

DON'T GIVE IN

Last time we learned that when a person places their faith in Jesus Christ, they become a totally new creation. So let's take a look at this new person and what they can become. Paul sketches this process called **sanctification** beginning in Romans 6:11:

*So you should **consider** yourselves dead to sin and able to live for the glory of God through Christ Jesus.*

Having risen from the dead and being dead to sin, the believer is now ready to move on. But it isn't always easy as Paul tells us in Romans 7:15-20:

*15 I don't understand myself at all, for **I really want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do the very thing I hate.***

16 I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong.

17 But I can't help myself, because it is sin inside me that makes me do these evil things.

*18 I know I am rotten through and through so far as my old sinful nature is concerned. No matter which way I turn, **I can't make myself do right. I want to, but I can't.***

19 When I want to do good, I don't. And when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway.

20 But if I am doing what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing it; the sin within me is doing it.

Paul is telling us that he has a desire to do what is right, he has a desire to see victory in his life, and he has a desire to do those things that please God. Here we see a man who is struggling with sin, but who really wants to stop doing those things that make him miserable. How can one achieve this goal? How does one put off things that shouldn't be in their lives?

Well, this is the moment that we need to introduce the word "*knowledge*" to our discussion. It's basic to the principle of the Word of God that people first have to know what is true before they can put it into practice. The book of Hosea tells us that the people were destroyed because of a lack of knowledge, Hosea 4:6, NLT:

*My people are being destroyed because **they don't know me.***

Hosea 6:6. NLT

*I want you to be merciful; I don't want your sacrifices. I want you to **know** God; that's more important than burnt offerings.*

In other words, God doesn't want our sacrifices; He wants us to know, really know, Him. He says that is far more important than trying to show Him, or anyone else for that matter, how good we are. In this context the word know means to acquire information

through your mind and pass it down to your heart so that you can make it happen. What kind of information do we acquire about God and how do we get that knowledge? It is a knowledge of the character of God, a knowing of what God is like and how He works because we have had the experience of Him and His working in our lives. It is an experiential knowledge. Now when we say “experiential” there is danger of being misunderstood. Some immediately think of emotional hype and flamboyant experiences. That’s not what’s meant here at all. To know God is to know who He is and what He does in our lives. In other words, God is Jehovah-jireh--the God who provides. And we know that because He has provided His love and care for us. God is Jehovah-shalom (the God who is peace) and we know that because we have received His salvation and know that we have legal peace with God. We know that God is merciful because we are alive, we have been forgiven, and He uses us in His ministry, not because of who we are but because of who He is. God is patient, and we know that through experiencing His unending patience with our falling on our faces and His picking us up again and setting us on our feet. Much as a parent watches their 18-month-old begin to walk. The child takes a step and tumbles. What does the parent do? Exclaims how wonderful it is the child took one step, and then picks him or her up and encourages that child to take two steps. The child does so only to tumble again. Patiently the parent picks the child up, sets him on his feet again, and holds arms out encouraging him to take some more steps. And so the process proceeds, attempting, tumbling, being assisted to get up again, and then encouraged to keep trying--until the child is finally walking, and then running all over the place. Our Heavenly Father is that patient with us as we try to walk along the path He has for us. We come to know that God is in control as we experience His work in our lives--saving, guiding, opening and closing doors, arranging circumstances to help us become what He wants us to be. We could preach a whole series of sermons on knowing God, and maybe we will someday.

Suffice it to say that what Hosea is talking about here is a long way from mere head knowledge; it is heart knowledge gained through the experience of God’s working in our lives.

Isaiah 1:2,3, NLT:

Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! This is what the Lord says: “The children I raised and cared for have turned against me.

*3 Even the animals—the donkey and the ox—**know** their owner and appreciate his care, but not my people . . . No matter what I do for them, **they still do not understand.**”*

They did not know so they could not function properly. You will never be able to please God without knowing what He wants you to do. We find the same thing in the New Testament, Philippians 4:6-8. NLT:

6 Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

7 If you do this, you will experience God’s peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard

your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.
*8 And now, dear brothers and sisters, let me say one more thing as I close this letter. Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. **Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.***

Colossians 3:5-10:

So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual sin, impurity, lust, and shameful desires. Don't be greedy for the good things of this life, for that is idolatry.
6 God's terrible anger will come upon those who do such things.
7 You used to do them when your life was still part of this world.
8 But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language.
9 Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old evil nature and all its wicked deeds.
10 In its place you have clothed yourselves with a brand-new nature that is continually being renewed as you learn more and more about Christ, who created this new nature within you.

