18:36] Maybe our translation makes it look like a command. But it's not. It's not an imperative mood in the Greek. It's the indicative. For sin shall not be your master.

Because you are not under law, but under grace. He's not saying now you make sure sin is not your master. He tells us that we're to refuse it and not let it master us.

In verses 13 and 12. But now he's saying here's the reason why you should refuse it. Because sin shall not. It will not be your master.

Why? Because you're not under law, but under grace. This is the emancipation proclamation of Jesus Christ.

You're no longer under the law as a covenant of works in Adam to where sin is your master. You are now under the covenant of grace in which sin is no longer your master, but Jesus himself is.

[19:33] And being in Christ, you have all the resources of his life available to you so as to not serve sin. So that's what we are as Christians.

We're in Christ. United with him in his death. And these are the glorious realities of it. Can you see then why the suggestion at verse 1 is so ludicrous?

Shall what then, shall we say? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may abound? How can a dead to sin man even consider such a proposition?

To go on sinning? Shall I just go on sinning? No, I'm dead to sin. And that's his whole point. So we need to remember who we are in Christ.

No longer in Adam, but in Christ. Realize it and live in the light of it. Reckoning it so. Refusing sin. Rededicating ourselves to God. Martin Luther, or not Martin Luther, Jones.

[20:36] Martin Lloyd-Jones said of Romans 6, this passage we've studied. He said, personally, I found my new understanding of it to be one of the most liberating experiences in my Christian life.

And that's one of the reasons we're studying this book together. I found it to be such a liberating, refreshing study in my own reading of this book. And I trust that God will lead us into greater expressions of liberty from sin as we realize who we are in Christ.

Any questions or comments before we go on to chapter 3 this morning? All right?

Yeah, Raj? Well, that's excellent.

What would you say to that slave who says, I can't help it. And he went and followed that master.

[21:57] You say, well, yes, you can. Here, look. He says, you're a free man. You don't have to follow that master anymore. So this I can't help it is just an excuse, isn't it?

Any time we say to ourselves or to Christ or to each other, well, I can't help it. I know I shouldn't be sinning, but I can't help it.

What are we doing? We're making an excuse. You can't help it. Christ has forever broken the chain of sin. So if you say, I can't help it, you're saying, I don't want to break that relationship with sin. Christ has broken it. You need to enter into the glory of it, the reality of it. Yes, we often say, I can't, I can't, I can't.

And the reality is you can. Your relationship to sin has forever been changed because of what Christ has done. We need to apply that to any of our addictions.

[22:59] It may feel like we can't stop it, but God says in Christ you can. C.J. Miller says the person who says he can't really, he can't stop, really does not want to stop.

The day he wants to stop, he does. But until he really wants to be changed, he always has a secret intention in the heart not to stop. The rest is all talk.

Reality, grace sets us free. Now live in the reality of it. So that's an excellent point, Raj, that we have the excuses cut right out from under us, don't we?

I don't have to sin. You never, as a Christian, have ever sinned where you had to because it was your master. Rather, you sinned because there was that secret inclination in your heart to want to. Mark? I don't know if you wanted to address this, but would that take away any need for a genuine believer to seek professional psychological help for an individual problem that they have?

[24:16] Wow. I'm not, I'm not sure that I'm ready to put a blanket statement on things like that.

He surely or she surely should start with what is hers or his in Christ and realize the potential that is theirs in Christ.

I mean, that's a whole other study in itself, what the professional counselor is going to tell you. I mean, that's about like what we talked about before, the positive thinking.

There's a principle that's true there, but what are they telling you to tell yourself? And I would have greater concerns on, well, you know, what's that counselor going to tell them? If what they tell them is truth, fine.

But if what they tell them is to excuse them, which is the order of the day, isn't it, in professional counseling, is to, we're all victims.

[25:19] You were born that way, so you're just a victim, and you need to get used to the fact that you're a victim, and you can't help it. And that's the greater concern I would have.

What does the professional counselor tell you, rather than the fact that they take a fee for their counsel? There's good biblical counselors. I'm wondering what a Newtatic counselor or a biblical counselor would answer to that question, because, you know, there seem to be cases, not that I personally admire it, but that you read about those who were claimed to be genuine believers who have a bondage that is impossible for them to break.

