

- ***READ Romans 6:1-7*** Those who have ever tried to make real progress in any specific area of life have probably quickly realized that the greatest hindrance to progress is anything that might hold us back from moving forward. Last week we talked about the need for moving only forward in our lives as disciples. We recognized that there are experiences of loss in our pasts that can anchor us in the past so that we might not be able to move forward. We also noted that there might be sin in our past that hinders us from moving forward.
- This morning, we want to focus on sin and how it can halt any sort of progress that we might be pursuing in our discipleship if we do not deal with it properly. The text we just read in **Romans 6:1-7** talks about the point in our lives where we decide to become disciples of Jesus and to take up the name of Christ. It is at this point that Paul phrases this turning point in two very interesting ways that pertain to our thoughts of getting past sin so we can move forward as disciples. In this text in **vv.6,7**, Paul says that be crucified and dying with Christ allows us to, *"no longer be slaves to sin,"* and that we are now, *"freed from sin."*
- What type of image does this type of language put within our minds? I don't know about you, but I am imagining an individual who is weighed down by the heavy weight of sin to the point that it is as if he is chained down to the very spot in which he stands. Yet, it is at this point of change that those chains are broken, they fall to the ground, and this man is freed to move on from that place of despair.
- Yet, this doesn't happen by accident does it? Of course not! Those chains don't just fall off for no reason, but the chains of sin are broken because of that person's commitment to repent and live differently from that point on. This morning, I want to think upon the idea of breaking the chains of sin and making repentance a real part of our discipleship. It doesn't matter when you made the good confession and were baptized for the forgiveness of sins. It could've been 10, 20, 30 years ago. It could've been just last week....if we have not made the conscience decision to break the chains of sin then we have not made any true and real progress in our faiths, and we cannot say that we are growing mightily and prevailing. Repentance means more than just being sorry. It means making big changes in our lives so that Christ is reflected in the way we live our lives. This type of thing takes great effort, so we will begin by establishing some motivation for why we ought to make repentance real in our lives, and then we will focus on exactly how we can make that happen. First...the why.

I. Why should we break the chains of sin?

A. God desires our holiness.

1. We were created in the image of God to be like Him in holiness and righteousness. Adam and Eve were created in perfection having a perfect fellowship with God that existed because of their purity and innocence. This type of relationship and fellowship is what God wants for us.
2. However, our decision to rebel against Him and sin makes this type of relationship impossible because a holy God cannot be in fellowship with sin. Our iniquities cause a separation to come between our unholy selves and a holy God. **(Isaiah 59:2)**
3. Once this sin enters our lives then by all rights we should be cast into hell fire...but God is merciful. He still wants to be in fellowship with us, and this is why we have the second chance at life that Paul talks about in this text. We looked at the first seven verses, but now I want to look at the next seven verses to see that our decision to die to self and to be alive with Christ is a true second chance at life. **(Romans 6:8-14)**
4. We, through Christ, have made the decision to die to sin, and we now have the opportunity to be *"alive to God in Christ Jesus."* That decision, in part, should be motivated by a knowledge that God wants more for us than to be dead to sin and wicked tools of Satan. He wants for us to be used for our intended purpose...*"instruments of righteousness"* working towards sanctification and eternal life with God. Breaking the chains of sin takes effort, but knowing that it will bring joy to God should motivate us to give the effort.

B. Sin only ends in destruction.

1. Of course we want to please God, but we must very practically recognize that repentance and turning away from sin is necessary because sin will only lead us to destruction. Paul makes the ultimate result of sin known in **Romans 6:23**, *"for the wages of sin is death,"* but we can also see this in other places throughout the Scriptures.
 - a) *"There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."* (**Proverbs 16:25**)
 - b) *"But each is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death."* (**James 1:14,15**)
2. When men decide to follow their own hearts and desires then bad things will come. Case in point? Consider the people of Noah's day. These people had their minds and actions set on whatever it is that they wanted and desired. They followed their own desires to the point that the Bible says, *"that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."* (**Genesis 6:5**) What was the result? *"The Lord was very sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart."* (**Genesis 6:6**) This led God to the point that He sent the global flood that destroyed all life except that of Noah and his family.
3. We must recognize that following our own desires will not lead us towards God. We are set up to fail within this world because Satan is its ruler, and he wants nothing more than our demise. He wants us to love ourselves above all else. He wants for us to be selfish within our hearts. He wants for us to rebel against God. He wants for us to be this way because he knows his end will be hellfire, and he wants to take as many of them there as he can. Sin will put us on the fast track to an eternity in condemnation if we allow it.
4. But even before we reach eternity, we must recognize that sin can and will destroy our lives on earth. Just this past week I read a book entitled *"Wanted Man."* This book was written about the spiritual journey of a man named Michael Glaesemann. Mr. Glaesemann grew up in the 60s, and from what I can gather that was a pretty rowdy time in American history. He got caught up in drugs and alcohol, and before he knew it he was admitted to a psychiatric ward suffering from delusions caused by his abuses. It was after some time of rehab that he picked up a Bible and just started reading. Over the span of a couple of years he realized that he had to rid himself of the sinful habits that had gotten him to where he currently was in his life. The book details his breaking of his chains of sin, and ends with his obedience to the Gospel. He now resides in Louisiana with his family, faithful to the Lord. One of his sons, Jonathan, is actually a friend of mine and a fellow preacher. Sin can and will destroy our lives. It will only lead us to destruction, and we should desire so greatly to avoid its disastrous end at all cost! But how?...

