

# United in Death and Life

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'd like you to open up your Bibles, if you have a Bible with you, to Romans chapter 6.

If you don't have a Bible with you, the words will of course be on the screen, but there are also plenty of Bibles out in the chairs among you, and I encourage you to use one of those Bibles so that you can have something in your hands, so that you can look down and see the context in which the passage occurs this morning that we're going to take a look at.

In case you haven't been with us over these last several months, we've actually as a church been walking through the book of Romans, and we are in the middle of chapter 6, and this morning we're going to remain there because the Apostle Paul deals with the implications, the ramifications of the resurrection of Jesus here in Romans chapter 6 for us.

And so we're going to read this morning, beginning in verse 5 of chapter 6 and going down to verse 11. We also like to stand together as we read God's Word, so I want to ask you guys if you would stand with me this morning while we read.

Romans chapter 6, beginning in verse 5, For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.

[ 1 : 20 ] We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin.

Now, if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

For the death He died, He died to sin once for all, but the life He lives, He lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Father, we are thankful for these words and thankful for the Spirit who inspired them and who will help us to understand them now. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. You guys take a seat. There probably has been, no doubt, in the history of team sports, there probably has been some team somewhere where you would look at that team and say that every player on that team was absolutely essential to winning the championship, to being the greatest team at that time.

[ 2 : 33 ] But most of the time, when you look at most sports teams that win, whether it's a football team winning the Super Bowl or baseball team winning the World Series or basketball team winning the Finals, whatever it might be, most of the time, when you look at a particular sports team, there's someone on the team, if not multiple someones on the team, that if we're really honest, it didn't really matter whether they were on the team or not.

The team was going to win the championship that year. It just doesn't matter. I don't think it really matters this past year who the third string quarterback for the Patriots was. I don't think it matters. He never got into the game very often.

He certainly didn't play at all in the Super Bowl. It just didn't matter. Because there are always great players on great teams. I know we always say it's a team effort, and that's true.

You can have the greatest player in the world and yet lose every championship because he doesn't have anybody else around him. But nevertheless, almost all great championship teams, whatever sport it is, there's a great player or a couple of great players on that team that just rise above.

And you know just by watching them play that they're cut above everyone else. I mean, everybody on any sort of professional sports team is better than all of us because they made it on the team. They're a thousand times better than we are.

[ 3 : 48 ] The worst player in the NBA would destroy any of us on any given day if we set out to play them. That's true, and we know that. But we also know that there are those guys that are just above and beyond, and without them, teams wouldn't normally win championships.

So you've got to feel pretty good if you're a guy on a team who never actually gets in the game, who never plays, but because that guy's on your team, at the end of the year, you're going to get a ring, or you're going to get a trophy, you're going to get your name put on a plaque.

Not because you actually did anything, not because of your great accomplishments on the field or on the court, but because those guys are on your team. That guy or those two guys, they're on your team, and they win.

That's what they do. They dominate everybody else. When they enter the game, they're going to win, and you win by virtue of being connected to them, just by virtue of having the same jersey that they have.

We see something similar to that in the Bible. We see something similar to that here in Romans chapter 6, because Paul labors throughout this book to tell us that we must be connected to Jesus.

[ 5 : 04 ] We must be united to Jesus. We must have some sort of connection, and the nature of that connection is we must believe in Him. We must know that His accomplishments become our accomplishments.

And that may seem foreign to you until you begin to think about experiences that you've had in your own life. Because we've never been professional athletes, but a lot of us played in sports, or maybe you were in a band growing up, and there were great players in that band that made you look better than you were.

Maybe you played on a sports team in Little League or whatever, and you had a great player on your team, and because of that great player, you got first place, but you didn't actually do anything. That was my experience about every other year playing sports growing up.

The reason is because I am almost exactly one year, nine months younger than my brother, which means that every other year I was on his team, pretty much.

