

Romans 6, I Corinthians 6 “Fighting Sin in Christ”

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama.! Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

! We talked about bearing fruit, bearing fruit not in order to be united to Christ, but because we are united to Christ, abiding in Him.

Growth in grace versus growth in self. And that is true not only when we talk about bearing good fruit, but also, and I warned you, the negative side too, when we consider fighting sin.

In our hearts and lives. We need to talk about that today. Because I think so many of us trust in Jesus, and so we trust that we will defeat sin one day.

But these days, we so often feel like we're losing the battle, don't we? Like we're stuck in old patterns and habits, like we can't grow at all.

[1 : 24] In fact, I suspect I'm not the only one who finds the fact that we still struggle with sin remaining in us very frustrating.

I mean, just this weekend, I think my own selfishness, my pride, my impatience, and I see how they hurt others. I see just some of that. I'm just tired of it.

And people ask me often, why doesn't God make us stop sinning right away when He saves us? Wouldn't that make life so much better, Pastor? The Bible doesn't give a direct answer to that exact question.

But we'll see this morning hope in that struggle. And that at least part of the reason for that is that we desperately need Jesus to fight sin.

So perhaps God uses this struggle to keep our hearts turned toward the Savior we need so much. How does our union with Christ, that most important identity-defining, life-changing relationship, impact our relationship with sin?

[2 : 38] The Bible's answer to that begins with something we've already covered quite extensively this summer, but we're not going to skip over it, that in Christ our sin is forgiven.

Praise the Lord. Ephesians 1. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of His grace.

Jesus paid it all, right? And His blood washes away our sin once and for all. What grace! Nothing we did to earn that. Because Jesus took the punishment for our sins, we will never face it.

We are covered in Christ, right? We talked about this great gift extensively. It is a done deal. But remember we also said that Jesus doesn't just throw forgiveness at us from a distance, like it's just a thing that we get from Him.

Rather, He unites us in Him. He marries us. He binds Himself to us so that He impacts our ongoing lives every day, including our relationship with our sin.

[3 : 56] As Paul reminds us many times, there is grace for this ongoing life too. Both our justification being made right with God and our sanctification being made like God flow from the grace of our union with Christ.

It's that transformed life that I want to spend our time focusing on this morning. We don't want to sin more just because Jesus forgives all of our sins, do we?

That's not it. That's not it. It's an understandable question when grasping the gospel of grace and it's so wonderful. But Paul answers it definitively in Romans chapter 6, our main passage for today, page 942 in the Pew Bible.

Paul tells us that another impact on our sin from our union with Christ that's so important.

It's a rich truth, but it is not simple to track with. So listen to him explain. He's going to explain the reality of what changes in us.

[5 : 13] And then he's going to talk about the implications of that in our lives. Okay? Romans chapter 6 at verse 1. Here's that question. What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

By no means. How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were united to him, right?

Were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too connected to him might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self, that sinful man, that sinful nature, was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again.

[6 : 34] Death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died, he died to sin once for all. But the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Therefore, let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies to make you obey their passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

For sin will have no dominion over you since you are not under law, but under grace. Paul explains our sinful natures used to rule over us, to have dominion over all of us.

We are constantly selfish, deeply obsessed with what I want, right? Not focused on God's glory. As a result, we thought and desired and did and said things that were consistent with our old king, our master, our boss, that sinful nature.

But something changed. Remember what it was? We were baptized into Christ Jesus. In other words, by faith we were united to Jesus.

[8 : 06] All Christians, everyone who believes in Jesus, he's saying, we all died with Christ. Remember? Connected to him. What happens to Jesus happens to us in this amazing union.

He's been teaching us that over and over. Not only did we die with him, we were buried with him. For what purpose? That we might live a new life.

Verse 4. Now that new life can't be a life in sin, right? Because we just talked about a death to sin. We just died that death with Christ.

So he explains in verse 6 that that sinful nature was kicked off the throne of our hearts and lives. It was displaced by Jesus so that we are set free.