II. How can we break the chains of sin?

A. Commit to God.

1. A commitment to sin is a result of a commitment to ourselves, and we will never break those chains as long as we love ourselves more than anything else. If we love ourselves the most then we will continue to offer ourselves up as slaves to Satan in our sins. A commitment to self is, in reality, a commitment to the devil himself. *"Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?"* (**Romans 6:16**) If we really want to break the chains of sin then we must make a clear and conscience decision to truly die to self so that we can live to God. We must be fully committed to God! We must truly repent and change the course of our lives with God leading us.
2. That commitment and change of life begins with the willingness to allow the blood of Jesus to cleanse us of all of our sins. When we are baptized in faith into Christ, we are *"raised from the*

dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4)

This is all made possible because of the sacrifice of Jesus. He died, was buried, and was raised so that we too might die to self, be buried in water, and be raised to a new life through the powerful working of God. **(Colossians 2:12)** Jesus has provided the way...we must take it!

3. Once we have taken advantage of the great gift of a second chance, we must cling to the one who has provided that second chance... God our loving heavenly Father. **Psalms 63** is a psalm of David, and he speaks to his heartfelt desire to cling to God. *“O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My souls thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and early land where there is no water.” (Psalms 63:1)* Where is this land where there is no water? This is the land of sin and hopelessness. All of the disciples here this morning know that feeling of being trapped in sin, and without hope...yet God gives relief from that horrid place.
4. *“When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches, for you have been my help, and in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy. My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me.” (Psalms 63:6-8)* The salvation offered by God, the second chance of life through our repentance should cause us all to cling to God and allow that commitment to carry us through to the finish line. His strength to break the chains and keep them off should cause us to be ever mindful of His goodness, and if this is true about us then we will not have to worry about apathy or backsliding...we know just how bad things can be chained up by sin and that is not a place we will want to allow ourselves to go back to.

B. Learn to hate sin.

1. As a people who are constantly reminding ourselves to be as loving as humanly possible...I want to give us a place in which we can direct our hatred and that is in the direction of sin. Of course we should hate the wicked actions of those all around us, but we should first and foremost hate the sin that can so easily entangle us to the point that we are chained down by it.
2. There are many reasons why we should hate sin, and I think first and foremost is because of the effect that it has on us and our God. Sin causes us to be without hope. While living in the captivity of sin we have no bright future toward which to look, but all that remains for us is death and destruction. True hopelessness is a reality when it comes to those who are chained down by sin.
3. But even worse than what sin does to us is what sin does to our God. Sin hurts God to the point that He cannot even look at us...His face is turned away from us when we willfully decide to reject Him and His holy ways. **(Isaiah 59:2)** Think about that...God lovingly created us from nothing for only the purpose of fellowship with us, and yet we would reject that fellowship to follow some fleshly desire of our own?...How must that make God feel. Yet know that our sin is also the reason for which God sent His own Son to His death. God hates sin so much that He would have His own Son killed so that it might be erased from our lives...and we how often do we ignore these facts and continue on in our sin? How must that make God feel?
4. Obviously it pains God to no end, and that needs to become a pain that we feel when we make the choice to sin. It should cause us pain to know that we have caused God pain, and this should move us to make repentance truly real in our lives through learning real self control in our lives. We must weigh the results of sin against the results of sacrificing temporary pleasure. We must recognize that the temporary sufferings of this world are not even remotely comparable to the joy that awaits us if we will give it all up for God. **(Romans 8:18 & II Corinthians 4:16-18)**
5. Our temporary suffering is well worth the pleasure that it produces within the being of our God who sees that we are getting it! We are getting the idea of what it means to love someone else to our own temporary discomfort, and we are willing to go through such things because we know the good it is doing. **We must hate sin because we love our God so much.**

Making big changes in our lives as a result of true repentance is never an easy thing. Repentance means a complete doing away of that which has at some point brought us pleasure. This is never an easy thing to do, but we must recognize that moving forward so that we might grow mightily and prevail will only happen if we truly put away those heavy chains of sin that hold us down. The chains of sin are heavy, but the burden of our Lord is light. May we all break the chains of sins in our lives, so that we might move forward in glory for our great God.

PRAYER *Our Father in heaven...great and glorious is our name above all names, and worthy is Your name to be praised. Father, we are so thankful that You possess so great a power that the chains of our sin might be broken and that we might be set free to serve you all the days of our lives in Christ. We recognize that this deed does not come easily, and we pray that we might find that proper motivation knowing that You desire our holiness and that Satan is the great liar who offers peace when we will only ever find heartache. Help us to commit ourselves fully to Your will so that we might leave the paths of sin and darkness and only walk in the light. Help us to hate the sin that hurts You so much. Help us to break the chains and leave them behind as we move only forward. Thank you so much for the strength You provide. Thank you for the blood of Jesus that gives us forgiveness and a second chance at life. It is in His name we pray...amen.*