

## **THE FACTS & ACTS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**

### **Romans 6:1-14**

Good morning! We're continuing our series on "Power to Change". Today, we're going to look at the "facts and the acts" of the Christian life. We've been going systematically through every major doctrine in the Bible which is pretty much covered as we go verse by verse through the book of Romans. We've been through the first two sections on **Sin and Salvation and now the third great section of Romans starting in chapter six on Sanctification.**

Sanctification is the key to Christian living here and now. I want to start by talking to you about the three great phases of your salvation: Justification, Sanctification, Glorification. What are these words? They are actually three different phases of your salvation. Justification has to do with your past. Sanctification has to do with right now. Glorification is a big word that has to do with your future in heaven.

Let me explain some more about Sanctification because we're starting the sanctification section on Romans.

**Sanctification is being set free from the power of sin so that we may become more like Christ.** That happens in the here and now. All of us identify with this. We want to become like Christ but sin gets in the way. Anyone here who doesn't sin anymore? Paul talks about our struggles as Christians -- struggles with ourselves, with sin, with Satan. He actually shows us how to overcome the power of temptation in our lives.

How do you handle the struggles in your life? When your old sin nature keeps popping up at inappropriate times in your Christian life? How do you deal with that? It is a struggle. What sin do you struggle with?

I remember the story of a woman who approached her pastor in church and confessed that she had incurred the sin of vanity. “What makes you think that?” asked the pastor. “Because every morning when I look into the mirror, I think how beautiful I am and tell myself ‘You’re beautiful’”. “Never fear, my child,” was the pastor’s reassuring reply after staring at her. “That isn’t a sin, it’s only a mistake.”

That woman really struggled.

Last week we saw in chapter 5 that every one of us has this sin nature. Even babies have it. It’s the desire to live for ourselves. The old sin nature comes from Adam, the father of the human race. It’s been passed down. Because you’re human you have human nature, the nature to be your own god, your own boss. How do I break the power of my old human nature? You can’t. You can’t break the power of your old sin nature on your own. Otherwise, you wouldn’t need Jesus if you could. The fact is, Jesus Christ has already broken it and we’re going to see how we can appropriate that into our lives.

The truths I’m going to talk about today are very, very important. Yet, most Christians don’t understand what I’m going to talk about. The majority of Christians are defeated, frustrated, discouraged and have no power in their lives. Paul says that in order for you to break the power of sin in your life, the temptation to do what’s wrong, you have to know some things and you have to do some things. The secret of victory over sin in your life is knowing three facts and doing three acts. That’s why I’m calling this **"The Facts and the Acts of the Christian Life."**

You know, there is what’s called positional truth and experiential truth. Positional truth is a fact no matter what. It doesn’t change. Experiential truth is how we feel or think about something. And as you know, our feelings or our perceptions are a poor barometer of what’s real and factual.

You see, there are some things God says in the Bible about you that you say, "That does not make sense!" But they're true whether you believe them or not or whether you feel it or not. For instance: The Bible says that once you're saved your sins are completely forgiven. Yet many Christians still feel guilty. They positionally are forgiven but experientially they still feel guilty. God says that in Christ you are covered with His righteousness and you are seen perfect before God.

Positional truth is what God says about my Christian life. Experiential truth is when I begin to live the way God sees me, when I begin to act upon what God says. God can say something and I may not ever live it in my life. Most Christians will die and go to heaven without ever living what is true about themselves in the Bible.

An example is how in 1863 President Lincoln declared the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves. The minute he declared that, every slave in the United States was legally set free. Did every slave experience it? Not at all. Some didn't even know there was an emancipation proclamation years afterwards. Positionally they were free from their master, but experientially they still were slaves.

If God says some neat things about me, how can I experience in my life what God says is true? If God says I'm free from sin how do I experience that? How do I convert something God says about me into my practical life so I can enjoy it? That's what I'm going to share with you today. But first, let's look at **the three "Facts" of the Christian life.** God wants us to know three fantastic truths that help us find freedom from sin. Read Romans 6:1-14.

