

Alive from the Dead

By David Harrell

Romans 6:11-14

Will you take your Bibles and join me this morning turning to Romans chapter six as we continue our verse by verse study of Paul's epistle to the Romans. And as I come before you I am reminded of something John Piper once said, quote, "All genuine preaching is rooted in a feeling of desperation." He went on to say, "You wake up on Sunday morning and you can smell the smoke of hell on one side and feel the crisp breezes of heaven on the other," end quote.

That certainly resonates as being true in my heart. I stand before you again helpless, dependent solely upon the power of the Spirit of God to somehow reveal these great truths to you. The goal of preaching is always to display and magnify the glory of God. And that is something that is absolutely impossible for me to do apart from the power of the Spirit of God. And so I trust that you have prepared yourself to receive the Word this morning.

Let me read the text that is before us that we will be looking at closely beginning in verse 11 of Romans chapter six.

Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.¹

Thus far in his epistle, the apostle Paul has made it abundantly clear that sin has devastating consequences in our lives. Sin is so terrible that it can damn a man's soul to an eternal hell. He has made it clear that sin is so utterly abhorrent to God that one single sin, it only took one single sin to ignite his wrath and condemn and entire human race.

Paul has made it clear that we have sinned in Adam and that man is therefore a slave to sin. And this is proven by the inevitable consequence of physical death which will be an eternal spiritual death for those who do not place their faith in Christ. Only faith in Christ can save a man from such a fate.

And the apostle has gone to great lengths to explain to us the marvelous benefits of justification given freely to those who trust in Christ, that glorious transformation whereby God declares us to be righteous and imputes to us the righteousness of Christ. And now we come to chapter six and we learn much more about this issue of sin, this enemy within.

He has told us that we have died to sin. We have been freed, in other words, from the tyranny of sin, from that task master. Because of the imparted righteousness of Christ that

¹ Romans 6:11-14.

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we are given, we are now united to him. We are literally, as believers, alive with Christ. The law of sin no longer has any dominion over us unless we allow it to. So we live now in the reign of grace, in a totally new realm.

But we have also learned that although we have died to sin, we are not dead to sin. Every Christian continues to battle with this enemy. While the old man no longer reigns, he nevertheless still remains as we are all very aware. We are still influenced by remaining sin, by our unredeemed humanness, by our flesh, this physical body that will some day be done away with.

And it is this remaining sin that I want us to focus on for a few minutes before we examine this text more closely. Think about your own sin for a moment. It is easy for it to come to mind if you listen to your conscience. And if you don't, just look at some major problem in your life and then go backwards and it will point to your sin.

It is interesting. In Hebrews chapter 12 and verse one the writer says that we to "lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."²

The Christian life is there pictured as a race. In fact, that term in the original language is *agwn* (ag-one'). We get the word "agony" from that. And so it pictures a strenuous, grueling, determined effort to move towards a goal, to win the race of faith and obedience, a pursuit that requires self discipline, a race would require sacrifice and perseverance. And I would ask you. Does this characterize your life? Are you straining with every muscle fiber in your body to somehow bring glory to God, to build his kingdom? Or is your life kind of a stroll in the park? You really have no goals as a Christian. There is really no finish line that you are straining to pass over. You started out fast, maybe, but now you have been distracted by all of the things in the world and you are just kind of moseying around.

All we need to do is look at your calendar and your checkbook to get a good understanding about your life. And in order to run this race we are told in that text in Hebrews 12 that we are to lay aside two things, one, every encumbrance.

Encumbrance simply means a weight. It could be translated a weight or a hindrance, an impediment. We are to lay aside anything that hinders our progress, that impedes our progress. These can be good things as well as bad things.

Ask yourself. What are the weights that hinder your progress? What are those things that are impeding your spiritual growth, those things that compete for your attention and demand your affections, those things that you do in your life that dull your spiritual affections, dull your conscience? What are those things that you are doing in your life that make you unfit for Christian service, that bring dishonor upon the Lord, those things that destroy relationships? Maybe your marriage, your family. What are those things that

² Hebrews 12:1.

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ruin your appetite for the Word, that leaves you no time for prayer, no time to commune with the Lord, those things that have tricked you into believing that somehow you can find your greatest joy and satisfaction in them rather than in the God that created and saved you?