In verse 5, where it refers to idolatry, you may blow that off thinking idolatry is something that happens in Africa or among primitive peoples. But no, folks, it happens to those of us in the good old USA too. Paul specifically here equates idolatry with being greedy for the good things of life. That includes materialism, but is not limited to it. Idolatry also happens any time we put ourselves above God. So when we want to be totally in charge of our life, that is idolatry because God wants to be in control of our life. God is to be Number One. We might get a better idea of what Paul is trying to convey in this passage if we consider the translation from The Message. As you listen, notice how strong the language and the images are:

Colossians 3:5-10, The Message

*Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life—even though invisible to spectators—is with Christ in God. He is your life. When Christ (your real life, remember) shows up again on this earth, you'll show up, too—the real you, the glorious you. Meanwhile, be content with obscurity, like Christ. And that means killing off everything connected with that way of death: sexual promiscuity, impurity, lust, doing whatever you feel like whenever you feel like it, and grabbing whatever attracts your fancy. **That's a life shaped by things and feelings instead of by God. It's because of this kind of thing that God is about to explode in anger. It wasn't long ago that you were doing all that stuff and not knowing any better. But you know better now, so make sure it's all gone for good: bad temper, irritability, meanness, profanity, dirty talk. Don't lie to one another. You're done with that old life. It's like a filthy set of ill-fitting clothes you've stripped off and put in the fire. Now you're dressed in a***

***new wardrobe.** Every item of your new way of life is custom-made by the Creator, with his label on it. All the old fashions are now obsolete.*

You can't do what you don't know, so we begin by **knowing**. How many times do you hear someone say something like: "*I don't believe God would do that,*" or "*I don't believe Jesus was really God,*" or "*The Bible is nothing more than a collection of mythological stories,*" or "*God wouldn't send a good person to Hell. I do a lot of good things and have lived a good life for the most part, I'm sure I'll be OK.*" Where do people get such confidence? People who say these things know very little if anything at all about the Bible. They don't know, really know as we were describing a few minutes ago, God. They don't have first-hand experience with the character of God. They therefore are basing all their knowledge on assumption, on what they want to believe, or what a neighbor or co-worker has suggested, rather than on the facts. And if they don't change their attitude, what a shock awaits them at death. We must read and know the Bible before we can reach any conclusions, either for or against what it claims is the truth. Most people are just plain ignorant concerning the most important decision they will ever make. What a tragedy!

A believer needs **to know** as well. In order to function properly we need **to know** that the power of sin has been broken. We need **to know** that we do not have to fall victim to the power of sin in our lives. We need **to know** that sin cannot force us to do that which is against what we know God would want us to do. And how do we know that? By receiving Christ as our Savior and experiencing Him setting us free from the power of sin. Now once you know that, you are on your way to victory because it puts confidence in your heart. The doubt is gone and the fear is gone. You know you're dealing with a defeated enemy that no longer has control of you. All of this begins with **knowing** God's Word in the Bible, and with **knowing God Himself**.

The next thing we need to address is also found in Romans 6:11, and it is the word "**consider**," which is also translated "*understand*" in certain translations. What does it mean to "*consider*" something? Well Webster says it means "*to think about carefully: as a : to think of especially with regard to taking some action.*"¹ The Greek word used here is actually an accounting term: *reckon*. If you're from down South you might say, "I reckon that would be so" when you want to affirm something. We could translate the word in this verse to mean "*affirm*." First you come to **know** something is true, then you **affirm**, or conclude, or believe that it's true. You know it is true because the evidence proves that it's true, so then you believe it with all your heart. The accounting of the matter adds up to **dead to sin= live for the glory of God**. So when verse 11 tells us:

*So you should **consider** yourselves dead to sin and able to live for the glory of God through Christ Jesus,*

We should now be able to believe this because of all the evidence we've been given thus far in our study of Romans. You may find these things difficult to believe initially

¹ Merriam-Webster, I. 1996, c1993. Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary. Includes index. (10th ed.). Merriam-Webster: Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.

because they are so counter-culture. This is not what we're told on the TV news or talk shows. This concept is almost like a fairy tale to us, and we all know that fairy tales are interesting stories, but only fantasy. But you can believe it. The more you cling to it, and the better you understand the Bible, the more you **know** about the Bible, the easier it will be to accept the things the Bible teaches.

