

# Dead to Sin

## Breaking Free by the Spirit

July 18, 2021

Today we're breaking free from sin.

**Is sin dead to you?** Or do you *stay in touch* – keeping it only *mostly dead* – checking in every now and then to make sure it's *doing okay* without you? Well I sure hope not.



For if you live according to the *sinful* nature, you *will* die; but if by the *Spirit* you put *to death* the misdeeds of the body, you will *live*, because those who are led by the *Spirit of God* are *sons of God*. For you did *not* receive a *spirit* that makes you a *slave again* to fear, but you received the *Spirit of Sonship*. ... we are God's *children*. ... *heirs* of God and *co-heirs* with Christ, – Romans 8:13-17 NIV



For you are *all sons* of God through *faith in* Christ Jesus. For *as many* of you as were baptized *into* Christ have put *on* Christ. ... there is neither *male* nor *female*; for you are *all one* in Christ Jesus. ... and *heirs* according to the promise. – Galatians 3:26-29 NKJ

And because you are *sons*, God has sent forth the *Spirit of His Son* into *your hearts*, crying out, “Abba, Father!” Therefore you are *no longer* a *slave* but a *son*, and if a *son*, then an *heir* of God through Christ. – Galatians 4:6-7 NKJ

Okay – hold on a minute! What's going on? The Apostle Paul says:

Don't you know that ... you *are slaves* to the *one* whom you *obey* — whether you are *slaves to sin*, which leads to *death*, or [*slaves*] to *obedience*, which leads to *righteousness*? But thanks be to God ... You have been *set free* from *sin* and have become *slaves to righteousness*. ... you have been *set free* from *sin* and have become *slaves to God*, [*and*] the benefit you reap *leads to holiness*, – Romans 6:16-18, 22 NIV

What's going on here? I thought we were *no longer* a *slave* but a *child of God*! How do you get out of this one, Paul? What are you saying?

What I am saying is that as long as the *heir* is a *child*, he is *no different* from a *slave*, although he owns the *whole estate*. [Well that's different. I guess it's *true*: we must *receive every word* into our heart to have ears to hear. (Ezek 3:10)] ... But when the time had fully come, God sent *His Son* ... that we might receive the *full rights of sons*. [By *growing up* and *growing into* our inheritance] ... So [just to be clear, in Christ, whether male or female] you are *no longer* a *slave*, [of *sin*] but a *son*; [of righteousness – but “as long as the heir is a *child*, he's *no different* from a *slave*”] – Galatians 4:1-7 NIV

[So] Speaking the *truth in love*, we are to *grow up* ... into *Christ*, [by putting to death the deeds of the flesh by the power of the Spirit. (Rom 8:13)] – Ephesians 4:15 ESV

But until we all grow up *into Christ*, **we all remain slaves to something**. Because, just like with children, **self-rule isn't an option, it's a delusion**. Jesus came to set the captives free ... *from sin*.



For if you live according to the *sinful* nature, you will *die*; but if *by the Spirit* you put *to death* the misdeeds of the body, you will *live*, – Romans 8:13 NIV



“Dead” is a funny word. A jury can be dead *locked*; a *lock* can be dead *bolted*; and a *bolt* can be dead *weight* ... to a *dead-beat*. And that tanker can come to a dead *stop*, in a dead *calm*, in dead *silence*; *unless* the captain is *dead set* against it; for fear a torpedo could hit ‘em *dead center*, and leave ‘em dead in the water.

So **how do we put sin to death and live?** By *dying* ... to *sin*.

Just as *sin reigned in death*, so also *grace* might *reign* through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. ... We *died to sin*; how can we *live in it* any longer? ... our *old self* was *crucified with Him* so that the body of sin might be *done away with*, [i.e. **made powerless**] that we should no longer be *slaves to sin*— because anyone who has *died [to sin]* has been *freed* from sin. – Romans 5:20-6:7 NIV

So what's it mean to have “died to sin”? Well it can't mean that we *never* sin, because 1 John 1:8 says only *self-deluded liars* claim to be *free of sin* – rather than *from sin*.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. – 1 John 1:8-9 NIV

Paul's talking about choosing to “live in it” (living in *ongoing, unrepentant, wrongdoing*).



When someone says, “**You're dead to me!**” it means they're cutting off *all* contact and association, because **they want nothing to do with you anymore**. Being dead to sin, in order to put sin to death is like *that*. **When I die to sin, sin is dead to me**. I want *nothing to do* with you *anymore*. Paul explains it this way:



Those who live *according to* the sinful nature have *their minds set on* what *that nature desires*; but those who live *in accordance* with the *Spirit* have *their minds set on* what the *Spirit* desires. – Romans 8:5 NIV

And we're dead set on *following*. But “dead to sin” does not mean “dead to temptation”. We've been set free from the domination of sin, not the lure of temptation. **Jesus didn't die to take away our free-will**. I still *have* a sin *nature*, but I've been given the *power to triumph* over it.

