



# NEW BEGINNINGS CHRISTIAN CHURCH GOLD COAST, QUEENSLAND

QUALIFIED FOR EVERY BLESSING BECAUSE  
OF THE FINISHED WORK OF JESUS

## GRACE: MORE POWERFUL THAN ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOUR

Often, people believe that sin is the pathway to pleasure; otherwise they wouldn't do it. People become addicted to anything that gives temporary pleasure as a means of distraction from the emotional pain they are going through.

The brain works in such a way that when we do something we enjoy it releases endorphins as a reward. This encourages us to repeat the behaviour each time we need relief from emotional pain. It serves as a coping mechanism.

Once a person has learned they can manipulate their emotions by running to the refuge of their habit/drug the basis for addictive behaviour has been set. Of course the relief never lasts, necessitating a return to the same sinful practice and, eventually, bondage to it.

I always smile when I hear that well-worn cliché, "Grace is just a license to sin." Paul teaches the opposite. Grace is the only power that can deal with habitual sinful behaviour. He assures us that sin will no longer have dominion over us because we are not under law but under grace (see Rom.6:14).

Dealing with sinful habits and addictive behaviour is different for a believer than it is for a non-believer. A believer is now free not to sin.

### Why do Christians choose sin?

So why would a Christian still choose to live in sin? This is a very important question. In Romans 6, Paul asks, "*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?*" (Rom.6:16).

The reason he asks this question is not so much because we might not know that sin leads to death, but that we might not believe it. We often need convincing that sin really is the source of our pain and grief.

Now if we believe that sin is what would make us happy, and God appeals to us not to yield the members of our bodies to sin but to yield them to righteousness, then in our heart we would conclude that God is the source of our unhappiness! He is withholding good from us.

Does that sound familiar? It was the logic behind the temptation in the Garden of Eden. From the beginning of time Satan has deceived people into believing that what God has forbidden is the very thing they need for happiness and fulfilment in life. This makes God the source of our unhappiness. Many Christians would never admit this openly, but it's what they believe in their heart.

Having set before us life and death, God gives us the freedom to choose for ourselves. Why does He do this knowing that we may choose sin and death? If we do not believe Him when He tells us that sin leads to pain and unhappiness, then He allows us to learn it by tasting the fruit of the choices we make. He says, "You choose; and you live with the consequences."

Similarly, Paul counsels us to reflect upon the fruit of our behaviour when we were under the dominion of sin. He asks, "What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death" (Rom.6:21). We need to be honest with ourselves. What good fruit ever resulted from going down the road of sin, either before we were saved or after?

Contrast this with the fruit of making our bodies available to God: "*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*" (Rom.6:22).



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### Being free indeed

Jesus said, *“If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed”* (Jn.8:36). Real freedom consists not merely of breaking free from habitual sinful behaviour, but of wanting to do so and having no desire to go back there. People don't genuinely repent because they are told to. They change their behaviour when they change their minds about sin. That's what the word 'repent' means.

Sometimes it is only after a long, painful process that we come to truly believe – in our heart as well as in our mind – that sin is our enemy and God is our Friend; sin is the cause of our pain and God is the fountain of all true, lasting pleasure.

Maybe you are puzzled by Paul's terminology. He said that we are either a slave to sin or to righteousness. It seems strange to speak of our freedom in terms of slavery.

In my book ***This Is The Life***, I wrote, *“A slave is in the total grip of the master whom he serves. Whenever a person chooses to sin he is no longer in control of what will take place. That's the deceptive power of sin. It makes you think you are getting what you want. In fact, you lose control the moment you give yourself over to its power. Sin always takes us much further than we want to go.”* Adam had no idea that committing that one sin would result in him and the planet coming under Satan's control.

If sin is so powerful, how much greater is grace! When we are in the grip of grace, God will take us much further than we ever imagined possible! Is there a limit to what God has in store for those who yield their bodies to do His will? *“... as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.'* But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit” (1 Cor.2:9&10).

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*(This article is an excerpt from Ken's book, **Grace: The Power To Reign**)*