Now what does it mean when you affirm that you are really dead to sin and alive to God through Jesus Christ? First of all it means that when we're tempted we can have confidence in the presence of the Holy Spirit who comes to live within us when we give our life to Christ. That's exactly what 1 Corinthians 10:13 tells us:

But remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it.

What more could anyone ask? For a believer, there will never be a temptation or trial that they cannot in the power of God have victory over. You can also be secure in knowing that if and when you do sin, you won't lose your salvation because you sinned. Sin may rear its ugly head and cause you to give into it even though you do not have to. But the one thing sin cannot do is take you away from God. This means that you can also be confident in eternal life. Listen to what Jesus said in John 11:25,26:

Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. 26 They are given eternal life for believing in me and will never perish."

Now I ask you to pay attention with all your heart to what we're telling you.

When you are free from the fear and temptation; when you are free from fearing an ultimate disaster because of your failures and your sins; and when you are free from fearing death, then you can fully enjoy the grace and blessings of Jesus in your walk with Him. That is what happens when you **know** and **believe (consider or reckon)** these things to be true.

John Stott has said that:

"The major secret of holy living is in the mind. It is in knowing that our former self was crucified with Christ, in knowing that baptism into Christ is baptism into His death and resurrection, and in considering that through Christ

we are dead to sin and alive to God. We are to recall, to ponder, to grasp, to register these truths until they are so integral to our mindset that a return to the old life is unthinkable.”²

When Christ died, was His payment for sin sufficient? Absolutely! Therefore, when we died in Him that payment was sufficient for us. Sin can no longer make any claim on us. That’s why we don’t fear that God will cast us out even when we sin. The penalty was perfectly paid by Jesus and the power of sin over us was broken.

Paul goes on to say in Romans 6:12:

(Therefore)³ do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to its lustful desires.

Verse 12 begins with the word, “*therefore.*” Whenever we see a “*therefore*” at the beginning of a sentence, we know exactly what it is there for. It takes us from the past statement to the present statement. And what was the last statement made in verse 11? “*You must consider yourselves dead to sin.*” So “*therefore*” “*do not let sin control the way you live.*” To make this practical in your day-to-day life, we could suggest that you ask God for help whenever you feel you want to do something you shouldn’t. Then get in touch with people who can help you not to do it. Ask a trusted friend or family member to pray for and with you. Talk with someone you trust either face-to-face or on the phone, maybe someone you know has struggled with the same issue, and explain what your dilemma and temptation is. Accept the love and support that individual probably wants to give you.

In the first 10 verses of chapter 6 Paul has been saying that sin has no control over us anymore when we receive Christ as our Savior. But Paul has never said that it is no longer a force that has to be dealt with. It just isn’t our lord and master anymore. It keeps calling us to come back over to the other side of the road, if you recall the contrast we made last week. Sin wants to bring us back under its control even though we are no longer under its power. Before we were believers, sin was our king/queen-our lord and master, and we were slaves to it, which is exactly what we’ll see Romans 6:17 says when we get to it shortly. What Paul wants us to understand in verse 12 is that if sin is no longer our lord and master, don’t let sin act like it is still our lord and master. Don’t let sin act as if it still had control of you. Listen to Peter writing in 1 Peter 2:8-12:

*“He is the stone [in other words, the Person] that makes people stumble, the rock that will make them fall.” **They stumble because they do not listen to God’s word or obey it, and so they meet the fate that has been planned for them.***

² Stott, John *Romans*, p. 180.

³ “Therefore” appears in most Bible translations. It does not appear in the paraphrased NLT which is quoted here.

9 But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are a kingdom of priests, God's holy nation, his very own possession. This is so you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

10 "Once you were not a people; now you are the people of God. Once you received none of God's mercy; now you have received his mercy."

11 Dear brothers and sisters, you are foreigners and aliens here. So I warn you to keep away from evil desires because they fight against your very souls.

12 Be careful how you live among your unbelieving neighbors. Even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior [that means, your good deeds], and they will believe and give honor to God.

Peter is telling you and me to take a look at who you are. You don't need that kind of stuff anymore. Remember if you have accepted Jesus as your Savior, you are a new creation in Christ, a brand new person on the inside, so to speak. The Holy Spirit of God now resides within you. But until you are in Heaven you will have to remain in the same body and it is that body that is calling out to you to have its lusts fulfilled. Your new spirit that has been joined with Christ in the presence of the Holy Spirit of God provides the power to walk away from all temptations. You simply have to call upon Him to help you in such situations and He will.