*Being set free* was a single action accomplished *by Christ*. *Walking in* our freedom and *growing up into Christ* is a process requiring our desire and cooperation and effort. Paul writes:

Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in *slavery to impurity* and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in *slavery to righteousness leading to holiness*. [“Because by *one sacrifice* He has *made* perfect forever those who are *being made holy*” (Heb 10:14)] – Romans 6:19 NIV

So **if you don't want victory, don't expect victory**. Know what a slave owner was called? Lord. And **there's only one Lord whose ownership actually liberates**. The One who's come to adopt as sons, and then empower us to grow into our full rights of inheritance. And to the degree that we hold back from total submission to our Savior, we remain enslaved to the control of sin.

[Think about it this way] When you were *slaves to sin*, you were *free* from the *control of righteousness*. – Romans 6:20 NIV



That's the *controlling* element of our faith through God's empowering by the Spirit. It's like power steering. It feels like you're the one doing the work of steering, but if the power steering goes out you quickly realize how much assistance you had. And this power never comes absent our efforts. Because **empowered steering doesn't work when we're set on turning our own way**.



Our problem is, we want God to *liposuction* our sin. Suck it out and toss it out with minor pain and quick recovery, to be magically rid of it. But He won't. And He don't. He forgives 'em in an instant. But He cleanses us through a process of being washed in His Word. (Eph 5:26)

But now that you *have been* set free from sin [by receiving forgiveness *from it* and the power to *overcome it*] and *have become* [immature children of God, which is no different in practice than] slaves to God, the benefit you *reap* [and we reap that which we sow and cultivate and grow] leads to holiness, [it doesn't teleport us, it guides and directs; because by one sacrifice ...] and the result is eternal life. – Romans 6:22 NIV



Which will begin the moment when we die to sin and receive new life in Christ. Liposuction makes someone *look* better, but it doesn't make them *stronger*. That comes through healthy *habits* and *effort*. And that's why **the Lord won't liposuction our sin**. But He *will* gladly train us to grow up into His character, because **He doesn't enable laziness, He empowers holiness**.

For *sin* shall *not* be your *master*, [that's not a *command*, it's a *promise!*] because you are not under law, but under grace. – Romans 6:14 NIV

Any idea what the difference is? “Under Law” means **God's acceptance is a wage I earn by following rules**. And if we don't *come out from under* that mindset, every sinful act will threaten to separate us from God. Whereas “under grace” means **God's acceptance is a gift I receive by following Jesus**. And when you're following Jesus, *nothing* can separate you.

For the *wages of sin is death*, [that's the only thing we're ultimately capable of "earning" for ourselves on our *own*. Because a *wage* is something we *deserve*] but the *gift of God* is eternal *life* in Christ Jesus our *Lord*. – Romans 6:23 NIV



There are only two masters. One pays wages. The other gives gifts. The *wages we deserve*; the *gift we don't*. It's like your kids on Christmas morning. The gifts you give are hardly an expression of *compensation* for *their* goodness and obedience. Those gifts are an expression of *your love* for those little ... *children* – as Jesus calls us.

What then? [says my sinful nature] Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! – Romans 6:15 NIV

If we play that game, sin will *rule* us; because sin is a master and an attitude that grace gives us a license to sin makes our deliverance from its power *impossible*. The question is: **are you as committed to your Savior as you were to your sins?** Because being fully committed to Christ actually sets us free in three very distinct ways from the domination of sin.

First: **grace sets us free from sin's delusion.** As we comprehend God's unconditional love and care and concern, we begin to see ourselves and others through his eyes. And grace begins to lift the fog, and discernment develops, and we can see that **promiscuity punishes, and purity rewards;** and that **selfishness restrains, and selflessness liberates!**

And with this: 2) **grace sets us free from sin's desire.** Sin has warped many to the incredible degree that even when they see their sin as destructive they refuse to give it up. But grace draws us to the One who treasures us most. And as we begin to treasure Him, sin – that which dishonors Him – becomes more and more *unattractive*.

You see, **true faith in Christ is a triumph of desire, not willpower.** It's more than choice, it's something we cherish. It's more than logic, it's something we love. It's more than decision, it's something we delight in. And then, if and when we do: 3) **grace sets us free from sin's despair.** Sin deludes people into thinking that wrong is right. Then it lures them into doing that which is shameful. Then it turns around and shames them for doing what it lured 'em into. Know why?

Because when we're filled with **self-disgust**, and **self-remorse**, and **self-pity**, and **self-loathing**, we'll do just about anything to numb, or escape, or distract ourselves from it. And sin is right there to offer the means of ever deeper enslavement, with **the false promise of delivering us from the very thing it's offering us as a means of deliverance!**

But because of God's *grace*, my *value* is not *derived* from my *performance!* I was *loved* as a *sinner*, way before I loved God! And I am *forgiven* when I *fall*, and *cleansed* when I get up! Because I am a *child* of God! And I'm *growing up* into Christ. Because **the strength of grace easily breaks the back of guilt and shame and despair with the overwhelming, devastating, all-engulfing power of perfect love.**

And of *that* you can be *dead sure!*