

## **BC&D-21: LIFE DOMINATING SINS**

The essence of our study in BCF chapter 21 is the simple truth that as believers, Christians, and followers of Christ: we can't overcome any sin. We are powerless to produce permanent change in our struggles with our flesh and sin.

### **We Are \_\_\_\_\_ Apart from Christ**

I was recently discipling one person and at the end of our session I asked them to close in prayer. This is another simple way, as disciplers & counselors, that we can get an insight into someone's life, as we minister to them. As I listened, they said something along the lines of:

"Lord I want to finally resist this certain besetting sin, and finally get the victory over it.

I followed up with a prayer along these lines:

"Lord, I know that this fellow believer will never be able to overcome this sinful habit, only you can overcome that sin. I also know that they will never get the victory, because only You can, and already have.

Help them by increasing their faith, to believe the truth of your Word. May they as they received You simply by faith, now continue their walk in sanctification the same way: simply by faith in You, and Your promises."

### **Surveying the Truths of Lesson 21**

To get these truths deeply rooted in our hearts, minds, and lives, join me in lesson 21. Note these bolded areas of each "boxed" section in your pages, starting on:

**Page 370:** If you have experienced a spiritual new birth, this becoming a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are no longer under bondage to Satan. Jesus has given you eternal life and has placed you under His care. **Since victory over Satan has already been provided by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, you are to use all the resources that God has given you** and be an overwhelming conqueror in Christ (*based on John 8:34-36, 10:27-29; Romans 8:31-39; Ephesians 6:10-18; Hebrews 2:14-15; James 4:7; 1 John 3:8, 5:1-5*).

**Page 371:** God has defeated Satan through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through this overwhelming victory, **God has also empowered you to overcome any temptation to sin and has provided sufficient resources for you to respond biblically to any problem of life.** By relying on God's power and being obedient to His Word, you can be an overcomer in any situation *(based on Romans 6:1-7, 8:31-39, esp. verse 37; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Colossians 1:13, 1:19-23, 2:9-15; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 2:13-14, 4:15-16; 2 Peter 1:2-11; 1 John 4:4, 5:4-5).*

**Page 373:** As an obedient believer, you are to stand firm in the strength of the Lord, to be sober in spirit, and to remain alert in order to resist the schemes of the devil. However, in all areas of your walk as a believer, **you are incapable in your own strength and insufficient in your own resources to overcome the wiles and temptations of Satan.** Therefore, you must put on the full armor of God to be an overwhelming conqueror in your continuing spiritual battle against the forces of hell *(based on Ephesians 6:10-18; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-10; Revelation 12:11).*

**Page 382:** You do not have to be controlled by sin, since sin's power has been broken in a believer's life through the Lord Jesus Christ. **Relying solely on God's resources,** you can be more than a conqueror in Jesus Christ, even in the areas in which you have been enslaved to sin for a very long time *(based on Romans 6:5-7, 6:12-18, 8:31-39; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 Peter 2:24-25, 5:8-10; 1 John 3:8, 4:4).*

**Page 389:** Among your friends, family or acquaintances, you may know someone who is enslaved by a life-dominating sin. As a faithful, loving believer, **you have the unique opportunity to help reconcile this person to the Lord (if an unbeliever) or help restore him to a life of peace, joy and righteousness (if a believer)** *(based on 2 Corinthians 5:14-20; Galatians 6:1-5).*

**Page 393:** After receiving a spiritual new birth through the Lord Jesus Christ, a believer is provided with God's power and resources to overcome any life-dominating sin. Sometimes, **the first major test that he faces is to rely solely on God's power and His Word to overcome the enslavement of a life-dominating sin** *(based on Romans 6:1-23, 8:5-18; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:14-17; Galatians 2:20, 5:16-25; 1 John 2:15-17, 5:2-5).*

**Page 395:** This week's study guide gives you biblical steps to **overcome any life-dominating sin and to be equipped to help others** who may be mastered by a particular sin *(based on Romans 6:1-7; 1 Corinthians 6:9-12; Galatians 5:16-17, 6:1-2; Ephesians 6:10-18; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 John 4:4, 5:4-5).*

## **Understanding Romans 6, Mortification & the Spirit-filled Life of Victory**

Look back to that highlighted section of p. 370. Think of how (as Col. 2:6 reminds us) we were saved. We are only saved by faith in what Christ did on the Cross, twenty-centuries ago, that we could not have seen except by faith.

