

Dead to Sin, Alive to God

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[0 : 0 0] We are in Romans chapter 6 this morning, and we're going to be covering a little bit of ground, first 11 verses of this chapter.

And so as you turn there in your Bibles, if you're using one of the Bibles that we have scattered around in the chairs, it begins on page 942 and continues to 943. I want everybody to get their Bibles open.

I know it's on the screen, but it's also helpful for you to have it in your hands, whether that's on your phone or whether that's in a printed Bible. All right? All right, you guys, I want to ask you to stand with me as we read God's Word together.

The Apostle Paul writes here in chapter 6, What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means.

How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

[1 : 1 0] We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

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. 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.

But the 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 that 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.

We are grateful for this word. We are grateful, Father, for the continuation in this book of the great truth that we have seen over the last several months.

[2 : 2 3] And ask for Your Spirit's help and understanding. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. You guys take a seat. We have been since last June walking steadily through the book of Romans.

It's taken us until now, in the middle of March, to get to chapter 6. And I feel like studying through the book of Romans is like going to the world's largest and greatest buffet.

Not like the nasty buffets that have, you know, weak old rice sitting out there. And who knows how old meat that's been sitting out there drying under the lamps. But a good buffet. A gourmet buffet. With table after table of food.

And there's no way that you can eat everything that's there. There's no way that you can dive as deeply into every entree as you would like to dive. So that even though we've been going what might feel to some of you at a slow pace through the book of Romans.

I feel, looking back on the first five chapters, that there's so many things that we could have dwelt upon. So many things that we could have sat and just tasted and enjoyed and had more of.

[3 : 29] And yet, at some point you have to move on to the next entree. To the next table. Well, at some point you have to move from the appetizer to the main course. And then to dessert. You have to move from table to table.

You have to eat a little bit of every part of the buffet. And so that's sort of what we've been doing. We began in chapter 1 with Paul's introduction. But then at the middle of chapter 1, he begins to lay out for us what is the main course of Romans.

The doctrine. Justification by faith alone. But he starts in verse 18 of chapter 1 by showing us how sinful we are. How desperately in need of saving we are.

And he continues that for two chapters. All the way up to chapter 3, verse 19. We get two full chapters of, You're a sinner and the wrath of God is coming upon you. Two full chapters of that.

That's a fine way to begin a meal. But then the main course. But through faith in Jesus we can have our sins forgiven. Our sins punished.

[4 : 31] Not in ourselves, but in Christ upon the cross. And His perfect righteousness. His life of obedience completed. And His obedient death on the cross counted for us.

And in our place. And then you arrive at chapter 5. Half of chapter 3 and all of chapter 4 are devoted to explaining justification by faith. And chapter 5 then begins to add foundation to that.

And help us to feel assured that through faith Christ's righteousness really does belong to us. And the benefits that flow out of His death really do belong to us. Until you arrive at the second half of chapter 5.

Where you have that great explanation of how Adam stands as the head of all humanity. But Jesus stands as the head of a new humanity. And if you're in Adam, then his sin counts as yours.

And you still need saving. But if by faith you are in Christ, His righteousness belongs to you. And in God's sight you are righteous and holy and perfect.

[5 : 35] And counted as having obeyed perfectly throughout your entire life. But last week we saw that at the very end of chapter 5, Paul says something that's a bit strange.

He says that in light of this overarching large view of history of two figures. Adam and Christ standing as the heads of two humanities. He says though then that the law came in in the midst of that history.

The law came in and the purpose of the law according to Paul in God's mind was not to deal a death blow to the problem of sin. Not to solve the problem of sin that we have.

But to exacerbate it. The law came in to increase the trespass, he says. So that grace might be seen to be all the greater. The law's purpose is to make sin bigger and stronger and more deadly to us.

So that when grace triumphs over our sin, it's an even greater victory. Imagine if you will a veteran boxer. At the end of his career, but he's still a great boxer.

[6 : 42] Everyone knows that he's a great and fine boxer. He's had a great career, wins and losses here and there, but he's known to be a great boxer. And suppose he has one match left in his career.

