

• *Know this – we cannot continue in sin*

We cannot continue in sin. When we do sin we are acting out of character and are resisting what God has done to us and the place where he has put us. Paul says: *Know this: our old person was crucified with him . . .* It is possible to translate this as a statement ('Knowing this . . .') but the Greek could also be an imperative and that is a likely meaning here. If this is correct it is the first command in the letter.

There is a fact to be grasped

• *Paul repeats – the old person we used to be has ceased altogether*

There is a fact to be grasped. ⁶*Know this: our old person was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be made powerless so that we might no longer serve sin.* ⁷*For he that has died is legally released from sin.* ⁸*And if we died with Christ we believe that we shall also live with him,* ⁹*knowing that Christ having been raised from the dead does not die any more; death no longer lords it over him.* ¹⁰*For the death he died, he died to sin once for ever, but the life he lives, he lives to God.* Paul is simply repeating and enlarging what he has already said. The 'old man' – the person we used to be – has ceased altogether. He no longer exists. 'Old man' is not 'the flesh' (the sinful side of our nature). That **does** exist still! The 'old man' or 'old person' is the entire person we used to be in the kingdom of sin. That person has gone!

• *The flesh does exist still*

• *But we are no longer in the kingdom of sin*

This means that sin has been legally stripped of its power. It also means that we are able to be (and have been!) raised from the dead. We are united with Christ in his resurrection. We are spiritually alive with resurrection power. It is a fact! It is something that cannot be reversed. Just as Christ cannot go back to the realm of death, so we cannot go back to what we used to be. Death no longer reigns over Jesus. Sin and death and Satan no longer reign over us. They never will! This is something we must get hold of. ¹¹*So also you are to reckon yourselves as dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.* Paul says 'reckon'. He does not say 'experience'. This is something we do with our mind! We grasp hold of the fact that we have died to sin and we are alive with resurrection power. We may not feel that this has happened to us but it has and we must believe it!

• *Sin has been legally stripped of its power*

• *We are united with Christ*

• *We must grasp this fact and reckon it to be so*

Then there is a command to be obeyed

Four entities

Then there is a command to be obeyed. ¹²*Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its desires.* ¹³*And do not present your members as weapons of unrighteousness in the interests of sin.* There are four entities mentioned in this verse. (i) First, there is 'you'. Paul says 'you' are not to let sin reign in your mortal body. (ii) Secondly, there is sin. Although it is defeated, it is still there. The 'body of sin' has lost its power to domineer but it has not gone away. (iii) Thirdly, there is 'your mortal body'. It is a phrase that reminds us of the teaching about our bodies. They are subject to decay and death. They are the channels along which sin comes at us. (iv) Fourthly, there are the desires of the body. This does not refer only to **physical** sins such as immorality or gluttony or physical laziness. The point is that all sins come at us through the body. It is the fact that we are in mortal bodies that gives rise to the fact that sin still troubles us.

(i) *You*

(ii) *Sin*

(iii) *Your mortal body*

(iv) *The desires of the body*

• *We can take up the battle with a sense of victory and fight a fight of faith against sin – and win*

• *We give the parts of our life away to God – our limbs, faculties, powers of thought and imagination, emotions and our tongue*

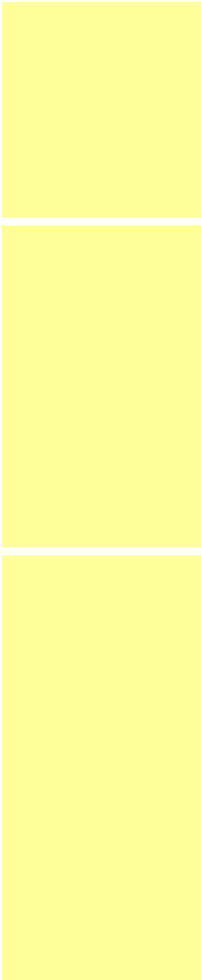
• *We are not under sin, nor are we under the law of Moses*

• *Living under God's grace, we shall find ourselves much stronger to resist sin*

'We' – our central personality – have died to sin. We are not under its dominion. So we can take up the battle with a sense of victory and fight a fight of faith against sin. And we can win the final struggle to put sin down. It is a struggle, but it is a struggle in a war that has already been won. Sin is not eradicated, but because we are not in its domain it is defeated.

The 'members' of our body are its component parts. It includes our limbs, our faculties, our brain and powers of thought and imagination, our emotions. We must not be guilty of mutiny against God's kingdom of grace. It is giving the parts of our life to God that makes holiness practical. It is not easy to think we are dedicated to God when our tongues talk as they please, when our imaginations commit sins in the secret corners of our lives, when our temper or appetites have their way. True dedication to God gets down to details. We give the parts of our life away to God.

There is a final word of assurance. Paul gives a reason why we must give ourselves to God. It is the only sensible thing to do. ¹⁴*For sin shall not have dominion over you. For you are not under law but under grace.* One might have expected Paul to say, 'You are not under sin but under grace.' It would have fitted with everything he has said so far. But Paul is about to tell us that sin is strengthened by any attempt to deal with it by law-keeping. Actually you can make a thousand resolutions to keep the Mosaic law or any other codified law, and all that happens is that we discover how strong sin is. We are not under sin and we are not under Mosaic law. When we grasp what it is to live under God's grace, we shall find ourselves much stronger to resist sin.



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