Did we see Him there personally suffering and dying? No, it was by what? Yes, faith. I believed the truth of God's Word and God saved, forgave, and is keeping me forever.

So that is how we also are to live this new life in Christ, by faith in the truth of God's Word. As we saw last time:

## **First, we must Remind ourselves of what GOD has Done (6:1-10)**

The same way we were saved is the same way we live the rest of our lives. Was I saved because I completely understood the Gospel? No, I am still understanding more and more; and shall until glory!

Was I saved because I felt that God saved me? No because sometimes I feel that He couldn't have because I am so unworthy and sinful—does that un-save me? NO.

Then we get to chapter 6:6, and Paul picks right up where Christ Jesus left off. Paul said that we who are redeemed by Christ's blood must no longer allow ourselves to go back to slavery to sin.

*Romans 6:6 (NKJV) knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should **no longer be slaves** of sin.*

## **The Choices Redemption Prompts**

Redemption makes us no longer slaves to sins, but only a series of correct choices allow us to enjoy the benefits of our liberation.

Romans 6, starting with v. 7, is all about the choices we are allowed to make each day, as freed men and women.

Either we choose to surrender of bodies back to the daily control of our new master, or if not, our old master begins to reassert his control upon us. Listen to Paul's plea on behalf of God in v. 7-10:

*Romans 6:6 (NKJV) For he who has died has been **freed from sin**.<sup>8</sup> Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,<sup>9</sup> knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.<sup>10</sup> For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.*

Because Christ redeemed us “out of” the slave market, adopted us into His family, and declares that we are never for sale again: v. 11 onward has some powerful words about the choices our Redeemer expects from us on a daily basis.

## Second, we must remind ourselves of what WE must do (6:11-14)

So apply that faith that you and I have for the work of Christ on the cross in our place and apply it now to the rest of our walk. Join me in Romans 6.

- [Romans 6:11](#) Likewise you also, **reckon yourselves** to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NKJV)
- [Romans 6:11](#) In the same way, **count yourselves** dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (NIV)
- [Romans 6:11](#) Even so **consider yourselves** to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (NASB)

Romans 6 and verse eleven introduces us to the very first imperative in the entire book of Romans. After chapters explaining all that God accomplished through Christ, we are asked to respond.

### The Imperatives of Romans 6

#### 1. Christ in us means we can: SAY \_\_\_\_\_ TO GOD

Now that I am redeemed I can choose to increasingly say yes to my new Master, and obey Him more and more of each day.

Paul calls us to exercise or build a habit of counting on God. He explains the power of the Cross in v. 5-10 and then says, act accordingly. You can count on God to be there when you face temptations and sin, which is the first attitude for progressive sanctification demanded of believers—we “reckon” (pres. imperative, “keep on counting”) ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus (v. 11).

*Romans 6:11 Likewise you also, **reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin**, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. NKJV*

Reckon is the Greek word: **logidzomai** ‘operate on what you know is true.’” Only through Christ can we resist any sin, and resist our besetting sin, and change our long-term patterns, because God has given us the strength of Christ “living in me” to do so.

This spiritual habit or **discipline of reckoning** is dependent on our knowing and believing the truths of God's Word as presented in verses 5-10. Then we build upon that habit of faith and also practice:

#### 2. Christ in us means we can: SAY \_\_\_\_\_ TO SIN

Now that I am redeemed I can choose by grace and through faith to say NO to my old master and deny my flesh more and more each day. “Don’t be so foolish as to try to be what you are not!”

*Romans 6:12 Therefore **do not let** sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. (NKJV)*

Our second habit is translating the power of Christ's death by surrender to His will, as we say no to our own. Paul commands us in v.12 “**therefore do not let sin reign**” using a present imperative (“do not let sin continue to reign”) as it did before we were saved.

