

“The Spiritual Oppression of Sin”
 Sermon for 21 September 2025
 Text: Romans 6:1-6

A little piece of Bible Trivia: Did you know that the earliest New Testament Documents (Paul’s letters to the Thessalonians) are found right next to the oldest New Testaments Documents (excluding the Revelations)?

Two noteworthy facts about homelessness: first of all thievery is rampant as well as the use of rape allegations to get one’s way on the street. Secondly, homelessness means that you cannot have, safely, or securely, personal possessions. Wearing jewelry can draw unwanted attention and robbery.

Handwriting which requires a skill set, pen and paper are apparently non-essentials in our paperless, texting/email typing age. I met my first adults prisoners who admitted to now knowing how to read handwriting on September 17th. So written communication has to be typed, or printed to reach the widest audience.

And, reasonably bright individuals have adopted the opinions that the Bible is full of contradictions, and untrustworthy as well as garbage/BS. No wonder people are drawn to paths, pagan or new age teachings of a spiritualist bent!

So it is refreshing to preach to a crowd that generally speaking have respect for the Bible, can read, write and think for themselves, who have personal property and own, or rent real estate. *You are folks, spiritually speaking, from whom the oppressive cloud of sin has been lifted!* You now inhabit an entirely different universe from those in jail, or who live amongst the homeless street people. Being “poor” has different meanings to different populations. I am not sure what it means to be able to read print, but to not write. I am intrigued by the neurological ramifications between learning, writing and memory functions. Learning on one’s own, hand-writing and thinking for oneself seem very connected and yet uncoupled by current trends in education. Surely one implication is that transcription, note taking, diaries, journaling and letters of correspondence have all taken a hit. Historical research which included hand-written sources has become increasingly esoteric—and frankly, out of reach for an increasing number of our fellow citizens. The Jewish kings were expected to write out the Torah by hand and to have their copy at ready in order to deliver on the demand for justice from their thrones.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Is verse one of Romans 6. That chapter is largely about obtaining freedom from the power of sin. Or, to put it another way, the chapter deals with how to break free from the oppressive power of sin—the powers of enticement and allurements and persuasiveness of sin which keep us in bondage. Isn’t it enough to know that we we have been forgiven of our sins, and that we no longer, being forgiven, or have to walk in shame and carry the burden of guilt which comes from our captivity to sin? We declare that the power of sin itself has been broken—it cannot coerce, compel or control us as it did in times past—***all through the grace, and mercy of God*** a result of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

If sin evokes grace, should we sin more to evoke more grace?! If you were consider this logic like that of a bored grammar school student (albeit it twisted!), it makes sense that if the goal is getting attention—being noticed, being important—then negative attention, which is secondary to positive attention, turned out to be more desirable than no attention at all! Juvenile, right? But

some teachers fall for it and cater to the disruptive class clown. Paul would take exception to this capitulation. It is foolish to generate grace by sinning. God's bountiful mercy needs no such provocation! ***Perish the thought! He might exclaim, or God forbid. How shall those who have died to sin, persist in sinning?*** They cannot, and do not. The oppressive power of sin has been broken—that is, it can no longer oppress us—we are freed.

If we were to attempt such a thing, we would nullify the power of our baptism in Christ. For to be **baptized into Christ is to be baptized into the death He died to sin**—once for all. It is impossible to live in sin and to be dead to sin at the same time. Hallelujah! Dead men tell no lies; in fact they don't do anything at all! **Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death.** But that is only the first half of the equation; here's the second half: **but that as like Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, then we, too, shall be raised up in the likeness of His resurrection and walk in newness of life as He also walks.** Both death and resurrection are tied to our baptism—we simulate both of them and it is in this sense that baptism is essential spiritually speaking. Before we can rise in Christ, we must die in Christ—we cannot inherit the one without the other. Walking in newness of life is living out our freedom from sin.

At this point in chapter six, verse 6, Paul takes, as it were, a step backwards, and writes: **Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him that the body of sin** (our old body! our former self—the person we used to be!) **might be destroyed, that hence forth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.** Sin in a saint is rendered inoperative. It is obsolete, timed out.

The temporality of sin is a marvelous doctrine! There is no sin in heaven, or in the inhabitants of heaven which would be our glorified selves! The deplorable, detestable, dreadful and devastating get left outside the door; they track nothing inside. The lust, the greed and the desire of sin are like so much barnyard muck own those boots. Indeed, there is no paralysis, decrepitude, bondage or captivity inside those gates except those voluntarily assumed out of gratitude and love for our Savior.

It is not only sin that has no dominion over us, beloved, it is also death. Death has no dominion over Jesus and therefore none over us who are saved in Him. **Rather we are alive to God through the Lord Jesus.** We are still in possession of our mortal bodies. We still have to exercise control over our bodies, and the members of our bodies. The lusts that dominated our former bodies can be stirred up, still be acted upon as if in seeming reality, but they are delusional—and they must be put down. We must choose not to act upon their impulses, or to pursue their vanity.