We are not only to lay aside those things, but also he says, “Lay aside the sin which so easily entangles us.”

Entangles simply means that it compasses us, those things that exert tight control upon us, the sin that controls us tightly. The old King James says, “Those sins that so easily beset us.”

What are your besetting sins?

And sin, of course, speaks of indwelling corruption, those things that most frequently occupy your mind.

Now in this context, the sin is the sin of unbelief, primarily, but each of us are prone to certain sins and that is what I want us to focus on before we come to our text in Romans this morning.

For a man who rejects Christ his besetting sin will be the sin of unbelief. That will be the sin that will hinder his exercise of faith. But for the believer it will be a whole host of things. Typically they are sins that we refuse to see.

Let me give you just a small list. What about the sin of anger? Some of you are known for having an explosive temper, a temper that is destroying your marriage and your family. Some of you have the sin of self... of a lack of self control. For some you have an idol of food. You become a glutton. It is kind of an acceptable sin in Christian circles, isn't it? You are killing yourself one mouthful at a time. Others are controlled by the sin of prescription drugs or television or entertainment or sports, hobbies. Some of you it is pornography. Some of you are ruled by fear. You are anxious for so many things. Frankly you fear God or your fear man more than you fear God. Some of you are struggling with lying. You are a habitual liar. Some of you cheat. You cheat others. You defraud others. You steal in little ways. You don't pay your debts. Some of you are habitually land most or the time secretly immoral. Some of you dress immodestly. Some of you are lazy. Maybe you are a perfectionist that drives everyone nuts around you. You are critical, demanding. Some of you are filled with bitterness. Some of you are unforgiving. Some are filled with envy and jealousy. Maybe it is the sin of constantly complaining, always being discontent, of whining.

The point is we are to lay aside those things, whatever they might be. Beloved, anything that impedes your progress in running the race which God has set before you must be jettisoned. And you want to ask yourself, again, am I even in the race or am I just waltzing around in life?

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Because you must understand if your passion to win Christ is truly there it will animate your conscience to become more acutely aware of all of those weights that are slowing you down, all of those besetting sins that make you unfit for service.

Paul summarized it very simply in Titus 2:12. He says we are “to deny ungodliness and worldly desires.”³

All of us must constantly examine our heart. We can’t leave any part of our heart unguarded, can we?

Now when we find those areas of sin in our life, what are we supposed to do? And that is what Paul is going to help us.

I have heard it a thousand times. And usually I don’t hear this until sin has done some great devastation in a person’s life, but people will say, “Pastor, I hate my sin. It is doing it to me again. I find my life in utter shambles. I never seem to be able to gain victory over it. What am I to do? I am not running the race. I am not even walking. I am so weighted down with the distractions of life and I am so entangled by sin that I can’t even get off of the couch, so to speak. What must I do?”

Well, this is precisely what Paul addresses here in this text. And here the Holy Spirit really reveals to us that in order to gain victory over sin believers must do something with the truth about their new identity. That is what Paul has been talking about.

May I remind you of this? In verse three of chapter six he says, “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?”⁴

Remember there the term “baptize” is metaphorically to describe our immersion into Christ at salvation when we are mystically united with him. This is part of our new identity. Our immersion into Christ included our immersion even into his death. The point is, when he died in some unfathomable way, we also died. The old man of sin that once defined our very nature is dead. He no longer reigns. Oh, he still remains, but his dominion has ceased.

Verse four says, “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”⁵

Newness of life. Remember, that is newness in quality here. We have been transformed. We have a radically different disposition from our former self.

³ Titus 2:12.

⁴ Romans 6:3.

⁵ Romans 6:4.

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So how can we gain victory over indwelling sin that still remains? That is the question. And Paul is going to tell us that we must do three things, given the truth about our radically new nature. Number one, we have got to know it in our mind. Number two, we have got to affirm it in our heart and, number three, we have got to live it by our will. And I pray the Spirit of God will enlighten each of our minds to these great truths.