You know what temptation is like, don't you? It's that little voice inside that calls out:

<i>"I see it, I want it."</i>	<i>"It will feel good."</i>
<i>"I deserve it."</i>	<i>"It won't hurt anybody."</i>
<i>"No one will ever know."</i>	<i>"Everybody else is doing it, why shouldn't I?"</i>
<i>"Just wait, I'll get even."</i>	<i>"Just a little won't hurt."</i>

You know what we're talking about, don't you? If you pamper the body, entertain the body, and continually expose the body to temptation, you are going to have a problem because it is the body and all its sensory connections and feelings that are exposed to the world and can become channels through which temptations can draw you into sin, and then sin can have its way with you because you allowed it. That's exactly what Paul is telling us in verse 12, that sin would like to have control over us. But you do not have to allow it to have control over you. You have the power to choose. Your will to want to resist is a key ingredient here. If you want to resist you have the power to ask God to give you the strength to resist. That is very likely what Paul had in mind when writing Philippians 2:12-15:

Dearest friends, you were always so careful to follow my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away you must be even more careful to put into action God's saving work in your lives, obeying God

with deep reverence and fear.

13 For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him.

14 In everything you do, stay away from complaining and arguing,

15 so that no one can speak a word of blame against you. You are to live clean, innocent lives as children of God in a dark world full of crooked and perverse people. Let your lives shine brightly before them.

You can't do these things if first you don't activate your will to call upon God to help you remain in His will. If you choose to do your part, God will most certainly do His part. Don't be depressed if you fail. Holiness is not a discipline that develops instantaneously. In fact activating your will is a lifelong job until you get your new body in Heaven. So when you hear certain people claim that, "Ten years ago I eliminated sin from my life," you can be assured they're trying to hide something because no one has ever been able to do that. In fact, the closer we get to God, the more spiritually minded we become, and the more we become aware of God's holiness the more keenly aware we become of our own sin.

So Paul continues with this theme in Romans 6:13:

*Do not let any **part of your body** become a **tool of wickedness**, to be used for sinning. Instead, give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life. And use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God.*

A person's self-will becomes the central issue in this verse. Paul is speaking here of body parts: the mind, the organs, the eyes, the ears, the mouth, and I'm sure we could make a very long and detailed list if we wanted to, but you understand what we mean. We're talking about all those things that are part of our flesh and our humanness. Do not let any of those parts become weapons that can be used against you to corrupt you and cause you both physical and emotional pain. Satan uses our bodies as weapons to control the world. The body becomes the weapon he needs to promote unrighteousness. So Paul is saying, "Don't be a contributing partner with Satan in corrupting the world. Don't let him use you as one of his weapons." Instead, all of those bodily parts can be used to serve God and bring Him glory, as well as your own personal peace and joy. God wants to use your body as a weapon of righteousness to defeat evil. God wants to say, "Here's my man, here's my woman, here's my child. They are My weapons of righteousness." What a fascinating concept. When God wants to battle sin, He reaches down and uses the people who are willing to be His weapons.

Now let's move on to Romans 6:14:

*Sin is no longer your master, for **you are no longer subject to the law**, which enslaves you to sin. Instead, you are free by God's grace.*

God's Law, the Ten Commandments, were given to Moses so that people could look at

them and be aware of their sin; to look at them and know that they couldn't possibly keep them all the time. Just listen to them. It's something you should be able to realize right away.

1. Worship no god but Me.
2. Do not bow down to any idol or worship it, because I tolerate no rivals.
3. Do not use My name for evil purposes.
4. Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy.
5. Respect your father and your mother.
6. Do not commit murder.
7. Do not have sex with anyone other than your wife or husband.
8. Do not steal.
9. Don't say things about people that aren't true.
10. Do not desire anything that others have and you don't.

The rules God has given us command, restrain, demand, rebuke, condemn; but those rules cannot conquer sin. Those rules were never meant to solve the problem of sin. The Law was given so that people could know what sin was and that they needed someone to save them from their sin. From the very beginning of the Bible such a Savior was promised and He finally came in the form of Jesus. Trying to gain God's favor, or our salvation, or eternal life by showing God that we can obey all His rules is not going to get anyone anywhere. The Law only increases our bondage to sin by making it evident that we can't keep it.