This present imperative is negative so it is better translated, “Stop letting sin reign.” Sin reigns in our lives and bodies when we “**obey it in its lusts**”. When sin enslaves (v. 6), we are subjecting ourselves to the rule of our own desires. The Greek word *epithumia* refers to our “longings” or “desires,” which may be either good or evil, here these are sinful desires, and thus evil. The third truth Paul presents is:

### **3. Christ in us means we can: \_\_\_\_\_ THE PATTERN**

Now that I am redeemed I can choose to STOP the patterns that my old sins led me to follow, like: wasting my time, neglecting God’s Word and prayer, and avoiding the sanctifying habits of Scripture memory and accountability.

In v. 13a Paul repeats the command of verse 12 using more specific terms. He says, “**Do not present** (lit., “do not continue to present,” or “stop presenting”) **your members to sin**”.

*Romans 6:13a And do not present your members [as] instruments of unrighteousness to sin, (NKJV)*

Paul told the believers that they had to put a stop to those patterns that displease God. It is our choice, enabled by God, but made by us: that breaks the patterns of sin.

For example, if you struggle with time in the Word you call out to the Lord in prayer, and ask for help to break the old habits that keep you from God. Then, make a plan to read the Bible and pray before the smart phone or computer, or TV. Put your Bible out in plain sight, maybe right where your phone is plugged in, or by your keyboard.

Then as you wake up, or come home and it is time to make a choice: right then with the two choices in front of you of either: God or TV, God or FaceBook, God or gaming, right then you cry aloud and ask God for help. Which leads directly to the next choice:

### **4. Christ in us means we can: \_\_\_\_\_ A NEW PATTERN**

Now that I am redeemed I can choose to ask God to help me START a new pattern of holy habits.

Then in contrast to the wrong choices, in v. 13b Paul commands that we “**present** (aorist imper., “present once and for all”; also used in v. 19) This refers to a decision of the will.

Before sin can have power over a believer, it must first pass through his will (cf. Phil. 2:12, 13). So we can see that before grace can energize us, that choice must pass through our will; and Paul continues **“yourselves to God, as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God”**. Paul says the same thing six chapters later, “Offer your bodies as living sacrifices . . . to God” (Rom. 12:1).

*Romans 6:13b but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members [as] instruments of righteousness to God. (NKJV)*

This means asking the Lord to change your appetite. This means asking the Lord to give you the strength to get rid of things that enslave, entangle, and trip you up.

There may be cable subscriptions that need to be canceled. There may be an online accountability that may need to be set up. There may need to be an agreement with someone you love and trust to hold you accountable for your new habit of time in the Word, or listening to your Scripture memory.

## **5. Christ in us means we can: \_\_\_\_\_ OUR OLD MASTER**

Now that I am redeemed I can choose to firmly deny my OLD master any place in my life.

*Romans 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. (NKJV)*

This means preaching the Gospel to myself, reminding myself what Christ did, and that He is now my Ruler, my Master, my King, and no longer is my old master in control. It is a liberating moment when we even say aloud those truths: “sin no longer has dominion over me”, “I am under grace”.

## **Preaching the \_\_\_\_\_ to Yourself**

Now, in simple faith that saved you repeat that to yourself. (Just like my old pastor John MacArthur always used to tell us 'preach the Gospel to yourself!') Say something like this, even if I do not feel it, understand it, or even at times want it:

“Lord, I WILL by faith, believing YOU: consider myself dead to sin”.

“Lord I want to operate on what I know is true, you have made me dead to sin.”

Satan’s accusations no longer can derail me because Jesus Christ has taken the penalty and even the record of ALL my sins upon Himself, and forever away from me. Which makes us overflow with gratitude and love so that next:

## **6. Christ in us means we can: SURRENDER \_\_\_\_\_ TO OUR NEW MASTER**

Now that I am redeemed I can choose to Surrender again and again to my NEW MASTER.

*Romans 6:19 I speak in human [terms] because of the weakness of your flesh. For **just as you presented** your members [as] slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness [leading] to [more] lawlessness, **so now present** your members [as] slaves [of] righteousness for holiness. (NKJV)*

“As Christians, we realize shortly after we have been saved that there is a new inner battle being waged within us - a battle between our old sin-lead nature and new Spirit-lead nature. Paul in Galatians best describes this inner struggle in Galatians 5:17:

*For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. NKJV*

Like Paul, our heart's desire is to please and obey God, but our flesh is weak making sin difficult to resist. Yet, it is in our continual struggle with sin and obedience to God that sanctification does its work.

