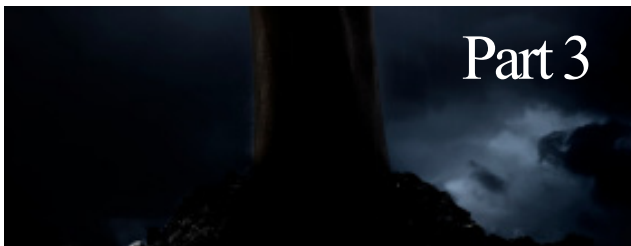


ROMANS Part 53

Chapter 6:12-14



Death of the Old Humanity



Let not Sin, then, be reigning in your mortal body, for you to be obeying its lusts. Nor yet be presenting your members, as implements of injustice, to Sin, but present yourselves to God as if alive from among the dead, and your members as implements of righteousness to God. For Sin shall not be lording it over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.

In “Death of the Old Humanity, Part 2,” I talked about Jesus Christ being roused from among the dead and no longer dying. Not only is He no longer dying, He is unable to die. This is the meaning of the term “vivification,” which the *Concordant Version* intelligently differentiates from mere resurrection. Resurrected people such as Lazarus can die again. Resurrection touches the body. Vivification, on the other hand, touches the body and the spirit. It speaks of life immortal. The other term associated with resurrection is the one I used in the opening sentence, “rousing.” This has to do with the soul. It is being woken up, so that your senses operate again. These are three different Greek words used in the New Testament (*egeiro*, rouse; *anastasis*, resurrect; *zoopoieo*, vivify); one for the soul, one for the body, one for the spirit. The common versions often lump these words into the single term, “resurrection.” Numbnuts.

So here is the order of the trifacta, when it happens: 1) you’re roused, that is, woken up; your five senses are engaged again, with maybe a couple more senses thrown in for added flavor, 2) you’re resurrected, that is, you have a body again, and 3) you’re vivified, that is, you can never die again—guaranteed no more death or your money back. To review: resurrection touches the body, rousing the soul, and vivification the spirit. We are anticipating all three things because our Forerunner, Jesus Christ, is all three things, right now, before God. As with the Forerunner, thus also with us—eventually.

“For in that He died, He died to Sin once for all time, yet in that He is living, He is living to God. Thus you also, be reckoning yourselves to be dead, indeed, to Sin, yet living to God in Christ Jesus, our Lord” (Romans 6:10-11).

Last time I was with you in Romans, before the “Era is Limited” series, I related the new creation to resurrection, using Romans 6:8—“Now if we died

together with Christ, we believe that we shall be living together with Him also.” And also Romans 6:4—“We, then, were entombed together with Him through baptism into death, that, even as Christ was roused from among the dead through the glory of the Father, thus we also should be walking in newness of life.” I told you that, even though we are not now roused, resurrected, or vivified, we are supposed to be faking it (this is the precise meaning of “as if” in Romans 6:13), living as though it were all true. If that means walking with your head held high, then do it. Well, not too high. We don’t need any haughtiness taking over. I just want you to quit condemning and hating yourself. At least hold your head level. All right? Don’t walk about with your chin on your chest; it’s bad form.

Don’t let your body drag you down; you’ll soon be trading it in for a new one. This truth of trading in your body for a new one is a way to laugh at the decaying thing you’re forced to look at in the mirror every day. I suppose it’s okay for you to look at that body in the mirror as long as you remember that it’s doomed and that resurrection is around the corner. Otherwise, you may be in big trouble. These bodies have many clever ways of

“Your identity is in Christ, not this embarrassing thing with knees, elbows, a belly-button, and several layers of fat protecting your six-pack.”

dragging us down. They will say some very mean things to us, including, “Look hard in the mirror; this is who you *are*”; “Get a load of me, will you? You must be a big fat *loser*,” and “See how many other people are so much better than you because they at least take care of themselves and *look good*.”

When your body tries to depress you like this, you can turn the tables on it. That’s right: I want you to start depressing your body. When your body tries to ruin your day by telling you how worthless you are because it is in such terrible shape, I want you to ruin your *body’s* day and say to it, “Those are pretty big words coming from a collection of flesh, blood and bone that is doomed to be *traded in any day now* for a newer model.” I want to make sure that you italicize the words “traded in any day

now,” because this is the phrase that will demoralize your body, force it to think twice, and make *you* the captain of it once again. You should always be the captain of your body.

At this point, you may start feeling sorry for your body. Do this only if you want to. Just make sure you humiliate it first; give yourself a *reason* to feel sorry for it. Some of you don’t want to hold back on your body at all. You’re going to sling the barbs and no way you’re pulling out the pity card. You’re so upset with it that you would gladly demoralize and humiliate it. I get it. It’s why I’m telling you this. I want you to get on top of it and stay there. When you start thinking the “new creation” way, your body will have no more jurisdiction over you. Treating your body like the old creation that it is serves it right for making you



think that your identity is tied up in it and that the old creation is somehow going to last forever. It’s not, and it’s not. What a lie that has been. *Your body is you?* It isn’t true. *Your current body will last forever?* Ha. Hardly. Your identity is in Christ, not this embarrassing thing with knees, elbows, a belly-button, and several layers of fat protecting your six-pack. You’re coming into new truth and leaving your fat ass (don’t know how literal this is; sorry) behind.