We are no longer under the rule of that ruthless taskmaster. That's the good news. Simply stated, Romans 6 is saying, In Christ, our sin is dethroned.

[9 : 15] Now you may say, It doesn't feel like that. Sin still feels really strong.

I mean, pastor, temptation is often overwhelming to me. I can't resist sometimes. He didn't say the struggle was over.

He'll be clear about that. He does say the battle is won. There's a new king. I think that when we think about sin that way, What we feel sin as is what British author G.K. Chesterton described as a rhinoceros in a restaurant.

Okay? Can you picture, kids, a rhinoceros, full-grown rhinoceros in a restaurant? That rhinoceros running around in the restaurant would have lots of power and would create a lot of damage and destruction and disruption in that restaurant, but would have no authority whatsoever.

That is sin in your life, Christian. Lots of power to do lots of damage, but don't you dare give it any authority where it has none.

[10 : 35] See, sin has been displaced as ruler in your life. You are not a slave to sin. You, in fact, are dead to sin.

Like it's a rotten ex-boyfriend. You are dead to me. Right? In fact, you hate sin. It's what sent the lover of your soul to the agonizing death on the cross.

How can I make friends with the enemy of my best friend, Jesus? The enemy of my own life in him as I'm connected to him? I can't. By no means.

May it never be, Paul says. I hate sin because I know what it has done to me and to people I love and to this wonderful world that God has made.

I want to live as one who is no longer bound by that awful taskmaster, but has really been set free. Sin is not who you are.

[11:37] Sin is not who you are. And so, Paul is going to say, it's not how you need to live any longer. I know you battle compulsions, addictions, obsessions.

Many of us in this room battle against those. But Christian brother or sister, you are not united to sin. You are united to Jesus.

Jesus, he has kicked sin off the throne of your life. He has separated it from you as far as the east is from the west.

So you do not have to sin. Sin is not inevitable. Stand in the strength of God's word and tell that life-wrecking rhino that he has no authority in your life anymore.

Truth. You must consider yourselves dead to sin. Because God says he defines us, not what we do.

[12:45] God says he unites us to Jesus. He takes the throne of our hearts. And he alone in his gracious rule has dominion in our lives. No one else. Nothing else.

He's in charge. John Owen is the theologian that I've learned the most about this topic from. How we fight indwelling sin in our lives.

He says there are really in the world only two challenges for pastors. The first is convincing people under the dominion of sin that they are under the dominion of sin.

The second is convincing people no longer under the dominion of sin that they are no longer under the dominion of sin. That second challenge is the one that I've been trying to focus on so far this morning.

To encourage Christians like last week that abiding in Christ will bear fruit. Change is possible. Growth is inevitable. There's a new king on the throne of your life and it makes all the difference in the world.

[13:54] But I do also want to say this to all of us. Be sure that you have bowed the knee to the new king.

Be sure that he's the one you're looking to and hoping in. If you just come to church, if you just try to be good, that's not bowing the knee to the new king.

If all you ever feel is desires to do whatever you want because no one else has authority in your life. There's no God and no other authority.

Or maybe you acknowledge God exists but you just constantly feel, all you feel is pressure to perform to be good enough for him.

Or to come out on the right side of some cosmic karma. You may need to realize that you are still under the dominion of sin.

[14:56] And it's actually okay to admit that this morning. It's needful to admit that if that's where you are because you are hearing now the invitation of the true king.

Of this new king who promises that if you will only trust in him, he will defeat sin and death for you. And bring you into the new kingdom and the life of freedom that you have been looking for in your own rule over your own life.

All the pressure that that brings with it for you. You will find that freedom only in Jesus Christ. And you can come to him right now. Now, this is what I mean when I talk about sin being dethroned from our hearts because we are in Christ.

You don't have to live to please yourself, to be good enough, to become valuable enough. Sin is not who you are so it's not how you need to live any longer.

