

**Pastor Kyle Mercer**  
Stop Managing Sin. Start Killing It.

April 12, 2026  
Series: The Rescue  
Romans 6:1-13

**BIG IDEA - JESUS DIDN'T JUST COME TO FORGIVE YOUR SIN; HE  
CAME TO BREAK ITS POWER**

Good morning across all of our campuses. Last weekend was Easter, and we had an incredible Easter. It started for us on Wednesday night at Wake Forest University. Then we had a Thursday night service, a Saturday night service, and Sunday services. In fact, we had 11 services across three campuses with just under 7,000 people in attendance. It was exciting. Yes.

I love all of the little stories. I was talking to a guy, and he said, "I invited a friend to church, and he was going to come last minute. I told him, 'Well, you'd better come early.'" He said, "Well, I'm just going to come right before the service. Can you save me a seat?" He says, "I can save you a seat, but I can't save you a parking spot." That's the truth. Right?

I had another lady. She was right down here at our Patterson Campus, and she said a group came in. It was already crowded. People were trying to find seats. A group came in, and she asked, "How many seats do you need?" She said, "16." She was like, "Uh, three here, two here, one..." You know what I mean? Couldn't do that.

Guys, it was incredible. What was exciting to me is not so much the numbers but the stories *with* the numbers...people saying that their one came for the first time, people saying that their one came to Christ, seeing people respond for eternal life, seeing people come forward to have the abundant life. It was incredible.

In fact, I have another exciting announcement for today. I told you we had 11 services across three campuses. Well, today we launch our Butner Campus. Are you guys excited? Men of Butner, my name is Pastor Kyle, and I look forward to getting to

know you and you getting to know me. I know we're just meeting for the first time, but welcome to the Two Cities family.

Listen, men of Butner. We are eager to get to know you. You are not an afterthought for us. You are not a project, and we are so excited. We're sending a team. They're already with you right now, and we are excited to bring the help, the hope, and the healing of the gospel only found in Jesus Christ.

I know right now you probably feel like, "Man, I don't have a ton of freedom. I don't have the freedoms I had before I was in Butner." Well, I hope that by the power of the gospel you will experience spiritual freedom, forgiveness of sins, and a life with Christ. We are excited for you men. I want to pray, and then I want you to join us as we continue our study in the book of Romans. We'll be in it all year. Let's pray.

Lord, I pray for the men of Butner, that the gospel would bear so much fruit in Butner. Lord, we thank you for all of the partnerships that made this possible. We thank you for God Behind Bars. We thank you for the administration at Butner prison and how gracious and generous they have been to us, Lord. We come to Butner the way Jesus Christ came. We come to serve and not to be served, Lord. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

Well, is change possible? Can people change? Do people change? I mean, this is a question everybody asks. "Can anyone really change?" Or maybe you've heard the phrase before, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks." In fact, change is so hard for us. Change is so hard for you that you'd rather somebody else do it. Right? You want change, but you want your wife to change or your husband to change or your kids to change or your boss to change or your employees to change.

Think about this. Personal change is so unbelievably difficult we would rather somebody else do it. "Well, if my wife will change..." or "If my husband will change, then maybe my marriage will change, and maybe everything can change without me changing, because changing is so hard." In fact, the world tries to get people to change. Let me tell you some of the common ways we think change happens.

Some people think change happens through discipline. By the way, there's some truth in all this. In other words, this is the "Train harder, try harder." This is like if I got up here and said, "Hey, the reason you're still in the same place you were last year is all of the hard things you're avoiding." You'd probably be like, "He's right." There *is* some truth to that.

Other people think, "Here's how you change: you just need counseling and therapy." We're not against counseling. We're not against therapy. The whole idea there is "Somehow, if I knew my Myers-Briggs and I knew my Enneagram and I also knew my

DISC test and I knew my StrengthsFinder and I knew what animal I was and I knew what color I was... If I knew all of that, then I could be a different person because I would be more self-aware." Sometimes it just makes you a more selfish, self-aware sinner with high self-esteem. That's what it does, often.

Other people think it's medication. "That's it." And we're not anti-medication. Pray and take a pill. Do both. We believe in both. But we live in a heavily, heavily medicated culture. For those of us who still occasionally watch TV instead of Netflix, or something like that, you cannot watch TV without a commercial about some pharmaceutical company trying to sell you some drug that's going to change your life. Then they hope you don't listen to the end where it says, "May cause death." You know, the warnings at the end.