The effects of living in a fallen world have harmed everybody differently. We all face different issues, struggle with sin, and past hurts of varying degrees, hindering our ability to live the life God desires for us. Once we accept Jesus Christ into our lives, the Holy Spirit enters our life to start a transformation process (progressive sanctification).

He convicts us on areas that need to be changed, helping us to grow in holiness. We begin to view the world, people, and personal difficulties from a more biblical perspective.

Our choices begin to be motivated by love and truth and not selfishness. For instance, we may have misplaced our confidence and security on beauty, wealth, and materialism, but God may ordain difficult circumstances to liberate us from these growth-hindering snares. The transformation process may be painful, but it is always motivated by God's love for us.

Sanctification is not about trying to be sinless in order to earn the favor of God. Rather, sanctification is for our own benefit. God commands us to pursue sanctification so that through it we may be blessed.

## **Christ in us means we can: CULTIVATE \_\_\_\_\_ HABITS of Grace-Prompted Serving (Romans 6:15-23)**

*Romans 6:15-23 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! 16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, **you are that one's slaves whom you obey**, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? 17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became **slaves of righteousness**. 19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you*

*are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now having been set free from sin, and **having become slaves of God**, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. NKJV*

## Sanctification is a \_\_\_\_\_ Process

Sanctification is one of the most challenging aspects of the Christian walk. Our natural tendency is to embrace sin, yet God in His divine wisdom has chosen to give us the responsibility of working out our own sanctification.

*"Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work," says 2 Timothy 2:21.*

But how do we pursue sanctification? How are we personally responsible? Lovingly, God has sent His Holy Spirit and His written Word, the Bible, to guide us. Though every person's sanctification is unique and personal, there are common disciplines in the pursuit of sanctification that are unchanging<sup>1</sup>."

## Sanctification is the \_\_\_\_\_ to Spiritual Growth

Sanctification is both a position as well as a progression. We were positionally-sanctified the instant Christ has saved us, yet sanctification progresses as each grace-prompted choice we make transforms us unto the likeness of Christ. Personal sanctification is our responsibility.

Choices to pursue sanctification make positive growth occurs. Our pursuit involves surrendering our will to the leading of the Holy Spirit. This takes time and cannot be hurried. Just as newborn babies gradually mature unto adulthood, so God seeks to mature life of every believer. God's work of sanctification will be finished in every believer's life only when they see Jesus Christ face-to-face.

Grace-energized living means our personal, daily application of spiritual discipline.

That is what God states in our passage this morning, both His work and ours, side-by-side:

*"Work out your own salvation.... For it is God who works in you" (Phil. 2:12-13).*

God has left something for us to do. Our instantaneous justification launched what God describes as a life-long arduous struggle to work out our own salvation and that is called **grace-prompted living**.

## Discussion Time

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.allaboutfollowingjesus.org/sanctification.htm> [413]



*Around your tables, take turns reading this study guide you are holding, and looking up and reading.*

When I truly prayed, asking in simple faith for Christ to save me—whether I felt a strong emotional feeling or not, God began His work within me. I started changing from the inside out. The same is true with these imperatives.

***God never commands me to do what He hasn't already given me the grace to accomplish by faith through His Spirit!***

Now go through the same process the rest of the way through Romans 6—

- I will not let sin reign...
- I will not present my members...
- I now by faith present myself to You God...
- I present myself to You Lord as your slave...
- I ask You to enslave my members (my mind, my emotions, my desires, my body, what ones are out of control? If they are out of control they aren't under Christ's control...)

## **The Result is Spiritual Strength**

The New Testament epistles call us to personal purity or holiness, and are built around dozens of imperatives (or requests). Remember that **God never asks me to do what He hasn't already given me the grace to accomplish by faith through His Spirit!**

Look up Titus 2:11-13, and read it aloud.

