

## **“Sanctification” Pt 2**

### **Romans - the Gospel of God**

Romans 6:11-23

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**Jeff:** Let's pray. Father, thank You for the day and for the blessing of life in Christ. Thank You, Father, for the fellowship we have one to another. And thank You, Father, for the Lord Jesus Christ and for the deposit of the Holy Spirit given to us so that we might not only know and experience the great riches that are in Jesus Christ, but so that we might live and move and have our being, our Christian experience, united to You. And Father, we pray that You will deepen our understanding of that, deepen our walk in the faith. We pray that You'll deepen our knowledge. And Lord, we ask that You'll do this often in the context of our local churches. And Father, we pray that You would gather us together in a place like this and encourage our hearts mutually, Lord, as we seek to gather together during the week and feed upon Your word.

We ask, Lord, that You'll bless us, but not only us. We pray that You'll be with those who can no longer be with us. And certainly we pray for Bruce and for his leadership over this Bible study for many years, and for his solid example in the Christian faith. Father, thank You also for his example of growing old with courage and boldness. And Lord, we just ask that You'd continue to minister to him and to his wife.

Father, we certainly pray for Kevin. And Lord, as we have opportunities we pray, Lord, that we might think about him, that we might pray for him, and certainly that we might reach out to him. And Father, we ask that his experience in dying would be not only meaningful to him but also to us as well.

Father, we ask that Your hand would be upon us as we study Your word. And Lord, we pray that You will feed our minds on the book of Romans. We pray it in Christ's precious name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** All right. We did not get through all of our chapter the last time around, at least all of the section that we were going to look at, so I'm going to start a few verses back. I'm going to start us up in Romans chapter 6. I would like us to look at verses 11-23 today. Don, do you have that quickly and easily?

**Don Maurer:** Yes.

**Jeff:** Why don't you read for us verses 11-23, please?

**Don:** Okay. *“Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*

*“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.*

## **“Sanctification” Pt 2**

*“I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.*

*“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

This is the word of the Lord.

**Brave Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Transcriber’s Note:** NKJV.

**Jeff:** All right. Let me start off with a brief explanation of what I think is a good summary of the gospel topic called “gospel grammar.” When you think about a gospel grammar you think about indicatives and you think about imperatives.

An indicative tells you the state of things. An imperative gives you a command. Now when you think about the gospel you can think about it visually in terms of a pyramid. That is to say, the indicatives are the foundation; that is, God did something for us, right? God in our sinfulness sent His only-begotten Son into the world to live the life that we could not live, to die the death that we would not want to die, to be raised to life that we might be raised in Him, and so on. These are the indicatives of God. They form the foundation of the pyramid. Those are the things that God has done.

The top of the pyramid is the imperatives. Now why is it that they are at the top of the pyramid? Well if you inverted this, and say that the imperatives are down here as the foundation, you’d be starting with works.

**Ted Wood:** Yeah.

**Jeff:** And that would be an uncertain foundation. The foundation is the indicative, and it leads to the imperative. That’s what we’ve been seeing in the book of Romans. In the book of romans we’ve been learning that we are sinners and that we need a Savior. God supplied that Savior.

And now we’re learning about the imperatives. We’re now transitioning to sanctification. In other words you can put it in the statement that God puts it to us in the Old Testament and sometimes in the New: that is, “I am your God; you are My people.” That phrase “I will be your God and you will be My people” is a good summary of the indicatives and the imperatives. The indicative is “I will be your God”; the imperative is “you will be My people; this is how you will be My people.”

So that’s where we are in terms of the outlay of the book of Romans. And we are in chapter 6 which is thinking about the chapter on sanctification and thinking about imperatives. And what I want us to do as we come to this last portion of Romans chapter 6 is to think in terms of the exhortation. I want us to think about the explanation that we’re given here because there is a little bit of a wrinkle. And one wonders what Paul is saying. There’s an explanation to what he’s saying given by him. And then there’s an illustration here. So I want us to think about those things.