I don't know. I would say if it's a true believer, there is no such thing as a bondage that's impossible for them to break. That's just from Romans 6 alone.

That's just an impossibility. Do they need help in learning how to break it? Yes. Where all that help might come from, I'm not ready to draw lines and say, that's the only place you can seek help.

But dare not cross the line of Scripture's truth and make them feel like, and reinforce in them the idea that, well, you're just the victim.

[26:49] You can't help it. Going along with taking away the excuse of sin, there's also the promise from God's sovereignty that he'll bring no temptation upon us, that we have to seek unto our, he'll provide a way out.

1 Corinthians 10.13, so you have the reality that there is no temptation in which there's not a way out. He himself provides that way out.

So that's an excellent point. You can't get to the place where you say, I couldn't help it. There was no way of escape. Oh, yes, there was. But it was probably a whole lot earlier than, in other words, Joseph's way of escape was when she was saying, let's go to bed.

And he said, no. And that's the way of escape. The way of escape was not to follow her into the bedroom and get so far into the scene and then to say, I couldn't help it. Well, you missed the way of escape.

The way of escape was way back here. And so it is with many of our sin problems that the way of escape is something that is out at the outset.

[28:01] And that's why Jesus says, nip it in the bud. And if your eye tempts you to sin, gouge it out. Whatever that thing is in your life that even is a temptation, just get rid of it up here.

Because there is a power of temptation that will ensnare you and suck you in. But don't say God didn't make a way out.

The way out is always there. He's faithful. Isn't that what that verse says? He is faithful and will always give you a way out. Good point.

So those biblical perspectives need to be dealt with. Whatever else is coming into the pool from different sources, dare not rob the scriptures of what they have to say and encouragement and offering hope to the believer because of what he is in Christ.

Dare? If a person knows the biblical truth and they profess to be a believer, and yet they come back and say, you know, I can't overcome this.

[29:05] There's no way. I've got a problem. There's no way. Would that be a good opportunity to encourage them to review if they truly are saved? Well, I think that at some point they have to ask that question, don't they?

If I continue to live a life of sin, then have I been saved from sin? Because salvation is always from sin. It's not just salvation in sin.

And so, yes, if I just go on walking in my sin and I find no power to break bondages of sin, then I think at some point you have to deal with all the scriptures that say, if the tree is good, the fruit will be good.

If the root is real, there will be fruit. I don't know that that would be the place always to start. Every situation would need to be examined.

And it doesn't mean that Christians, real Christians, don't fall over and over to the same sins. But they fight it. And they get up and go again against it.

[30:12] And it's not something they just grow comfortable and say, well, I can't help it. That's the bad attitude. That's the attitude that needs to be rooted out. And if it is that, that they've just made way for sin and they've just let sin reign in their bodies, then they need to be taught.

And, yes, part of that teaching would be, are you sure the root's there? Just in a loving way to challenge them to examine themselves to see if they be in the faith, if they are united to Christ.

Any other thoughts, comments on this? Yes. Well, let's go with Mike and then... Go ahead, Mike.

Well, it just seems like Hebrews 12, the first four or five verses, address, possibly address a situation where you really are having quite struggle with sin.

You know, even under death, you have fought that hard of it. There's something that you have hard of it. And then the biblical talk that either you do yourself or somebody comes alongside and does is to remind you of how Christ has been our forerunner and has attained the prize and has freed us from that problem.

Excellent. Hebrews 12, you're not yet in your struggle against sin. It recognizes Christians struggle against sin. But in your struggle against sin, you've not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood and looking to Christ, fixing our eyes on him, throwing off then everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.

[31:55] You see the inner wovenness of biblical realities with the exhortations to refuse sin. God doesn't just say do, do, do, and don't, don't, don't. He says this is what Christ has done.

He died to sin. And when he died to sin, he forever changed your relationship to sin. You're no longer a slave. Now, you count on it being so and start refusing it.

And then just keep rededicating your life to God as you refuse to serve sin. So, you see, exhortation and doctrine, command and fact mixed together in the scriptures.

And that's what we need. We need both. Good. Roger. Okay. I'm talking about it. Okay. So, yes, I guess we've kind of gone around the path.

Has your question been addressed, Mark? I want to be careful. I do realize that minds can be damaged and need professional help.