Now there's an inspired phrase, "leaving it behind." It is true that you will soon be *actually* leaving your body behind, but what I've been saying here is that you can anticipate this day by mentally abandoning it. This way, you no longer look at it and say, "This is me." Your identity is in Christ, and He is seated at the right hand of God and death is lording it over Him no longer, meaning that the body He owned while on earth is sure as heck no longer lording anything over Him. So don't let your irritating fat layers lord anything over you either.

Perhaps, as you tell your body these truths and employ my recommended sayings, you can accompany the words with a physical gesture. This can be very helpful. Others have told me how much it helps them to do something physical toward their physical frame, and I'm not talking about exercise here. I recommend that, as you look at your body in the mirror and say terrible things to it, you snub your nose at it simultaneously. Allow me to describe this gesture: You put your thumb on the tip of your nose and wiggle your fingers in a sort of happy yet at the same time belittling wave motion. Adding "nyaa-nyaaa" may also help, as long as you sing it rather than say it. For bolder souls, there is "flipping the bird." I have flipped the bird to my body a few times over the years. For you older folks who may not know what this means, it means that you turn the back of your hand to your image in the mirror and raise your middle finger and hold it there for awhile. For you older folks who *still* don't know what this means, forget it. My body doesn't like it when I do this to it, which is just the point. I don't want it to like it. I want to demoralize it so that it quits making irrational and irregular claims over me. As long as it quits doing this, I can live peaceably with it until "trade in" day. As long as it behaves itself, I will take care of it for as long as I need it.

MIRROR, MIRROR

Don't you wish sometimes that mirrors had never been invented? In the old days they had really fuzzy, tinny mirrors, like burnished bronze, and people only had a vague idea of what they looked like. This was a great advantage for the people. The people back then thought they were much more beautiful than they actually were. As the mirrors have improved, the disposition of the populace has correspondingly degenerated. Now we obsess over ourselves. We, as members of the body of Christ, ought not do this. I'm not saying we should neglect our appearance, but we should stop worrying about its many imperfections. People: we are five minutes away from the snatch-

ing away and new bodies. This is my teaching. It is my disposition and my literal belief. We are to graduate in our thinking to the new creation. This thing with all the bumps, lumps, moles and wrinkles that you've been dragging around for years is on borrowed time. You can change what it looks like to a certain degree, but it's always going to be what God and your parents genetically handed you. What you *can* change for certain and with overwhelming success is how you think about your body. In light of the coming reality, you can stop letting it claim jurisdiction over you. This is new creation truth concerning the body.



NOW SHOWING: SIN

We now dive into new creation truth concerning Sin. (I capitalize it occasionally to personify it.) This truth is related to that concerning the body, so it shouldn't be too tough of a graduation. The only other thing that drives us crazier than our bodies, in my opinion, is Sin. Failure. We miss the mark all the time. This is what sin means: "to miss the mark." Anytime you screw up, that's sin. It doesn't have to be a classic sin like greed, sloth, pride, jealousy, or wearing Crocs. It can be something as simple as missing a credit card payment and getting socked with a heavy interest charge. Or saying something to a spouse or a child that you regret. Or forgetting the very thing you went to the grocery store to get. Or forgetting to set your alarm clock, being late for work *again*, and falling beneath the storm cloud of your boss. Or, speaking of work, sin can be making a really bad mistake there that makes everyone think you're stupid. Anytime you fail, that's sin. Any time you do something really dumb or even evil that fills you with the sick feeling of regret every time you think of it so that the mistake practically

ruins your entire day and life—that’s sin. Paul is about to give you some really good news concerning this, and I will attempt the trick of putting it into language that brings it home to you and makes a noticeable difference in your life

Here is what Paul has to say about sin in Romans 6:12,

“Let not Sin, then, be reigning in your mortal body, for you to be obeying its lusts.”

First I am going to give you the standard Christian interpretation of this verse—which is completely wrong, as you may have guessed—and then I will give you the proper interpretation, which will agree perfectly not only with the immediate context, but with the entire tenor of the book of Romans. The correct interpretation will forever deliver you from Sin’s sick ability to ruin your day and your life. Notice that I did not say you would stop sinning. Are you kidding me? Why would I say something like that? You’re a human being. No human being stops sinning this side of immortality. I said that sin would no longer be able to ruin your day and your life. This is Paul’s intention for you in chapters 6-8 of his wonderful letter, and it is mine as well.

HOLIER THAN THOU

Christians see the phrase, “Let not Sin, then, be reigning in your mortal body,” and because they are a bunch of law-keeping hypocrites with self-righteous (that is, unrealistic) expectations of themselves, they think this means, “Stop sinning.” They think that the phrase “the reign of sin” means “the act of sin.” And so they embark upon “anti-sin” campaigns for themselves—and for you. Some of them actually believe that they can eliminate Sin from their lives. This is deception on mega-vitamins. Watch these people doing their thing; it makes you want to cry for them. It’s so embarrassing to watch.

They wake up one very holy morning feeling and believing that they can live like Jesus. (Of course, if they reach for their alarm clock and miss the snooze button the first time, they have already sinned because they have already “missed the mark,” but we will keep our conversation now to what the Christians assume sin to be.) The Christians get themselves into a mind-set of doing everything right. They effect a Jesus Aura. This is a “holier-than-thou” thing that smells a little bit like rotten tuna. You can spot these people as soon as they walk in the room, not to mention the odor of self-righteousness, which again smells like rotten tuna.