If that one match that he has left is against a small, scrawny, inexperienced, amateur boxer, and he comes out and he wins the match, everyone would say, well, that was good.

He won his last match. It's a victory. It's still a win. But imagine if the veteran boxer's last fight is against the champ, the heavyweight champion of the world, the most fearsome fighter known in the world at the time.

And imagine the veteran overcoming and winning a victory over the champion. His victory is all that much greater. His legacy has grown. He is now seen to be an even greater boxer.

He's still the same boxer. He still possesses the same punching power as if he defeats the young, inexperienced amateur. But when you bring in the champion, when you bring in the larger challenge, the skills of the veteran are magnified so that we can see them for what they are.

[7 : 48] And that's what the law does. The law magnifies and amplifies our sin. It turns mere sin into a breaking of the law into transgression so that when the grace of God overcomes your sin, and if the grace of God enters your life, it will overcome your sin.

It's seen as a greater victory. The greater the sin, the more glory God gets from showing His grace to be even more powerful.

Strange way to end the section on justification by faith, and it leads to an inevitable question at the beginning of chapter 6. Notice, Paul is turning a major corner in chapter 6.

We're moving from chapter 6 to a focus on the solution to the guilt of sin over us. Now in chapter 6, we're going to begin to focus on a solution to the problem of our actual sinful lifestyles.

In other words, we're moving from chapters 1 through 5 of talking about how to get right with God and have His righteousness counted for us to chapters 6 through 8, how to actually produce our own righteousness in our lives.

[9 : 00] But he has a question to open up chapter 6 that flows from what he has said about the triumph of grace at the end of chapter 5. And it's a logical question. What shall we say then?

Are we to continue in sin, remain in sin, that grace may abound? That's logical. If the weight and size and depth of your sin only magnifies the power of God's grace to overcome your sin, then why not conclude, well, let's just sin some more.

Let's grow more steeped in our sinfulness so that the grace of God could be magnified even beyond what it's magnified now as it overcomes the sin that I've already committed.

Why not just do more? It's a logical inference from everything that Paul has said here. It makes perfect sense to think that way. It means that we have rightly understood the doctrine of justification as we've walked through here.

Because Paul's answer to that question is, no, no, no, no. No. No. That's not the answer at all. That's not a correct conclusion. He does not say, oh, you misunderstood me.

[10 : 13] I didn't mean that you're justified by faith apart from any kind of works. I didn't mean that it's all of grace. I just meant it's mostly of grace.

He doesn't say that. The question flows from a right understanding of what he said so far that it's all of grace, that your standing before God has nothing to do with things that you do and perform.

It's all grace. And so then the question, why not magnify grace more by continuing in sin?

He's turning a major corner here as we begin to talk about the practicalities of how does a Christian live? What does the Christian life look like if conversion looks like simple faith in Jesus and nothing more?

Then what of the Christian life? But I can't move on just yet. I feel as if we need one more taste of the doctrine of justification this morning before we move in to what it means to live as a Christian.

[11 : 25] How are we to understand this? Because my great fear is that as we move from chapter 5 to chapter 6, there might be someone among us who hasn't quite clicked with them.

It hasn't quite registered with them what Paul is saying when he tells us that we are saved purely by His grace through faith alone.

Now they say that a teacher hasn't really learned to communicate the truth that he's trying to communicate unless he can explain it to children. And so before we move into chapter 6, which we're doing this morning, let me take just a moment to try to give you a children's illustration of the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

Now I know that we live in a culture that doesn't like the idea of definitive judgments on a person's character or performance. We just don't like that. So that in a lot of sports leagues now, there's a trophy for everything so that every kid walks home with some sort of trophy and some sort of ribbon rather than one kid or one team being the victors and having the trophy and possessing that title of champion.

We live in a culture that doesn't like that. But nevertheless, there are areas of life where you can't avoid it. There are areas of life where you get assessed. And one of those growing up, I recall, that was regular, was report cards.

