

“Dead or Alive?”

- Romans 6:8-14 -

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Romans 6:8-14 *Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the*

life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 13 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. 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.



Quietly and without fanfare, the apostle Paul, for six and a half chapters, hasn't actually told us to do *anything*. Kind of weird huh? Maybe there is something in you that has been wanting that instruction a little bit. It's easy to become dependent upon coming to church and sitting in a pew seeking our weekly "step by step instructions" instead of listening, hearing, moving, and maturing in organic relational living with Christ. It seems Paul felt it more important that we understand first, *what we were*, then, *what God has done for us*; then, *what God has done in us*, and then, *what God has made us to be*. Only after a clear grasp of these aspects are we then ready to hear and respond to His commands.

Here in this chapter we are now moving from that section of Romans which emphasized what God has done for us in forgiving us, to what God is now doing continually in us and how we are to respond to His grace. In that organic relational accord that Christ wants us to have with Him, the believer has not only been baptized into the shared death experience with Christ but into His shared life dynamic...His very **living**, post crucifixion and resurrection.

In the life we are given to walk out in Christ, we do not obey in order to be redeemed, nor do we even obey in order to remain in good standing. Rather once we are redeemed, that rebirth enables us, compels us, and impassions us to that kind of living. In other words, what we **are** in the Christian life, precedes any real and consistent ability to walk out the life that God would have us live.

This rather simple concept is not so simple to practice. For there is some inexplicable pull within us to, at the very least to *add* to, the working of our salvation. It is indeed important that we do not "throw the baby out with the bathwater," and negate all importance and even necessity of obedience and holy living. But getting this backwards will create a lot of frustration and angst and will at the very least keep us from the joy and thankfulness that should naturally flow from our redemption.

This redemptive path is the historical route of our God. Just like with the children of Egypt, God *rescued the people first*, and **then** He gave them the law. In Exodus, chapter 20 verses 1-3, we read, "And God spoke all these words. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me." Now note the order of verses 2 and 3. It does not say, "If you will obey the command,

you shall have no other gods before Me, then I will be the God who brings you out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage.’ No, it’s the other way around. I’ve **already** brought you out of the land of Egypt. I’ve already brought you out of the house of slavery. Romans 5:8 is a perfect example... “*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” What we **are** precedes what we **are to do** in the Christian experience. What God has made us to be by His grace, enables us to do what He has commanded. What this means then is that one can sit in church his or her whole life *learning* of what a life in Christ looks like and the living a Christian practices and still never get it...still never experience a successful walk in Christ and still never experience the joy and the success of a faithful living. You’re trying to gather a recipe when Christ already baked the cookies! We are to simply *eat!*

We need to understand that despite our modern attempts to do otherwise, we cannot receive salvation “al-la-cart.” Now we *do* need to acknowledge that many Christians want forgiveness, but they don’t want holiness. It’s an overt and purposeful attempt at “piece-meal” Christianity. The aspects of justification and sanctification are all-in-one. As God grants us forgiveness in salvation, He also breaks our bondage to sin. This truth at times really messes with people’s heads because post salvation they often find that they suddenly have an awareness of sin in their lives as never before. Naturally, one can tend to think “wow...I’m sinning and being tempted to sin more than ever...I must not *really* be saved then.” The likely truth of this scene is that we were just never was aware of all that sin until God opened our eyes! We’re aren’t *worse* than before, we just can *see better than we ever could before.*

Being inexplicably wed together with Him, grafted together in spiritual union, He now goes where we go. Note that we *live* with Him. Not just *exist* with Him, but really *live!* Something that the world cannot comprehend! But the truly redeemed understand! The “days that the locust has eaten” (Joel 2:25) are more than restored, for He now brings a life “hundred-fold.” (Mark 10:30)

Upon salvation we are “justified” from sin. Positionally standing before God as if we have never sinned. But to be “free from the power of sin” is different. Paul claimed to be the “chief of sinners” shortly before his departure from this earth. And yet he had no sense of bondage to sin! Instead he walked in triumph. When he had a “death-experience” in Acts 14, he was immediately in the presence of God! What? The “chief of sinners?”