They are definitely not Jesus. I think that all the Jesus movies portraying Jesus as a very slow-talking, very quiet individual who floats gently through life and barely raises His voice above a whisper, are wrong. Jesus was vital, alert, quick, looked around with the speed of a bird, and frequently belted out sermons that could be heard across valleys.

But back to the people trying to “be like Jesus.” They all speak in gentle voices and act as though nothing at all were worrying them. The measure out their words very carefully and purposefully, trying always to be gentle.



"Here comes Mr. 'holier-than-thou'."

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It’s almost like they’re in a trance. They are. They’re in a Jesus of Nazareth Trance (JNT). No doves will land on them, however. Doves are afraid of them. The Jesus People must guard against everything that would cause them to sin, including any contact whatsoever with Satan. (Jesus could face Satan and still not sin; hmm, I wonder why *these* people can’t do it?) They are constantly on the lookout for sin triggers. If chocolate makes them sin, they never walk down that aisle of the grocery store. If a certain TV show makes them sin, they avoid that show. If the Internet makes them sin, they may actually give away their computer. If certain people make them sin, they will avoid these people. Some of them will join either a monastery or a nunnery to ensure an escape from *every* sin trigger. (I would not be able to do this; both monks and nuns *make* me sin; I can’t help poking fun at them.) They constantly tell themselves, “Happy thoughts, happy thoughts, happy thoughts; please, please, *please*, happy thoughts.”

At this point, these poor people resemble volcanoes. Smoke occasionally emerges from the tops of their heads, and molten lava from their nostrils. You do not want to be around when they finally crack—and crack they will. It’s always only a matter of time.

MASS CONDEMNATION

I remember feeling this way as a kid in the Catholic church after going to confession—pure and holy, that is. The Catholic Church has a remarkable way of tricking both kids and adults into thinking that they are either a doomed sinner or a cleansed saint. Everything in the Catholic church oozed from these two extremes. Of course, it's the same in any branch of Christianity, or in any other religion for that matter. Frequently, one must be reminded of his or her failures. Every religion has developed a means by which seekers of holiness may live lives free of guilt: confession; guilt coupled with confession. In the Catholic church, confession means going into a little shadowy box and confessing your failures to the priest. In my case, this was Father Forn I. Cator. In other religions, absolution may be gained by doing yourself harm, that is, engaging in some sort of physical or mental penance. The Filipinos literally whip themselves and have themselves nailed to crosses while wearing Crocs. Lazier Catholics simply kneel and say several “Our Fathers,” “Hail Marys” and “Battle Hymns of the Republic.”

Kneeling is not as uncomfortable as crucifixion, however, and this damages the chances of the lazy Catholic's quest for holiness. The kneelers are always padded, something I've never understood. Comfort, for a Catholic, doubles the probability of failure. Some sort of discomfort is obviously required if you're going to be paying for your own sins. After all, look how much Jesus suffered. There were no padded kneelers on the cross! (Try not to inform a Catholic that Jesus Christ already died for their sins. It will ruin everything for them. Their next sentence will be—and I can guarantee this—“Then why bother?”)

All religions have made a thriving business out of sin, guilt, the relief of guilt, and a studied ignorance of the cross. How about that for a racket with a steady, guaranteed income? It's as good as the funeral business; people will always be sinning and dying.

TRY TO STAY PURE, KID

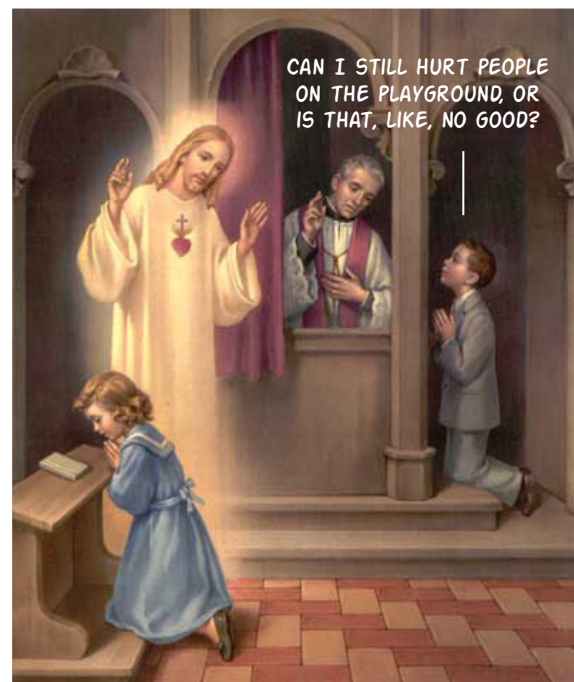
As a kid in the Catholic church, I went into the confessional feeling all crummy about the stuff I had to tell Father Forn I. Cator. But when I'd come out and said my required prayers, I felt like a new man (kid). I felt cleansed. To this day, I can still remember that feeling. No wonder my parents spent all that money to send me to a Catholic school. Money can't buy me love, but it can buy me freedom from guilt—at least for a couple hours.

In my church, the Sacrament of Confession (capital letters, please) descended upon us once a month. We al-

ways headed over to the church during the school period immediately before recess. Whether this was designed to inhibit playground crimes, I don't know. Out I went to recess after confession, trying not to play too hard, talk too loud or run too fast, lest I be led into temptation and ruin my clean “confession feeling.” I remember always being subdued—well, subdued for me.

The guys and I had a game that we used to call “Keep Away Kill,” where we divided into two teams and tried to keep a ball from one another. Whichever team had the ball in its possession when the bell rang at the end of recess, won. This game had no rules. You could do anything to get the ball from the other team: push, tackle, bite, hit, smash, trip, even kill—thus the name.