I mean, the math doesn't always work out that way, but about every other year I was on his team. So the years that I was on his team and a couple of his friends, I got a trophy. On the years that I wasn't on his team, I might get a participation ribbon, or if I worked really hard, I would get the award that sounds like a great reward, but it's not always a great reward, most improved player.

[ 6 : 21 ] That basically just means you stunk on the first day, you didn't stink as much on the last day. I got a few of those things too, all right? I was willing to work hard, but I wasn't the championship player.

I wasn't the guy that was going to lead the team to victory. But I understood, I knew what it was like to know that you were on that team, to know that by virtue of my connection with this team, and particularly with these particular players on this team, there's a really good chance I'm going to get a trophy at the end of this year.

Not because I'm great, because they are. We've experienced that to a certain degree at different times in our lives. But in Christ, in Christ we can have all that He has won.

all the reward that He deserves for living a perfect, sinless life. More than that, we are told in the book of Romans and throughout the Bible that if we are connected to Jesus by faith in Him, then all the mess-ups that we've made, every sin that we have ever committed, He takes upon Himself.

It's not just that we get His victory, it's that He's willing to bear the brunt of our loss. It's that He is willing to take upon Himself the very wrath of God that we deserve for our sins.

[ 7 : 44 ] Paul says in Romans that Jesus in His death has defeated the condemning power of sin over our lives, that we're guilty, that we deserve to be punished for our sins, and yet Jesus on the cross defeated the condemning power of sin over our lives.

But He also says here in Romans chapter 6 that He has defeated the power of sin over our lives that keeps us in bondage, that continues to make us do the things that we don't know why we do them.

We don't know why we keep making these choices. We don't understand why we keep treading the same paths over and over, making the same mistakes over and over. And the reason Paul tells us is that apart from Christ, we're slaves of sin.

Sin is a power over us that doesn't just condemn us to judgment someday. Sin is a power over us that condemns us to repetition, that condemns us to continuing to remain in sin and committing sin.

And Paul says that Jesus, by His death, has defeated that power of sin over us. In fact, you can see it in Romans chapter 6.

[ 9 : 01 ] You can see it in the verses that we've read. Paul says that we have been united with Jesus in a death like His. He says in verse 6, we know that our old self, that's the sinful you, our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin, your sinful nature, might be brought to nothing so that we wouldn't be enslaved to sin anymore.

That's what Jesus accomplished in His death. Not just freeing you from the penalty of sin, but from the present power of sin over your life.

And yet, there is so much more in this passage. Because Jesus did not merely die for us, He also rose for us.

Paul doesn't say that by faith we get to receive all the benefits of Jesus' death and then stop there. He says that by faith we get to receive all the benefits of His death, but also all the benefits of His resurrection.

I know typically when we think about the resurrection of Jesus, we sort of categorize it in our minds. The resurrection of Jesus serves as great testimony or evidence or proof that Jesus really is who He claimed to be.

[ 10 : 20 ] And that's absolutely true. The resurrection stands as sort of a stamp upon all that Jesus did. A stamp of approval. A seal telling us that everything that He said, everything that He did was absolutely true.

Because if any man told you, I'm going to be killed by these people over here, and then three days later I'm going to come back from the dead, and then that happened, you would be inclined to think everything else they said must be true.

Because who predicts a thing like that? Who says a thing like that is going to happen and then it actually comes to fruition? You would be inclined to say everything this man has done, everything this man has said must indeed be true.

Because He said He was going to rise from the dead, which doesn't happen. And He rose from the dead. In fact, if you talk to most people who say that they are not Christians, they do not believe in the claims of Christianity, people who actually are thoughtful about this, people who actually give reasons for not believing in Christianity, it usually boils down to something very simple.

And the reason is this, dead people don't come back to life. Not people who've been dead for three days. You can resuscitate somebody after several minutes, and sometimes even after a couple of hours we've seen that happen.

[ 11 : 46 ] But days? That's time for decay to set in. That's real death. And people will say, that doesn't happen. And since that doesn't happen, I cannot believe the claims of Christianity.