So, Paul begins this section with a question. **v. 1 "What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?"** He's talking to Christians -- all Christians, Paul included. Should we go on sinning?

He's talking about continuous deliberate sin. Why does he bring this question up? In the previous chapter in v. 20, he says *"where sin increased, grace increased all the more."* Wherever things get real bad God pours out more grace. Some smart alecks took this and thought "Every time I sin that shows God's grace. I'm going to do God a favor. I'm going to let Him really show super grace."

That is misusing what God has said. Paul says, Should we continue sinning to show God's grace? His answer is very short, *"By no means!"* A different translation says: *"God forbid!"*

Why? Because we died to sin. This is the first positional truth. Is Paul saying if you become a Christian you never sin? No, everybody sins. But he is saying, if you are a genuine Christian that you will not deliberately keep on sinning. You will not make a practice of it. If you're really a Christian it's going to show up in your lifestyle. A person cannot say, "I'm a Christian" and there's no change in his life. That person is not really a Christian. You do not continue sinning. The most miserable person in the world is a Christian who is trying to sin and get away with it.

*I John 3:9 "No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God."* He's not saying that you don't sin if you're a Christian. He's saying you don't keep on and on doing the sin with no guilt. It's impossible for a Christian to keep on sinning and get away with it.

So now, how do I break the power of sin in my life? **Three facts of the Christian Life:**

1. **When I became a believer I was placed in Christ.** This phrase "in Christ" is used 120 times in the New Testament. It is the number one way we are called Christians. We are in Christ. 2 Cor. 5:17 *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ..."* There is a tremendous implication here.

Because I am in Christ then I was crucified, buried, and resurrected with Christ. God is so concerned that you get this truth that He gives us an illustration that will show this point. Baptism, v. 3 " *Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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. 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 "*

Baptism illustrates this truth. We were buried with Christ, crucified with Christ, buried with Him and resurrected with Him. Baptism represents a burial and resurrection. Whenever you see a baptism, think of it as a funeral. It's saying, "I died with Christ." When we take the person and put them under the water it shows they're dying to an old way of life, dying with Christ. When we bring them up they're being resurrected with Christ. This is why we practice immersion in this church because it symbolizes it.

But why make a big deal over baptism? Why does it matter how you baptize? It matters because it pictures this truth. Immersion is important because it shows we were buried with Christ and raised with Christ. How do you show that with a sprinkle? The Bible also says when you're baptized it's a symbol of washing away all your sins. I didn't want to wash away just a few sins; I want complete washing away -- total immersion. All of my sins symbolically are forgiven and that's what baptism shows.

*Colossians 2:12 "...having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead."* Baptism is a burial. Every time you see a baptism think of this first truth. I was placed in Christ and I was buried with Christ. Baptism states: I died with Christ. What did Christ die for? Our sins. And we died in Him for sin.

Paul is saying that all of us, if you're a Christian, you're in Christ, Christ died on the cross and you were in Christ when He died on the cross. That's a positional truth. We'll come back and explain how this applies to your life. The second fact is this:

2. When Christ died my old sin nature was crucified with Him. v. 6-7 *"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—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin."*

Can you tempt a dead man? If you are dead in Christ, then the temptation cannot have its effect in your life. Let's look at a few passages that explain this -- when Christ died, my old nature was crucified with Christ.

First, Ephesians 4:22-24, *"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."* Your old self is your old lifestyle, the way you used to live, your old desires and habits and patterns.

Now, in Colossians 3:8-9 *"But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."* All of those things are the old self.

Then, in Galatians 2:20, *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

Paul says that we are no longer slaves to sin. And because of that, you have a choice, you are free. When you are a slave, you do what your master wants you to do.

Now that you're free you have a choice, you can choose to continue to be a slave or you can choose to live like a free person. Therefore, you can choose not to sin by the power of the Holy Spirit. I'm not saying you can be perfect. I am saying that you can choose not to sin. There were times in your life that you said, "I can't help myself. I just can't stop." There were times in your life when you were a victim to sin. Before you became a Christian you had no power to stop, no power to change. You'd try to start new habits, and you fail. Because you didn't have any power. Sin had a power over you. But now that power has been rendered powerless and you have been freed from that power. Why are so many Christians defeated by sinful habits? Because they're looking at the wrong thing. Instead of looking at the circumstance they ought to look at the cross which set us free.