Now let me remind you of the context here again. In verses eight, nine and 10 Paul summarizes the excellencies and the majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ that he is forever finished with sin and death. It no longer has dominion over him. And in verse 10 he says, "For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God."⁶

Now keep this in mind as we begin to understand this. This is part of our new identity as well. He is saying here that even as Christ has forever conquered sin and death, even as he is now living in the realm of God, in the realm of glory and majesty at the right arm of the Father and is no longer in the realm of sin and death, the same is true for all who are united to him through faith.

This is our new identity. And verse 11 now proceeds to explain this, that what is true of Christ is true of us. Like our Savior, we are totally out of the reach of sin and death. It no longer has power over us. Now, granted, we are going to pass through physical death. But we will never experience eternal death, the second death. The sting of death is gone. It has no victory. And even as Christ will never again be placed, once again, into the realm of sin and death, neither will we who are united to him. Therefore we will never lose our salvation as some people claim that you do.

Beloved, we can no more fall from a position of saving grace than Christ could fall from glory and be subject again to the ravages of sin and death. This is all part of our new identity and this is what Paul goes on to describe in verse 11.

"Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."⁷

Which, by the way, is a marvelous text in defending the doctrine of eternal security. This is the application of all that Paul has been saying.

Now before we examine this more closely, I wish to draw your attention to a very fascinating truth. Do you realize that this is the very first exhortation in the epistle thus far? This is the very first time he has asked us to do something. Paul has preached doctrine for, as I counted it, 148 verses. He has preached doctrine of 148 verses teaching on the condemnation of man and the good news of our justification and helping us understand our identity in Christ. And finally on the 149th verse he gives the first exhortation.

Verse 11.

⁶ Romans 6:10.

⁷ Romans 6:11.

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“Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”⁸

Now what does this teach us? Very practical lesson here and that is we must know doctrine if we are going to live it. I received an email from a man attacking me for spending so much time preaching Bible doctrine from this pulpit. He said that I needed to spend more time preaching on the love of Jesus. He said that I am more concerned with being doctrinally precise than living out the power of the gospel.

By the way, I receive variations of this type of criticism on a fairly routine basis. But I would submit to you that you cannot separate the truth of Jesus from the love of Jesus. The Lord Jesus prayed to the Father, “Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth.”⁹

You have got to begin with truth. In fact, according to Titus 1:9 I am called to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. Jesus warned over and over that wolves would rise up within the Church in sheep’s clothing, in other words, pretending to be a shepherd and they would try to devour the flock. And we are to protect the flock from them.

In fact, Paul said that the Church is to be the pillar and the support of what? Of the truth, 1 Timothy 3:15. And Jude tells us that we are to contend earnestly for the faith, for the Word of God that was delivered to the saints and that certain persons have crept into the church unnoticed.

You see, friends, even as we see here with the apostle Paul, if you do not understand doctrine, you will not have discernment and you will not understand the gospel and you will not know how to live it out.

I remind you, again, of what Paul said in Ephesians 4:11, that he gave the Church first apostles and prophets and then evangelists, pastors and teachers:

...for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.¹⁰

And he goes on to give the reason, so that we will not be “children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming, but speaking the truth in love.”¹¹

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ John 17:17.

¹⁰ Ephesians 4:12-13.

¹¹ Ephesians 4:14-15.

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There it is. We are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head, even Christ. And certainly we see this lived out here in this epistle thus far, 148 verses of doctrine and finally the first exhortation.

It is obvious that the Holy Spirit wanted to build that foundation. And once you have the foundation laid, then you can build the superstructure of godly living.

Now given our union, given our new identity, the three things that we must do to effectively battle against indwelling sin. The first one I would submit to you is to know it in your mind. In other words, understand it intellectually. And we see that here in verse 11, the very first two words.

He says, “Even so...”

In other words, in the same way, it could be translated. In light of your knowledge concerning your union to the risen Christ that I have been speaking about, now that you understand your new identity, now that you know that you have died to sin, that you have been raised to walk in newness of life, that you no longer live in the realm of sin, in the realm of death, “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”¹²

Beloved, this is where the battle must begin. You must know these things intellectually. You must understand them in your mind, because you cannot live what you do not know. I find it interesting if you go to Ephesians six the apostle Paul gives us a call to arms to fight against the schemes of the devil. We are to wear the armor and he describes the armor. And the very first foundational piece of armor that we are to wear is that of truth. We are to gird our loins with truth. And that was literally a reference to kind of a leather girdle type of thing that the Roman soldier would put on. That is the basis that you would now go on to put on the breastplate of righteousness, that breastplate would be anchored into that girdle of truth.