First of all let’s look at the exhortation that we find in the text. And let me start by asking a really basic question because we’re going to see three exhortations here. The first thing is: what does exhortation mean? What does it mean to exhort someone? Well, I think we have a tendency to think that it means to encourage. And we are right if we think in that direction; it does mean to encourage.

## “Sanctification” Pt 2

And I think the Greek word is awfully helpful at this point; it’s the word *paracoleo*. It’s made up of two words: *para* the preposition, and *coleo* a verb—“I call.” So the idea is that I call alongside.

Now when we encourage someone we are encouraging them to come alongside of us and stand with us. And I think that’s such a great image, and it’s often used in the Scriptures. And I think that we’ve got to get our minds around the idea that we’re not calling someone to stand where we are because we’re so wonderful. But we’re calling people to stand where we are because we stand in Christ.

I think this is the basic task of any minister. When he calls people by his preaching to stand he is calling them to stand, to take their stand in Jesus Christ along with other believers, to stand with other believers.

You know, I would say this to you, and I mean this with all sincerity. This is why it’s so wonderful to be a part of a church family, because we’ve just been talking about Kevin. And Kevin needs to be surrounded by his church family, and don’t we all as we near the end of our lives? As we near the end of our lives we need to be surrounded by the church family. And Ted was absolutely 100% correct. When we begin to enter into those older years and we begin to fail, and people see us less and we’re more at home than we were before, and in fact we find that we are now shut in, we are often neglected; people are often forgotten when that happens. And it’s a reminder to us that we need to be a church no matter what stage of life we’re in. And I just think those things are important for us to remember. So when we call each other to stand, we’re calling each other to stand in Christ.

Now there are three things by way of exhortation that this text offers us—three things. First of all, he says that we need to reckon what needs reckoning. Now I talked to you about this idea of reckoning last time. I said that you can use the word. Paul does, translations do. You can use the word “reckon”; you can use the word “consider”; you can use the word “impute.” All of these words do the duty of translating the word *logizomai*.”

What is it? Well, it’s an accounting reference. And I talked to you the last time about reckoning to one’s account. For instance, that’s the idea of what we call double imputation. Double imputation is when my sins are reckoned to Christ, imputed to His account. And His righteousness is then reckoned to my account, to me; it’s imputed to me. So that’s the idea of a double imputation or a double reckoning.

But he’s talking about us reckoning or considering something absolutely true and steadfast. Let me give you an example of how we do this, and we even do it unconsciously. And maybe this is more autobiographical than it is anything else.

But I’ll never forget it. Maybe I should say it this way first. No, I’ll give you the illustration first because I don’t know if this comes with a slide or not; I can’t remember. (*Laughter*) But I’ll never forget that I was in the Meadville Mall; I’d just graduated. And I was coming out of the bookstore at eighteen years old. I was walking down the mall, and over to my left, sitting in the middle of the mall, was an old man. And his name was Mr. Givens. And he was a literature professor, an English professor when I was in high school.

And he as the most intimidating man I had ever met in my entire life. He was tall, he was thin, he was bony. And he just had that Ichabod Crane kind of look to him; he was terrifying. (*Laughter*) And he was sitting there.

## “Sanctification” Pt 2

And I’m thinking; I catch him out of the corner of my eye. And I’m thinking, Please don’t see me; please don’t see me; please don’t see me! And he says, “Mr. Stivason!” *(Laughter)* And I thought: oh, man! And this is what he did.

Now you ought to know that this guy would hit you! *(Laughter)* In school this guy would hurt you! *(Laughter)* He was of the old school kind of thing. So I watched him and he would hit people. Later on he told me this story. He smacked a kid over the head with a ream of paper. The kid’s nose started bleeding.

**Don:** Oh, my!

**Jeff:** He immediately dismissed him from his classroom and told him, “Do not get blood on the door on the way out.” *(Laughter)* He said, “They came to me from the office and said, ‘We can’t get his nose to stop bleeding.’”