Other people think, "It's a new environment. That's what I need. That's what you need. You don't need to change. You just need a new environment. That'll change you." Well, Adam and Eve were in a perfect environment and they sinned grievously. Others think, "Well, no, I need community. I need relationships. I need friends. I need peers. I need mentors."

Listen. Any of that and all of that can be helpful, but if you'll turn to Romans 6, Paul is going to finally talk about how we actually change, which is the question you're all asking. Right? "How do I not look at that? How do I quit gambling? How do I not drink too much? How do I stop being so anxious about the future? How do I stop yelling at my husband? How do I forgive my dad?" People are asking this question all the time. All the time.

Believe it or not, Paul hasn't answered it yet. If you're new, we're in Romans for a year, and Paul has talked a lot about *justification*, being freed from the penalty of sin. He has talked some about *glorification*, that one day we'll be free from the presence of sin. He hasn't talked at all about *sanctification*, being free from the power and pollution of sin.

See, in Romans so far... The first three chapters are discouraging and depressing. He's like, "*You're guilty, and you're guilty.* I don't care if you're religious, and I don't care if you're not religious. I don't care if you're unrighteous or self-righteous. Everybody is guilty." That was the first three chapters.

Then he's like, "The grace of God has appeared in the person and work of Jesus Christ. You can be forgiven and set free and righteous before God because of what Jesus did in his life, death, and resurrection." You're like, "This is amazing." He's like, "In fact, when you die, you're going to go to heaven. You're going to be able to stand before God, all because of what Jesus did." You're like, "This is amazing. This changes my

eternity. The only problem is... What do I do with the life I have left? How do I actually grow in holiness?"

So, that's what we're going to talk about today. We're going to spend the next four weeks, at least, talking about how we grow as Christians. How do we love God more? How do we hate sin more? How do we care more about lost people? How do you become the godliest version of yourself? How do you live your life the way Jesus would live his life if he were you? How do you become, practically and progressively, the holiest version of yourself? Or, as the Puritans used to say, how do you simply grow in godliness?

We're going to look at the first 13 verses of Romans 6 today and begin to answer that question. This is a deep sermon. At least, *I* think it's deep. It's a deep sermon. I'm going to define a lot of things for us. It's going to be very practical at the end, but we have to understand some things first. There are three things you have to understand.

The first thing you have to understand is *how grace and sin work together*. I'll show you this. In Romans 6:1, Paul says, "***What shall we say then?***" If you've been following along, Paul likes to ask and answer a lot of questions, but he hasn't done that for two chapters. He's back to asking questions now. "***What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?***"

Just so you know, if you understand the gospel, if you understand everything I said last week, that you can't out-sin the grace of God, that you can't outrun the grace of God... If you understand things like the thief on the cross... Everyone loves the thief on the cross, if you know that story...deathbed conversion at the end of his life. A guy who was crucified and did terrible things with his life can look at Jesus and ask for forgiveness, and Jesus will forgive him.

You start asking those questions, and then you start asking, "If God is going to forgive me of every dumb, sinful, stupid thing I've ever done, then why not just do it anyway?" Everybody asks that question. It's like, "Why be good if God is going to be gracious?" In fact, here's how I can prove that you've done this, Christian. Have you ever thought about sinning, decided to sin, but weren't too worried about sinning because you knew as soon as you were done sinning you were just going to ask God for forgiveness?

It's like, "Well, then why should I even not sin? Can I have the best of both worlds? Why don't I just get to go to heaven when I die but live however I want here?" Well, this is what Paul is trying to answer. He's saying, "Guys, listen. Don't take grace for granted." If you're truly forgiven of sin, you're going to want to be freed from sin, because real Christians don't just want to be forgiven of their sin. Everybody wants to

be forgiven of their sin. Real Christians who have the Spirit of God in them want to be set free. That's what grace does.

In fact, Paul asks this question. "***Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?***" Look at what he says. "***By no means!***" "May it never be." It's like the strongest negative he could say. He goes, "***By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?***" So, we need to talk about being dead to sin and not living in it.

Here's what has happened. For the last three and a half months, I've tried... Maybe I've not done the best job, but I've tried to make the gospel central and say, "Listen. Jesus Christ died for you." I try to say it, like, 10 different ways. He died instead of you. He died in your place.