And that is exactly what we see being played out here.

So the Lord graciously reveals these truths pertaining to our new identity so that we can know them. We can believe them and live them out.

Now we see this all through chapter six. For example, notice in verse three again, he says, “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?”¹³

In other words, I want you to know this, Christian. You need to know this. Understand what it means.

Verse six.

¹² Romans 6:11.

¹³ Romans 6:3.

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“Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.”¹⁴

Do you know this to be true about yourself? Do you understand this glorious union with Christ?

How about verses eight and nine?

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.¹⁵

So, again, you must intellectually understand these doctrinal truths with respect to your union with Christ with his death, with his resurrection.

Why did Paul write to Timothy? Why did he do that? The answer is found in 1 Timothy 3:15.

“So that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.”¹⁶

You see, without the pillar and support of the truth, without the revealed Word of God, we would not know how to conduct ourselves.

So the Church is to uphold the truth of divine revelation. We are not to invent it. We are not to in any way condemn it. We are not to stand in judgment of it, but we are to proclaim it and protect it and support it.

Whenever a believer comes to me with some life dominating sin it is not good enough to day, “Don’t you realize that what you are doing is dishonoring to the Lord? Stop it. Don’t do that anymore.”

Well, they already know that, typically. If they don’t, of course, you have to being there. But most of the time they already know that. And so what do you do? Well, you go back to the basics. And inevitably I will begin by saying, “All right. Let’s go back. What is the gospel? What has God done for you? Do you realize your union with Christ? Do you realize that you have died to sin, that sin is no longer your slave or you are no longer a slave to sin? Do you realize that you have been raised to walk in newness of life? Do you understand these truths? Do you understand your new identity of Christ?”

And almost inevitably the answer is, “Not really.”

¹⁴ Romans 6:6.

¹⁵ Romans 6:8-9.

¹⁶ 1 Timothy 3:15.

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That is why we have to do 148 verses before we get to this. And typically we want to come to the 149th verse without doing and work in the 148 previous verses.

Colossians three verse nine. After listing various kinds of sins that plague the believers in Colosse, Paul had to remind them of these foundational truths regarding their new identity in Christ.

He said, “You laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.”¹⁷

So he does the same thing there.

So for those of you struggling with sin, you need to learn these doctrines, understand your new identity in Christ. Be able to rehearse them. Know them so that they become a part of your life.

Now the exhortation comes in verse 11. Not only must we know these things with our mind, but, secondly, affirm them in our heart. Notice what he says.

“Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”¹⁸

This word “consider.” This is one of Paul’s favorite words, λογίζομαι (log-id’-zom-ah-ee) in original language. It means to count. It means to calculate. It carries the idea of reckoning or calculating, to credit something to someone.

We might say that you need to regard this or recognize this about yourself.

And grammatically it is interesting. It really speaks of a command to be carried out upon one’s self. You are to count yourself. Moreover the grammar in the original language indicates that this needs to be an ongoing process. Do this on an ongoing basis.

Now to summarize that real simply, he is saying that I want you to consider your new identity in Christ, I want you to affirm this in your heart on a continual basis. I want this to dominate your thinking. Recognize this fact. Count yourself dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Affirm this in your heart.

Now this moves truth from the head to the heart, right? Right doctrine is now ready to produce right conduct. And I want you to notice there are two things we are to consider. First of all he says, “Consider yourselves to be dead to sin.”¹⁹

I want you to affirm this every day, every second of the day. Never lose sight of this fact. What he is saying is, my friend, what was true of Christ is now true of you. You have

¹⁷ Colossians 3:9-10.

¹⁸ Romans 6:11.

¹⁹ Ibid.

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died once and forever to the realm and rule of sin and death. Paul repeats this in Colossians one verse 13.