[33:12] I'm not denying that reality. But there's a quickness in our culture to run off to the counselor who will tell us, you're okay, I'm okay, we're just victims.

And that's what I would caution us against, that we learn the sufficiency of this book. That we have in Christ and in the revelation of Christ everything that we need to live a life of godliness.

That's not a claim that's been dropped. That claim was made and it still stands. And I do believe there are well-meaning Christians, counselors and psychologists and so on, that are not giving that reality its due weight in scripture.

That scripture is sufficient for dealing with the most nasty of sins. You read 1 Corinthians and see the kinds of sins that those people were involved in.

And Paul doesn't say, well, I'm sorry, I can't help you guys because that's really a nasty sin. But he rather preaches Christ to them. And so don't you know your bodies aren't your own?

[34 : 25] They belong to Christ. Why? Because he's purchased them with his own blood. Now stop serving your lust and start obeying and dedicating yourself to God.

And serving him, glorifying him with your body. So Paul had to deal with these sins and addictions and problems. And he did so with scripture.

And I think that ought to be our first recourse. And we ought to give God the glory due his name and his word. Any other comments, questions?

So we're not going to get into chapter 3 today. I can see that. We'll push pause and take that up next week. Pastor Aaron.

This is another danger with counselors that aren't Christian counselors. They would exchange one poor behavior for another.

[35 : 26] And tell you you're okay, I'm okay, but they still might try to work with you on your behavior. And if you're addicted to drugs, they'll try to exchange that addiction for an addiction to fitness and training.

Every time you want to do drugs, go out the line. And so the person overcomes the problem with drugs, but now they're addicted to something else. And the problem at the root of it has not been taken care of.

They still have an issue in their heart. And they haven't been pointed to Christ as the problem. Or Christ as the solution to their problem. They've been pointed to something else. An AA meeting takes place of alcohol.

They're still addicted to something, and it's not Christ. It's something besides that. And so professional counselors may be able to deal with particular behaviors, but generally they don't get it to heart.

They exchange one thing for another. It's more acceptable to society to be addicted to running than to drugs, but it's good you haven't dealt with a heart issue, and Christ isn't the answer.

[36 : 28] Did you hear that in the back? That's excellent. Who is best qualified to deal with issues of the heart? The secularist that's been trained in the university that says there is no God and we are just animals without souls?

Or someone who knows the God who made us and has his mind, and in this book he deals with what? With hearts.

With souls. With soul problems. I mean, if the Bible's not about soul problems, what is it? So there you have perhaps an overstatement of the case, but folks, we are qualified with the Scriptures to deal with soul problems and heart problems.

And what Pastor Aaron is saying is that people without the knowledge of man's heart, that is found here, it's God who reveals man's heart. We don't know our own hearts, but God's Word reveals our hearts.

Someone who has God's revelation of man's heart is better prepared to get to the root of the problem than someone that doesn't know the heart. And the temptation with that counselor might be just to get them off of one symptom of the problem over to another behavior, but not dealing with the heart.

[37 : 51] So again, the Scriptures are the roadmap to the heart, and we ought to place our confidence in the wisdom of God. Somebody had a comment. There? So I was thinking of a friend that we've been working with who has a lot of problems, and he's going to the Christian counselor, getting good counsel.

But it's kind of like they tend to minimize the issue of sin. They'll talk about, well, this is because he has a personality disorder, or he's a PhD, or he's this, that, or the other, which is all true.

I mean, I really think there are real, you know, psychological, emotional problems. But it all comes back to sin. Even though they may be ADHD, they still have sin.

That has to be addressed. That's the boundaries of a real disability. And sin is ultimately what kind of a problem? A heart problem, isn't it?

So who's really qualified to deal with a heart problem? So that's the world we live in. And we need to be armed with Scripture to face it.

[38:58] This is something of a tangent, but it's connected. And I appreciate going there this morning. Let's realize what's ours in Christ and live off of it.

That's what the counselor ought to be telling us. That's what you, the counselor, ought to be telling yourself. That you are to be counseling yourself and telling yourself these things.

And we are to be telling each other these things. What's true from the Scriptures? May we do that to each other this day, as we have a day in which to fellowship and to share our hearts and our problems.

Well, we're dismissed. May the Lord add his blessing to our thoughts.