

Sin's master, Righteousness' slave

Text: [Genesis 4:7 HCSB](#) If you do right, won't you be accepted? But if you do not do right, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must master it."

We need to understand that we are in a spiritual battle. The devil (who is called at times our accuser) wants to tear us apart, remove our joy and make us spiritually powerless. Adonai, in His sovereignty uses the devil's evil desires to train us and perfect us.

- [Job 1:8-12 HCSB](#) Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? No one else on earth is like him, a man of perfect integrity, who fears God and turns away from evil." (9) Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing? (10) Haven't You placed a hedge around him, his household, and everything he owns? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions are spread out in the land. (11) But stretch out Your hand and strike everything he owns, and he will surely curse You to Your face." (12) "Very well," the LORD told Satan, "everything he owns is in your power. However, you must not lay a hand on Job *himself*." So Satan went out from the LORD's presence.
- [Job 2:3-6 HCSB](#) Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? No one else on earth is like him, a man of perfect integrity, who fears God and turns away from evil. He still retains his integrity, even though you incited Me against him, to destroy him without just cause." (4) "Skin for skin!" Satan answered the LORD. "A man will give up everything he owns in exchange for his life. (5) But stretch out Your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse You to Your face." (6) "Very well," the LORD told Satan, "he is in your power; only spare his life."

Job was not the only man to have to go through this process (though his may be one of the most extreme cases). The Apostle Peter also had to go through it.

- [Luke 22:31 HCSB](#) "Simon, Simon, look out! Satan has asked to sift you like wheat.

Seeing the process repeated in the Old and the New Covenants over a span of thousands of years indicates that it is a universal one. The devil would like to put all of us through this grinder. But take heart. Note that both came out on the other side of the experience better, humbler men.

Satan's accusations are not all we have to face. There are demonic forces that surround us with very real powers to afflict and oppress.

- [Ephesians 6:12 HCSB](#) For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens.

In order for us to be successful in our battles with these spiritual forces, we need to be well armored. But our protection does not consist of shrines, votive candles or voodoo dolls. We cannot battle spiritual forces with physical objects. Instead, we use spiritual states and conditions.

- [Ephesians 6:11-17 HCSB](#) Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the tactics of the Devil. (12) For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens. (13) This is why you must take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared

everything, to take your stand. (14) Stand, therefore, with truth like a belt around your waist, righteousness like armor on your chest, (15) and your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace. (16) In every situation take the shield of faith, and with it you will be able to extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one. (17) Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word.

Note: Of the six elements comprising the believer's spiritual armor, the only offensive weapon we have available is the Word of God. It is referred to as the sword of the Spirit. When we use Scripture in battling unrighteousness, hypocrisy and heresy, we make available to the Spirit the only thing the devil and his cohorts actually fear.

So how do we master sin? First, attitude has a lot to do with it. Allow me to share 10 essential attitudes we need to maintain in order to build godly character.

- **Ephesians 4:30-32 HCSB** And don't grieve God's Holy Spirit, who sealed you for the day of redemption. (31) All bitterness, anger and wrath, (*attitudes which lead to...*) insult and slander must be removed from you, along with all wickedness. (32) And be kind and compassionate to one another, (*attitudes which lead to...*) forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.
- **James 1:14-15 HCSB** But each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desires (*attitudes*). (15) Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death.

We need to get rid of bitterness, anger, wrath and all evil desires. We need to have (1) kind, (2) compassionate spirits. However, none of these steps are possible without a humble attitude. Bitterness, anger and wrath come when pride tells us we have been done wrong – that we deserve better. Kindness and compassion come when we consider others better than ourselves. Besides we cannot grow without (3) humility. Growth and maturation require that we be open to instruction – (4) teachable.

- **1 Peter 5:5-6 HCSB** Likewise, you younger men, be subject to the elders. And all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because **God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble**. (6) Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you in due time,

Further, we must develop (5) honesty and (6) openness about our sins. We need to confess our sins when we commit them. Cain failed to confess his sin when he gave God his second best and he ended up murdering his brother. Like many today, Cain had an outward, surface religiosity that was not grounded in a heartfelt humility. He wanted a relationship with God but on his own terms. He wanted God to accept his works, validating his view of his own self-worth. When God deemed those works to be inappropriate, Cain reacted with bitterness. He was given a chance to correct his ways, but instead allowed that root of bitterness to grow into jealous rage that drove him to fratricide. He failed again when God confronted him over the murder and ended up exiled and marked. David, on the other hand, failed to confess his sins immediately and ended up murdering and covering it up. However, when confronted, he confessed his sin and though burnt, he came through the fire.