“For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.”²⁰

Like Christ, you can never go back into that realm and rule. Remember in verse nine he said, “Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.”²¹

Talk about security for the believer. And what a reputation to that Antinomian charge that we studied earlier where at the beginning of verse six some were saying, “Oh, I know why you want to believe this doctrine of justification. You want to continue in sin that grace might increase.”

Are you kidding me?

So he is saying, “Make it a constant habit to affirm this in your heart that sin and death has no more dominion over Christ, nor does it have any dominion over me because I am united to Christ.”

Paul will even repeat this in Romans chapter eight verse 10 and 11. He says this.

And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.²²

In other words, Christ’s death has forever defeated this task master of sin for those who have placed their life, their faith in Christ. For those that haven’t they are still a slave to sin. And his resurrection has ever... has forever defeated the tyranny of death. I mean, this is incredibly good news. We will be raised with Christ not only physically in our resurrection, but as the context indicates here in this text, the moment we are born again, the moment we place our faith in Christ and we are transformed by the power of the Spirit, we are raised to walk in newness of life. That is the emphasis of the context here. The old nature was crucified with him. It died with him, verse six.

And immediately when this occurred in some inscrutable way, we joined him in his death and burial. Our old worthless self was buried. It was done away with. But miraculously the new self now is resurrected. There is a new nature. So we, too, might walk in the newness of life, verse six.

²⁰ Colossians 1:13.

²¹ Romans 6:9.

²² Romans 8:10-11.

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What incredibly good news, amen? To think that we were once slaves to sin and we have been freed from sin's bondage. We have a new nature. That is why, again, back to Hebrews 12:1, we are to "lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."²³

So, again, here in verse 11 we are exhorted to affirm these things to be true on a continual basis. Consider yourself to be dead to sin. I cannot tell you how many times I have spoken with believers who do not understand these things. So let me make it clear and let me say it in another way. Beloved, if you have placed your faith in Christ, not only has he saved you from the penalty of sin, but also from the power of sin and you have got to get a hold of that glorious reality. Think how important this is in the battle against indwelling sin.

We can say, "Thou I seem to think that the entangling, besetting sins that dominate my life that are impeding my progress are things that I have no control over, that I am a slave to, in reality I have died to that tyranny. I have died to that master. I am just giving myself back to it. They rule only because I have chosen to let them rule. I am letting my flesh rule me rather than the Spirit."

This is precisely what James had in mind, you will recall, in James one verse 14. He said, "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin."²⁴

So the point is, beloved, how utterly ridiculous to give power back to the very tyrant that has been forever deposed. Why would we do that? This is what Paul will go on to describe in verses 12 and 14.

So we are not only to consider ourselves to be dead to sin, but secondly notice he says, "...but alive to God in Christ Jesus."²⁵

We are to affirm this great reality as well. Do you ever do that? Do you ever think about that that I am alive to God in Christ Jesus? Think of the implications of this. He is saying that even as Christ now lives in the realm of glory, beyond the reach of Satan and sin and death, because I am united to him, that very same power that raised Jesus from the dead is working in me. At one time I was dead in my sins. And now look what God has done. And that power continues to help me become more like Christ. I am alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Paul said in Ephesians 2:5, "Even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ."²⁶

²³ Romans 12:1.

²⁴ James 1:14-15.

²⁵ Romans 6:11.

²⁶ Ephesians 2:5.

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And in verse six he goes on to say that he has, “raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.”²⁷

And in verse 10 he goes on to say, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”²⁸

Isn't that astounding? We are part of a predetermined plan of God. So we must reckon all this to be true. We must affirm these truths in our heart on a continual basis. In fact, Paul prayed that the saints in Ephesus would do this in Ephesians chapter three verse 16.

He said in his prayer, “that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man.”²⁹

And that is my prayer for you that are struggling with some life dominating sin, that God would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man. Why?

...so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God.³⁰

So, again, beloved, you are alive to God in Christ Jesus. Everything about your inner man has been radically changed forever.

Now this is not true for an unbeliever, for those of you who are sitting here today or hearing my voice and you are either bored out of your mind or you don't believe a word of it, I would humbly submit to you that the reason you don't understand these things is because the Spirit of God has not transformed your heart and because you are a slave to your sin.

You were born in sin. You are dead in sin. The Bible says that you are part of the children of wrath. You are under the wrath of God. You have no life.

As a believer we have light in Christ. Think about the life of the unbeliever. You struggle to survive. You enjoy a few fleeting pleasures of life. You grow old. You get sick and die. Wow, isn't that great? No hope, no real joy, no real purpose. You are looking for the next high, for the next thing that will somehow bring you pleasure.

I remember an old commercial. Isn't it funny how those commercials seem to never go away? I forget which beer it was, but I, being an outdoorsman, I saw these guys sitting

²⁷ Ephesians 2:6.

²⁸ Ephesians 2:10.

²⁹ Ephesians 3:16.

³⁰ Ephesians 3:17-19.

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around a campfire and they were drinking a beer and one of them held it up and says, “Guys, it doesn’t get any better than this.”

And, you know, for an unbeliever, that is true. That is about as good as it is ever going to get. But praise God it gets a whole lot better for us.

I looked out the window this morning and the dogs had caught another mole, praise God. And they were battling that mole as if it were some dinosaur. And for some reason the analogy came to my mind that many of my friends and loved ones who prefer darkness rather than light live like that little mole. They live in the dark, kind of underground, working all the time and finally they come to a little grub and they say, “Oh, isn’t this great? It doesn’t get any better than this.”

And they have no idea the glory of God that is just a few inches above them. They will never be able to look at a sunset and see the glory of God. They will never hear a symphony and hear the glory of God. They will never be able to read the Word of God and understand the glorious truths that are there. Why? Because they are just a little mole in the ground living in darkness. And that is where unbelievers live. They have no idea what it means to really have life, because they have never been raised to walk in newness of life. They don’t understand the marvelous benefits of our justification that believers have, that we have spent so much time on. They have never been granted eternal life. They don’t understand the marvelous blessings of walking with Christ and communing with him. They don’t understand what it is like to go before the Word of God and be absolutely struck with its riches and be driven to tears over its great truths. They don’t know what it is like to sing praises to God, praises of redemption that we know are coming true. They have not been granted all things pertaining to life and godliness.

They are like the little mole.

Dear friends, we are alive to God in Christ. Cherish the thought. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. My God shall supply all my needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We could go on and on, couldn’t we? This is what it means to be alive to God in Christ.

Paul said in Ephesians 3:20 that he is the one “who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.”³¹

The unbeliever has no understanding of that and he has no power because he lives under the absolute dominion of Satan. He is ruled by his lusts. He is ruled by the tyrant of sin.

For us all things work together for good. For them nothing works together for God. It will work for their damnation. That is where the power of the gospel comes in, because only when we place our faith in Christ and repent of our sins can we be freed from this bondage and be alive to God in Christ.

³¹ Ephesians 3:20.

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And do you really think that with all of this I want to continue in sin that grace might increase? Are you nuts? That is what Paul is saying.

Moreover, I would ask you, dear Christian, struggling with sin. Given these astounding realities do you really want to continue to yield yourself to sin? Do you really want to do that? You don't have to.

Don't crawl back into the dark dirt with the mole. Know these truths in your mind. Affirm them in your heart and, finally, live it by your will.

Notice verse 12.

“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts.”³²

How foolish to obey the lusts of our mortal body that is temporal, that is gradually dying, that will gradually decay. It is really stupid when you think of it that way, isn't it? And yet we do it all the time.

Paul lamented over this in chapter seven verse 14. He grieved that he is still, quote, “of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.”³³

That is to say, you know, I am still fleshly.

He went on in verse 18 saying, “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.”³⁴

And he mourns in verse 23:

For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.³⁵

He is longing to be freed from this body that continues to acquiesce to the demands of a deposed tyrant. And in order to fight that, we have got to go back and rehearse those things that are true about our new identity, affirm them in our heart and now live them out in our life.

Verse 12, he goes on to say, “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts.”³⁶

³² Romans 6:12.

³³ Romans 7:14.

³⁴ Romans 7:18.

³⁵ Romans 7:22-23.

³⁶ Romans 6:12.

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He says it a little different in Romans eight verse 13. He says that we are to put to death the deeds of the body. We are to kill it.