In Keep Away Kill, I was one of the fiercest competitors. If you see how tough I am in the word of God and how hard I defend God and how plainly I try to state things, you have a sense of how I played “Keep Away Kill.” I made the Tasmanian Devil look like Tinkerbell.



I had no regard for my own body, or for those of my competitors. It was all about getting the ball and keeping it. I never killed anyone, but only because it would have meant writing sentences on the blackboard. Immediately after confession, however, I was a different kid. I would lose my desire to kill my friends and steal their ball. I would play the game like a proper gentleman; the game was now an English fox and hound hunt to me, minus the bugle. It was too risky to throw myself into

the game because, well, one sin might lead to another, then to another, then to another, and I'd be back under God's cloud of disfavor until I could visit the confessional again and tap the benevolent ministrations of Father Forn I. Cator.

SCRATCH THAT

Remember how it is when you buy a new car and you don't want to scratch or dent it? I have no idea how it is because I've never owned a new car, but I have owned a new bicycle. In the first few days after buying my new bicycle, I wanted to keep it looking as good as new. I treated it like a museum piece. I dared not ride it in the rain, as it might get splashed with mud. After every ride, I hosed it down and buffed it with a cloth. It was my baby.

Same with a car, right? You park your new car in the far parking lots at Wal-Mart because you're afraid someone will bump into it or open their car door into your precious vehicle. It's always such a relief when you get the first scratch on that bike, or the first dent on the car. Well, not at first. At first, you're furious. You act as though your life has crumbled. It's only a relief later when you realize that it's just a thing and that it's supposed to be used, not catered to and lived for. After the first scratch or dent, you can quit worrying about it and use it as it's meant to be used and live for important things. Cars were meant to be driven, and bicycles to be ridden. Playgrounds were meant to be played and bled upon. Now that I think about it, it was always a relief to get that first sin out of the way after confession. It's not that I tried to do it, but it found me soon enough. Bang! Here came the inevitable screw-up and I would think, "Well, now that that's over with, I'm already doomed so I just might as well live." Ah! What relief. I could be myself again and steal that ball no matter what.

NEW CREATION NOT A MUSEUM PIECE

The new creation says, in effect, "There. You just got your dent, your scratch, and your first sin after confession. All is lost, you can't win now, you've already blown it, so you might as well just live." The phrases "all is lost" and "you can't win now" refer to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and what He suffered on your behalf. He already *knew* all was lost with you because you were already condemned in Adam; He took your failures to the cross. He already *knew* you couldn't win because you had already lost in Adam; He took your loss to the cross and trumped it.

This is the truth of the new creation. Now that you know that your old humanity has been crucified and that neither scratches nor dents can bother a corpse, you can be yourself again. You can live. All worry is over. When I was a Catholic, that feeling of being cleansed wasn't perfect or permanent. I could only start enjoying myself, ironically, after that first sin. This bliss lasted up until the



“Now that you know that your old humanity has been crucified and that neither scratches nor dents can bother a corpse, you can be yourself again.”

time I was suppose to gather my wits and failures again and revisit the confessional box. The new creation is *not* this. The new creation has removed not only all my sins, but has done so permanently. I am now supposed to feel cleansed all the time without fear of anything taking the feeling away, not even sin. How can sin take the good feeling away when Jesus Christ took away sin? The cross of Christ and the new creation is a permanent fix removing sin at its root. What is the root of sin? You can't get more root-ier than Adam. If you deal with Adam, you've dealt with everything. Jesus Christ dealt with Adam. He overwhelmed Adam; He buried him. Adam is so dead, he's not coming back. Stop looking around fearfully, then, as though Adam were around the corner. You're worried about a ghost. Because Adam is dead, you can now live boldly and with fervor and enthusiasm in newness of life. Go ahead and live large. Live boldly. No scratch or dent can condemn you. Park your car anywhere; ride your bike

in the rain. Another way of saying all this is, “For freedom, Christ frees us” (Galatians 5:1).

“HAND ME A NAIL AND A HAMMER”

Now let’s talk about these bodies of sin. We try hard not to sin because we think that “sin reigning in our mortal body” has to do with sinning. “Sin will not reign over me! I will kill it! And I will make sure to kill any thing, or any environment, or any trigger, that causes me to sin!” This is wrong thinking. It’s playing into the hands of Sin. This mis-assumption that “the reign of sin” has to do with sinning is what keeps religions like the Catholic variety in business. It’s what keeps people living over-careful lives, as though they could dent their car or dirty their bicycles unto death. It’s what makes people unbearably self-righteous when they manage to deceive themselves into believing they’re living sin-free lives.

If the person hauling him or herself out of bed in the morning in the “Jesus of Nazareth Trance” does manage to live a relatively mild and relatively “sin-free” life, at least until lunch, that person will, by default, look down upon everyone not living up to their standards. This would be everyone. *Just look at those evil people going to the movies, drinking alcohol, raising their voices, riding their bicycles in the rain, and running around like lunatics on the playground.* If you’re a true-blue Pharisee, you may actually be able to

hold onto this deception for a lifetime and damn other people for many, many glorious years. When you do sin, you consider it an anomaly—*Whoa, what just happened there? That’s not like me!*—and you quickly regain your balance by either confessing your failure to God, by calling upon a professional to absolve you, or by somehow penalizing yourself, either by physically harming yourself or practicing some sort of mental abuse. The Filipinos, as I said, whip themselves; some modern folks cut themselves; others simply become depressed. For some, depression is a subtle form of self-flagellation; these people don’t deserve to be happy. Other unhappy souls, never able to make the grade of the moral perfection they so crave, take out their frustrations on other people, punishing themselves by proxy.