And the third fact is this:

3. Christ's resurrection has guaranteed our ultimate victory. This is encouraging. v. 8-10 *"Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God."* Even death has been defeated. That's the worst enemy. Hebrews 2 says that people are in fear of death and Christ has defeated that enemy too.

Those are the truths, the facts. What good does all of this knowledge do for me? It doesn't do you any good unless you act on them. You've got to know it, you've got to believe it, and then you've got to act on it.

There are three things you must do with your knowledge, knowing that I died with Christ. When I died, my old sin nature died but that doesn't mean it was destroyed. We still have a sin nature. But it is rendered powerless. That means you now have a choice, it doesn't control you.

You can now choose to do what's right. A Christian can never say, "The devil made me do it!" He can't blame the devil, Adam, anybody. If you sin it's because you choose to sin.

Now, let me share with you three things you must do. The 3 Acts of the Christian life.

1) Reckon. v. 11 *"In the same way count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."* I'm using reckon because that's another word for count in the Greek. In fact, some versions render it "reckon". To reckon is to establish by counting or calculation. Paul is saying that just as Christ died and rose again, you also died and rose again. You are dead to sin but alive to God. Sin is no longer your master but God. Don't ever doubt that. It is an established fact and you must act on it. Reckon.

Paul wants to stress that because many Christians don't know how to conquer sin in their lives. They live defeated lives. But the first step to defeat it is to firmly believe that our old self has been put to death by the death of Jesus and we have rose again with our new selves because Jesus rose from the dead. And all this is the work of God.

You just agree with him. "God, I don't know how it all works out. I don't understand it all. But I believe that because I am in You, that somehow I've died to that tendency to sin."

The first act is to reckon. Second,

2) Resist. v. 12 *"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness."* In short, don't let sin go unchallenged in your life.

The first word is "therefore". What is it there for? Paul is saying we are coming to a conclusion. The bottom line is this: If I really believe I am in Christ my old sin nature was crucified on the cross and I no longer have to give in to sin.



I can choose. I have a new power in my life to quit giving in to temptation. Then I realize I do have the power to resist temptation. Paul is saying, Resist it. No longer let it go unchallenged in your life.

A Christian has no business saying, "I can't help it." Because you can help it, according to God. The Bible says that Jesus Christ has broken that power. Before you became a believer you didn't have the power to change. But now that you are a believer you have a new power. And you believe it and you resist what God says to resist. Resist that sin! Reject the idea that you can't control your own desires. You can control your own desires. As Galatians 5:16 says, "*So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*" You keep in step with the Spirit of God. That's how you resist sin. How do you keep in step? Read your Bible always. Pray. Fellowship with other Christians. Listen to Christian teachings and music. And all that stuff.

Some people think that the more they become a Christian, the less they will be tempted. The truth is, the stronger Christian you become, the more the devil is going to tempt you! He'll be after you. I mean, he would rather take down someone who is strong in their faith than someone who is not. For example, if Billy Graham had succumbed to temptations when he was at his peak, just imagine how much it would hurt the cause of Christ. But as we know, many Christian leaders have actually fallen because of the temptation of wealth, women, and wine. Well, I don't know if there's a Christian leader who was scandalized because of drinking too much but I thought it was good alliteration.

Anyway, my point is, if you are a visible Christian leader or someone leading a big ministry, there are more temptations because you would deal with a lot of things and people. And the devil takes advantage of that because he knows our weaknesses.

This passage we're looking at today teaches, as a Christian, you do not have to be intimidated by your old nature, or the devil, or self, or anything anymore. I died with Christ. That means when Jesus took the penalty for my sin, He took the penalty for all my sin: not only the sins I did yesterday, but the ones I do in the weeks to come. All of my sins have been paid for.