I mean, this is so central to Christianity that every person you see getting baptized today... We tried to simplify this. We don't know how to simplify it any more than four words, so every shirt is going to say, "Jesus in my place." That's the gospel. That means Jesus Christ died *for* me, died *instead* of me, died as my substitute. What we also need to realize is that when Jesus died *for* us, when we trust *in* him, we died to sin.

Now, what does it mean to die to sin? As soon as you talk about this, you have to go... If you read the rest of Scripture (Romans 7; we'll get there in a couple of weeks), understand human experience, and know church history, you realize that when someone becomes a Christian, they don't just stop sinning. I mean, that would be amazing.

Wouldn't it be amazing if we became a Christian and somehow we got a spiritual lobotomy? We couldn't remember anything from the past, we were living a completely new life, nothing from the past affected us, and we were completely free from all sin. Guys, you're still going to experience temptation. By the way, Jesus experienced temptation.

We don't believe in what's called *perfectionism*. We don't believe you're going to be able to live a perfectly sinless life. The hope is that you would sin less, but you're not going to be sinless in this life. So, what does it mean to die to sin? If you are a Christian, I want to tell you... Basically, part of what I'm doing is telling Christians, from the Bible, what happened to them when they became Christians.

You know, sometimes you have to have that conversation. "Mom and Dad, how was I born?" When you're 8 years old, there's a way you *think* you were born. Then your parents tell you how you were *really* born and you go, "Oh, that's a little different than I thought." I'm going to tell you what happened to you, because you might think,

"Oh, I prayed to receive Jesus into my heart. That was nice." I want to tell you what actually happened to you.

The Bible says you died to sin. Here's what that means. We don't do a good job with this. Let me try to explain this. When a person becomes a Christian, they get a new relationship with Jesus. Everybody has a relationship with Jesus, if you didn't know that. You've never met anybody in your whole life who Jesus wasn't their Lord, whether or not they recognized it or not.

When you become a Christian, Jesus becomes your Savior. Well, that's good to know. We tell people that. What we don't tell people is, actually, when you become a Christian, you don't just get a new relationship with Jesus. That's awesome. You also get a new relationship with sin. Sin is no longer your master. Paul will say this in verse 14. We'll look at it next week. Sin no longer has dominion over you. Paul says, "Therefore, don't live in sin."

Now, what does it mean to *live* in sin? Sometimes we have to define things by their opposite. If we died to sin, that means we're not living in sin. Here's what living in sin means. This is what non-Christians do. *Living in sin* means sinning is where I find my life. Nobody sins out of duty or obligation. Everybody sins because they think that's where they're going to find life.

Here's what it also means to live in sin: to live in unrepentant, habitual sin; to live in patterns of sin. Let me give you a phrase that people are scared of, but it's not really a scary phrase. It's the phrase *church discipline*. Church discipline is just basically how the church protects itself against the spread of sin, among other things, and its witness to the world.

Well, how do you know what sin you should talk to another person about? Say you see Betty, and you think she did something sinful. Should you confront Betty? Well, first check your heart. Are you mad at Betty? Was it you? Did you see it wrong? Here's what you confront. You confront patterns of unrepentant sin. I always recommend seeing something three times, because it's very hard for someone to say you saw it wrong three different times.

The Bible says we cannot live in unrepentant patterns of sin. In fact, Paul goes, "Guys, this was what your whole baptism was about," which is interesting because... I didn't even plan this. This makes me look better than I am. We're talking about baptism on a baptism Sunday. Let me show you verses 3-5. Paul is like, "Guys, you're forgetting about this."

***"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."***

Paul goes, "We're supposed to walk in newness of life, not live in sin." Okay. Here's what we do. If you're new... You came to Easter. You came back. You didn't grow up in church. You don't know all the Christianese. Let me give you a favorite Christianese of Christians: "I'm struggling with sin." That's what people like to say. "I'm struggling with it." You know, "It was late, and I was tired. It was a hard week. I struggled with this sin in my life."

Now listen. Do Christians struggle with sin? Yes. We'll see this in Romans 7. But we talk about struggling with sin differently than the Bible does. Most times, when a Christian in America says they're struggling with sin, here's what they mean: "I'm struggling emotionally with it. I'm struggling because now I have to tell somebody that I did it. I'm struggling because I feel guilty and I feel shame." Christians struggle emotionally with their sin. We don't do what the Bible says. We're supposed to struggle *against* our sin.