[12 : 45] I mean, a lot of you kids are homeschooled, and so you probably don't get report cards. I'm telling you, if my kids were homeschooled, I'd still give them report cards because that's how I think. I'm going to assess you, and you're going to get a grade, right?

But I remember growing up, every six weeks we would get a report card. And there's really one of two ways to handle report card day. If you got good grades, then you come home waving the report card. Hey, it's report card day.

If you didn't, it stays in the backpack, and hopefully mom totally forgets that it's report card day. But when you're like me, and mom's a teacher, that's impossible.

She knows when report card day is. But we all understand that when you get the report card, for every subject, whether it's math or reading or science, you have a grade. You make an A, A+, you make a B, C.

You're assessed in terms of your performance over the past several weeks. It's definitive. It's written in ink with your name on the card. This is the assessment of your performance.

[13 : 43] But imagine for a moment if you weren't graded on math, history, what have you. Imagine if you were graded on your character, your actual behavior.

So I have this report card over here that I made up. It's blank right now. It doesn't have anything on it. But just suppose for a moment, some of you can't see this, all right? But there's a place for your name on it.

Suppose you were given a grade in a few things as a kid. You're a kid. You're in school. You get a grade on telling the truth. You get a grade on obeying your parents. A grade on being kind to others.

You get graded on sharing with others. You get graded on putting yourself last. Those are tough categories, right? Every kid's going to look at that and think, well, you know, I probably get maybe like a B in being kind to others.

I'm generally pretty nice to others. I don't lie all that much. I might get an A minus or something along those lines, you know. Some of these, though, you might go, oh, I got a C on that. Oh, I failed that. Yeah, putting others before yourself last.

[14 : 44] That's that. Yeah, I failed that. I didn't put anybody before me. I was first every time. So you get a variety of grades on here. But what if, suppose, there are only two grades?

There's either an A plus or a perfect record of telling the truth, obeying your parents, being kind, sharing, putting others before yourself.

There's either an A plus or there's an F. No in between, no gray areas at all, all right? It's just A plus or it's F.

Imagine what your report card would probably look like then. I got one for you. Don't worry. I got a report card for you, right? Not a problem. Here we go. It's even in a big envelope, just like they were when I was a kid, but they were smaller then.

This is for you, all right? So you put your name in the blank if you want. I just put U on it. This is what it would look like, I think. I don't know if you can see this. That's probably, that's what it would look like, right? Because nobody's perfect in any of these areas.

[15 : 44] You just have a list of Fs right next to your name. And even if you said, but I think maybe I got an A plus in one of those. Well, what about the book of James?

Where James says that if you've broken one of the commandments, you've broken all the commandments, right? There's no way out. It's a bad report. This is not a report card you're going to bring home to mom and dad.

This is the kind that you bury in the backyard for no one to ever see, to never be found again. But the good news of the gospel is that there's another report card. Following me?

Kids, you listening carefully? The good news of the gospel is that Jesus has been in the same classroom. Had to face all the same obstacles, all the same temptations.

And Jesus comes out A pluses all the way. Easily. A pluses. He never lied. He always told the truth.

[16 : 45] Always obeyed his parents as a kid. He was always kind to others. Shared with others. Put himself last. Even to the point of dying in the place of sinners.

A pluses all the way through. Now suppose with me that when it came time to receive the grades, your teacher took your grades, put them in Jesus' folder, right?

And took his and put them in yours. And the name at the top was changed from Jesus to your name. And now his A pluses are your A pluses. And your F's are his F's.

And he'll deal with the spankings. He'll take the groundings for you. He'll take it all. Whatever punishment you might have had coming for those grades, Jesus is going to take from his own father.

And you get the rewards of perfection. That is the doctrine of justification. It is not enough for you merely to have your grades erased.

[17 : 53] Because then you bring home a blank report card. It's not enough. Well, your grades are erased. Jesus takes your grades upon himself. He takes all of your sin upon himself on the cross.

But he does so, so much more than that. He lived a perfectly righteous life so that his righteousness is your righteousness. That's what Paul means in Romans 1, 16 and 17 when he says that in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed.