- **2 Samuel 12:13 HCSB** David responded to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Then Nathan replied to David, "The LORD has taken away your sin; you will not die.

We need to develop (7) godly grief. I guess you could say that Cain got his stubborn attitude honestly. His parents Adam and Eve also did not repent and ask for

forgiveness when confronted about their sin. They failed to take personal responsibility for their decision. Instead, they tried to shift the blame to someone else. In fact, Adam tried to blame GOD for his sin saying, “the woman YOU gave me.” We need to develop an attitude of godly grief. Godly grief produces a repentance not to be regretted and leading to salvation, but worldly grief produces death.

- [2 Corinthians 7:10 HCSB \(10\)](#) For godly grief produces a repentance not to be regretted and leading to salvation, but worldly grief produces death.

We also need to be (8) obedient. We need to act on what we know. Fear of the holiness of God and its ensuing consequences for sinners is insufficient. It’s not enough to just say you’re sorry and not actually quit doing what’s wrong. It’s not enough to just say you fear God and not actually change. Talk is cheap. True godly grief will actually lead to long term change. James says:

- [James 2:19-20 HCSB](#) You believe that God is one; you do well. The demons also believe--and they shudder. [\(20\)](#) Foolish man! Are you willing to learn that faith without works is useless?

The demons also believe, and they shudder, yet they remain demons.

We need to be (9) proactive about sin. We need to nip it in the bud. It would have been a lot easier for Cain to simply deal with his attitude and give of his best fruit. Dealing with fratricide was much more difficult - not only the consequences but also the hardening of his heart. Besides the consequences, besides the hardening of the heart there is a third threat. Sin can sometimes come at you sideways. David yielded to sloth and ended up in adultery and murder. We must (10) discipline EVERY aspect of our lives – not allowing sin any toe-hold in our lives.

- [Ephesians 4:27 HCSB](#) and don't give the Devil an opportunity.
- [1 Peter 5:8 HCSB](#) Be sober! Be on the alert! Your adversary the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.

After all, the Bible agrees that the best defense is a good offense.

- [Ephesians 5:11 HCSB](#) Don't participate in the fruitless works of darkness, but instead, expose them.

If you are serious about mastering your *yetzer hara* (your innate sin nature, your natural predilection for sin), there is one passage in the Scriptures that is a must-read. Romans chapter 6.

The Rationale for Sanctification (6:1-23)

1. Union with Christ (6:1-14)

a. The Divine Reckoning (6:1-10)

b. The Believer’s Reckoning (6:11)

c. The Believer’s Responsibility (6:12-14)

2. Enslavement to Righteousness (6:15-23)

In Romans 6, Paul gives us some in depth teaching on the matter of mastering sin in a systematic way. In verse 1-23, he gives us the rationale for sanctification. Sanctification and justification are two very important words with which every believer to be familiar. Sanctification follows justification. “Justification” describes how our sins are completely forgiven in Christ. “Sanctification” is the word we use to identify the process by which the Holy Spirit makes us more like Christ in all that we do, think, and desire.

- [Philippians 2:12-13 HCSB \(12\)](#) So then, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. (13) For it is God who is working in you, *enabling you* both to will and to act for His good purpose.

Notice that in Philippians 2 Paul says that we are to “work out” our salvation. He does not say “work for” our salvation. Salvation cannot be earned. Instead, he says “work out” - like kneading yeast throughout a lump of dough. When we submit to the Messiah as our Savior and King, we are saved. We are adopted into the family of God and have obtained sure passage to heaven. But then we need to start living like it.

- [Ephesians 2:8-10 HCSB](#) For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift-- (9) not from works, so that no one can boast. (10) For we are His creation--created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them.

Everyone likes to stop at verse 9, but we need to go on to verse 10. Out of gratitude, we need to begin doing whatever we can to make our lives resemble the lives of children of the Most High. However, though we are to “work out” our salvation, we recognize that it is God who is empowering the process. True sanctification is impossible apart from the atoning work of Christ on the cross because only after our sins are forgiven and we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’s empowering presence can we begin to lead a holy life.

