

Sacred Beyond Sunday

Delivered From the Kingdom of Sin – Part III

Romans 6:12-14

Introduction

For the first time in his letter to the believers living in Rome, Italy, the apostle Paul communicates several commands. Having developed the doctrinal truth that the believer has died to the reign of sin, he now challenges the believer that he has not died to the reality of sin.

Doctrines of Justification and Sanctification

When you were saved, or that point in your life when you trusted Christ's death and burial and resurrection as your only hope for heaven, you were delivered from the penalty of sin. That is the doctrine of justification.

Now, you are in the process of being delivered from the power of sin. That is the doctrine of sanctification.

Justification takes a moment of time; sanctification takes a lifetime. Do not combine the two doctrines erroneously.

Many cults, religious systems, and "isms" have made sanctification, or how you live, the basis for justification, or how you are saved. Nothing delights Satan more than seeing a believer's sanctification produce anxiety about their justification.

God wants, and Paul will explain, our sanctification not to determine our justification, but to verify it. Sanctification reveals the authenticity of justification.

The truth is, we have trouble living up to our position in Christ. We are holy in position, but not

always in practice. That is where sanctification goes to work. The goal of God through sanctification is to bring our practice in line with our profession.

Sanctification could be defined as the work of God's Spirit in our willing hearts, minds, and hands to conform us to the character of Jesus Christ. A shorter definition comes from the Greek word for sanctification, which simply means, "set apart".

The concept is not hard to grasp because all of us have things in our homes that are set apart, or dedicated for a particular use. When you used your Mom's favorite scissors to cut out your cardboard fort in the garage, you learned a lesson about sanctification.ⁱ

If you ever used your Dad's golf clubs to hit rocks in the back yard, you learned that things are sanctified; that is, set apart for a purpose.

The goal of God through sanctification is for us to dedicate our bodies and everything about us, so that it matches what God designed. There are things our bodies should do, and there are things our bodies are not supposed to do because of who we are in Christ.

When little Victoria learned at the age of eleven that she was next in line for the British throne, historians tell us that she burst into tears. Then upon regaining composure, she said with great conviction and purpose, "If I am to be queen, then I shall be good."ⁱⁱ

Was she always good? I have never met a perfect eleven year old, have you?

However, at age eleven, she recognized something that many Christians never seem to catch – the principle of sanctification. Victoria determined with passion and conviction that her practice would match her position. She suddenly discovered something about herself that made her want to exercise character that honored the crown.

Has it ever occurred to you that you are royalty? Peter wrote, in I Peter, chapter 2, verse 9, that you, Christian, are,

. . . a chosen race, a royal priesthood . . .

What we need in the church more than ever before, is people who will say with passion and conviction, “Since I am headed for a future throne as fellow heir and ruler with Christ in heaven, I will live up to it on earth.”

Because of who I am *in* Christ, I will now determine to live *for* Christ.

The question remains, “Just how do we live separated lives unto Christ? How does our character match our crown, as joint heirs with Jesus Christ?”

Sanctification – Set Apart To Christ

What does sanctification look like? What are we supposed to do?!

Paul’s Two-fold Command To Live a Life Separated Unto Christ

Beginning in verse 12 of Romans, chapter 6, Paul will answer these questions by giving a two-fold command. The first part is negative and the second part is positive.

Stop letting sin reign in your body

Look at verses 12 through 13a.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness . . .

This is the negative command of God through Paul.

The words in these verses are present imperatives, by the way. You could literally write in your translation, the word “Stop,” with an exclamation point! Verses 12 through 13a could be written,

Therefore, (stop!) letting sin reign in your bodies and (stop!) presenting the members of your body to sin . . .

John MacArthur pointed out in his commentary, that in the first part of verse 12, “Paul personified sin as if it were a powerful monarch who is determined to reign in the believer’s life just as he did before salvation.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The apostle Peter personifies sin as someone who is at war with us. He writes, in I Peter, chapter 2, verse 11,

. . . I urge you . . . to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

John Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, also wrote a lesser known book entitled, *The Holy War*. In the book, he personified the soul as a city having five gates. They included:

- the Ear Gate;
- the Eye Gate;
- the Nose Gate;
- the Feel Gate;
- the Mouth Gate.

The enemy of the city, Mansoul, was sin. It would come on a daily basis to attack Mansoul at one of the five gates. Sin would speak through the Ear Gate, or paint vivid and alluring pictures to the Eye Gate, etc.

The interesting thing is that Mansoul, in Bunyan’s allegory, could never be toppled by outside attacks. The only way the enemy could conquer the city was for someone on the inside of Mansoul to open one of the gates and let the enemy come in.

Both Paul and Peter urge the believer to engage in the battle against sin. In fact, when Paul, in verse 13, says, “Stop presenting your members to sin,” he is using a military term which was used for the transfer of weaponry or arms. In other words, Paul is saying, “Don’t let the enemy use your body as his weapon. Don’t let the enemy have your rifle or your sword so that he can use it against you!”

A man wants to be a holy man for God, but then watches the average movie that typically includes some form of adultery and fornication. We happen to know that statistically, just over ninety percent of all sexual content in the average movie today, is between unmarried people or people who are married to someone else. If you watch that, you have just handed your eyes to the enemy of your sanctification.