If I can put it this way, my friends, with sin you have got to eradicate it. You can't domesticate it. All right? It is not a pet. You have got to kill it. And this begins by remembering these doctrinal truths, knowing them, knowing them in your mind, affirming them in your heart, living them out by your will. And, again, this world is not your home. As a believer you have got to remember that. Remember what Peter said. I love the way he puts it in 1 Peter 2:9.

“But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION.”³⁷

It is like he is stacking up all of these things to help us remember who we really are. You are no longer part of this sphere of wicked influence. And then he went on to say in verse 11.

“I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul.”³⁸

Boy, to be sure, we are aliens and strangers in this world. This is Satan's domain. This is a God hating system. This is the kingdom of darkness that is filled with sin and death. We don't belong here. We are alive to God in Christ Jesus. That is why when I see lady gaga or MTV or I see these commercials for, what is it, Jersey shore with this guy always taking off his shirt in a situation and Snoopy or whatever and all of these satanic things, all of this vile wickedness, I want to throw up.

When a believer sees something... I saw some... advertisement for a think called the bachelor where some guy is kissing all these girls. That is sickening. And when a believer sees stuff like that, that is the reaction. Why? Because we have been absolutely transformed. We are not part of this world.

By the way, if you see those things and it appeals to you, it is because you are allowing sin to reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts. Why would you do that? Why would you do that?

1 John two verse 15.

“ If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”³⁹

You see, we are all strangers and aliens in this world as believers because of this radical transformation. We have been united to Christ in glory. So he says, verse 11:

³⁷ 1 Peter 2:9.

³⁸ 1 Peter 2:11.

³⁹ 1 John 2:15.

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Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.⁴⁰

Now given that, I would ask you, dear brother, why do you continue to obey the lusts of selfishness that provokes you to anger and destroys your family? Why do you keep doing that? I would ask you, dear sister, why do you continue to obey the lust of your flesh, this desire for attention and to somehow conform to this world by dressing like a trollup? Why would you do that? I ask you, dear brother, why would you go on presenting the members of your body to the sin of pornography? Are you going to go back and let that be your slave and let it destroy your life? You have been freed from all of that. Dear sister, why do you go on presenting the members of your body to the sin of gluttony? And on and on it goes.

Beloved, he says, “Present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”⁴¹

Again, do you not know that you have been justified, that you have been declared righteous by a merciful, gracious God that you would have all of these marvelous benefits, you have died to sin, you have been raised to walk in newness of life. You have a new identity. You have got to know this in your mind. You have got to affirm it in your heart and you have got to live it out by your will.

Romans 12 verse one Paul says, “I urge you therefore...”⁴²

In light of everything that he has been saying.

“...brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”⁴³

And finally, the apostle closes this wonderful section of exhortation with a marvelous affirmation. Notice verse 14. He says:

“For sin shall not be master over you.”⁴⁴

Isn't that a comforting thought?

⁴⁰ Romans 6:11-13.

⁴¹ Romans 6:13.

⁴² Romans 12:1.

⁴³ Romans 12:1-2.

⁴⁴ Romans 6:14.

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“For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law.”⁴⁵

In other words, the condemnation of the law. But, he says, “under grace.” That is, the supernatural power of saving grace that will continue to transform you into the image of Christ.

Dear Christian, don't impede the work of the Spirit and this wonderful race that he has set before you. Make it your habit to know the truths of your identity, to affirm them in your heart. You are alive to God in Christ. And then live them out by your will as Paul said in Philippians 2:13:

“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”⁴⁶

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for these liberating truths. But, Lord, we realize that for those who do not know you, this is a bunch of foolishness and only by your convicting power can they possibly see the truths. Oh, Lord, we would cry out to you that you would be merciful to them, that you would give them eyes to see and ears to hear that they might repent of their sins, that they might be so overwhelmed with their wickedness that they will literally cry out for mercy that they do not deserve, a mercy that none of us have deserved. Lord, we pray that they would be saved today. For those of us that know and love you, as we struggle with sin as I do, as we all do. Lord, cause these truths to bear much fruit in our hearts that we might become more like the Savior who has transformed us. I ask all of this in the name of Jesus and for his sake. Amen.

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⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Philippians 2:12-13.

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