So, let me ask you these two questions. Here's the litmus. Are you walking in newness of life or are you living in sin? Here's one of the questions: *Are you tolerating sin in your life?* The Bible tells us we're to put sin to death. Often, what we're trying to do is do PR management and marketing with our sin and trade in big sins for little sins that are easier to hide.

Let me ask you this question. And I don't mean to beat you up; I want to build you up. Are you making any progress in your Christian faith? If you want to be a spiritual leader... And I don't mean a Community Group leader. I mean, that's great if you want to do that. I just mean, in general, "I'd like to be a spiritual leader. I'd like to be a good husband, a good mom. I'd like to lead others. I'd like to disciple others."

Here's one helpful thing you could ask yourself: "Have I ever put any sin to death in my entire life? Is there any sin that I could say, 'Yeah, when I was 18' or 'When I was 22, I struggled with that, but I am walking in a serious measure of freedom in this area of my life'?" Are you making progress in your Bible knowledge? Are you making progress in your love for lost people? Are you making progress in your heart for God? This is what he's saying.

Look at verse 3. He says, "***Do you not know...***" Then he tells us these realities. Now, here's what he does not say. He doesn't say, "Do you not feel...?" Unfortunately, this is what we swim in, so this is just what we have to talk about. We live in a therapeutic age. So, what's about to happen in the next 26 minutes is I'm going to be dealing with some of you...well, all of you, to some extent, but some of you a lot...in different sins

in your life and things you need to do and areas you need to repent and realities you need to embrace. It's very hard to talk to people about these things.

What you'll probably start doing is talk about your feelings to yourself. I'm going to tell you in a little bit that you're dead to sin (I already kind of did), and you'll say, "Well, I don't feel that way." We're going to talk about how you're united to Christ, and you'll say, "I don't feel that way." We're going to talk about how the old part of you died, and you're going to say, "I don't feel that way."

Listen. Your feelings are great. We need feelings, and feelings are a huge part of the Christian faith, but the Bible does not tell you to first *feel* these things; it tells you to *know* these things. As you know and embrace them, by the grace of God, the feelings will follow.

So, what Paul does in verses 3-5... I read this to you. He mentions baptism three different times. The word *baptize* literally means... This is what the Greek, the original language, means. It means to dip, to immerse, or literally to dunk. This is why we practice at *our* church what we call *believer's baptism*, which is baptism after conversion, after becoming a Christian, by immersion.

Now, you'll see certain churches (I think they're wrong, and I think it's unhelpful) will practice infant baptism. Even the Greek Orthodox churches baptize babies by immersion. They dunk them three different times. Now, this is what's interesting. The word *baptize*... I told you it means to dunk, to dip, to immerse.

If you're new to Christianity... On a baptism Sunday, somebody invited you. You know, you're the soccer coach. You're the aunt. You're the uncle. You're the grandpa. You're the dad. We're all glad you're here. If you didn't grow up in church, you're like, "Baptism is the strangest thing ever."

Didn't all of us, sometime after puberty, think, "No one will ever dunk me again"? You're like, "My brother, my cousin... Every time I got in the pool, he dunked me." Like, one of your life goals was "I will never be dunked again, and if I do, it will not be on camera in front of a lot of people with everyone screaming." And that's basically what we're going to do today.

So, let me explain baptism. Paul goes, "It's a picture." By the way, Paul says (and Jesus says the same thing) baptism is the way you mark the most significant moment in your life. If you think about it, this is what... We're humans, so we have to. Humans have to mark significant moments. What happens when somebody gets engaged? Their friends are hanging in the bushes taking pictures. Right? We have to mark the moment.

Some of you do gender reveal parties. We have to mark the moment. The wedding ceremony, of course, is marking the moment. A funeral is marking the moment of someone's passing and grieving their loss and celebrating their life. A graduation ceremony is marking the moment, the transition, the graduation, the "well done" of education. Jesus says we're supposed to mark the moment.

Now, here's what happens. Think about it this way. A baptism Sunday is both a funeral and a birthday party at the same time. What happens in baptism is you go underneath the water. Now, what happens if we decide not to bring you back up from the water? You die. That's kind of the picture of it.

What's interesting is in the Old Testament, water was judgment. Now we have these big cruise ships, and we have weather patterns. We can watch meteorologists. We're not as scared of the ocean and the sea as all of our ancestors were for all of human history. Water is chaos. Water is death. You don't know what's underneath it. You know, Noah's flood. Jonah is thrown over. The Red Sea swallows the Egyptians. Water was a sign of judgment.

So, to go under the water is to go underneath the judgment of God, to say, "I died with Christ," and to rise a new person. There's cleansing. That's what water also does. In fact, it's interesting. If you go to old Christian sites and excavate the old baptisms... It's a little strange when you go to them, because you're like, "Wait a second. All of these baptisms from the third and fourth century all look like coffins." They're like caskets in the ground.

In fact, a lot of them... They spent a lot of money on this. You would walk in one flight of steps, and you'd walk out (they'd be built into the ground) another flight of steps. It was this idea that "I came in one person, and I'm walking out a different person." By the way, if you're here or at one of our campuses, and you've never been baptized, and you know you need to get baptized, and you're like, "Oh man! But it's Baptism Sunday..."

Now, we don't do instantaneous baptisms here. Certain churches do that. But this is our version of instantaneous baptism. If you're in this service at one of our campuses, and you need to get baptized, we would like to baptize you tonight at the 5:00 service. We would love to talk. Grab a staff person or grab a pastor afterward, because this is a significant moment in your life where you say to the world and to the church, "What Jesus did 2,000 years ago now defines my life, and it has changed everything about me."

In fact, look at what he says in verse 5. ***"For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his."*** Baptism is the way we visibly demonstrate (I told you it's a lot of theology today) our

union with Christ. To modern Americans, it sounds mystical. It sounds mysterious. It's taught everywhere in the New Testament.

Some would say it's the most taught doctrine in the New Testament. We just don't notice it, because it says, "In Christ" or "With Christ." Paul is always using these phrases. What it means is that when you put your faith in Jesus Christ, when you transfer trust to him, there is a real union now between you and Jesus in which *his* biography and *his* benefits become *your* biography and *your* benefits.

Somehow, in the mind and heart of God, everything Jesus Christ did in his sinless life now counts for you. That's your biography on judgment day. And all of the benefits...freedom from sin; forgiveness of sin; victory over Satan, sin, and death; personal righteousness; adoption into God's family...all of those are given to you.

Really, the only picture we have left of this today is marriage. Marriage is a union of one man and one woman across one lifetime. Think about it this way. You know, every Hallmark movie is the same. Right? We all know that. It doesn't matter. This is every Hallmark movie, and I'll show you how it points to union with Christ.

So, what happens in every Hallmark movie? There's a rich guy from out of state, normally from Europe, who ends up in a small town in Nebraska. We're like, "Aw." You've seen this movie. I'm making it up, but this is every movie. He's super wealthy. He made a lot of money or is from some rich family or who knows what.

Ten minutes into the movie, he's at a diner. The waitress is really pretty, but she's working part time, and she can't make it. You know, whatever. She spills the coffee and all that. The relationship begins. Part of the movie is that she doesn't know who he is, and she doesn't know all that he has, and blah, blah, blah. Ninety minutes later, they fall in love and get married. That's every Hallmark movie you've ever seen.

Now, here's what I want you to understand. That poor waitress, the moment she gets married, is in union with that rich guy, and all that he earned is now hers for free. That's the gospel. When we're united with Christ, all of his benefits freely come to us. He says, ***"For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his."***

Look at verse 6. This is the key verse we're going to camp out on. ***"We know that our old self..."*** Who is that? We'll talk about that. ***"...was crucified with him in order that the body of sin..."*** I guess that must be something different than our old self, because they're contrasted. ***"...might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin."***

I told you the first thing you have to understand is how grace and sin work together. The second thing you have to understand is the *old self and the body of sin*. So, what is the *old self*? Your translation may say the *old man*. Some of you are like, "I call my dad the old man." This is something different.

Your old self is not a part of you if you're a Christian. This is important to understand. If you're a Christian, the old self is not a part of you; the old self is the old you. What it's saying is when you placed your faith in Jesus Christ... We forget this, because modern Americans are not a supernatural people. There is a supernatural, dramatic nature to conversion in which, when you trust in Jesus Christ, you die to sin and your old self dies.

In other words, Paul is going, "Listen. The old you, the old self... We couldn't build upon it; we had to bury it. It was not something that could be renovated. Something completely new needed to be resurrected." Now, you may say, "Well, I don't feel like the old self is dead." Here's what happens. I'm going to explain all this, but here's what happens. This will help you understand your Christian life.

When you become a Christian, you get a new soul, but you're in an old body. The old self is dead, but what happened is someone new moved into an old apartment. Think about it this way. The old self was the old tenant. He's gone. He died. But you moved into his house or his apartment or his condo, and it still kind of smells like him. His pictures are on the wall, and the stain on the carpet is still there, and all that kind of stuff. You're still getting his mail occasionally. Like, "He died a while ago, but I'm still getting his mail."

Think about it this way. There are two good illustrations for this. One is very famous. It has been used. I'll use it as well. Think about the Emancipation Proclamation. The Emancipation Proclamation (history 101) is when Abraham Lincoln reads and declares that slavery has ended and the slaves are now free. Now, imagine that's a reality. That's a truth. That's a legal right that has been demonstrated.

How do you think a 35-year-old Black man in Mississippi who has been a slave his whole life feels when he hears that? Well, that's amazing. That's so true. But does he immediately feel like he's not a slave anymore? What about if he's at the grocery store and sees his old master? Even though the master no longer has any legal authority over him, he might still fear him.

Sin no longer has any mastery over us, but we still often give it power. We need to have the perspective that Saint Augustine had. Saint Augustine was a very promiscuous young man. Then he came to faith in Christ. This was a long time ago. Like, 1,600 years ago. He's a very famous Christian. Look him up sometime. Saint Augustine was very promiscuous. I love this story because it's so great.

After he has been a Christian for several years, one of his mistresses sees him and tries to flirt with him. True story. He doesn't respond like he used to respond, so she thinks he doesn't recognize her. She goes up to him and says, "Augustine, do you not remember? It is I." He goes, "I remember, but it is no longer I." He had a profound internal transformation where he realized he was a completely new person.

The problem is the old self is dead, but we have this body of sin. Now we need to talk about the body. By the way, the body is a good thing. Creation...God creates the body (Genesis 1 and 2). Incarnation...Jesus takes on a body (that's in the Gospels). Resurrection...Jesus is raised with a new body. We will be raised with bodies. So, the body is a good thing but inhabited by sin, an unwanted intruder that we don't have to let in, but we often do.

What's interesting is, in our society, as I think about it, we have three wrong views of the body. The first view of the body is *hedonism*. This is on the college campus. This is everything on Instagram, basically. It says, "The body is a playground, and my five senses are meant to be explored and experienced with as much instant and cheap pleasure as possible." That's hedonism. The Bible rejects hedonism, although God does give us a body to enjoy. We'll talk about that.

Then there's *stoicism*. Jordan Peterson, if you know who that is, is basically a stoic. The whole idea is "The body is something I must live in with all of its suffering and all of its struggles, and I should learn how to master and have dominion over my body." Then there's *gnosticism*. Hedonism says the body is amazing. Stoicism says you have to deal with the body. Gnosticism says, "I can't wait to get rid of this body."

You might think, "Who believes in gnosticism anymore?" The entire transgender movement is a gnostic movement. Isn't it amazing when 2,000-year-old theology shows up in the news? The idea that "I need to change my body so I can escape my body" is a gnostic idea.

Now, here's the thing about your body. Your body is a good thing, but the *body of sin* means the body sin wants to control. Here's the truth. I love stories of a 45-year-old person coming to faith in Christ. I love it, and I love those people, because they're so passionate about the gospel. They are so clear. "I wasn't a Christian. I was a Christian. I lived my adult life not as a Christian. I'm now living my adult life as a Christian."

But here's what I also... I'm not speaking this over everybody who came to Christ later in life, but often, they have a lot of struggles because they had a long time, four decades or more, where their body engaged in sin. Though their soul has been made new, their body does not forget it.

Sin wants to twist and pervert the good desires of your body to pursue them wrongly. So, it wants to take hunger and turn it into gluttony. It wants to take the desire to work and turn it into workaholism. It wants to take sexual desire and turn it into lust. It wants to take the desire to provide and turn it into greed.

Paul says this is where we have to fight, which leads to what he says next. Look here. He says in verse 7, "***For one who has died...***" He keeps repeating the same thing so we don't forget this. "***...has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.***"

Verse 10 is a pattern. It's what happened to Christ; it's now what happens to you. "***For the death he died he died to sin...***" Notice, past tense. One time. "***...once for all, but the life he lives...***" Present tense, continually. "***...he lives to God.***" He basically says, "Here's how it works for Jesus: he died one time, a long time ago, to sin, and now he continually lives to God." He goes, "That's how it works with you."

When you became a Christian, you died one time in the past to sin. There was a decisive break. You have a new relationship with God. Now you need to not live in sin but live to God, which leads to the third thing. So, we have to understand the difference between the old self and the body of sin, grace and sin, and finally, *what God does and what you need to do.*

In verses 11-13, which is what we'll end with, Paul gets as practical as he has ever gotten in his letter so far. Look at verse 11. He says, "***So you also must...***" In light of everything we just talked about...body of sin, grace, old self, union with Christ baptism... All that's true. "***So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.***"

Now listen. Both are important. You can't just be dead to sin and not alive to God, because if you are just dead to sin, you are going to be miserable. If I could just speak to some of you... Some of you are dead to sin, but you're not alive to God, so your Christianity is about what you don't do, and it's boring.

Some of you, your Christianity is boring. It's boring to your kids. It's *very* boring to your kids. It's unattractive to your coworkers and to your neighbors. I mean, we do need to tell our kids there are a bunch of things they should not do, but you do not want to raise your kids so that the way they define their Christianity is all of the things they can't do. "We can't drink, smoke, or chew or hang with girls who do."

So many of you are like, "Yeah, in our household, we don't listen to *that* music, we don't go to *that* dance, we don't go to *that* school, we don't watch *that* movie, and we

don't say *those* words." It's like, "Okay, okay. Well, what *do* we do? Because now my whole life is about all..."

It's like, "Actually, what we do is we do a ton of good works. The adventure of our lives is obeying Jesus Christ and taking the gospel to a ton of different people and seeing lives and legacies transformed. This family is way more defined by what we *do* than what we *don't* do. In fact, all of the things we don't do, we don't do them because they get in the way of all of the great things God wants to do in and through and beyond us."

So, he says you have to be dead to sin, but you have to be alive to God. Well, how do you do that? Look at verse 12. I love this. Remember, Paul talked about the body of sin, and he talked about the old self. He adds a third thing. "***Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body...***"

What is your *mortal body*? It's what you're sitting in right now. It's your earth suit that you're wearing. It's your hormone-driven, sleep-deprived, vitamin D-deficient, seed-oil-filled body. That's the only body you have, and for some of you, it's aging quickly. It's hard.

People want to get like this. Women are actually more like this. Christian women especially, since Eve, want to get super spiritual about everything. What does Eve do in the garden? She blames Satan. We can't just get super spiritual. We can't just say there's a demon and a devil under every rock. We need to take personal responsibility for living our Christian faith out in the only place we can live it out, which is in our body.

It says, "Don't let sin therefore reign in your mortal body to obey its passions." Sin always comes with an emotional appeal to you, just so you know this. You do know this, but I'm articulating it. Sin will try to make a rational argument, but at its heart it will be emotional. Sin will come with a personality. Sin will come with an argument. Sin will come with an agenda. Sin will come with a reward system. It comes with all of that.

We'll pick a silly illustration. Say right now you were like, "You know what? I feel convicted. The body of sin has taken over and turned my desire into gluttony, and I eat too much. I particularly eat too much at night. I eat too many chips and carbs late at night," and you just committed to the Lord right now you're not going to do that. What's going to happen at 10:00 tonight?

Maybe you make it the first night, but what starts happening? It's the weirdest thing ever. You will talk to yourself about why you need to not listen to yourself. It is the strangest thing you've ever experienced. This is what sin does. It comes with a sub-

personality inside of you, and it will tell you that you need to listen to it, that it's where life is, and that you'll have a better life if you do it.

Well, Paul goes, "We can't do this." In fact, Paul says, "I went from the old self (he's dead), the body of sin (that's sin trying to use your body), and the mortal body." Paul goes, "I'm not getting specific enough." Christianity is granular. It's at the baseline level. It's very specific.