What a bunch of death and pain. What a hideous recipe for a miserable life that millions and billions of miserable people now live beneath the grim shadow of every brand of religion you can name, including the one called “Christianity.” For Christians, the misery emerges from a regrettable misunderstanding of the entire sixth chapter of Romans. You may as well add chapters seven and eight while you’re at it. Rather than seeing the crucifixion, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the end to all striving and wrestling with the old humanity, they see it as a challenge to “be like Jesus,” and fight a fight against sin, death, and Satan that Jesus Christ has already fought and won. They dig up the corpse of the old humanity, prop it up in the corner, and box it. They’re trying to impress Jesus, yes, but instead, they unwittingly insult Him by living in practical denial of everything He accomplished. They simply cannot believe that there is “now therefore no more condemnation in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). They simply cannot believe that God now sees them through the prism of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30). They simply cannot believe that the full burden of sin was actually borne by Christ at Calvary (John 1:29). Surely, there must be some penance left for sincere yet deluded people to accomplish/suffer through, with tears.

LET NOT SIN BE REIGNING

Here is what it really means to keep sin from reigning in your life: it means keeping sin from telling you how to feel about yourself. Accompanying this revolutionary truth is the following: How can you even begin to dethrone Sin if it doesn’t exist? This exhortation of Paul’s assumes the existence of sin. This is such a simple



yet overlooked point. Romans 6 is not about how to be perfect, but about how to deal with the imperfection of an old creation body. At no time during this era of humiliation will you be able to come to Romans chapter 6 and no longer require an exhortation concerning how to “talk down” the condemning voice of Sin. In other words, at no time during this era of humiliation will you ever stop sinning.

Sin reigns in the same way your body reigns. Both Sin and your fleshly human frame would seek to seduce you into imagining that you are beholden to them, that your identity is unavoidably tied to them, and that your happiness in this life and your very destiny depend on you fixing them. Resist these lies. The new creation, via Calvary, has put the old creation to death. What vexes

tion. *This is precisely what Sin wants us to do.* If we bite at any of this bait, then we have just let Sin reign. We have enthroned Sin as king by acknowledging its lie, that is, the lie of its power over us. We have said, in essence, “Sin, you are right. We *don’t* deserve salvation. We don’t even deserve to live. We are miserable human beings.” If we do this, we have let Sin win. We have done the very thing that Paul exhorts us not to do.

Sin’s ultimate attack is this: “You must stop sinning.” Not only is this the ultimate attack, but the ultimate seduction and lie. Yet this is the battle cry of every religion. It is the master-plot of Satan. Please listen to Paul instead:

Now we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the transcendence of the power may be of God and not of us. (2 Corinthians 4:7).

An earthen vessel is a sinning vessel. To keep us humble and needing Him, God will make very sure that none of us ever stops sinning completely in this life. If this impossible thing ever happened and we became perfect little Mary Poppins People this side of immortality, we would no longer pine for a Savior and for the deliverance of our bodies. Why would we? How proud we would become. Not only this, but the exhortation, “let not sin be reigning in your mortal body” could no longer apply to us. Why exhort a perfect person to pull Sin off the megaphone of his or her life? Romans 6:12 can *only* apply to sinners. This is no encouragement to sin, but rather an exhortation to keep Sin from talking you out of new creation truth, that is, making you believe

that the old humanity has power over you. Having said that, I will always exhort you to avoid big mistakes—”Jim, don’t rob that bank; it’s a really bad idea”—but this is a far cry from an exhortation to perfect yourself and never miss the mark again.

This section of Romans, from chapters six through eight, addresses the fact that Christ is greater than Adam, and then explores the practical results of this truth. We are now subject to Christ, not Adam. This revelation precedes the change of our bodies, yes, thus it is a matter of reckoning things to be so that are not presently so, but soon will be. Remember Romans 4:17—



you now are, essentially, ghosts. They are specters from the past. It’s a smoke and mirror show, folks. A shadow on the wall. A hologram. It doesn’t exist. You are free from all accusations and challenges hurled against you by these conquered enemies.

We must, all of us, *reckon* the victory of Christ and the new creation to be true (it is an exercise of the mind), even in the face of the bathroom mirror and of our continued failings screaming at us. As soon as any of us miss the mark—without the knowledge of new creation truth—what happens? We begin questioning ourselves, doubting ourselves, doubting our goodness, doubting our sincerity to God, doubting our very salva-

For if, by the offense of the one, death reigns through the one, much rather, those obtaining the superabundance of grace and the gratuity of righteousness shall be reigning in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Who are the key players here? Adam and Christ. Paul sets forth “the offense of one,” Adam, against the gift of life “through the One, Jesus Christ.” Because of Adam, death reigned. This happened irrespective of any of our deeds, good or bad. Now, because of Jesus Christ, life reigns, again, irrespective of any action or work from us. We to whom God has given belief are the ones now “obtaining the superabundance of grace and the gratuity of righteousness.” The gratuity of righteousness, remember, is justification. The superabundance of grace is how we get it: God acted mega-graciously toward sinners in sending Christ on their behalf and giving them His Son’s very own righteousness.