So he said, “I went down to the nurse’s station and I told him, ‘You stop your sniveling!’” And he said that it cleared right up. *(Laughter)* He said, “And here it is, Jeff: I had his parents as my students. So I called them up and I told them just what their son had done and what I had done. And they said, ‘Okay, Mr. Givens; that sounds good, Mr. Givens.’” This was the kind of guy he was.

**Ted:** Those were the good old days. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** Yeah. So “Mr. Stivason! Come!” And I said, “Man, here it comes.”

This man had absolutely no authority over me. But I considered, I reckoned, my mind reckoned that this man still had authority over me. I could have kept on walking. I see him, right? No; in my mind I had reckoned that his authority was true! And so I immediately went over and sat down, and he said to me, “Well, how are ya?” *(Laughter)*

And that started an enormous friendship. I found out that he was a believer. I had a Bible study at his house; it was really wonderful. But anyway, I digress. My point is that he had absolutely no authority over me, but I reckoned it so. And so I submitted to his authority.

And Paul is saying, consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to Christ. And this is so powerful because we so often reckon ourselves alive to sin and dead to God. We so often reckon ourselves in the wrong direction.

I want to tell you how this practically works out. I was counseling a man who was struggling with pornography. And he was so steeped in pornography that at one point I asked him. I said, “Why are you saying yes?”

And this is what he said to me. He said, “I feel like I owe it.”

And I stopped and I said to him, “Do you realize what you just said to me? You said to me that you personified porn. You made it out to be your master. And you just told me you owe it. Now either you’re not a believer and sin is your master, or you have been sinning so much lately and grieving the Spirit so much lately that you are speaking in the language of slavery. And I don’t know which it is.” He was either clearly unsaved, or he had not understood this whole idea of reckoning himself dead to sin. And his patterns of life had brought him under sin’s control again, and he was even talking that way. And so consider yourselves dead—Yes?

**Ted:** Could we unpack that a bit?

**Jeff:** Yeah, let’s unpack it a bit.

**Ted:** It’s a powerful illustration.

**Jeff:** Go ahead.

**Ted:** I was wondering what he meant by “owe.” I would think that’s an odd way to say it. I’m just thinking that it strikes me that to persist in watching porn is like an addiction, and an

## “Sanctification” Pt 2

addiction promises life. So you can say, “I feel I can live without it,” like the person who says he can live without drugs, right?

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** Or body building, or anything. I mean, I just don’t know why he would say that; that’s an odd way to describe it.

**Jeff:** It is.

**Ted:** It would almost be like saying that we know we were stuck in a sin, but we think that sin gives us life. And that is simply not true; it gives us death. I’m sorry.

**Jeff:** No, I think that’s really good. I mean, I’ve never heard anything close to that, except for when I was first in the ministry. I was counseling a girl who had come out of a situation where her mom had married another man. And this man had molested her and her sister. And they ran away in the night and they ended up living with another woman. So she was now dealing with all these problems as a result of that.

But what she told me—and this is why I bring this up—was because I asked her. I said, “This is not to impugn you or anything. But you guys were teenagers at the time you ran away.” And I said, “What made you stay so long?”

And she said, “He had us convinced that we owed it.” And so that was the only other time that I heard something like that. But I thought to myself that sin is so deceptive. And in her case he was so deceptive that he had her convinced that she was in service to him. And here this guy spoke that same kind of a language, like he was in service to it.

**Ted:** I was wondering, owing for what? What did she owe him? And it had to be that he was giving her a life of something. She was getting something in return.

**Jeff:** Taken into the family.

**Ted:** She was indebted.

**Jeff:** Right, indebted; that’s right. But you know, the language aside, I think this is one of those things that we can slip into. And we’re going to find and we are going to be reminded again that we are not under sin’s dominion. The power of sin that held us is broken and we’re freed. But the trouble is that we often don’t live like that.