That's easy to say 2,000 years removed from the event. But if you lived in the first century, that would have been a much harder claim to make.

Much more difficult. In fact, I want you to hold in Romans 6, and I want you to turn over to 1 Corinthians chapter 15, which is, out of all of the Bible, is the greatest chapter that deals with the resurrection of Jesus and all that it means.

And Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 is really blunt. He's very clear. He doesn't hold back. In fact, if you look down in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 13, he says plainly, if there's no resurrection of the dead, in other words, if that's not possible, if that doesn't happen, if there's no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain and your faith is vain and we are found to be misrepresenting God because we testified about God that He raised Christ when He did not raise Him.

[ 13 : 00 ] If it is true that the dead are not raised. If the dead are not raised, he says, not even Christ has been raised. Why would he be willing to say something like that? Why would he be willing to pit everything he's ever done in his ministry, all of his preaching, why would he be willing to say?

It all hinges on the resurrection because of what he says a few minutes earlier, a few verses earlier. Verse 3, I deliver to you of first importance what I also received.

Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures. He was buried and He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scripture. Now, listen to this. That He appeared to Cephas. That's another name for Peter.

The risen Christ, He says, appeared to Peter. He saw Him. It wasn't a rumor. Then He appeared to the twelve. That is, the rest of His disciples.

He appeared to them. It wasn't a dream that Peter had. It wasn't like one or two people thought they saw Him or made up a rumor. All twelve of them. He appeared to all of them.

[ 14 : 03 ] But not just that. Verse 6, Then He appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some of them have fallen asleep.

Then He appeared to James. Then to all the apostles. And then last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me. So Paul is willing to make the claim that everything I preach hinges upon whether or not Jesus was raised from the dead because He has ready proof at hand.

He appeared to me. He appeared to Peter. He appeared to His own brother James. He appeared to the rest of the apostles and the disciples. More importantly, though, He appeared in those 40 days between when He was raised from the dead and when He ascended into heaven.

Paul says He appeared to over 500 brothers. And most of them, he says, still alive. You want to go talk to them? Hop on a boat, head over to Palestine, go to the Jerusalem area, and there some of them are still around.

In fact, at this time, those 500 have been scattered all over the place, and so you could find them in many cities. You could find many, many people alive when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians who saw Jesus resurrected, saw Him alive after everyone had seen Him die on a cross in view of the whole public.

[ 15 : 23 ] He was alive. They saw Him. Paul's not worried that His hinging, all of His preaching upon the reality of the resurrection is going to cause Him to falter in any way.

He's certain of the resurrection. So it's easy 2,000 years ago to doubt a historical event. But you couldn't do that in Paul's day with a whole lot of credibility because Paul would just say, look, I've got like 500 people who saw it.

Go talk to them. Check it out. I saw Him. Peter saw Him. James saw Him. We saw Him. We're not making this stuff up. There are hundreds of people who can corroborate this basic fact.

And so, it is a good thing that we can look back at the resurrection as a real historical event that actually occurred and we can say because of the resurrection, we can say that all the claims of Jesus are verified.

We can say that everything Jesus did, everything Jesus said is shown to be true. He's authentic. He really is who He claimed to be. He said He was the Son of God.

[ 16 : 29 ] He is the Son of God. He said He was the Son of Man, of Daniel. He is the Son of Man, of Daniel. He said He was the King of Israel. He's the King of Israel. He said that He's the Messiah.

He's the Messiah. He said that He's God in the flesh. He's God in the flesh. All the things that He said about Himself are proven to be true by the reality of the resurrection, testified at the time of the writing of the New Testament by hundreds of people who saw Him.

That's just historical reality. And so it's good to point to the resurrection and say, see, it's proof that Jesus is who He claims to be and that's what we normally do at Easter.

That's what I do a lot of times with Easter sermons. I want to do something a little bit differently this morning because Paul does something a little bit differently here in Romans chapter 6.