My point is to point out the word “reigns” here as it applies to sin as well as to death. We all know that death still operates in us, but what we need to know is that the *reign* of death has been delivered the death blow. Because of this, death can no longer “lord it over you,” that is, damn you to a life of fear. (It can only do it if you let it.) Romans chapters 6-8 say: *don’t let it do it*. You have been transferred from the doom and dread of death into newness of life. Haven’t you noticed that, since coming to the wonderful truths of Christ, you are less afraid of death? There you go. The explanation for this is that you have such a real and imminent expectation of life that death has lost its power. It’s voice grows fuzzy, it’s threats dim. In such a way have you ended it’s reign over you. You haven’t ended the fact that you’re mortal, but you’ve successfully ended death’s grabbing the megaphone of your life and harassing you day after day.

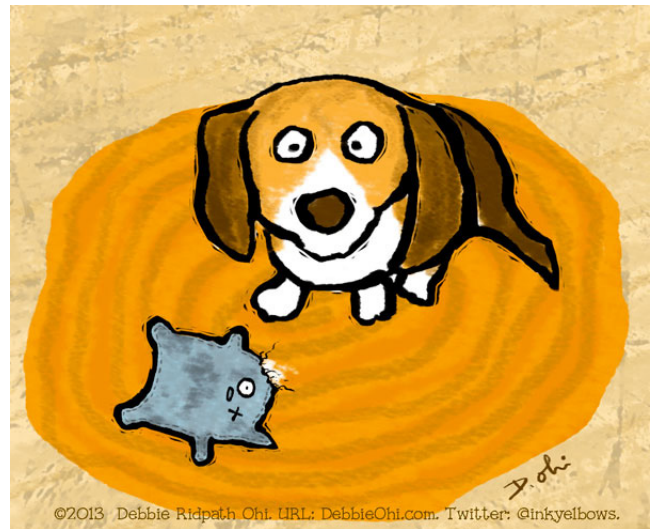
THE SPECTER OF SIN

A.E. Knoch writes in the *Concordant Commentary on the New Testament*:

The reign of Sin corresponds to the reign of Grace, Adam’s single offense to Christ’s one just act on Calvary, bringing life where Adam brought death.”

Now transfer this to Sin, because it’s the same principle. Because of Christ, Sin no longer reigns over you. *It still lives in you*—just as death still lives in you—but it no longer reigns. It’s no longer the King of the Megaphone of your life, telling you how to feel about yourself. It has

been dethroned by another King, Grace. The only way Sin can tell you nasty stuff is if you stupidly listen to it and believe it. What if a stranger come to your house and said, “Move over, I am now running your life.” Would you let this happen? Some people are so wishy-washy and so unsure of who they are that I suppose some *would* let a complete stranger enter their homes and dictate their lives. Most of us, however, would say, “Get lost! Who do you think you are?” That’s it! This is precisely what we are now to say to Sin. The hard part is that Sin is not such a stranger as someone appearing out of the blue at our doorstep, so it will be harder to clip the volume on Sin’s outrageous claims. We’re nevertheless exhorted to do it.



“God designed Romans 6-8 to deal with things we have done, not with things that we’re not supposed to do.”

Which King will you live under? Which Potentate will you bow down to and tremble before: Sin or Christ? Your Failings, or Grace? Death, or the promise of Life? If I were you, I would bow down to Christ and *His* opinion of you, rather than to Sin and its opinion. Sin will always kick you, taunt you and condemn you, whereas Christ will always love you, justify you, and challenge you toward higher thoughts.

I spoke earlier of a physical mirror, in reference to the body. I told you that your body is not who you are. You



If I could rename
Romans, I would
call it:
“Oops, You Just
Sinned; Now What
Do You Do?”

still carry around the flesh, yes, but the truth of the new creation, in light of the death of the old humanity, states boldly that “So that, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: the primitive passed by. Lo! There has come new!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Transfer what I said about the body now to Sin. You still sin. You can’t stop sinning, but this is what you must stop: *Stop listening to Sin’s ungodly and unfounded taunts concerning your status in Christ.*

“Let not Sin, then, be reigning in your mortal body, for you to be obeying its lusts” (Romans 6:14)

Again, Christians take the phrase “for you to be obeying its lusts” to mean “sinning.” The word “obey,” in the Greek is *hupakouo*. It’s a two-part Greek word, the English elements being, UNDER-HEAR. It means, “to hear and to heed.” This is where I get the megaphone analogy. Sin wants you to *listen* to it as it lies to you. Let’s face it, sin lusts. That’s what it is, and that’s what

it does. It can’t be other than what it is. This again proves that Paul’s exhortation is for sinners, not Mary Poppins People. Paul speaks here about a manifested lust, that is, a manifested sin. This is something that has just *happened*, something you have just *done*. God designed Romans 6-8 to help us deal with things we have *done*, not with things that we’re not supposed to do. The goal of Romans is not to fix you—this ain’t a re-make of Ten Commandments, folks—but to help you deal with the old creation even while realizing its ultimate doom. This realization will, in turn, *help* fix you. Don’t put the cart before the horse, as Christianity does. Christianity claims that, if you behave yourself, God will be nice to you. That’s a lie. In the book of Romans, Paul says that God has already been nice to you in spite of your behavior (Romans 5:8), and that only after realizing the impossibility of said behavior *ever* compromising God’s love for you can you even hope to behave yourself.