I think in some ways it’s an overused illustration, but nonetheless good, and that is this. When Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation into effect, which wasn’t the first one—I think there were multiple emancipation proclamations—the idea was that even though these documents had been signed and declared to be true, that these slaves were no longer slaves, many of those slaves in the South continued to live like they were slaves.

Now that’s an over-simplification, but I think in some ways that it still helps us to think about our own condition. We are declared free in Jesus Christ. And yet sometimes we still live as if we’re in slavery to a particular sin. Yes, Don.

**Don:** Jeff, did your professor repent of hitting that student over the head with a ream of paper since he was a believer?

**Jeff:** No, he owed it to him. *(Laughter)* No, I think he saw himself as old school and doling out discipline in the Hebrews 12 vain.

**Don:** Okay.

**Jeff:** Yeah, I’m pretty sure that’s the case. This guy would invite my wife and I over for dinner. He and his wife never had children. It was actually kind of a strange thing because although I was terrified of this guy at school, we certainly became his adopted grandchildren. And so we were over at his house one day, and this was the first time this had ever happened.

## “Sanctification” Pt 2

And the four of us were sitting around talking. And he just arose from his chair and wished us all a good night and walked out. And Mrs. Given said, “Well, that’s your cue to leave.” (*Laughter*)

Anyway, the second thing that we are to reckon is that we are to offer the right thing. I want you to think about what he says. He says this: “*Do not present your bodies to sin as instruments of unrighteousness. But present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life.*”

**Transcriber’s Note:** ESV.

**Jeff:** Now I want you to think about that for a minute. “*Do not offer your bodies to sin as instruments of unrighteousness.*” You know, I guess that one of the things that I think about is this, and I’m going to take you through the logic of this. But one of the things that I think about when I think about this is this; let me take you through the logic. Here’s the logic and then I’ll say it.

The logic is that we are free from sin’s power. We are therefore to consider ourselves alive to God. You need not offer yourself to sin. You ought to offer yourself to God.

Now what does that mean? What’s the payoff of that? The payoff of that is that at the point of temptation you’re able to say no. That’s the payoff of that logic of that sort of thinking.

So when he says, “*Do not present yourselves to sin as instruments of unrighteousness,*” he is saying that when sin comes to you—because notice that he is personifying it—don’t offer yourselves to sin as if it were your master, as an instrument of unrighteousness. Let’s personify it. Therefore when sin comes to you and calls you, you are able to say no.

OI want you to think about the example in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* for just a minute. You remember that after Christian leaves the House of Interpreter that he goes into the valley. When he gets down into the valley he meets Apollyon. And Apollyon basically tells him, “You need to get home to the City of Destruction. You’ve been an unfaithful servant, and it’s time for you to go home.” That’s what he tells him.

And Christian says to him, “I left you when I left the City of Destruction. You are no longer my master.” And that’s a great illustration when whatever sin we struggle with meets us along the way. It says to us, “Come home to the City of Destruction.” And it’s our obligation to say, “I left you a long time ago.”

And I want you to see this for a second. This is what is called man’s fourfold state. You get this in Augustine; you get it in Thomas Boston. But this is really Biblical. It’s often put in the Latin, but here it is in the English.

I’ll go through this in just a second. But the first one is “able not to sin.” Able not to sin, not able not to sin, able to sin and able not to sin, and not able to sin. That’s man’s fourfold state.

Now let me tell you where you find man’s state in each one of those. The first one—able not to sin—is in the Garden. That is in the garden when Adam is created prior to the Fall; he is able not to sin.

Now after he falls into sin, man’s condition is “not able not to sin.” That is a man enslaved to the power of sin—not able not to sin. That’s unregenerate man in post-Fall Adam, okay?