See, that's the negative that we've been talking about. But Jesus didn't just die, Paul says. What's the rest of this passage about? He also rose to new life. He will never die again.

[16:07] Death no longer has dominion over him. You've been to Easter before, right? We've celebrated the resurrection, of course. Jesus lives to God perfectly and gloriously and forever.

So you also. You've celebrated Easter. It's not just about Jesus. It's about Jesus as the first fruits.

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. All of you, you're so connected to him that if that's what's true for him, that's what's true for you.

We now live to God for his glory, freed by his grace, led by his truth. You're defined in Christ.

Remember, we started the summer there.

Not achieving our own identity. Receiving it from God. And if that's true, if we are who he says we are, see, now who we are impacts how we expect to live.

[17 : 10] You say, I'm just a short-tempered dad who wounds his kids. No. No, you repent of that and you find you are in Christ.

Forgiven. Loved. Becoming patient. Becoming patient. She's just a bad friend who can never be trusted. That's just Sally.

No. No, she repents and finds she is in Christ. Forgiven. Loved. Becoming trustworthy. Worthy. One more application.

I can be only who I am. You know what I'm born like. To some extent that's true. You act according to your nature.

Right? But Satan tries to get you stuck with that lie and stop short of a truth. Stop short of saying, I've been reborn in Christ.

[18 : 21] I can only be who I'm reborn to be. Remade to be in the image of the God who made me and who defines me. That's true.

So I don't know if you'll become patient, trustworthy, sober, or straight the way we think about those experiences.

I don't know if that'll be true for you anytime soon. Or even in this life. There's a fight. You feel it. God understands it.

But consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Even if that's your experience and those are your struggles, you've got millions of more years to live freed from those struggles than you have left to live in them.

[19 : 21] Isn't that good news? That's who you are. For millions and billions of years, you're going to be completely free. So fight sin like that.

Tell Satan who you really are. Whose you are. Remind him you are no longer under his rule and you refuse to live like it. See, many of us who've been in the church a long time, we struggle with what I'd call imposter syndrome.

We may hear things like this and we decide we better pretend to be better than we are. And we're pretending we're better than we feel like inside. And what we really are starting to think is that we're really more failures than successes as Christians many days.

Many of us get discouraged and say things to me like maybe I really am just a failure. Just an abuser. Just a gossip.

No, you're not. Union with Christ means that ultimately sin is the real imposter in our lives.

[20 : 32] That's so good, Sam Albury. Thank you. Sin is the pretender to the throne of your heart. Kick that rhino out. He doesn't belong. Jesus is king.

You are the beloved child of the king. That's who he says you are. So don't let sin reign in your body. Verse 12.

Don't offer yourself to serve unrighteousness. I just got to go do this again. Verse 13. No. Offer yourself to the true king for righteousness, for fruit bearing, for resurrection life like Jesus.

That's what our calling is. So is that all that happens? Is it that easy for you, Will? Is fighting sin just mind over matter?

It's like this Jedi mind trick. I do no sin. I do no sin. I do. And I don't sin. Is that all you do? You just tell yourself sin's not in charge and you quit sinning all the time? No.

[21 : 38] It does start with correct thinking. Because if we don't think correctly, we'll lose hope altogether, won't we? You've had days like that.

You'll decide there's no hope for you. But remember, there's something more than just new thinking. You're actually in a new relationship with Jesus.

Not only are we in him, but he is in us. There's real power for the fight. Let me picture it for you this way.

We need more than this. We need power. My young nephew, Ward, likes to come over to our house. And if I am there, he likes to play basketball.

Otherwise, at his height, it's just not much fun. Okay? Okay? Even when I show Ward how to dunk, this is Jesus as example, right?

[22 : 34] Which he is. Praise the Lord. Ward looks up to me, but he still can't do it.

Even if I then cheer for him, come on, come on, come on, you can do it. Even if I cheer for him and he tries with all his might, he still messes it up.