How does this occur? This great exchange of allegiance, this transference of identity—from our identity in Adam, an identity in sin, death, decay and corruption to our new identity in Christ? By the power of partaking of Christ's nature, or participation in Christ's divine nature through faith—which is called **believing in Christ, of in His Name, or trusting on His finished work of salvation.** This transformative identification between the believer and the Lord Jesus Christ forms by the power of God, or of the Holy Spirit, a new spiritual alliance as well as a new identity: **He who believes on Me, shall not perish but shall inherit eternal life.** (John 3:16) By alliance the believer comes into union with Christ and the new identity, acquired in the process, is that of a born-again sinner, a new creature/new creation, spiritual adoption—one has become a **child of God—someone born from above, spiritually, and not of the blood, or flesh, or of the will of man, John 1 expounds this truth:**

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, 13 who were [a]born, not of [b]blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

The Word Made Flesh

14 And the Word became flesh, and [c]dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of [d]the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 John *testified about Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me [e]has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’”¹

It takes an act of God, a divine prerogative, to **declare us righteous**, to create an universe and to change our identity! Sin entered the world through one man’s transgression (Adam’s) and now in a wonderful act of glorious reversal and of identification, **Christ’s one righteous act** (dying on the cross to bear the penalty of our sin!) **resulted in justification and life for all people**. (Romans 5:18) And only God could do, and did do that very thing. This reversal through union by faith with Christ ends sin’s dominion in that believer. This occurs on a spiritual level it is not merely symbolic—only symbolic—it is a shift in actuality. What drives this home in the overriding of the lusts of the flesh, case by case, moment by moment. The passionate desires, the lusts of the flesh gradually lose their compulsory power, to direct, or even affect our lives—God shifts our lane from sinning always, compulsively to the lane of soul liberty where we sadly can and do sin, by choice, in a blatant misuse of our blood-bought liberty.

Whereas death reigned before in our disobedience and in the sins that result from that disobedience. . . or rebellion, revolt, treachery and treason. Those are strong, potent words, I know. Unloving, ungrateful and selfish are softer terms but the truly repentant are much more comfortable with the first set of mental states and attitudes. Unconditional repentance comes more easily to those who are aware of the wicked of sin and who have internalized that our sin pains God, hurt his heart. Sin is a heart-breaking business, beloved, but the hurt starts with God and then extends to our family, friends and community.

God’s ways are righteousness, justification, freedom and life. When we walk in His ways, we walk in forgiveness, patience, mercy, love, truth, faith and power! We relate to sin on the outside because sin on the inside has been eliminated—sin on the inside is incompatible with our identity in Christ. So our life challenge becomes that of aligning ourselves with Christ’s beauty, love, truth and, yes, moral perfection. To be in union with Christ is to be growing in Christlikeness—but it is a transformation rather than an imitation we are looking for.

Do you remember my saying, *You are folks, spiritually speaking, from whom the oppressive cloud of sin has been lifted!* in my introduction to this sermon? I want to reflect on that with you, given the assassination of Charlie Kirk on 12 September 2025. Charlie was someone who was very focused on “making heaven” crowded.” Lifting the cloud of sin’s oppression is preparatory to filling up heaven! It has happened to all who call themselves “saved” and now would be a very good time to re-enlist in building the kingdom of God. Things just aren’t good out there in the world—the violence, murder and the constant drumbeat of hatred really increase the cloud cover.

¹Footnotes

- a. John 1:13 Or *begotten*
- b. John 1:13 Lit *bloods*
- c. John 1:14 Or *tabernacled*; i.e. lived temporarily
- d. John 1:14 Or *unique, only one of His kind*
- e. John 1:15 Lit *has become before me*

We can lean in, or we can run for cover. It's close to "fight, or flight" time and there's a certain grimness to the hour. We, Christians, can't be partisans of the gloom and we can lift the cloud of sin's oppression whenever, however and wherever we are.

- You know how the power of sin is broken—I just explained it to you. Jesus died to sin so that all might enter into that death and be set free from sin, death and the dominion of darkness. Have you told anybody?
- You know that by the power of God, we who are born-again have been transformed from our likeness unto Adam to our likeness unto Christ. Are you planning to tell anybody?
- You know that God would have us walk in righteousness, justice, love and peace. Have you shared this glorious trajectory with someone, anyone? Do you plan to?
- You know the disciples were always bringing people to Jesus (yes, the lame, halt and blind; those who are oppressed by the devil, the desperately poor and the needy). Have you considered that you might be the only "Jesus" those who need Him might ever run into? Will you live them, pray for them, or bless them? When . . . the time is short.

If we had but time enough, and opportunity, Lord, what would we do?

Amen.