A woman wants to be a holy woman for God, but look at the CD's and cassettes of her favorite songs that she listens to around the house or on the way to school or work. If you listen to the lyrics, you will discover that she is doing nothing more than handing her ears and emotions to the enemy to use them against her war for holiness.

Sociologists have estimated that by the age of twenty-one, the average person in America has been exposed to more than 300,000 commercial messages. These messages predominantly promote the basic assumption that personal gratification is the dominant goal in life.^{iv}

There is a war against holiness in the life of the believer and Paul says, "Stop giving your body to the enemy to use against you to win his war!"

I was on the campus of a Bible college about a year ago, and one of the students told me that a Krispy Kreme donut shop had just been built very near the campus. It was not one where they just sell the donuts, but one where you could watch the donuts being made.

Have you ever seen donuts being made? You walk in the shop and there is a little factory that is surrounded by a glass wall. You can press your nose against the glass and just watch. Those little balls are formed and flattened a little and then, a piercing blast of air shoots through them and creates the hole. They then, go onto a series of miniature elevators that go up and down in an oven, with the right amount of heat and humidity, and you can watch them rise. Eventually, they are finished in the oven and come out perfectly shaped on a conveyor belt and move under a waterfall of icing. You can keep your eye on one or two of them and can then, go to the counter and tell them, "I want that one."

Have you ever eaten a donut that just came off the belt? They melt in your mouth. In fact, you have to have another one, just to make sure you had it, because it happened so quickly. And then, a third one! And then what happens? They begin to swell . . . and you get this "yucky" feeling. Then you think, "Why did I do that?"

The problem for me, was not standing there. The problem was not the fact that I left a nose smear all the way down the glass as I was watching. I got to the counter and pulled out my wallet and, at that moment, said, "Lord, You've promised that no temptation will take me that isn't common to man, but You will, with the temptation, provide a way of

escape that I may be able to endure it. So, okay, Lord, give me the way of escape."

Wasn't that foolish? When should I have said that? Before I ever pulled into that parking lot; before I ever watched those cylinders of saturated fat move down the conveyor belt.

Most Christians today, and this is our problem, get as close as we can, and then say, "Okay, Lord, I'm ready for the escape hatch . . . now!"

Then, we will say, "Well, I can't understand why I am controlled by sin."

Do you know what my problem was? My problem was not even parking and getting out. My problem was earlier, when that student told me there was a Krispy Kreme shop. I should have covered my ears and said, "No, no, no, don't tell me about that."

That is where my problem began. That is where we need to post the guard. For us, in real terms, with real sin, ladies and gentlemen, it is most important, early on, to say, "No."

When we present the weapons of our bodies to the enemy, guess what? He uses them against us and has us obeying his commands again. When we give sin an inch, it will take the throne!

Notice again how Paul words this command in verses 12 through 13a,

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness . . .

Paul says, "Stop! Say 'No!'"

Have you ever thought about the fact that a young child never has to take lessons in saying "No"? Have you ever heard a two year old running around the house all day saying, "Yes, Mommy, yes, yes, yes"? Uh uh, he runs around saying what? "No, Mommy, no, no, no."

How is it that a two year old can say "No" and a twenty year old cannot . . . or a thirty, forty, or fifty year old, for that matter? Isn't it a fascinating revelation of our sinful nature that we say "No" when we are young and "Yes" when we are old? We say "No" to the things we should say "Yes" to, and "Yes" to the things we should say "No" to.

The average believer needs to learn to say a word that has all but disappeared from their vocabulary. The little word "No".

Let us practice that word by saying it out loud,
“No!”

Louder! “No!”

Say it louder! “No!”

I have never had so many people tell me “No” at the same time!

Offer yourself to God

Now, you need to understand that the Christian life is not just one big negative. It happens to involve a very big positive. Notice verse 13b.

. . . but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Offer yourself to God!

Sanctification is saying “No” at the right time, and “Yes” to the right person. Say “Yes” to God!

In this text, we discover that sanctification, or living a holy life, includes the principle of cooperation. There are two extremes to avoid in this doctrine:

- One extreme is that everything is up to the individual believer and they have to drum up the power to do anything good for God.
- The other extreme is that nothing is up to the individual believer and they have no responsibility to develop discipline and decision.

One verse that is often misquoted to support the second extreme, is Philippians, chapter 2, verse 13,

for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

So, in other words, if God does not will it, I will not be able to do it. If God does not give me a desire to read my Bible, then I will not be able to do it. If God does not will for me to witness, I will never do it.

The truth is, the previous verse, verse 12 of Philippians, chapter 2, commands the believer to,

. . . work out your salvation with fear and trembling;

Paul is not talking about justification, but sanctification. You cannot work something out that is not already on the inside.

Paul says, “work it out . . . decide to live for God.” Then, Paul adds, “for it is God who is at work

in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”

In other words, Paul is encouraging the one who decides to live a holy life and develop holy disciplines that God is the source of power behind our will saying “Yes.” He is not saying that we are robots and that if God does not give us the will, we never will.