Even with me on his team, see Jesus on my team cheering for me, and he is. But it's not enough, is it? For Ward to overcome his shortcomings, he actually needs to be connected to me.

Oh, there it is. So much better. Look at the look on that face. That's what it feels like. Connected to Jesus. When he's connected to me, he can dunk all day until I wear out, which Jesus never does. That's the kind of power you live with. This is the point. Jesus calls us not just to live up to him. But to live in him.

[23 : 44] To live out of him and his strength. Many of us fighting against sin see Jesus merely as the example or the standard to strive for. To live to God.

To live like Jesus. To live for righteousness. And that's true, but it gets really discouraging when we fail. But if we're united to him, Jesus is in us.

1 Corinthians 6. You, your body. A temple of the Holy Spirit that you have from God.

I am the tabernacle, the temple, the home of God himself. Who doesn't just forgive me when I fall short. Although he does. Who doesn't just kick sin off the throne of my heart so that I can fight sin. Although he does. But he vitally, moment by moment, day by day, empowers me so that I do overcome sin. I'm not saying perfectly in this life.

[24 : 45] There's that frustrating struggle, right? The struggle for which we will never stop needing Jesus. And the struggle for which he will never leave us alone.

Isn't that good? Oh, we hate struggling, but there's something really sweet about the Savior and our struggle. Paul in this chapter gives one particular example of sin in Corinth that needs to be addressed.

And dethroned and overcome. Let's read what can happen to a specific sin in union with Christ. Start at verse 15.

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?

Never! There's that word again. Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For as it is written, the two will become one flesh.

[25 : 52] But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body.

But the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you whom you have from God? You are not your own for you were bought with a price.

So glorify God in your body. See, he's reminding us, isn't he, of what we should know. We are actually in an unbreakable union with Jesus.

We've got to get that in our minds. Jesus is our head. We are the members. His arms and legs. His hands and feet. That is union with Christ.

He has by his spirit made his home in us. So, Corinthians, you're really connected. How could you imagine uniting Jesus to some temple prostitute?

[26 : 58] So, Southwood, how could you imagine uniting Jesus to some person on a screen? Would you even think about scrolling porn if you really thought you were bringing Jesus into that sin with you?

You wouldn't even do it with your mother sitting beside you. How could you with your pure Savior inside you? Right there with you every moment.

Hear me, you're not causing Jesus to sin. You can't do that. But he is connected to you. So, for sin like that, he had to die.

He had to go to the cross. Some people will tell you the Bible has a negative view of sex and sexuality. Nothing could be further from the truth.

It is, in fact, such a high view. It's such a powerful view that the two become one in a mystical way.

[28 : 01] Analogous to our union with Christ. Casual sex. Playing around sexually is sacrilege.

It is misuse of something holy. Don't miss the direct warning here in this passage. You can't have it both ways, child of God.

You can't do whatever you want with your boyfriend or girlfriend and then reunite with Jesus on Sunday morning like nothing happened. He was there with you the whole time.

See, this is one of our culture's lies. This is an idol that Old Testament prophets often call out. I believe it is one of our heart's greatest idols.

We like to think this is true and it's a lie. You can have it both ways. You can do whatever you want. Talk however you want about your friends.

[29 : 09] Pursue security and importance wherever you want. Prioritize whatever you want all week. And then live a different priority on Sunday morning.

Me and Jesus. Me and Jesus. That's what's important. I praise him. I want to be holy with him. No. Either you don't have him today.

Or he was with you all week, friend. He doesn't come and go. If you're united to Jesus, you have been bought with a price.

His precious blood. So you are not your own ever. You don't rule yourself. You don't own yourself. You don't define your own identity.

He has bought all of us. Every part of us. Every bit of our time. Everywhere we go. So we must live for whose glory? His glory. Even with the things that aren't really spiritual.

[30 : 11] Yes. With our bodies. With our jobs. With our money. All of it. Take all of it, Lord. Allberry again says it really well.

