

Henry Ow  
HCC Sermon  
Rom 6:1-4

## INTRODUCTION

1. Image: Our struggle with sins resembles a weed-filled garden.
2. Need: If we inspect the garden of our lives, then we would find various weeds of sin.
3. Subject: How do we remove these weeds of sin? (*He changed our relationship to sin when we placed our faith in Christ*)
4. Text: Romans 6:1-4
5. Preview: From the text, we'll see an observation. A reason. A means.

## BODY

- I. **Sin no longer rules over us** (Rom 6:1-2a)
  - A. Paul dismisses the idea that grace permits us to return to sin's rule.
    1. Paul depicts sin as a power that controls all of humanity.
      - a. If sin rules all, then how come unbelievers do some pretty great things.
      - b. The power of sin prevents unbelievers from pleasing God.
      - c. The power of sin affects unbeliever's motivation to do good.
      - d. The power of sin affects unbeliever's consistency of good deeds.
    2. A person cannot escape from the power of sin on their own strength
      - a. They need grace.
      - b. No person who has experienced grace would ever return to a life ruled by sin.
      - c. People who return to the rule of sin believe in cheap grace.
  - B. Grace prohibits us from returning to sin's rule.
- II. Sin no longer rules over us **because God frees us from sin** (Rom 6:2b)
  - A. Paul reminds us that they have died to sin.
  - B. The tension to do right and wrong reveals our separation from sin.
- III. Sin no longer rules over us because God frees us from sin **by uniting us with Christ** (Rom 6:3-4)
  - A. Paul reminds us of our union with Christ through baptism (Rom 6:3-4).
    1. Baptism shows how God unites a believer with Christ
    2. We identify with Christ's burial (Rom 6:3-4a).
    3. We identify with Christ's resurrection (Rom 6:4b).
    4. Illustration by Tim Keller
  - B. To do battle with sin requires us to understand what it means to be united with Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

## CONCLUSION

1. Summary: A believer avoids habitual sin because their relationship with sin is severed by identification with Christ
2. Closing Image: Let me close with an observation by Bono.

MANUSCRIPT

**Our struggle with sins resembles a weed-filled garden.** Christian author Rosario Butterfield compares a believer's struggle with sin to inheriting a garden. She says this in an interview. Let's say you inherited an enchanting garden. And for 10 years, you just let it thrive. You let it do anything it wanted. You never pruned back the weeds. You never got rid of the pests. You never worked with the roses. You just let it quote-unquote: "thrive"

And after 10 years, what is it? It's a disaster. It might even be way past the point of no return. And you go to a master gardener and you say, "Hey, this is not fair. I want my money back. I just did everything I could do to let this garden thrive. I let it do exactly what it wanted." You know the master gardener's going to laugh at you and say, "Buddy, gardens come with weeds! It's part of its nature and by failing to deal with that, you destroyed it."

**If we inspect the garden of our lives, then we would find various weeds of sin.** You may find weeds for your struggle with discontentment. Every time you look out the window, your neighbor's new BMW convertible makes you wonder: How would it feel to sit on those plush leather seats? How would the scent of fresh leather smell? How would it feel to have that top down with the wind in your hair? Maybe in another area of the garden, you find weeds representing your struggle with a desire for popularity. You spend time figuring out how you should pose for a photo that you plan to post on Instagram. You think about the lighting, the outfit you wear, and best angle to take the photo. You want everyone to linger on your photo. Some weeds in your garden of life might even represent your struggle with lust, deception, anger, or impatience. Many of us can probably identify various sin struggles. We know that these weeds cannot remain.

**How do we remove these weeds of sin?** We can't just go into the local Home Depot to purchase weed killer. Do we put on the garden gloves to uproot each of these weeds? But some roots of these weeds go deep, that elbow grease will fail to pull them out. We may need a gas powered weedwhacker.

Thankfully, God has given us something more powerful than any weedwhacker or weed killer to uproot the sin in our lives. He changed our relationship to sin when we placed our faith in Christ. If we desire to deal with the sin in our lives, then we have to understand how Christ changes our relationship to sin.

To discover how our relationship with sin has changed, we'll be looking at a letter that Paul wrote to the church at Rome. We'll be in Romans, chapter 6. Please turn there with me if you're not there already. If you have ever read the book of Romans, then you'll know that it displays the power the gospel. Chapters one to the middle of chapter three explain why all men deserve condemnation. The middle of chapter three to chapter five describes how God provides salvation to all through Jesus Christ. Chapters six through eight explains how believers grow in their relationship with God. If I had to choose one word to describe chapters six thru eight, then I would choose sanctification. Chapter six begins Paul's discussion on sanctification. Again, we'll be in Romans, chapter six.

This morning, I'd like to talk about three things. First, I'd like to make an observation. Next, I'll explain a reason. Third, I'll describe a means. Observation. Reason. Means.

First, what observation would I'd like to make. **Sin no longer rules over us.** We do not have to live in sin anymore. Sin no longer dictates what we do. Sin's power is broken. Sin fails to make us do it's bidding. **Sin no longer rules over us.**

In light of what Paul has written thus far in Romans, a believer might be tempted to think: If I am saved by grace, then why should I fight sin? Why not just continue to sin? After all, Romans chapter five verse twenty says: *“but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.”* Doesn't this mean that a believer can live in habitual sin because of grace?

**Paul dismisses the idea that grace permits us to return to sin's rule.** Look with me at Romans, chapter six, verse one: *“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means!”*

Paul understands that a believer might conclude that they can live in sin because God's grace would increase. After all, doesn't my sin cause God to show more grace? This prompts Paul to ask the question: *Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?*

Note the word: sin. It's singular. What's the big deal? Sin, sins. They're all the same. Paul uses the word: sin forty-eight times in the book of Romans. Forty-five times, it occurs in the singular. Paul paints a picture of sin being not just evil deeds. He depicts sin as a power that controls all of humanity. He writes earlier in the book of Romans that all of humanity is under sin (Rom 3:9). One pays wages to sin (Rom 6:23). Sin dominates people (6:14). Sin kills people (7:11). Paul characterizes sin as a ruler that rules over people. He may have picked up this image from the book of Genesis. Recall how Moses describes sin as crouching at the door of Cain's heart (Gen 4:7) before he murders his brother Abel. The power of sin rules all.

Now you may think: That doesn't seem to be right. If sin rules all, then how come unbelievers do some pretty great things. They help out at soup kitchens. When someone forgets an item at the check-out line at the grocery store, an unbeliever brings it out to them in the parking lot. The unbeliever pays their taxes on time. Unbelievers make incredible

breakthroughs in technology and medicine that benefit many. It doesn't seem like sin rules over them.

Just because unbelievers are under the power of sin, it doesn't mean that they can't do good things. But they can't do one thing. Please God. An unbeliever doesn't think: what can I do to conduct my life in a way of pleasing God? The thought never enters their minds. They don't even believe in God.

Not only does an unbeliever fail to live their lives to please God. The power of sin affects their motivations. Why do unbelievers return a forgotten item at the check-out line to someone? Is it so that they can hear the words: "Thank You!?" Is it to say: I've done my good one deed today? Is it for them to feel good about themselves?

What motivates an unbeliever to make breakthroughs in technology or medicine? Do they wish to see their face on a billboard touting their achievement? Do they desire to achieve acclaim through their work? Do they want history to remember their names? The power of sin taints their motivation to do good.

Let's say an unbeliever does good deeds. But for how long can they do good deeds? Can they be good all the time? When they hit traffic on the 59 freeway trying to make an appointment downtown will they have good thoughts? Or will they curse the fact that someone had the gall to get into a traffic accident and prevent me from meeting a client on time? Do they always get along with their spouse? Or does she complain to her husband: "How come you're never home to help with the kids?" when he tries to leave to spend time with the guys. Does she express her anger to co-workers when the manager promotes another person instead

of her? A person will eventually lie, speak a harsh a word, think wrongly of someone, or even feel angry.

A person cannot escape the power of sin on their own strength. They need help. They need a power beyond themselves. They need grace. Grace simply means unmerited favor. It refers to someone who has the power, the resources, and the ability helping someone with no power, no resources, and no ability. A person in superior position aids a person in an inferior position. When this person in a superior position helps the one in an inferior position, the person in the inferior position cannot make a claim on the superior or repay them. God demonstrates grace through the gift of his son Jesus Christ. Whoever believes in Jesus Christ's work on the cross experiences grace. God is in the superior position helping us in the inferior position through his son. We did nothing to deserve this. We cannot do anything to repay God.

If God saves us by his grace, then why would anyone want to return under the power of sin? Why would you submit yourself to sin's reign again? Why would you want to live a life of habitual sin? No person who has truly experienced grace would ever return to a life ruled by sin.

Yet you and I both know people who return to sin. One possible cause is that they live according to a cheap grace. It's also known as license. They think that they can live any way that they like because they believe that God will ultimately forgive them. They live according to the motto: "It's easier to ask forgiveness rather than ask for permission." After all, God is faithful to forgive us our sin. But such a person fails to understand the cost of grace. The payment for sin is death. But instead of us paying the price for our sin, God sends his son to die in our place. Only

God can free us from sin by sending Jesus to die on our behalf. Grace is not cheap. Grace is costly. It cost you nothing. But it cost God everything.

**Grace prohibits a believer from returning to a life of sin.** This explains Paul's response to the question: "*Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means*". Paul crafts his response: "By no means" in Greek in the strongest way possible in light of the argument. Other ways of translating the phrase include: "Banish the thought! God forbids! It's not even possible!" Grace should prevent a believer from submitting themselves to sin once again.

This brings us to my second point. The reason. Why do we no longer live under the rule of sin? **God frees us from sin.** Sin no longer rules over us because God frees us from sin. God liberates us from the bondage of sin. The authority of sin has no power over a believer. Sin's power has been cut. It is severed. **God frees us from sin.**

**Paul reminds us that that we have died to sin.** He writes in the latter half of verse two: "*How can we who died to sin still live in it?*" When believers place their faith in Christ, they have died. Now you may say: "What do you mean: we died? I feel very much alive." Very true, all of us are still very much alive. Some more alive than others.

But as believers we have died to sin's authority. When sin looks at us, it sees a corpse. It's hard for a master to demand anything of a dead slave. Think of it this way. When a person dies, the government no longer has any authority over them. The dead person doesn't need to pay taxes. The government doesn't draft a dead person to fight in its wars. The government cannot call upon a dead person to serve on jury duty. The government makes no claims on a dead person. Sin no longer controls or influences us because we are dead to it.

Wait one second. If that's the case, then how come I don't live a life that's free from sin. As you already mentioned, we still commit acts of sin. We experience envy, feel discontent, lie, think evil of others, lust, and express anger. And I would say to you: "You're right. You're envious, discontent, deceptive, lustful, and angry." But I would also say: "It's because you choose to be so."

Before you actually commit envy. Before you feel discontent. Before you lie. Before you think evil of others. Before you indulge in your lustful thoughts. Before you choose to express you anger. You feel a tension. You feel the tension to do right and wrong. You feel the tension to feel to do what is pleasing to God versus what displease God. Some feel this tension more intensely. Others feel it more mildly.

**The tension to do right and wrong reveals our separation from sin.** Before God severed you from the authority of sin by his grace, you would have felt compelled to do whatever you pleased. When you lived according to your selfish desires, by your own resources, you produced sinful acts. But now you no longer serve sin as its slave. God has given you freedom to choose. You can choose to return to the rule of sin, or you can choose to live under God's rule.

This brings us to the last thing. Means. How did we die to the rule of sin? **God unites us with Christ.** God by his grace unites us with Christ when we place our faith in his saving work. What happens to Christ also happens to us. Sin no longer rules over us because God frees us from sin by uniting us with Christ.

**Paul reminds us of our union with Christ through baptism.** Look with me at verse three: *"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus 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 might walk in newness of life.”*

**Baptism to shows how God unites a believer with Christ.** The word baptism has a literal and metaphorical sense. The word baptism in the literal sense refers to something submerged under water. One would describe a ship that has sunk as baptized. One would baptize a ladle into barrel to retrieve water to drink. You could describe a drowned person as baptized. The word baptism also has a metaphorical sense of taking on a new identity. For instance, a person who dyes cloth would baptize a white cloth into a vat of purple dye. When they remove the cloth, it takes on a purple color. A person united in Christ receives baptism and takes on a new identity.

When Paul talks about baptism here, he probably refers to both to conversion and water baptism. Why? During the apostolic age, the church would not separate conversion from baptism. Once a person professes faith in the saving work of Christ, they immediately receive baptism. Think of Cornelius (Acts 10:48) or the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:36-38) in the book of Acts. Once they professed faith, they received baptism. They occur almost concurrently.

Now you might be wondering why don't we do that now? Why do we wait a period of time after someone makes a profession of faith before they receive baptism?

During the apostolic age, to be a Christian would have meant that you renounced allegiance to the emperor and pledged allegiance to God alone. This caused families and business partners to ostracize you. When a person made a profession of faith, they understood the gospel and the cost.

After the apostles died, more people professed faith in Christ. But the early church needed to determine whether or not those who professed actually made a genuine profession of faith. This required church leaders to begin to examine baptismal candidates via a process called catechism. After an individual passed the examination process, they would then receive water baptism and enter the church community. We operate by a similar principle today through baptism and membership classes and baptism interview.

On a side note, baptism isn't required for salvation. If you needed to be baptized in order to be saved, then it would violate the principle: salvation by grace alone through faith alone. Baptism simply is an outward display of an inward reality. You receive baptism by the Holy Spirit uniting you to Christ when you place your faith in Christ. Afterward, you receive water baptism when the church affirms your profession of faith to demonstrate your conversion.

We are united with Christ in baptism. What do we identify with Christ in? **We identify with Christ's burial.** Let me read again the first half of verse four: "*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death.*" Why does Paul use the image of buried? What do you do with dead people? You bury them. I know. Some of you may say: "we cremate them". First century typically buried their dead. Just as Jesus died, you died. When you place your faith in Christ, God essentially superglues you to Jesus. Note the phrase: with him. Or imagine Jesus being a piece of duct tape and you being a piece of duct tape. God tapes you both together. Just as you can't remove two pieces of duct tape attached to each other, so you cannot un-unite yourself to Christ. It's permanent. Your union to Christ through the Holy Spirit has freed you from the power of sin because you're dead to it.