So, if you do not decide to study the Bible, God is not going to pick up the Bible, fly it under your nose, flip open a passage, and stick your nose in it. If you do not decide to come to church, God is not going to levitate you out of the bed, put you in the shower, fix your hair, put your clothes on, put you in the car, and drive you to church. You cannot say, “Well I just don’t have the desire, so God’s going to have to give it to me.”

One author writes,

The clear teaching of Scripture is that the Christian life is a cooperative effort. Paul included both the power of God and the effort of the believer when in one verse he wrote, “For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works with me.” (Colossians 1:29)

When we use the word cooperation, we do not mean a 50/50 partnership in which you put in your half and God puts in His half. The power is all His, but He does not act without the cooperation and submission of the believer.^v

Paul says that part of growing up in Christ is not only saying “No” to sin, but “Yes” to the Savior. Ladies and gentlemen, God will never drag you by the arm into holy living. Sanctification is not the result of spiritual abduction, it is the result of spiritual submission.

John MacArthur wrote, “God’s will is active in our lives only as our wills are submissive to His.”^{vi}

A large part of the battle is the discovery that spiritual growth is synonymous with spiritual discipline. It involves discipline, or training, as Paul used it with Timothy when he wrote, in I Timothy, chapter 4, verse 7,

. . . discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness

What a realistic command. There is no pietism; no mysticism of some special blessing, or a one time decision that once and for all makes purity, holiness,

joy, faith, and patience easily acquired practices. That is why Paul used the word “discipline”.

“Discipline” is the Greek word “gumnazo,” from which we get our word “gymnasium”. It refers to working out; breaking a spiritual sweat over training exercises that produce spiritual strength and growth.

Reinecker defines the Greek word to refer to that “vigorous development and application of all the believer’s strength and ability that he may serve the glory of God with every thought and action.”^{vii}

That is still true today. Sanctification is discipline and hard work.

The Christian does not naturally drift toward holiness. We do not drift toward godliness, but ungodliness. The gravitational pull of our flesh is not toward prayer, but away from it. We do not easily obey scripture, but disobey; we do not find modesty and humility easy, but immodesty and pride; we do not easily have faith, but fear; we do not tend to delight in the things of the Lord, but in the things of the earth.^{viii}

You can say “No” all you want to those wrong things, but you also need to say “Yes” to those right things. That is easy to do on Sunday. However, living a sanctified, sacred life beyond Sunday is an entirely different matter.

Roy Laurin provoked my thinking when he commented on this text in Romans, chapter 6, and asked his readers this question,

What use will you make of your bodies? Will they be temples or toys? Toys serve but a childish and temporary purpose. They are later laid aside, battered and worn and [abused]. Is that what your body is to you? How empty and sad such a life would be. On the other hand, temples are for the presence of God. They are made to hold communion with Him; to be filled with music and to be dignified by worship. They are to be stately objects of the beautiful reminder among mankind of both the presence and power of God.^{ix}

What a great question. Is your body a toy or a temple through which God displays and receives glory?

That is the very point Paul is teaching. How could we ever live in sin, now that we have been brought to life in Jesus Christ?

He writes in I Corinthians, chapter 6, verses 19 and 20,

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, . . . therefore glorify God in your body.

That is the same thing Paul meant when he said in Romans, chapter 6, verse 13,

. . . do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin . . . but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members . . .

(that is, your body parts – your mind and heart),

. . . as instruments of righteousness . . .

In other words, you, dear Christian friend, are not a toy; you are a temple of the living God! So, say “No” to sin and say “Yes” to the Spirit of God.

Ask yourself the questions:

- Is there something you are saying “Yes” to, that today, you need to decide, by the power of God within you, to begin saying “No” to?
- Is there something you are saying “No” to, by virtue of neglect or disobedience, that you need to say “Yes” to?
- Is there, in other words, something you are doing or thinking or planning or watching or saying that you should not?
- Is there something you should be doing that you are not doing?
- Will you submit your will to God’s Spirit and allow Him to work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure?
- Will you, in that specific area, say “Yes, Lord, I will cooperate with Your Spirit”?

Because we have been brought to life by Christ and we are in Him, we live for Him. Therefore, we, if we hope to grow in Christ by His strength and power and our submissive will, living through us, we say “No” to sin and say “Yes” to the Savior.

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- ⁱ Anthony Evans, Totally Saved (Chicago, ILL, Moody Press, 2002), p. 131.
- ⁱⁱ Ibid., p. 131.
- ⁱⁱⁱ John MacArthur Jr., Romans, Volume 1 (Chicago, ILL, Moody Press, 1991), p. 337.
- ^{iv} James M. Boice, Romans: Volume Two (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Book House, 1991).
- ^v Evans, p. 136.
- ^{vi} MacArthur Jr., p. 337.
- ^{vii} Fritz Reinecker, Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament (Zondervan, 1980), p. 626.
- ^{viii} D. A. Carson, "Reflections," Christianity Today (July 31, 2000).
- ^{ix} Roy Laurin, Romans: Where Life Begins (Kregel Publications, 1988), p. 206.