Reckon, resist, and

**3) Render.** This means to give or to offer yourselves. He says don't offer your body to sin, don't put yourself in situations where you're even tempted *"...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."* Render means to put at one's disposal, to offer voluntarily. He repeats this in Romans 12:1-2, where he says, *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship."*

Now, the only problem with a living sacrifice is that it can crawl off the altar. On Sunday we agree with God that we've blown it this week, ask forgiveness. Then we reckon or believe He's broken the power of sin in our old nature and we don't have to give in to it any more. We resist the devil and his temptation because we know we do have a right to choose and we don't have to be manipulated by sin any more. We don't have to be intimidated. Then we render, we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice on Sunday.... And then on Monday we crawl off the altar. On Sunday we sing "Onward Christian Soldiers" and on Monday we go AWOL. It is a continual thing but it should be a once for all present. Present yourself to God. Make a present. "God, here is my mind, here is my tongue, here are my hands, here is my body. I give it all to you." That's the key to victory in the Christian life. It's the starting point. That's why it's here at the beginning of chapter 6 .

This doesn't mean you're not going to stumble or fall. You will. Look at v. 14 *"For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace."* We have looked at the Law and we've seen how the Law brings death. But grace brings life. The reason we can have victory is because God says we are under grace.

Titus 2:11-12 says, *"For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age."* The grace of God teaches us to say "no". You now have within your power, the power to say "No!" to sin. You don't have to keep on in sin. Sin does not have to dominate your life anymore. Sin is like gravity and it's constantly pulling you down trying to make you fall. But grace is like God giving you wings. You can soar in the air in spite of gravity. In spite of the fact that you have an old sin nature. You do, but on the cross it was rendered powerless. It cannot manipulate you anymore. The next time a voice within you comes and says, "Go ahead and sin! It's no big deal! God will forgive you!" Ignore it.

God says you are dead to sin. That's positional truth. Experiential truth -- start acting like it. How do you act like it? Those three words: **Reckon -- God, I believe what you say is true. My old sin nature died on the cross. Resist -- I'm not going to just give up and let the devil intimidate me and let it go unchallenged. I don't have to do that any more. I may have done it for thirty years but I don't have to do it any more. Render -- Give yourself as a present to God.**

Nothing is more crucial than the sections we're going to look at than in this third major division of Romans. Maybe even today you are intimidated by the devil and by your old sin nature. Maybe some of these thoughts have gone through your mind, "I'll never be able to change! I can't be a consistent Christian. I'll never get control of that area of my life." You feel that you just can't break the power of sin in your life -- the temptation is too strong. You can't break it. If you could we could all read self help books and forget about Jesus. The fact is you can't on your own. Romans 6 teaches us three very important truths that you need to know, to need to believe, to need to act on.

One, Thank God right now that when you became a believer you were placed in Christ. Maybe you don't understand it all. "Lord, I agree that I was put in Christ."

Two, when Christ died my old nature was crucified. Thank God for that. We know that our old self was crucified with Him, so that sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. If I have died with Christ then I can be freed from sin.

Then thank God not only for Christ's death but for His resurrection that guaranteed our ultimate victory. If we were raised with Christ, we will live with Him and death no longer has mastery over Him. Satan would love to put in us the fear of death but for the Christian, death is just a homecoming. The life we live we now live to God.

Would you right now in your heart make a present of your life to God. "Jesus Christ, I want to give You my mind. I want to give You a present of my heart, my life, my ears, my hands, my mouth. I present myself to You. I thank You that sin will not be my master and that, because I'm under grace, You will give me wings to break the gravity of my old nature. Lord, help me to believe that I'm dead to sin and help me to start acting like it. Help me to realize that when I do sin I can't blame anybody else but it's because I've chosen to. Nobody is forcing me to do it."

Lord, I want to thank You for Romans 6 for the Facts and the Acts of the Christian life. As we study these Scriptures in the days ahead may we become victorious Christians. There are so many people in the world who are believers but who don't understand these truths. As a result they go through life frustrated. Yet, Lord, You meant for us to live in freedom. Thank You, Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen.