

Dead to Sin, Alive to God

Romans 6:5-11

5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.

8 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.

In Romans 6 the Apostle Paul is driving home a truth: As believers in Jesus Christ, as those who have been justified through faith, we no longer have the same relationship to sin we once had. In other words, when a person comes to Christ, not only are we acquitted of our guilt of sin, but we are transformed into a new person who does not continue to live in sin.

When we turn to Christ and put our faith into Christ, we are never again related to sin like we used to be. That's the whole point. Paul is proving that our union with Jesus Christ is completely opposed to a life of continuing sin. In chapter 6 Paul is expanding on the question he asked in verse 2, **"How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"**

Last time we saw that our baptism pictures the spiritual union that believers have with the Lord Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection so that we have died to sin and have risen to walk in newness of life. Verse 5 explains why we can live this new life, **"For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection."**

The truth of verse 5 has two parts: 1) We have been joined with Christ in the likeness of His death; and 2) We also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.

In verses 6-7 Paul develops the first half of verse 5, explaining how we have become united with Christ in His death, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin. In 8-10 he develops the second half of verse 5, explaining how we shall also live with Christ. Salvation means we are identified with Christ's death and resurrection in such a real and powerful way that our union with Him means a decisive break with sin and a new life with God.

I think Paul's goal for believers here is really the same as the apostle John's when he writes in 1 John 2:1, **"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin."** Paul wants us to have victory over sin. In chapter 7 Paul is going to describe the on-going battle he has with sin. So here in chapter 6 he lays the foundational truths on which we can stand victorious over sin. He wants us to see that Christ's death and resurrection not only paid the penalty for our sin, but also provided the power that we need to overcome sin on a daily basis.

The big idea here is: **Victory over sin comes from being joined with Christ in His death and resurrection.** I hope this message will lay the ground work for overcoming sin in your life.

1. Understand your Union with Christ (6:5)

Listen to verse 5 again, **“For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.”** Focus on the words, “united together.” This means, literally, to be grown together with, or grafted into Christ. It is the idea of being inseparably joined with Jesus. How are we joined to Him? First we are united **“in the likeness of His death,”** and then **“in the likeness of His resurrection.”**

We already saw in verses 3-4 that when Christ died, in a sense we died. In what sense is this true? How is our death like Christ’s death? Christ died physically, He gave up His life unto death. He died for sin, not His own but ours. Our union with Christ brings us the spiritual benefits of His death. We have not died physically yet, but when we are united to Christ by faith, we participated in His death to sin.

Still don’t get it? Paul explains it further in verses 6-7:

2. Know that your old person is dead so that you don’t have to sin (6:6-7)

Verse 6 says, **“knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”**

In the context here the **“old man”** represents what we were in Adam (5:12-19). Believers are no longer in Adam, but now we are in Christ. So when Paul says that **“our old man was crucified with Him,”** he means that what we were before we were saved died with Christ. Remember last time we talked about death being a separation. There is a complete separation between what we were under the reign of sin and death in Adam and what we have become under the reign of grace to eternal life in Christ. Our old life has ended.

Colossians 3:9-10 expresses this same truth: **“Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.”** Our old man has died, we have put him off, thrown him away like an old, dirty, worn out garment. We have put on the new man.

In 2 Corinthians 5 Paul explains this further. In 2 Cor. 5:14-15 he writes, **“For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.”** When Christ died, we died with Him with the result that we should no longer live for sin. So Paul concludes in 2 Cor. 5:17, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”**

Verse 6 says the result of the death of the old man is, **“that the body of sin might be done away with.”**

The phrase “body of sin” refers to your literal body as a tool of sin. Sin originates in the heart through the mind. But sin always works its way out through our physical body. Sin worked through your tongue to say lies and ugly words. Sin worked through your eyes to look at impure things. Sin worked through your ears to listen to slander and gossip. Sin worked through your feet to carry you places you shouldn’t go. Sin worked through your stomach to eat to the point of gluttony and drink to the point of drunkenness. Without Christ, your body was truly a “helpless tool of sin.”

But now the power of sin has been broken. The phrase “**done away with**” literally means “rendered powerless.” Like an engine with no spark plugs, like an appliance with no plug, your body can no longer be a tool of sin unless you choose to let it happen. In other words, as Paul concludes verse 6, “**that we should no longer be slaves of sin.**” The power of sin to control us has been broken by our union with Christ.

Verse 7 explains why this power of sin to control us is broken. “**For he who has died has been freed from sin.**” The literal translation is, “**for he who has died has been justified from sin.**” This word, “freed” or “justified” is the same word that Paul has been using for three chapters now to describe how we are made right with God through faith. It means that because of Christ’s sacrificial death God no longer counts our sin against us, but instead He credits Christ’s righteousness to our account.

I think what Paul is getting at is this: justification is the basis for our sanctification. We are made right with God so that we would be holy before God. But not only is justification the basis for our sanctification, I believe Paul is teaching that justification ensures our sanctification. Salvation not only takes away the penalty of our sin it breaks the power of sin over us.

J. Alistair Brown used this illustration:

Walking through a park, I passed a massive oak tree. A vine had grown up along its trunk. The vine started small - nothing to bother about. But over the years the vine had gotten taller and taller. By the time I passed, the entire lower half of the tree was covered by the vine's creepers. The mass of tiny feelers was so thick that the tree looked as though it had innumerable birds' nests in it.

Now the tree was in danger. This huge, solid oak was quite literally being taken over; the life was being squeezed from it. But the gardeners in that park had seen the danger.

They had taken a saw and severed the trunk of the vine - one neat cut across the middle. The tangled mass of the vine's branches still clung to the oak, but the vine was now dead. That would gradually become plain as weeks passed and the creepers began to die and fall away from the tree. Christ's death has cut the power of sin.

Yes, the "creepers" of sin still cling and have some effect. But sin's power is severed by Christ, and gradually, sin's grip dries up and falls away.

Charles Wesley’s great hymn says,

He breaks the power of canceled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.

When you come to Christ, there is a distinct break with your old life. We are no longer to be slaves to sin. So if you claim to be a Christian and yet you are still enslaved to sin, at the very least you do not understand your old man was crucified with Christ—and at worst, you are deceiving yourself and you have not truly been saved. Paul would ask you (6:2), “**How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?**”

We have looked at what it means to be united with Christ in the likeness of His death. But the second half of verse 5 says, “**certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.**” Verses 8-10 explain this further.

3. Know that Christ’s resurrection brings a life of victory over sin (6:8-10)

Verse 8 restates verse 5 and calls for us to believe it. **“Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.”** You may have noticed that in both verse 5 and verse 8 Paul speaks about our future resurrection, the verbs are both future tense. Verse 5, **“we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.”** And verse 8, **“we shall also live with Him.”**

There is coming a future day of the resurrection of our bodies when we will experience complete victory over sin. Sin will no longer be possible. We will be saved from the very presence of sin. Although that resurrection is not yet fulfilled in us, it is a certainty.

It is guaranteed by Christ's resurrection. That's what verse 9 teaches, **“knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.”** Christ's resurrection proves that He won the victory over sin. Why? Because as Paul will say in 6:23, **“The wages of sin is death.”** Sin brings death and the sting of death is sin. But Christ as verse 10 says, Christ's death for sin was the final payment: **“For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all.”** So death cannot rule over Christ because He died for sin once for all time. His resurrection proves that Christ has paid the penalty for sin and broken its power over us.

Christ's death and resurrection completely and finally conquered sin and death. The promise that we will one day share completely in this victory gives us the desire and power to overcome sin right now.

So the conclusion and application is in verse 11,

4. Consider Yourself Dead to Sin and Alive to God (6:11)

11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The verb “reckon” is in the present tense and means, *“keep on counting it to be true.”* Just as Christ died once to sin, so you should consider yourselves in Him to be done with sin. Just as Christ has risen from the dead and now lives for God, so should you live in Him. You don't count it to be true because you feel dead to sin and alive to God, but rather because God says that it is true. And the truest thing about you is not what you feel, but what God declares to be true.

This isn't just a mind game, where you tell yourself over and over that it's true until it actually becomes true. It is renewing your mind with the truth of God so that you begin to live that way. It is a fact, the truth, that you have died with Christ and are alive in Him, united in the likeness of His death and resurrection.

What Paul says is that counting on this fact, considering it true day-by-day and minute-by-minute is the key to victory over sin. Counting our union with Christ in His death and resurrection to be true and to be ours, this is the key to overcoming sin.

Salvador was a Cuban spy, sent to Miami as a mole in order to learn military secrets from the United States government. However, American Cuban nationalists with whom Salvador associated incognito eventually led the clever spy to renounce his loyalties to Castro. As a result, Salvador turned himself in to the United States government and they offered asylum, protection, and a new identity. The government masterminded a “murder” of Salvador so Castro's officials would assume the death of their spy, and once this plan was carried out Salvador was issued new documents, a new name, and a new life.

That is what happen to you. With Christ you have died to your old life and you are really a new person with a new life. It is Christ's death and resurrection that gives you the power to live free from sin.