Paul “reckoned himself to be dead to sin,” and “alive to God.” He now lived in the presence, yes, the *infilling* of the Spirit of God. Paul knew both *positional* and *practical* victory over sin. He was “alive to God.” Alive to God? If you do not have a “risen life” then you are not of Christ. AM I LIVING THE “RISEN LIFE?”

In verse 14 the Greek speaks in the emphatic sense, “don’t let sin reign at *all.*” The sin is still there. It does not go away. But if reborn, we are not held in its bondage anymore. Now we have a choice. We can let it have us, or we can walk in freedom if we choose to walk in our “newness of life.” That’s the new awareness of sin we get after salvation. That’s the new power over sin we get after salvation. Again, we can think we are a terrible person suddenly, but the truth is you were always a terrible person but you were just blind to it. It’s sort of like percolated folgers is good coffee until you have a cup of great Italian espresso and then you wonder what they heck you have been drinking all those years! It is an issue of awareness and the fact that you have “tasted” of something so very much better than anything you have had before!

Paul taught us last week in verses 1 through 7 about what it means to be dead to sin. To have been “baptized” into the death of Christ...sharing in the death of Christ. Now he wants to emphasize the other side of that experience...the other side of the water. Because having been reborn and baptized into His death, we’re now living in the newness of life. It is in this newness of life that we experience a radical break with sin.

So it's a total contrast. He's saying that God's grace is a radically, transforming power. We are not justified *by that new birth*. God doesn't accept us *because of the new life*. He accepts us because of what Jesus did! He accepts us because of Jesus' righteousness. And when He accepts us, He always gives us new life, too. In other words, they work together. Forgiveness and the new birth come together. And so we are justified by grace through faith, but along with that we are given a new birth which enables us by God's grace to walk in a newness of life. In God's plan of salvation, He plans not only to forgive us, but to change us; not only to justify us but to sanctify us. Not only to free us from sin's penalty, but to release us of the bondage of its power. And that's what Paul is talking about here in Romans, chapter 6. When he gets to the imperatives, it is important that we understand that particular principle. God's grace perceives our ability to obey the imperatives, but in God's plan He not only wants to forgive us, but to change us, to transform us, to make us like Him; to make us godly, to made us like the Lord Jesus Christ. Now having said that, let's look at each of these four imperatives.

Having experienced all those first events beginning in verse 11, Paul is ready to start giving directions. In our text He gives us four commands. The first command in verse 11 is 'know who you are.' The second command in verse 12 is 'be who you are.' The third command in verse 13, the first part of the verse is 'don't allow yourself to be used as a tool for sin.' And the fourth command in the second half of verse 13 is 'give your whole being to God as a tool for righteousness.' And then he gives a word of encouragement in verse 14.

So firstly "who are you?" Please note once again that in our faith union with Christ, the believer is not only dead to sin but now also "alive in Christ." I would call that kind of "super-charged." A supercharged life! More color, more passion, more meaning, more purpose, and yes...*more bumps*. But man is it worth it! Here Paul tells us that our resurrection in Christ begins at that new birth, not just at the Second Coming. When we're united to Christ and when we are raised again with Christ, that not only points to the day when we will be raised again and given a glorious and incorruptible body, but it points to the **now** in which God is working now in His grace in us. He's not only counted us **positionally** righteousness "according to the books," but He is growing us **practically** righteous through His relational grace. And so in union with Christ, when we trust in Jesus Christ, when we have faith in Him by the power of the Holy Spirit and we are united with Him, the believer is not only dead to sin but alive to Christ.

You remember what Paul said about us in Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 1? He says, "Remember you were dead." You *were* dead in sin. Well, now in this 6th chapter of Romans, Paul paints us a picture, presenting just how radical this transformation actually is. For we are no longer dead in sin, but we're dead to sin, and moreover we're **alive in** Jesus Christ. Word's cannot do justice to such an event. Can you imagine being there when Lazarus came out of that grave alive? What could one say at such an event? *Wow?* Like that first real spring day after a long winter...what words can express that feeling? All you want to do is just stand still and suck it down into your lungs and feel the warm on your skin. You can finally smell, and it seems like you have never smelled anything before. The resurrection of the individual from spiritual death to radical life is so out there...so amazing, that we all would struggle to find words to even begin to express our awe. It's not the new life that makes us right with God. It's a new life *because we are right with God*.