Rather than looking backward and seeing how the resurrection of Jesus proves things that He did and said then, I want us to see two ways in which the resurrection matters for us, for you, for me, now and in the future.

[ 17 : 34 ] I don't want us to merely view the resurrection as a great historical event that testifies to the reality of what we believe. That's good. We ought to do that. But I want us to see and savor all that the resurrection means for us now and in the future.

So let's start with the future because that's clearest here in the verses that we read. Take a look back again in Romans. Turn back in your Bibles there to Romans chapter 6 verse 5.

Paul says, If we have been united with Christ in a death like His, we shall certainly, that's future tense, this is going to happen someday, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.

It's going to happen, Paul says. If we've trusted in Jesus so that His death counts as our death, then we're also going to have His life count as our life and there's going to be a day when we join Him in resurrection.

Yes, we're going to physically die. That's still a basic fact of life. But, Paul says, if we're united with Him in His death, if we trust Him, if we believe in Him, there's coming a day when we're going to rise with Him.

[ 18 : 51 ] We're going to experience in a real, physical way the very same thing that Jesus experienced when He rose from the dead. Our bodies will come back to life incredible as that may seem.

That, he says, is coming in the future. He says it again. verse 8. Now, if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will, future tense, we will also live with Him.

Christ's resurrection is the promise that someday we too can have the same kind of resurrection life and that resurrection life, unlike the physical life we live now, that life endures forever.

forever. That's why in verse 23 of this chapter he's able to say that the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, everlasting life, life that never ends.

That's not merely some sort of spiritual reality that we get to sense and feel. That's real, physical existence that goes on forever in a real body.

[ 20 : 02 ] Granted, bodies that don't grow old anymore, that's got to be nice. Bodies that don't decay, that's got to be nice. Bodies that don't suffer from sickness, but real human bodies that live forever.

No more of this Tom and Jerry view of the afterlife where we float up as ghosts into the clouds and get a halo and sit on the clouds and strum harps. No.

That's not the biblical picture of eternity. The biblical picture is you died with Christ, you're going to be raised with Christ, and you're going to live forever in a real, physical body.

But it's even grander than that. Hold your place, turn over two chapters, maybe just one page in your Bibles to Romans chapter 8. Paul says in Romans chapter 8, verse 18, that he considers the sufferings of this present time.

They're not worth comparing to the glory that is to be revealed to us. The glory he's talking about is resurrection glory. Because he says in verse 11, if the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal dying bodies.

[ 21 : 16 ] He's going to do it. So now he says, all that we experience, all the suffering in this world, doesn't compare to the glory of resurrection that awaits us.

But wait. Verse 19, for the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. More resurrection language. The whole universe is waiting for the resurrection of those who are in Christ.

Think about that. The whole universe is waiting for this. Eagerly expecting this event to take place. And people get upset when we say that Christianity is the only way.

When we say that Jesus is the only way to life, people think we're being narrow. Listen, this is not merely about drawing boundaries around what we as human beings ought or can believe or what will do things for us.

This is cosmic. This, Paul is saying, is universal in the grandest sense of the term. This is not just about humans. This is not just drawing boundaries for us.

[ 22 : 30 ] The entire universe waits with eager expectation for the day when we receive the promise of resurrection life.

This is bigger than us. This is more than just you personally receiving life. Everything waits for this. He says more.

Verse 20, the creation was subjected to futility not willingly but because of him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in pains with childbirth until now and not only the creation but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the spirit we groan inwardly as we eagerly wait for our adoption as sons the redemption of our bodies.

Everything is waiting for that day. Creation is groaning. Why? Because in our resurrection in our final full ultimate redemption all of the universe is set right.

[ 23 : 43 ] All of the decay that exists in the universe around us all the death that exists in the world around us will be erased when Jesus returns and raises his people from the dead to give them everlasting life in real bodies in a real world that has been remade and refashioned and recreated.