IN THE FACE OF SIN

Rather than instruction on how not to sin, Romans chapters 6-8 tells us what to do in the face of it. Here comes a lust! *Bang. There. You did it.* The lust has been consummated. You went overboard. You sinned. *Now* what do you do? This is the whole point of Romans 6-8: “*Now* what do you do?” If I could rename Romans, I would call it: “Oops, You Just Sinned; *Now* What Do You Do?” Once a sin has manifested itself, what you do next is critical. Sin will now bombard you with lies about what a terrible person you are and how you just endangered your good standing with God. You can either listen to Sin, bow down to it, give in reigning power, let it condemn you and start crawling around on the floor weeping and gnashing your teeth, or you can flip Sin the bird and tell it to go f*** itself. You can say: “Sin, you can’t do *anything* to screw up my joy or Christ’s opinion of me, so you might as well shut up. You’re doomed. You’re on borrowed time. I’ll even go further, Manifested Lust: You’re a joke. Who do you think you are? My identity is *not* wrapped up in you, it is wrapped up in Christ. You were crucified with Christ, Loser.” At this point, the Manifested Lust will probably panic. No one has ever said this to it before. It will surely object at this point and say, “Well, I might have been crucified with Christ, but what do you know, I’m still here. Ha! Don’t you see what you just did? Looks like I’m alive and kicking, Sucker. What sort of crucifixion is *that*?”

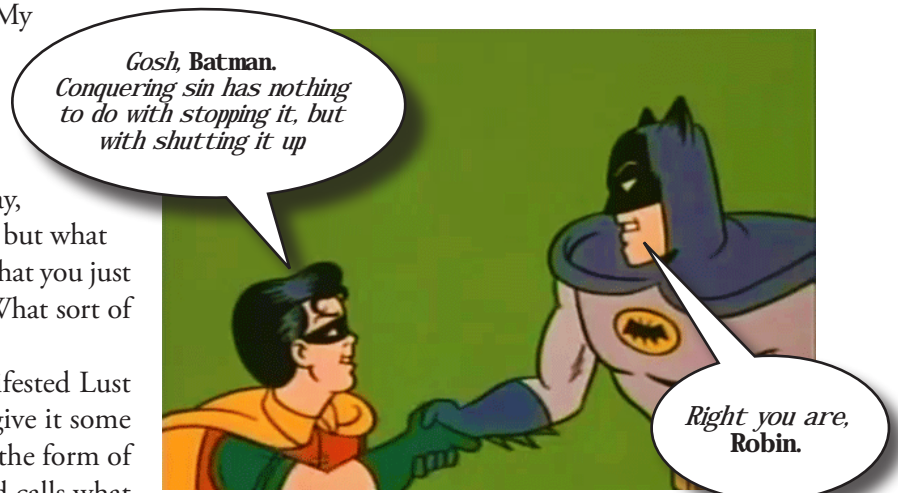
This is a darn good argument for the Manifested Lust to make—even though it’s wrong. I’ve got to give it some credit here. Now is when you must tell Sin, in the form of the Manifested Lust, “Nice try, Has-Been. God calls what is not as though it were. Ever heard of the figure of speech called *prolepsis*? Ha, I didn’t think so, Hologram. I am already anticipating in my mind your ultimate demise. And oh, by the way, you’ve already been defeated in principle, and I do believe that your actual banishment from my life is perhaps only minutes away!”

Ooo! Good play. Sin is not going to like that one bit. Do you know what it’s going to do? It’s going to shrink like the Wicked Witch of the West and melt into the floor. It’s going to be intimidated. It’s going to actually start believing what you say about it. It can only do this, however, if you believe it yourself.

“Obeying the lusts of Sin” has nothing to do with sinning or not sinning, but with listening to Sin and feeling how it tells you to feel, as though it were your King and had the right to lord its nasty rhetoric over your Christ-covered head. Heck no. It’s a dethroned, de-clawed enemy.

Ignore it, and it will go away. Ooo! There is nothing Sin hates more than being ignored. And we’re talking here about ignoring some GOD-AWFUL THING that you’ve just done. Well, of course. You’re a sinner. You’re a mortal son of Adam and mortal sons of Adam fail continually. *Now* what do you do? You keep believing Christ that you’re justified. You minimize the sin. You refuse to battle it. You shrug and say, “Well, I guess that’s God’s department. I’m justified. God, I just *love* justification!” Revel in your freedom, I tell you. Revel in it!

I dare you to find one church that will tell you to do this. Rather, the church—any church—will send you into battle with the sin. It will sell you books on how to conquer the sin and all Sin. Sin loves this. Satan finances churches for this very reason, to keep people so busy fighting Sin with books and sermons and seminars that people ignore the accomplishments of Christ. Sin feeds on attention, any attention. There is no such



thing as bad publicity to Sin. It doesn’t care if you’re indulging it or fighting it, as long as you’re paying attention to it. Oh, my friends. Conquering Sin has nothing whatsoever to do with stopping it, but with shutting it up. It is about conquering the guilt and shame that Sin will constantly throw in your face after every misdeed. I quote here from the *Concordant Commentary on the New Testament*, by A.E. Knoch,

Deliverance from sin comes, not through victory *over* it, but through death *to* it. It is useless to struggle against sin, or to fight with its practices. Rather we should acknowledge its force and reckon ourselves as dead through it and to it, yet alive in resurrection where sin has no place.

Please read and re-read this amazing quote until you—without a doubt—*get* it.