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This is why Paul begins his rationale for the sanctification of the believer with a discussion of our union with Christ in the first 14 verses. In the first 10 verses, he says that God considers us joined with Christ – joined in both His death and resurrection. So Paul states in verse 11 that we need to own that concept.

- [Romans 6:11 HCSB](#) So, you too consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

“You too consider yourselves...” Paul says. How should we consider ourselves? In a world enamored with the development of positive self-image, this should be a fascinating answer. Paul gives us four elements of a healthy self-image. Paul says we need to consider ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Then (because Paul always goes straight to the implications of theology), he tells us what that looks like in day to day life. He tells us what responsibility comes with God’s gift of justification. He begins with a very blunt statement.

- [Romans 6:12-13 HCSB](#) Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires. (13) And do not offer any parts of it to sin as weapons for unrighteousness. But as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness.

We need to consider ourselves “weapons for righteousness!” What a term! Most people consider righteousness, holiness, to be a passive comfortable affair. Paul describes our new condition as becoming weapons! Think of it like martial artists do. They consider their bodies weapons and they spend a great amount of time training, disciplining and conditioning their bodies. They invest a great amount of time developing their skills so that in the day of battle they’ll be ready. Remember that passage in Ephesians about the armor? Listen to it again.

- [Ephesians 6:13 HCSB](#) This is why you must take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand.

There is a titanic struggle going on. It is a global battle for the spirits and souls of mankind. Whether we like it or not, whether we even know it or not, we are (each and every one of us) soldiers on the battlefield. There are only two armies: the forces of darkness and unrighteousness and the forces of light and righteousness. Some of us are passive. Some of us are cowardly. Some of us are reluctantly marching forward. Some of us are charging forward swinging our swords. So we each must decide. We are all weapons. We must not only decide which camp we will defend but also how rusty or sharp we will be. Let’s get back to Romans 6.

- [Romans 6:14-15 HCSB](#) For sin will not rule over you, because you are not under law but under grace. (15) What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Absolutely not!

In a phrase reminiscent of Hashem’s statement that Cain could master sin, Paul declared that sin will not rule over us **BECAUSE** we are not under law but under grace. Modern Christianity talks a lot about grace, but they use it in a manner that gives us the sense that God cuts us slack now. He looks the other way when we sin. Paul knows this is a shocking statement to the Romans. He says “What then? You were expecting something different?” Grace is not an excuse to sin. Grace empowers us to **OVERCOME** sin. But what is our part? We know how God reckons us. How should we reckon things? What should our view of ourselves be? Paul continues by saying we should consider ourselves not merely freed from the shackles of sin but bondslaves of righteousness!

- [Romans 6:16-20 HCSB](#) Do you not know that if you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of that one you obey--either of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness? (17) But thank God that, although you used to be slaves of sin, you obeyed from the heart that pattern of teaching you were entrusted to, (18) and having been liberated from sin, you became enslaved to

righteousness. (19) I am using a human analogy because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you offered the parts of yourselves as slaves to moral impurity, and to greater and greater lawlessness, so now offer them as slaves to righteousness, which results in sanctification. (20) For when you were slaves of sin, you were free from allegiance to righteousness.

Last, we should consider the rewards.

- **Romans 6:21-23 HCSB** And what fruit was produced then from the things you are now ashamed of? For the end of those things is death. (22) But now, since you have been liberated from sin and become enslaved to God, you have your fruit, which results in sanctification--and the end is eternal life! (23) For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- **Lucifer lost heaven and gained future imprisonment in the Lake of Fire by choosing darkness.**
- **Adam and Eve brought death and the yetzer hara upon us all by choosing the darkness.**
- **Cain brought the first murder into the world and was exiled by choosing the darkness.**
- **David brought the death of his baby, the rape of his daughter, the murder of one of his sons by another, the rebellion and attempted assassination by a son and constant warfare – even after he confessed and repented of his sins!**

On the other hand:

- **Noah gained his family's survival and the continued existence of humanity by obeying.**
- **Abraham gained the Promised Land by obeying.**
- **Moses gained the freedom of our people by obeying.**
- **Christ gained our salvation and adoption into the family of God by obeying.**

So which will you choose to be: sin's slave or righteousness' slave?