This is cosmic. This is universal in scope. If you think that you can dismiss Christianity as just one more of another options available among the religions then you've underestimated the claims of Christianity.

You've underestimated the claims of Jesus. Jesus does not sit beside Buddha or Muhammad or anyone else. He sits alone resurrected exalted and only those who are in him receive resurrection life on this day.

Only those who are in him. but Paul does not merely say hope in the future no matter what's happening now hope in the future something better is coming.

That's true but he says a little bit more than that here in chapter 6 because the life that we receive through the resurrection of Jesus is not just future physical life as important as that is but the life that we receive through the resurrection of Jesus Christ is also present spiritual life overcoming the spiritual deadness that we have apart from Jesus.

[ 25 : 26 ] Let me show you what I mean back into Romans chapter 6 Paul says in verse 7 the one who has died has been set free from sin if we've died with Christ we believe that we will also live with him future and we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again death no longer has dominion over him that's everlasting life for the death he died to sin once for all but the life he lives he lives present tense to God present tense the life that Jesus lives is in the present he says and then so you also you must consider yourselves dead to sin and presently alive to God in Christ Jesus presently know believe consider count yourself to be presently alive to God in Christ Jesus just as Christ lives to God because of his resurrection so also now he says consider yourself to be alive to

God or as he says in verse 4 of this chapter just as we were buried with him by baptism into death in order that Christ was raised from the dead to the glory of the father so we to might walk in newness of life walk now in newness of life he's saying that the resurrection has present implications for us the resurrection brings life to us right now when we trust in him you see apart from Jesus without Christ we find ourselves spiritually dead dead spiritually no real spiritual life to be spoken of that's why Paul can say in Romans 3 that there's no one righteous not even one he can make a broad statement like that because he knows apart from Jesus we can't do things that are really in God's sight righteous we can't apart from Christ we don't have the ability to do that it's just not in us but when we trust in

Jesus he doesn't just promise us life in the future he gives us spiritual life now take a look at what he says in Ephesians if you'll turn over a few pages in your Bible to the book of Ephesians this is so important for us to see the present implications of the resurrection in Ephesians chapter 2 Paul says regarding people apart from Jesus you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked that's the reality of existence outside of Christ for human beings apart from Jesus apart from faith in him dead in trespasses and sins dead spiritually dead but look down a few verses but God verse 4 being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in trespasses!

God made us alive together with Christ and then look at how he describes that being brought to life in verse 6 says he raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus!

another way of saying he made us alive or raised us with

[ 30 : 20 ] Christ created in Christ for good works which means that those who've been raised with Christ made alive created anew have been made that way for the sake of good works the things that we couldn't do before more detail though is in Colossians chapter!

3 it's just a couple of! over from Ephesians if you're tracking along otherwise you can just look to the screen in Colossians chapter 3 Paul says if then you have been raised with Christ that's what we're talking about spiritual resurrection then seek the things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God set your minds on things above and not on things that are on the earth because if you have died your life is hidden with Christ in God you have new life now and now rather than be consumed by the things of this earth you can set your sights on better things so he's going to describe negatively the things on the earth the things that we have now been set free from as followers of Jesus verse 5 put to death therefore what is earthly in you sexual immorality impurity passion evil desire covetousness which is idolatry on account of these the wrath of God is coming he says you used to walk in this way this was your life this is who you were in these things you once walked when you were living in them but now you must put them all away anger wrath malice slander obscene talk from your mouth he could add more to the list but he stops here we have sexual immorality idolatry anger wrath malice slander obscene talk you might say

I didn't do all that some of it but I didn't do all of it well the point here is not that everybody does all of these things but these are the kinds of things that dominate our lives apart from Jesus because as much as we try to convince ourselves that we're pretty good we're not bad we're pretty good people the truth of the matter is we see these things put in black and white and then we see them in our lives we see covetousness we see sexual immorality which before we thought of as no big deal but now it's singled out as belonging to the sinful life of this world we see that yes we are at times consumed with anger and wrath yes we have participated at times in obscene talk saying things using words in ways that do not honor God we begin to see yeah I guess even though I thought compared to my neighbor or my co-worker I was pretty good yeah I guess this is who I am apart from