Now think about what grace from God can do in our lives: “teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts” (Titus 2:12).

Now read these words and discuss them around your table:

*“Our participation in the process of **sanctification** comes only after we've been totally accepted and made right before God through faith in Jesus. **So yes:***

- *We **work** hard at obeying God's word.*
- *We **read** our Bibles.*
- *We **pray**.*
- *We **memorize and meditate** on Scripture.*
- *We **share** the gospel.*
- *We **serve** in our church.*
- *We **fast**.*

***God commands us in His Word to do many things; and our obedience is both pleasing to Him and brings His blessing to our lives. But not one adds to our***

*justification, our standing before God, our eternal life. Only grace sustains lasting change and **sanctification**. Through the cross we overcome not only the guilt of sin, but the power of sin as well<sup>2</sup>.*

## **Make Your Choice Today**

Sanctification is like being healthy spiritually. Just like our body needs proper nutrients combined with exercise, so our souls need regular intake of the Word mixed with choices to obey.

These two elements: the Word and active obedience to the Word is how the Holy Spirit works. He uses the power of His Word and fellowship with other believers, to peel away our desires for sin, renews our minds, and changes our lives.

Each day Christ calls us to renew our desire to respond with these 4 choices to renew our sanctifying habits:

1. **I want to:** Listen to God DAILY through His Word.
2. **I want to:** Respond to God throughout the day in prayer.
3. **I want to:** Make sacred vows to obey His plan for my life.
4. **I want to:** Share my burdens with another believer so they can encourage me.

And all of these choices to seek, follow, and obey the Lord are only valid if they are prompted by love. We love Him when we have His commands and do them (John 14:21).

Close with prayers of choosing to renew some choice from the list above to seek the Lord each day and grow in Him.

Further Study:

## **Denying Ungodliness in All Forms is Progressive Sanctification**

Justification differs from sanctification thus: the former is an instantaneous act with no progression; while the latter is a life long process with it the idea of growth unto completion.

Our ultimate goal is to be like Christ (cf. Rom. 8:29; Phil. 3:12–14; 1 John 3:2). Only by continually focusing on Him the Spirit transforms the believer more and more into His image. II Corinthians 3:18 describes progressive sanctification. The more believers grow in their knowledge of Christ, the more He is revealed in their lives.

When we pray in faith asking God to change us, and we want to respond to God's will, our prayer is a sanctifying grace that changes our lives dramatically. Prayer is a

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<sup>2</sup> C. J. Mahaney, *The Cross Centered Life*, Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2002, p. 31-34.

means of progressive sanctification. One more passage we need to look at is II Corinthians 3:18.

*2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. NKJV*

“The tense is interesting here: we are being transformed from one degree of character, or glory, to another. It is because sanctification is progressive, a growth, that we are exhorted to “increase and abound” (1 Thess. 3:12), and to “abound more and more” (4:1, 10) in the graces of the Christian life.

The fact that there is always danger of contracting defilement by contact with a sinful world, and that there is, in the life of the true Christian, an ever increasing sense of duty and an ever-deepening consciousness of sin, necessitates a continual growth and development in the graces and virtues of the believer’s life.

*“Holiness is not a mushroom growth; it is not the thing of an hour; it grows as the coral reef grows: little by little, degree by degree”.<sup>3</sup>*

Salvation is all about God changing us. First we are made a new person by the new birth inside an old body. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17)!

Then new birth begins a new lifelong goal for every believer called progressive sanctification. We are all called by God to make daily choices to become more and more like Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:15-16 reminds us, "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." Our goal every day should be to yield more of our body and mind to God for His purposes.

Thus when we read what God's Word says He desires and prayerfully respond to Him saying that is what I want in my life. I want Your way and not mine, and God’s Spirit pours out in us the grace or power to do make that response. God’s grace energizes or works in us to produce “love, joy, peace” or “loving our husbands and children” and “being kind”

Progressive sanctification **starts** with God who makes His will known, **it continues** when we agree and ask for His will to be done in us—**it transforms** us step-by-step as we obey and submit and follow God’s way, walking in the power or energizing strength of the Spirit.

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<sup>3</sup> Evans, William, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Press) 1998, c1994. [272 words]