What righteousness of God? The righteousness of his Son that's counted as yours when you trust in him. That's the doctrine of justification.

To which it would be easy for us to reply, if Jesus is going to take all of my F's and I get all of his A pluses, why should I ever bother?

If I know that's true, why would I even do my homework? Why would I even show up on test day? Why don't I just sneak out to the playground if it doesn't matter for me?

[18 : 59] That's the question that Paul is going to answer in Romans chapter 6. If our standing before God is based solely upon what Christ has done for us, why would we do anything?

And so he asks the very basic question right at the beginning here, shall we continue in sin so that grace might abound?

Should we do that? And his answer is the strongest negative answer that he could give. It's translated in different ways in your translations. The ESV says, by no means. Some translations say, certainly not.

Some translations say, God forbid. But the point is that Paul was saying, no, that's impossible. That cannot be. And then he tells us why. He asks a question that he doesn't intend for us to answer.

It's just a rhetorical question. He says to us in verse 2, how can we who died to sin still live in it?

[20 : 03] How can we still live in sin if we died to sin? It's not expecting an answer. In fact, you can understand this question perfectly well if you turn it into a statement. If you simply said, we who died to sin cannot still live in it.

That's his point. If you died to sin, you cannot live in sin. And so the answer to why not continue in sin so that grace may abound is you can't do that if you're a Christian.

You died to sin. That's the answer. But now we need to ask further questions. What does it mean to die to sin?

What exactly does he mean by that? Does he mean that if you're a true Christian, you won't sin anymore? I mean, think about it. He says you've died to sin.

Dead people don't usually do things. So does he mean that we don't sin anymore? I don't think that's what he means. But not merely because that's convenient for me who happens to be someone who sins every day.

[21 : 05] I don't think that's the case because it doesn't fit the other things that he says here in Romans chapter 6. So if you just look down, for instance, at verse 12. He commands us in verse 12, Do not let sin reign in your mortal body to make you obey its passions.

He's telling us to not sin. He's giving us commands. And really throughout chapter 6, he's telling us don't sin. Fight against sin. Wage war against sin.

And those commands would make no sense if Paul is saying in verse 2 that Christians don't sin anymore. So when he says that you can't remain in sin because you've died to sin, he doesn't mean you don't sin anymore.

So what does he mean? I think that when you see the word sin in this particular verse, in this context, and in this chapter, I think sin here refers not merely to the acts of sin that we commit, but it refers to the power of sin over our lives.

I say that because sin is talked about in Romans chapter 6 like it's some sort of power, like it's a person who exercises authority over you. So again, verse 12, don't let sin reign over you.

[22 : 27] Verse 16, do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone's obedient slaves, your slaves are the one you obey, either of sin, which leads to death. You could be a slave to sin, he says.

Don't be a slave to sin. Don't let sin rule and reign over you so that sin here in Romans 6 is not merely the acts of sin that we commit, it's the power, it's the controlling power of sin over our lives, our minds, and our hearts.

That's what sin is here in Romans chapter 6. And Paul says that you've died to sin. The power of sin over you has been broken decisively.

You have been set free from the grip that sin had upon your heart and your life. Just look down at verse 6. We know, he says, 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 the one who has died has been set free from sin.

So when Paul says we died to sin, we can't live in it, he means we died to the power of sin. Sin doesn't have that kind of power over us. We're not slaves of sin anymore.

[23 : 49] That's changed. He goes so far as to say that who you were, the old you, the old man, was crucified, gone, dead. He uses, in fact, the analogy of baptism to help us better understand exactly what he's talking about.

because what Paul wants us to see, I think more than anything in this passage, is that when you are united to Jesus by faith, not only does the union that's created between you and Jesus, not only does it absolve you from all the guilt of your sin, not only does it allow you to have his righteousness counted toward you, but it also breaks the power of sin.

The death of Jesus, yes, satisfies the penalty of sin that we owe, but the death of Jesus also breaks the power of sin over our lives.