THROW YOURSELF AT GOD
RATHER THAN AT SIN

“Nor yet be presenting your members, as implements of injustice, to Sin, but present yourselves to God as if alive from among the dead, and your members as implements of righteousness to God” (Romans 6:13).

Presenting your members to Sin is the same as surrendering to Sin’s assessment of you and throwing yourself at it with abandon, saying, “Take me! I’m yours anyway!” Talk about feeding Sin. This makes you an implement of injustice. This is just as bad as waking up in the morning in a “Let’s Live Like Jesus Today” mood and deciding to walk around like a “zombie of homemade righteousness” as you studiously avoid every scratch and dent in life because everything is a trigger that will trigger sin, that will damn you to hell, that will potentially prevent you from looking down your nose at other people who dare to be human and to accept their failures as part and parcel of life’s grim lot even though they’re ignorant concerning how to cope with failure through the power of Christ and with the truths of the new creation. Don’t do it.

“Deliverance from Sin comes, not through victory *over* it, but through death *to* it.”

—A.E. Knoch, *Concordant Commentary*

Instead, “present yourselves to God as if alive from among the dead, and your members as implements of righteousness to God.” Just as “don’t let sin be reigning” doesn’t mean that you stop sinning, neither does “present you members as implements of righteousness to God” mean that you start doing everything right. It’s a two-way street here. This passage means what it says, and only what it says: present your members to God. “Do everything right” has to be artificially crow-barred into this passage—which is no problem for religionists. But no. This is throwing yourself at God and saying, “Well, here I am, in all my raging failure. The one thing I’m *not* going to do is keep listening to my doomed Failures daring me to believe that You love me and have justified me. Look, I’m still a raging loser, and You know that. But as I said, I’m throwing myself at You; I’m going to

start thinking the way *You* think, and start anticipating the new life *You’ve* won for me. Is that okay?

God is going to answer something like, “It’s more than okay! This is what I’ve been getting at the whole time. This is why I gave my Son to the cross. This is why I inspired Paul to teach the deepest aspects and deepest realities of the death of My Son!”

“For Sin shall not be lording it over you, for you are not under law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14).

There you go. This hearkens back to A.E. Knoch’s quote from the *Concordant Commentary*—

The reign of Sin corresponds to the reign of Grace, Adam’s single offense to Christ’s one just act on Calvary, bringing life where Adam brought death.

“You are not under law, but under grace.” This is *not* proleptic. It is a fact today, right now, where you stand. You have been transferred from Law to Grace. Grace is now to be as real to you as Sin has been in the past. This is the reason why “Sin shall not be lording it over you.” The slapping-down of Sin is not based on wishful thinking, but on the reality of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

One of the problems I have with self-righteous Christians (sorry for the redundancy) is that they act like nothing happened at the cross. In spite of Jesus Christ coming to die for the sins of the world, these people still insist that most of humanity will burn in hell forever. Why? Because of their sin. I say to them, as nicely as I can, “Didn’t anything happen at the cross? What was all the fuss about?”



“Zender says that something really did happen at the cross, but I’ve decided to just ignore him and keep condemning people to hell.”



I read in John 1:29 that the Lamb of God came into the world to take away sin. Yet here are these anachronistic anvil-heads still quacking about Sin and how it's still going to keep most of humanity from God for eternity, and how the old humanity is alive and well (kicking nicely, thank you), and how the new humanity and Grace are purely theoretical concepts: *a wonderful thought, too bad it doesn't really work on actual sinners.*

Hello? Calvary? The cross? The Lamb of God? Taking away sin? "It is finished." Ring any bells? I say to these people as evilly as I can, "Well, yes, Sin would be an issue all right, but, I don't know if you heard this, but Jesus Christ came and suffered and died to take away the Sin of the world, and I am guessing that it worked."

Sin shall not be lording anything over anyone realizing his or her transference out of Law and into Grace. Remember, this transference came down to two individuals and two only: Adam and Christ. It had nothing to do with you. You hadn't even been born yet. Today, you are but a spectator of long-ago events, reading the account in Romans chapter five of two amazing performers fighting for your life. Adam committed a monumental sin, but Jesus Christ died a monumental death that out-monumentalized the eating of a lousy piece of fruit.

Jesus Christ won.

Which side will you camp on? The losing side, or the winning side? Which power will hold the megaphone in your life and dictate the way you feel about yourself? The power of a piece of fruit that tell you you're still guilty, or the power of the crucified and spotless Lamb of God who tell you that you're righteous?

I know which way my mind is heading, and I'm sticking to it. —MZ (To be continued.)

The Lesson of the Finch

Martin, I really enjoyed your entire "Era is Limited" series, and I was just thinking about one of my favorite movies "The Gladiator." Maximus was pondering the upcoming battle and was wondering, I suppose, if he would survive it, or come out maimed, or even lose the battle and humiliate Rome. But as he left to command his troops, he saw a finch on a limb and was thinking about the freedom the finch had—no worries, no pain, just happily doing God's will. All the adrenaline subsided momentarily as Maximus observed the finch. Suddenly, the finch flew to freedom, and Maximus smiled a wry smile. Then reality struck and he returned to his adrenaline-surged responsibility. His demeanor changed again to suit his serious and grave plight.

Sometimes when I'm in an anxious state, I see God's wonders in simplicity and wonder why I dwell on the woes of earthly bonds.

Lifes a bitch, brother, but there are glimpses of life and freedom from this evil eon.

—Marcus, Amarillo, TX