Jesus but then in Christ verse 12 put on then as God's chosen ones holy and beloved compassionate hearts kindness humility meekness patience bearing with one another forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you and he says above all this to put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony prior to Christ those other things categorized us described us but now in Christ these things have the possibility of describing who we are we can now become compassionate kind we can be humble we can be patient we can be forgiving because we have been forgiven and then most important all we can put on love which binds us and unites us together look at verse 11 Paul says here in Christ here there's not Greek and Jew circumcised uncircumcised barbarian Scythian slave free but Christ is all and in all you want to know the solution the ultimate real solution to racism you know the solution to it it's not a program it's not better education in the schools that's not going to do it it's not even going to happen when we when we put minorities in positions of power if that were the case then racism would have been eliminated now the solution to racism the solution to division the solution to social division is Christ it's the gospel of

Jesus Christ it's in Christ that there's no longer Greek or Jew it's in Christ that we don't count people as a slave or a barbarian it's in Christ that those distinctions are erased and eradicated and only in Christ do we find lasting solutions to the sins of society and the sins of our own hearts you don't know why you struggle sometimes some people struggle with the same sins over and over and over just quite simply because they're still dead in sins and they haven't trusted in Jesus others followers of Jesus struggle with the same sins over and over because they're not making use of the life that they've been given they're not putting these things that Paul says on compassion and kindness they're not putting them on they're not fighting with the strength and life that they have within them now against the ways of their former life but the reality is apart from

[ 35 : 56 ] Jesus apart from him we don't have the strength to be the kind of people that we'd like to be and with him we do it's all the difference in the world and all of that power all of that life is available to us because Jesus rose from the dead and those who are united to him by faith one with him by faith receive not just forgiveness of sins but freedom from the power of sin and life to be lived out and that's why we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus not just because it proves that he is who he says he is that's important because the resurrection of Jesus promises us life in the future that lasts forever and real vital spiritual life in the present for victory over the things that would condemn us again there's power if we would understand the meaning of

Easter I came across this article the other day by the British Prime Minister in which he wrote about the meaning of Easter of course in England they still have an official state church and so there's still a lot of connections between official connections between Christianity and the government unlike what we experience here in America and so often times their leaders are given over to saying something even though it's a really secular country they're given to say something about religion and the Prime Minister of England this year says this he says I am an unapologetic supporter of the role of faith in this country and he says and for me the key point is this values of Easter and the Christian religion compassion forgiveness kindness hard work responsibility those are values we can all celebrate and share later on toward the end of his article he says

I want to end my argument with this I hope everyone can share in the belief of trying to lift people up rather than count people out those values and principles are not the exclusive preserve of one faith or religion they're something I hope everyone in our country believes that is he says after all the heart of the Christian message it's the principle around which the Easter celebration is built Easter is all about remembering the importance of change responsibility and doing to which I say no it's not those are good things those are things that really can only ultimately happen in our lives if Christ has defeated the power of sin and infused us with his life true enough but the principle around which Easter is built is not the importance of remembering change or responsibility or doing the right thing Easter exists because we have not done the right thing Easter exists because we have not been responsible because we have not shown compassion and forgiveness and kindness because we have not been hard workers we have not been responsible people we do not though we laud those values we do not exercise them in our daily lives without fail if we did we wouldn't need a crucified and risen Savior that's not what Easter is about

Easter is about a Savior who died for your sins and rose to give you life and my prayer for you this Easter is that you would not get caught up in the secularization of Christianity the ruining of the only religion that ultimately matters because we can say good and kind things about Jesus we can say good and kind things about the Christian religion or we can curse them it does not matter if you do not trust in him and experience his death as your death and his life is your life let's pray