Then after one is converted to Christ one is able to sin or able not to sin. And that’s where we are in our discussion of Romans 6. You are still able to sin. There is still a possibility that you will present your body as an instrument of unrighteousness to sin. But you are also able not to sin because you are free from its power. And therefore—this is what we were just saying—able to say no to temptation.

## “Sanctification” Pt 2

And then in glory, after you’re dead, you will not be able to sin—not able to sin. Won’t that be a great day?

**Mike Davis:** Amen.

**Jeff:** A fantastic day when we put sin down. So that’s man’s fourfold state. If we are believers then we live in that third state: able to sin and able not to sin. But the great thing about it is that you see the transition from “not able not to sin” to “able to sin, able not to sin.” That is to say, you’ve been freed from its power.

Let me give you one more *Pilgrim’s Progress* illustration. This is where both Christian and Faithful get themselves into trouble with Giant Despair for sleeping on his ground. And they get themselves thrown into Doubting Castle, and there they languish for three days. And they languish for three days before they remember the promise of God. And that idea of languishing in our sins, contemplating the worst type of sins before we remember the promise of God, is illustrative of this whole idea of “able to sin, able not to sin.”

And how is it that one emerges from sin? Well in this particular account I think it’s very simple: they remember the promise of God. And I think it’s as easy as that. And what I mean by that is that the Holy Spirit lives in you and brings your life into conformity with His word. And though you are able to sin, and sometimes you do sin, the Holy Spirit is always drawing you to the holiness of God’s word, His standard of conformity to it.

And I guess the point that I’m making is this: there’s nothing magic about this. Have you ever counseled someone who has been in sin? And you’re frustrated because there’s absolutely nothing that you can say to get them to stop their behavior. And you and I know that it is absolutely 100% true that there is no magic bullet. There is nothing that you can say or do that will magically get them to stop. But what has to happen is, they have to say no to temptation. They have to say no, because sin no longer has dominion over them. They have to recognize that they have the ability to say no. And they have to say no; it’s that easy. And it’s that difficult at the same time, because it is difficult. Yes?

**David Miller:** I want to share something a friend said, maybe a nugget. He said that before the temptation gets to where you have to say yes or no, you can sense it coming. And as soon as you sense it coming, go to your knees because that’s where the power is. And the struggle will end before you get to the point where you have to answer it.

**Jeff:** Yes. Yeah; I mean, turning to the Lord in those times of temptation is the place to go. I think there are a number of things that you can say. None of them are magic bullets; you have to depend on the Lord for that deliverance.

But for instance one of the things that you can say is this. You can say that sin is not a creative force. My one elder says this to me all the time. Sin is not creative; it’s not imaginative. The paths that a person will go down, if they go down a path of sin, is a predictable pattern. In other words, all you have to do is read the Old Testament and see where any particular sin as listed in the Ten Commandments leads. And that’s where it will lead in the New Testament as well. It’s not creative; it’s very predictable. In other words, unfaithfulness to a spouse, hatred of others, a life of thievery, all of those things are very predictable. They have very predictable outcomes; no surprises.

He, following C.S. Lewis, says that the unpredictable thing is love. Love—the virtues of the Spirit, life in Jesus Christ and what it produces in us—that’s imaginative, that’s creative. It’s often surprising not only to others, but to us. Sometimes the way we handle people who we

## ***“Sanctification” Pt 2***

would rather not talk to at all is surprising, right? Sometimes that’s more surprising to ourselves than it is to others.

So to say yes to sin is to submit to an old master; that’s the idea. Third, (and this is under this idea of reckoning), we are to receive the motivation that God provides; that is, we are no longer under sin’s condemnation. And if we’re no longer under sin’s condemnation then sin no longer has dominion over us. That is to say, it’s power has been broken. And we’ve been saying that quite a bit. But Paul says it quite a bit. And I think it’s important for us to learn, to get it into our heads.