Here's how Paul ends. Look at verse 13. ***"Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness."*** So, he moves from your entire mortal body to your members.

By the way, the word *instrument* is actually a war term in the original language meaning weapons. What he's saying is you can break down your entire body into individual members. If you want your Christianity to get real, start going, "What am I doing with my thumb? Am I doomscrolling? Is that what I'm doing with the members of my body? What am I doing with my eyes?"

Do a member audit. Wouldn't that be interesting? You can delete the file and burn the paper, but do a member audit. Like, "What do I do with my eyes? How am I using them? Am I using them to notice good things and encourage other people? Am I using them to be grateful to God for all that I see and the beauty of the creation?"

Or am I doing what the Bible says I shouldn't do, which is have haughty eyes, which are eyes that are constantly critical and judgmental of other people, so I feel better about myself, because there's no easier way to feel better about myself than by putting other people down?" What are we doing with our feet? What are we doing with our ears? What are we listening to?

Here's the thing. This is so practical, but I think it could work. Just try this for a week. What if every morning when you woke up the first thing you did was you said, "I'm going to do what the Bible says. I'm going to present myself to God"? It might feel a little silly to you. It might feel a little formal to you. You might lie in bed. You might kneel behind your bed. You might go sit in a chair.

You might go on a walk, and you might just go, "All right, Lord. I want to use my hands to serve you and to serve other people today. I don't want to do evil things with these hands. Lord, thank you for this tongue. Thank you for a mouth. I realize it's a great stewardship, and I'd like to use that member of my body to bless and encourage other people and not to gossip and slander and spread lies."

By the way, in a minute, like I do each week, I'm going to call you to the altar across all of our campuses. Some of you have never come, and that's fine, but I want to give you a theological reason for it. We've talked a lot about response culture, and I've not given you enough Bible verses. Here's a Bible verse: "Present yourself to God."

We all know this. There's just something that happens in my soul when my body does something. So, part of what we try to do each week is to create some space for you to respond. You may come forward just to recommit your entire body to the Lord. Say, "Lord, this is the battleground where I'm going to fight the faith. I'm going to fight for belief in God in this body."

You might want to come forward, and you don't need to tell anyone what it is. You just may want to come forward and commit one part of your body, to go, "God, if I'm completely honest, this part of my body has not been committed to you, and today is the day to change that."

Also, I want to give you two other things that I want you to think about. First, if you're going to fight sin, you have to get to the root of the body of sin. Here's the thing. You have to ask this question. This will really help you if you can get this. If you're struggling with a besetting, consistent sin in your life, ask yourself this question: "What is the lie under the sin I'm believing?"

If you're anxious, you can't just tell yourself, "Don't be anxious. Don't be anxious. Okay, brain, don't be anxious." You have to go, "Why am I believing that God is not in control? What has happened in my heart that I don't believe God cares about me?" If you're struggling with stinginess... "God, what has happened in my heart that I believe you're not going to take care of me? I believe that somehow I have to take care of myself."

Under so much sexual sin is the lie that "If you don't engage in this, you're missing out, and to be truly human is to engage every sexual desire you have." We have to decide. We have to figure out what the lies underneath it are. I'll tell you the second thing, and then we'll pray. I want you to try this this week. I want you to try this today, because today you're going to be tempted.

Whenever we view temptation, we get scared of temptation. Part of that's right, because Jesus said to pray, "Lord, do not lead me into temptation," but you're going to be tempted, so here's what I want you to know. When you're tempted today, it's an opportunity to do the right thing. It is so powerful to get that. Do not view temptation as "This is my chance to do the wrong thing."

Say, "You know what? I've been looking for an opportunity to honor God. Here it is. I've been looking for an opportunity to grow in grace and godliness. It's right in front

of me. I've been looking for an opportunity to be assured of my own salvation and God's work in my life. It's right here. I've been looking for an opportunity to privately honor God when no one else would see it. This is my opportunity." What would it look like if everyone in here decided to use their members for righteousness instead of unrighteousness? Let's pray for that.

Lord, there's a lot of theology in here. I pray across all of our campuses, Lord, that you would set people free from sin, that we would put sin to death, because as we will see next week, we are not under the law but under grace. I pray across all of our campuses, Lord, whether it's in this moment, whether it's tonight before we go to bed, or tomorrow morning, Lord, that we would live lives where we present our bodies to you. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.