Is that it? Nope. Paul adds one more thing. **We identify with Christ's resurrection.** Look at the latter half of verse 4: *"in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."* The same power that raised Jesus from the dead raised you from the dead. Paul describes it as *"the glory of the Father"*.

One might wonder: why does Paul use the word: glory rather than power? Glory is power displayed. When you see fireworks burst in the sky, you don't say: "what powerful fireworks!" You'd actually describe the display as glorious. God the Father displays the power of the Holy Spirit when he raises the Son from the dead. That same power raises you to a new life.

This new life then places you under the rule of God. A sign of this new life is the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Spirit dwells in you to direct and lead you in what Paul calls: "newness of life". This new life refers to one that you live under God's rule rather than sin. The Holy Spirit has given you new desires to live according to God's instruction.

How does resurrection power work? Tim Keller tells this story about Christ's resurrection.

A minister was in Italy, and there he saw the grave of a man who has died centuries before who was an unbeliever and completely against Christianity, but a little afraid of it too. So the man had a huge stone slab put over his grave so that he would not have to be raised from the dead in case there is a resurrection from the dead. He had inscriptions put all over the slab saying, "I do not want to be raised from the dead. I don't believe in it." Evidently, when he was buried, an acorn must have fallen into the grave. So a hundred years later the acorn had grown up through the grave and split that slab. It was now a tall, towering oak tree. The minister

looked at it and asked, “If an acorn, which has power of biological life in it, can split a slab of that magnitude, what can the acorn of God’s resurrection power do in a person’s life?”

Tim Keller makes this comment: “The minute you decide to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord, the power of the Holy Spirit comes into your life. It’s the power of the resurrection – the same thing that raised Jesus from the dead... Think of the things you see as immovable slabs in your life - your bitterness, your insecurity, your fears, your self-doubts. Those things can be split and rolled off. The more you know him, the more you grow into the power of the resurrection.”

How does this work exactly? Think about a sin that you struggle with. Let’s say you struggle with desiring the approval of others. You may be a parent with kids in high school wishing that other parents would recognize how great your kids are. Whenever you have dinner with other parents at a symphony banquet, you may feel the temptation of saying: “Oh! If only my child practiced more then she could have been a first chair violinist” hoping that another parent would say: “Your child isn’t that bad. She’s only second chair because she works hard in her other classes. You’re such a good parent” But when you feel that temptation, you have a choice. Will I live under the rule of sin by criticizing my daughter so that others might praise her and in turn praise me for being a wonderful parent? After all, I feel the need to be affirmed. Or will I choose to live according to God’s rule knowing that my worth doesn’t come from what other people say. God by his grace saved me through his son so that I might be worthy in his eyes. I don’t need the approval of other parents. God approves of me.

Maybe your in-laws are staying with you for an extended amount of time. The first week is the honeymoon period. Everyone laughs, smiles, and says polite things. The second week, you feel the heat of potential conflict when your mother-in-law questions your décor decisions.

Why did you paint the wall this color? Why did hang up this photo? Your in-laws begin to complain about the food. It's too salty. It's too mushy. It's too bland. Every critique chips away at your patience. You feel the desire to give your in-laws a taste of their own medicine. You have a choice to make. Will you return to the rule of sin and lash out? Or will you rely on the power of the Holy Spirit that reminds you: you are imperfect. You have faults. But God by his grace saved you. After all God bears with you even when you criticize him for not running the world you think it should go. If you do decide to speak, then speak the truth in love rather than bitterness.

To do battle of sin requires us to understand what it means to be united with Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. When you face the temptation to sin, remember that you are no longer under the rule of sin. You don't need to give in. The Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead can help you to avoid sin and live in a way that pleases God.

To summarize this morning's message, we talked about three things. When you combine them together it forms this statement. **Sin no longer rules over us because God frees us from sin by uniting us with Christ.**

Let me close with an observation by Bono, the lead singer of U2. He says this: "Your nature is a hard thing to change; it takes time... I have heard of people who have life-changing, miraculous turnarounds, people set free from addiction after a single prayer, relationships saved where both parties "let go, and let God." But it was not like that for me. For all that "I was lost, I am found," it is probably more accurate to say, "I was really lost. I'm a little less so at the moment." And then a little less and a little less again. That to me is the spiritual life. The slow reworking and rebooting the computer at regular intervals, reading the small print of the

service manual. It has slowly rebuilt me in a better image. It has taken years, though, and it is not over yet.”

The struggle with sin will last for all our life. But as we embrace our identity in Christ, the Holy Spirit helps us resist our desire to return to sin little by little and become more like him every day.