So now there’s the explanation; this is in verse 15. Notice this; this comes out of verse 14. Take a look at verse 14. *“For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”*

I want you to notice one thing. Compare verse 14 with verse 12. *“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body.”* So let it not reign. Look at verse 14 again: *“For sin will have no dominion over you.”* Don’t let it reign because it doesn’t have dominion; that’s the idea.

Now he says this in verse 14. But look at what he says in verse 15. *“What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?”* In other words, let me be clear about this. If you’re thinking that because grace abounds that we ought to go on sinning because we can never catch up to grace, that’s not what I’m saying. He says that you have missed the point. In other words, your glass is always going to be fuller of grace than it is towards sin because grace is always going to cover your sin. But if you conclude from that that you can go on sinning, you’ve misunderstood what I just said. What he’s saying is that we ought not to go on sinning even though grace abounds because grace enables us to mortify sin in ourselves, to kill sin in us. That’s the idea.

So three things I want you to notice here. Since we are not under law, sin will not have dominion. So do not let it reign; that’s the idea. Second, the one we obey is our master. This is very clear from what he says; that’s the battle of Apollyon. And third, I am of a different mold.

Now I want you to see this; this is in verse 17. Now this is powerful stuff. Verse 17; he says: *“But thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,”* or *“to which you were delivered.”*

Now I want you to think about that for just a minute. He says that you have become obedient to the standard to which you were delivered. Now that idea of being delivered or committed is in the passive voice, which means that this happens to us. We didn’t do it ourselves; we didn’t do it to ourselves; it was done to us. We were delivered into a particular mold. And the language here is just that. You were poured into a mold, a form of teaching, a type of teaching.

And what type of teaching is this? It’s a cruciform type; it’s a Christlike type of teaching—that is to say, the death and resurrection of Christ. It’s where he started. If you died with Christ you are alive with Christ.

And what he’s saying is this, and here’s the beautiful thing about it. What he’s saying is this. He’s saying that you need to understand if you think about it in sort of visuals, that your life has been poured into the mold of Jesus Christ. This happened to you. Now live out what has happened to you. Be what you are. Or become what you are would be a better way to frame it. That’s the idea.

I personally think that in some ways this is the simplest teaching in the world. But it’s the hardest thing to put into practice. Does that ring true for you?

**Mike:** We don’t tell ourselves the truth in this. We tell ourselves the wrong things.



## “Sanctification” Pt 2

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Mike:** It’s kind of like 1 Corinthians 10:13: “*No temptation has seized you except that which is common to men.*”

**Jeff:** Yeah, that’s great.

**Mike:** “*God is faithful.*” He will always provide a way out. Is that true or is that a lie? So if we’re not looking to Him, and we’re of a mindset that we’re locked in sin and that is it, then we’re not looking for the way out.

**David:** In the New King James, and maybe in the old King James, it says, “*yet you obeyed from the heart.*”

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**David:** “*That form of doctrine.*”

**Jeff:** How does it end that verse?

**David:** “*To which you were delivered.*”

**Jeff:** Yes, “*to which you were delivered.*” The idea is that you have been delivered to this form of teaching, and so you obey from the heart. I think the ESV does say that. It’s great to point that out. “*But thanks be to God that though you were once slaves of sin, you have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed.*” Thanks for that, because that’s a good thing to point out: that the obedience arises from being delivered to the form of teaching, being delivered into the death of Jesus Christ—dying with Him, rising with Him.

As a result of that we are able to obey from the heart. I don’t know about you guys, but sometimes my obedience is from the mind and not from the heart. In other words I know it’s true, and so I’m going to be obedient. But I may not have any affection for what I’m actually doing at the time. I don’t know if that rings true for you. But I’m being candid with you. Sometimes I know that I need to do this, and so I do it. But I’m not necessarily crazy about doing it.

I mean, that’s like telling your son to get up and mow the lawn. And what does he do? From the head he obeys. He knows cognitively that he’s supposed to get out there and mow the lawn. But he’s not loving it. And that can be the same with us.