But the person who has Jesus as his/her Savior doesn't have to worry about keeping these rules of the Law, because they have been given all the righteousness which Jesus has through their faith in Him by the grace of God. Jesus was the only one who ever obeyed the Law, these rules, all the time. So He was the only one who could be the perfect sacrifice that God required for sin. A believer then, because of God's grace, is seen by God as having obeyed the Law, these rules, perfectly, not because they actually did obey them but because of their faith in Christ alone.

What does this all mean? It means that simply put all people ever born are sinners; they make serious mistakes. Sinners cannot please God and are therefore destined to die and go to Hell. But God knowing that this might happen, set in place a plan for all people to be forgiven of these mistakes and therefore still be able to get into Heaven. God knew that none of the people on the earth could ever overcome their sin nature on their own. So He decided that because He loved each and every one of us so much, He Himself would take the form of a man and come to earth and make Himself the perfect sacrifice for sin so that we could all be forgiven and go to Heaven. Some of you might be thinking, "Wait a minute, didn't God send Jesus to earth to die on the cross?" Yes and No. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all one and we're not going to attempt to explain the concept of the Trinity at this time. The important thing to know and understand for now is that God became a man and came to earth to die for our sins so that we could go to Heaven and so that we could have a better life while we were still here on earth. The human race has been given a great gift. It's a shame that the greatest majority

of them reject that gift without understanding the severe consequences of their own foolishness. And it's all the result of people thinking they can go to Heaven by being what they consider a "good" person. We who believe in Jesus are new creations. Sin is no longer our master; Jesus is now our master, and there is no other way to Heaven. Let's now conclude Chapter 6 of Romans by reading verses 15-23, NCV:⁴

So what should we do? Should we sin because we are under grace and not under law? No!

*16 Surely you know that when you give yourselves like slaves to obey someone, then you are really slaves of that person. **The person you obey is your master.***

[Unfortunately many of us make ourselves our own master.]

You can follow sin, which brings spiritual death, or you can obey God, which makes you right with him.

17 In the past you were slaves to sin—sin controlled you. But thank God, you fully obeyed the things that you were taught.

18 You were made free from sin, and now you are slaves to goodness.

19 I use this example because this is hard for you to understand. In the past you offered the parts of your body to be slaves to sin and evil; you lived only for evil. In the same way now you must give yourselves to be slaves of goodness. Then you will live only for God.

20 In the past you were slaves to sin, and goodness did not control you.

21 You did evil things, and now you are ashamed of them. Those things only bring death.

22 But now you are free from sin and have become slaves of God. This brings you a life that is only for God, and this gives you life forever.

23 When people sin, they earn what sin pays—death. But God gives us a free gift—life forever in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The payment for sin is death, eternal death. When God gives someone eternal death in Hell, He is giving that person just what he or she worked for, what they have earned and what they deserve. If God did not give them eternal Hell it would be unjust, and God cannot be unjust.

Those who hope for pardon or deliverance without Christ are hoping that God would be unjust. God will not be unjust. Now there are a lot of people who say, "I just don't believe that. A loving God wouldn't send a good person like me to Hell." Well, people have a right to believe or not believe whatever they want. But it is a fool who refuses to believe God's absolute laws, whether spiritual or physical. If the same person who doesn't believe this absolute law in verse 23, "*The wages of sin is death,*" were also to state that they did not believe in the law of gravity, they have every right not to believe in it, but I guarantee that law would have their total and undivided attention if they were to walk off a cliff.

Now there is another side to the absolute in verse 23 which says: "But the free gift of God

⁴ New Century Version

is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Eternal life is not a paycheck for the things we do. It’s not something that we earn for what we do. It is a free gift. You can’t earn eternal life. You can’t earn it by your works and you can’t earn it by belonging to a church. So if you want what you deserve, God will give you what you deserve. But if you want what you don’t deserve, God will graciously, freely, and generously give you that.

Anyone seeing the truth of God’s Word in this chapter might well exclaim, “Boy, I don’t want to be a slave to sin. I don’t want to be in a position where I can only do wrong things. I don’t want to go from sin to sin to sin; from being vile to being viler and viler; ultimately landing in eternal death. I don’t want to do that. I want the gift of eternal life. How do I get that?” Look back to end of verse 23:

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now that you know, if you haven’t already taken the plunge, why wait any longer? You can bow your head right now and ask Jesus to be the Lord of your life. You are welcome to talk with either of the pastors about your decision to solidify it.

Next week, chapter 7.