You can't leave Jesus in the car to go sin. To go into a prostitute. You can't leave Jesus in a car in the driveway and go in to yell at your kids or ignore your neighbor.

You can't leave Jesus in a car in the school parking lot and go in to cheat on a test. Or make fun of a classmate. Friends, our union with Him is inseparable.

So He lives within us to empower us to overcome sin. Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. He gives us strength to fight Satan.

To flee sexual immorality. To resist temptation. Because we never fight sin alone. We're connected to Him. So I encourage you. Find a friend today to confess sin.

[31 : 18] What's God bringing to your heart right now? A friend you can confess to. A friend who will pray for you. A friend who will remind you of Christ in you.

That truth. That truth. That reality. That reality. We're not stuck. We're not losing. When we fall, He forgives.

When we submit to sin, He kicks it back off the throne. And when we fall short over and over, He sends His Spirit to convict of sin. To draw us back to abiding in Christ.

To bear fruit of repentance living with Him. That's the battle. That's the struggle that we live in. In part so we never think we can live away from Jesus.

Perhaps also in part so that we know there is always something better to look forward to. When you're frustrated by the struggle of remaining sin in you, doesn't it make you long for the wonder and the joy of sin removed forever?

[32 : 29] Can you imagine? When you eat this supper with your Savior at the wedding supper of the Lamb, sin is not invited.

Sin will be gone forever. The true King will be on the throne of our hearts exclusively and eternally. And we will be free, not just from the penalty of sin, not just from the power of sin, but from the very presence of sin once and for all.

This meal reminds us to look forward to that day. Jesus did on that night when He was with His disciples and was about to be betrayed.

Jesus took bread. And He broke it. And He gave it to His disciples. As I am ministering in His name, give this bread to you. He said, take, eat.

[33 : 34] This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. And in the same way, after supper, He took the cup and said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Drink from it, all of you. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. You say, there's a day coming when sin will be gone forever.

And every day between now and then, it's His body and His blood that is given in my place to take care of my sins. That's my hope.

And I look forward to the day when I eat this again with Him in glory, when sin is gone and death is swallowed up forever. I want to remind you this morning that only repenting people come to this table.

Those who come to take the body and blood of Jesus must believe that they are sinners in need of a Savior and must even now be turning from sin to Jesus, must be bringing their sin to their Savior because only He forgives sin and dethrones sin and empowers us to overcome sin.

[34 : 59] And so we come to Him because indeed, grace is greater than all our sin. Amen? That's our only hope. So if you come repenting, then whether you're a member of Southwood or any other church that preaches the good news that the only thing that can be done with sin is taking it to Jesus, that He alone deals with it, then you come repenting to eat with Him.

If you're not repenting today, don't come to take the bread and the wine. It may be that you are connected to Jesus by faith, but you're just not willing to bring some particular sin to Him because you know that He'll take it away from you and you're not ready to let go of it yet.

Brother or sister, stay where you are and pray for His help. Come grab a brother or sister to pray with you for Him to kick that sin off the throne of your heart.

It may be that you don't see yourself as a sinner at all or see Jesus as a Savior that you need. Oh, would you please hear the invitation of Jesus this morning to stop having to fight for your own freedom, but to come to the one who has given His life that you may be set free and have your sin and death covered and taken care of once and for all.

That's His invitation to you to come and find rest in Him and we'd love to tell you more about it. He's an amazing Savior and we're gonna pray to Him and then we'll come and feast.

[36 : 45] Jesus, thank You for what You have done. You alone know what to do with our sin and so we come with it, dragging it with us to You. Thank You that You're with us this morning.

Thank You that Your blood truly does cover and cleanse. Thank You that we will never be separated from You. Use these elements to remind us of that.

That You don't just eat with us now, but You go with us today and this week. Teach us, change us, make us thankful. In Your name, amen.

For more information, visit us online at southwood.org. Thank you. Yes Yes Yes Thank you.