So our first directive in Romans is this: "Know who you are." Isn't it an awesome thing, that after going for six and a half chapters without a single command, the first command that we hear from God through the words of the apostle Paul is simply that? Here's my first command for you... **Consider who I've made you to be.** Think about what I've made you to be. Think about who you are. Know who you are. Paul is saying appreciate, dwell on, take in, internalize, what you have been made to be in union with Christ. Once again, Paul knows that when he says to you, "You are dead to sin," your instinctive reaction is to think, "Well, I don't feel dead to sin. I mean, you may say that, Paul, but it sure doesn't feel that way. It sure doesn't look that way to me. When I look

at my life, I don't feel like I'm dead to sin." And that's precisely why Paul is saying this to you. Paul is saying this because we must actively, consciously appreciate, dwell on, take in and internalize what God has done for us in union with Christ because sometimes it doesn't seem like much has changed. And the most mature Christians are the quickest to see their own faults. And so it is vital that they pause to realize what God has actually done in them now.

He's not saying, "Look, okay, I know you're a sinner, but think real positive thoughts, have a good positive attitude about yourself, and then lo and behold, that will have an attitudinal affect on you and then you'll not be a sinner." Paul is saying, "This is what you **are**. You are dead to sin. I want you to think about what God has made you to be, dead to sin." He's not saying, "If you have a good positive attitude about it, maybe that will become the case." He's saying that "It is already the case, and I want you to reflect on it." He is not saying to live in denial. He is not saying see yourself as dead to sin and, therefore, never admit that you sin.

Secondly, notice what he says in verse 12. He draws a conclusion from all of this. So his second imperative is: ***be who you are***. Act like who you are. Live like who you are. In other words, he's saying, in light of who you are don't be a slave to sin. Look at his words: "Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you obey its lust."

It's clear that Paul is not saying, "Okay, as a Christian because you're dead to sin, you should never, ever sin again. And if you ever sin again you're not a Christian." He doesn't say, "Do not ever sin again." He does say, "Do not let sin **reign** in your mortal body." You are not under the dominion of sin. Your life is not characterized by the addictive, controlling bondage of the desires of sin.

Paul, by the way, wouldn't have to be saying this to us if we weren't struggling with sin. He knows the situation. He says "Don't let sin reign." Your life is no longer controlled by the desires of sin. It's no longer controlled by this agenda of sin. You are not under the addictive power of sin. Your new life in Christ has brought you new desires and new godliness and new birth. Then, He imparts to you a new life because being a Christian is not making a new start in life, it's receiving a new life to start with. And so the apostle Paul is saying, "Be who you are." He's not telling you become what you're not. He's saying **act like what God has made you to be**. Live in accordance with what God has made you to be. So sin is not going to reign. We desire to live a life of godliness. We desire to be like the Lord. We desire to see those things that are good and pure and beautiful. We desire after godliness.

Thirdly, if you look in verse 13 Paul says, "Don't allow any part of yourself to be used as a tool for sin. This follows on this same idea that we've just been talking about. In other words, Paul says, "In light of who you are, don't be used as a tool for sin. You are now redeemed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, you're forgiven of sins, you have broken free from the power and bondage to sin, so don't be a tool for wrongdoing. Don't let your body be used as an instrument for wickedness." We've said that Paul knew that the flesh could be a conduit for sin. And so he's saying, "Be on guard of sin's use of the portal of your body to be a gateway for sin."

And then finally he is saying this. Verse 13, the second half. "Give your whole being as a tool for righteousness." Give it to Christ. Physically, actively, and passionately. We ought to give all of ourselves, inside out. In other words, Paul is saying, "In light of who you are, a person who is dead to sin, and alive to Christ, give yourself to God. Present your whole being to God, as someone who is alive to God, dead to sin. Give your body to the Lord as a tool for righteousness, because sin shall not be master over you precisely because you're not under law, ***you're under Christ...***"