And he wants us to see that, he wants us to understand that, and so he brings in baptism as an analogy. Notice what he says, beginning in verse 3. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

[25 : 11] He brings baptism, I think, to the fore for two reasons. Number one, because baptism in the New Testament is always associated with our conversion. Now, I know practically a lot of times our baptism can occur weeks or even months or years after our conversion.

But normally, baptism occurs around the time of conversion, and baptism is the outward sign to everyone else that you have, in fact, been converted. So, Paul is in some sense just referencing our conversion, the moment of our salvation, the moment of our justification, when we are united to Jesus by faith.

But he's also sort of vividly illustrating what it means to die to sin. To die with sin is to die with Jesus so that baptism becomes a picture of us going down, dying with Christ, and then rising to new life with him.

We die with Christ, Paul says. He emphasizes this idea of with Jesus over and over. In fact, six times in this passage alone, he speaks of us either dying or rising with Christ, being crucified with Christ, coming to life with Christ.

Over and over, Paul wants to emphasize that your faith in Jesus unifies you. It creates a union between you and him.

[26 : 33] And that union is why your sin can be counted as his sin and his righteousness can be counted as your righteousness. But that union is also why the power of sin, the enslaving power of sin over your life is decisively broken in your life.

Now you might ask the question, when does that happen exactly? Does it happen when I'm converted? Does it happen when I trust in Jesus? Or did it happen on the cross?

Which one is it, Paul? Because you say we're crucified with Christ. You say we die with Christ, but he died 2,000 years ago. When was the power of sin over my life broken?

To which I would say it was decisively broken 2,000 years ago on Calvary. But you don't experience the freedom from sin. You don't experience the broken power of sin until your conversion.

And then the death of Jesus becomes your death. his life then becomes your life. You are united to him and because of that union with Jesus sin doesn't have the power over you it once had over you.

[27 : 52] It's broken. It's gone. But of course we all know that despite that reality we still struggle with sin, right? I sinned this week, right?

You all probably sinned this week. Some of you got in an argument on the way to church this morning and you sinned, right? That's right. Some kids might have already gotten spankings today for all we know.

Alright? Sin has happened among us today, this morning before we even got here for worship. So we know that we continue to struggle with sin. So what gives?

What's the deal? If the power of sin has been broken why do we continue to struggle? I think it's because though by faith we experience once for all through union with Jesus the death of the power of sin the reality is we still struggle in our daily lives to reflect that reality.

It is the difference between being unified or having union with Jesus and having communion with Jesus. See our union with Jesus is a once for all thing. Once you trust in Jesus you're united to him you can't be separated from him.

[29 : 06] But communion is the enjoyment of all the fruits of your union with him. You follow me here? They're related terms but they're not the same. Union is once for all and it lasts forever.

Communion ebbs and flows. Some days you have strong communion with Christ and your walk with him is strong. Other days you're distant from him a bit.

Your communion is weakened. It's a lot like marriage because on the day that you're married you become according to scripture one flesh and that's not a bond that we have the power to break.

Jesus says what God has joined together let no man separate. He goes so far as to say that even if you do separate if you get remarried outside of that unless there's been biblical grounds for that separation that second relationship the initiation of it initially is sinful initially.

This is serious business. You become one flesh on the day that you're married. You're united for life right? And there are days when you'll have great communion with your spouse.

[30 : 16] There are happy days and happy months and happy years that you experience where things are going well and you feel incredibly close to one another but then there are times when you feel distant cold does that mean that your union no longer exists?

No your union exists you're still married there's still your husband there's still your wife the union has not and cannot be fractured by how you feel on that day yet somehow we experience the ebb and flow the strength of our relationship the depth of our feelings for one another our willingness and ability to serve one another it ebbs and flows throughout our lives I read an article this week I saw online it's not a typical thing I normally would click on but I clicked on it it's just written by a psychologist but it was a very personal sort of account of her relationship with her husband over the 20 some odd years of their marriage and she in the article I kept waiting for something positive at the end right she was lamenting the state of her marriage that early on in her marriage she and her husband had a very close relationship but then once they had kids she felt as if she no longer mattered that the kids were everything to him and she had difficulties connecting sometimes with their kids sort of the reverse of what happens in a lot of homes but over the years she and her husband grew apart they slept in separate bedrooms by this time it had been years since they had hugged or kissed or anything yet at the end the only hope she expresses is well we're still married right we're still married despite that great gulf despite that great distance the union still persisted it still mattered now in her mind she's not a