The objective in the Christian life is to obey from head and heart, right? It’s not just to know and be obedient, but to know and to love, and let the obedience flow from what we know and love. And sometimes that’s hard. I think that’s the challenge.

**David:** It seems like that’s part of the refining. (*Unclear*)

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**David:** We may fail one time, five times, a hundred times. But we know that our hearts are changed.

**Jeff:** You know, I think that’s really helpful; that’s good. I think that one of the things that we need to think about is this. Why is it that sin is so much more appealing sometimes than virtue? I’ll never forget; C.S. Lewis helped me with his *Preface to Morals*.

One of the things that he said is that he talked about Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. And he asked the question. Why is it that Satan in that poem is so much more likeable than is unfallen Adam? And if you’ve ever read it you know exactly what he means. It’s almost as if Milton makes Satan the hero, because you can identify so much more with Satan in that poem than you can with Adam. Satan in the poem appears multi-dimensional. He appeals to some of our own struggles. Adam is a flat figure. He is not very appealing to us.

## “Sanctification” Pt 2

And Lewis asks the question: why is that the case? And this is how he answers that. He says it’s because we can identify with sin so much more. It’s easier to identify with sin and all of the complexities of dealing with a sinful life than it is to have virtue appeal to us. And I don’t know about you, but I’ll tell you how the rubber met the road for me in this.

When I was early in my preaching I preached a lot about the horrors of hell. I would paint the picture for the people. I preached a lot about the sinfulness of sin. I preached a lot about those things, but grace took about 10% of my message.

And I’ll tell you why. After I read Lewis I realized why. It’s easier for me to talk about hell and sin because I know it more. But it’s harder to talk about virtue if you know virtue less, and you have to really think deeply about what it is to be virtuous, because virtue doesn’t come easy, but sin does.

And one of the things that I started changing in my preaching as a result of that was that I started to try and think more deeply about grace and about life in Christ and about those sorts of things, and paint less vivid pictures of hell and sin and its effects, because I as a redeemed person—able to sin, not able to sin—I wanted to enhance the whole idea of not sinning. And I thought to myself that the Bible constantly helps us to think, that the starting place is in how we think, in what we consider and what we reckon. And if we are always thinking about the vividness of hell and sin, then those are the things that we’re going to reckon true. And so we need to start thinking about the vividness of virtue and grace and life in Christ. And the more we can think about those vivid colors, then the more we’ll reckon those things true in our lives; a matter of the mind is what it is. Yes, Tom?

**Tom Benedict:** We’re told to take every thought captive, right?

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Tom:** And before all was created—seen and unseen—there was the eternal Word.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Tom:** That has to be our focus. The substance of Christ is this eternal Word, and that should be our focus. That’s not all He is. But God has created everything that is seen and unseen.

**Jeff:** Yes; right. You know, I’m struck by this. John Owen at the end of his life wrote a book that he did not intend to publish. He’s an old Puritan. He wrote a book that he did not intend to publish. But he ended up actually publishing the book.

The book is called *The Glory of Christ*. As he thought he was dying, he just wrote this book as a meditation for himself in his dying days. And he ended up living through the illness and he ended up publishing the book. But it’s interesting that this is what he thought of in his dying days. He was meditating on the glory of Christ. And that’s a good lesson for us. Well let me pray, and then we’ll dismiss.

Father, thank You for the day and for the time You’ve given, for life in Christ and for the good reminder, Lord, that our lives have been delivered over to you, and that Christ’s death and resurrection are our own. And Father, we pray that we’ll live out of those resources. We far too easily find ourselves capitulating to our old master and going back to old territory, old geography, and living under the City of Destruction and its shadow. Lord, we pray that You’ll help us to be able to simply say no to temptation. And we know that this is and will be a lifelong battle. We anticipate the day when we will not be able to sin. But until then, Father, give us much grace, much strength. Lord, give us the abiding presence of Your Holy Spirit who dwells within us. O Lord, comfort our hearts in all of this, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.