Christian in her mind that union may dissipate at any moment but we've experienced to probably smaller degrees that lessening of the intimacy within marriage those of us who are married and then the strengthening of the intimacy I think the Christian walk is much like that once you've trusted in Jesus you have a union that is permanent and solidified with him but your communion with Jesus is going to vary from time to time in your life and your walk with him will ebb and flow much like your walk with your spouse and there will be days when you experience in a very real way the breaking of the power of sin over your life you'll know it experientially and then there will be other days when you feel like you can't sense that feel as if you can't sense it I think that that's what Paul has in mind in this chapter not just in this passage but throughout this chapter that there is a union that marks a change in our relationship to sin and the power of sin over our lives but the reality of the

Christian life is you experience and you partake of the fruit of that union with Jesus in various ways and to various degrees throughout your life which is why at the end he gives us what I think is one of the keys to experiencing the fruit of union with Jesus namely breaking the power of sin over our lives notice what he says in verse 11 so you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus consider yourselves he says think of yourselves in this way count yourselves to be dead to sin but we are dead to sin are we not I mean look up just one verse above in verse 10 the death that Christ died he died to sin once for all but the life he lived he lives to God

Christ died a once one time death to sin on our behalf this is not something that's repeated throughout your life you don't you don't have to die to sin over and over and over Christ one time died to sin in our place and we get the benefits of that that's reality he says the one who has died has been set free or literally has been justified from sin in verse 7 he says in verse 8 if we've died with Christ we believe that we will live with him that's a done deal it's settled it's happened and yet he says in verse 11 so since that is settled since you have died with Christ and Christ death was a death to the power of sin in your place since that's true now you must consider yourselves think of yourselves as having died to sin in other words you have to remind yourself continually how do you win a daily victory over sin how do you do that step number one we're going to look at a number of other steps in the coming weeks step number one remind yourself that the ultimate decisive victory is already yours you don't you don't have to gossip not if you know

[35 : 50] Christ you don't have to give in to the temptation to spread the rumor that you just heard you don't have to anymore you don't have to click on that link that goes to those explicit images you don't have to do it I know often times we feel almost inexorably drawn into sin and the believer needs to say in the midst of that drawing that feels like it can't be stopped wait I don't have to do that I don't have to go down that route I don't have to do that thing I don't have to say that unkind word I don't have to do that because the power of sin has been broken in my life I'm not going to I'm not walking that way I'm not clicking that link I'm not watching that show I'm not having that conversation I'm not going to do it unless you learn to claim the victory that you have in Christ you will have very little experience of that victory in your life very little indeed

I don't know how many times I stood up here and belittled or said disparaging things about what's known as the health and wealth gospel prosperity gospel some people call it the name and claim it type of gospel it's no gospel at all it's a misnomer it's not good news because it's not true but the whole idea that you can claim something you can claim a bigger house you can claim a better parking spot you claim it in the name of Jesus and he's going to give it to you it's done it's not true it's not in the bible it's just not there right Jesus had no place to lay his head the gospel writers say why didn't he claim a soft pillow or at least a tent or a home to sleep in it's not true Jesus didn't do it why would we think that we can do it it's just not true the name and claim it movement is just a false gospel but but now but now here we have something that we must claim we must name this reality we must know this reality and we must absolutely daily claim it as our own we must remind ourselves

I've died to sin I'm alive to God the power of sin has been broken over my life by the cross of Christ and I just don't have to be the person I once was I don't have to return to the old paths and I don't have to do that thing anymore when you learn to remember and recall and count and consider yourself dead to sin but alive to God you will find that you will begin to experience in a far more real far more frequent and far more intimate way the communion with Christ that is yours through your union with him let's pray