

DEAD AND ALIVE 1

ROMANS 6:1-6

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of 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, 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.

Once upon a battle... an infantry soldier came under heavy fire. Bullets were zipping through the air - hot metal flying over his head - as he dove into a foxhole.

Under normal circumstances this G.I. rarely thought about his faith. Yet in the heat of battle - staring death in the face - he pulled out the cross he wore around his neck. He was desperate for any help he could get...

Suddenly, another G.I. dove into the same foxhole.

When he rolled over, the previous soldier noticed he was an Army chaplain. *What a relief.* He held up his cross, and said to the chaplain, "Wow, am I glad to see you! Can you tell me how to get this thing to work?"

That's really a good question. How does the cross work in our lives? How does the victory Jesus won 2000 years ago translate into victory in our lives today?

That's the question I want to answer over the next three weeks... On a practical level how does Christianity work? How does the cross work? How does cross-work effect changes in my life today?

Before we dive into our text I want to give a little autobiographical insight as to why Romans 6 is so important to me personally. The first time I taught through the book of Romans was in the early 1980s.

I was a new pastor and a relatively new Christian. I longed for victory over my sin, and a sustainable joy.

I was raised in church and had tired of going through the motions with no power. I desired faith that worked. It turns out this chapter was the medicine I needed.

What I discovered in Romans 6 were truths I'd never been taught. In fact, some of what I learned in this chapter contradicted the assumptions I'd held earlier.

For a time I was torn between what I'd been told by preachers, and what the Bible actually taught.

About the same time I was studying Romans... one day my wife, Kathy, was browsing in the Christian bookstore and found a volume she thought I'd enjoy.

The book was titled "[Birthright](#)" by David Needham, a professor at Multnomah Bible College. I read the book, and

couldn't believe Dr. Needham had drawn some of the same conclusions from Romans 6 as I had.

His insights provided me some needed clarity.

Later I read another book entitled "[The New Man.](#)" It was by a famous British preacher named Martin Lloyd-Jones. It further confirmed my new understanding.

Once my confusion was dispelled, I embraced the truth of Romans 6 wholeheartedly, *and my life has never been the same.* My outlook was transformed by the cross of Jesus and the Word of God. For the last 35 years the truths of Romans 6 have sustained me.

What this chapter teaches has become an anchor in my life. Romans 6 explains how Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection works in us and transforms us today.

I hope you know [the cross is the crux of Christianity.](#)

In fact, our words "[crux](#)" and "[crucial](#)" and "[crucible](#)" all come from the word "[crucifixion.](#)" The key to overcoming Christianity is the cross and its impact.

I want us to start by asking you... [Are there habits in your life you can't break? Are you mired down in sin?](#)

[Do you live somewhere between discouragement and desperation?... Do you long to overcome sin, and fear, and guilt, and bitterness, and despair?... Do you desire a consistent victory and an unquenchable joy?](#)

The simple answers are found in Romans 6.

But I'll tell you upfront, like me, you'll need to believe the truth - and deal with some false assumptions.

Let's begin in verse 1. The author of Romans, the Apostle Paul, asks, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" And then he answers his own question, "Certainly not!"

This is a bold, emphatic response.

Listen to Paul in a few other translations... The NAS, "May it never be." - The RSV, "By no means." - The OKJV, "God forbid." - The NEB, "No, No." - The Philips Translation, "What a ghastly thought." - The yet-to-be-released Adams paraphrase... "No way Jose..."

The message is clear... There's no excuse for a Christian to continue in a habitual, unbridled life of sin.

At the close of Chapter 5 Paul makes a wonderful statement, "where sin abounded, grace abounded much more." In other words, if sin is a mountain, and grace is an ocean; then all sin is below sea level.

There is no sin that God's grace can't smother.

There is no sinner that God's grace won't cover.

God's grace - that is, His favor and forgiveness - is sufficient to cleanse *all the sin, of all the people, over all the ages.* There is no limit to God's amazing grace.

"But Sandy, I spit at my daddy, and slapped my mama... I cussed out the cops... I took God's name in vain... I kicked my neighbor in the shins... I lied, and cheated, and fornicated, and smoked dope - and that was just on Friday. I won't even give you the run down of what I did on Saturday. I'm an out-of-control sinner.

And I've always assumed there's no hope for me..."

But that's not true! The Bible says when sinners get bold and sin abounds, grace doesn't shy away!

Grace rises to the challenge. God's grace refuses to be eclipsed by our sin. There's not one despicable act you've done Jesus won't forgive, *if you ask Him*. "Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more."

Yet Paul is concerned that someone could twist this statement to say what it was never meant to say...

Someone could conclude, *"If God's grace rises to the height of our sin, then why not elevate our sinning to prompt more grace? Here's the twisted logic: Since the more grace God shows, the more glory He gets, we do God a favor by giving Him a reason to forgive us."*

There was an influential Russian monk who actually taught this notion. Gregory Rasputin lived in the early 20th century. People called him *"The Mad Monk."*

He once wrote, *"If you are simply an ordinary sinner, you are not giving God an opportunity to show His glory, so you need to be an extraordinary sinner."*

Rasputin was a drunkard, a womanizer - *a disgrace to God's grace...* His logic is like the teenager saying he'll keep a messy room so all his friends will see that his mom is a great housekeeper. Ask one of **my** kids if they were willing to try that on their mom, and I bet they'll reply as adamantly as Paul, *"Certainly not! Are you out of your mind? I'd like to live a long life!"*

A good mom loves her teenagers unconditionally. Her forgiveness is limitless. But she won't let her child abuse her love, and take advantage of her grace...

A good mom is no fool - *and neither is God!*

I know few Christians with Rasputin's audacity, but I know many who follow his logic. They downplay the need to live a holy life. Have you ever thought, *why worry about sin when God is so loving and forgiving?*

That's akin to Rasputin's logic.

Here's why sin and purity matter... Grace doesn't just forgive us, it changes us. **It makes us a better person.** If we've truly tasted God's grace we'll become like Jesus - not *overnight*, but certainly *over time*.

And at the end of the day, if there's no change at all in our lives... then we have to seriously question if we've ever received God's grace in a saving way.

Here's today's big idea: **When a person really encounters the salvation Jesus brings, something happens in that person that's so colossal, he or she doesn't remain the same. A change occurs.**

At the person's core, they're transformed into something different and new. The idea of a Christian cruising through life in blatant, habitual sin - without being bothered or troubled by it - just isn't possible.

CH Spurgeon once put it, **"The grace that does not change my life will not save my soul."** Grace is not just *judicial*, it's *effectual*. God doesn't just clean my *slate* in heaven - He changes the *state* of my heart on earth.

Several years ago, there was a popular Christian slogan that adorned the bumpers of believing drivers. It read, “Christians aren’t perfect, just forgiven.”

The message conveyed a nice sentiment. We as Christians don’t want to be seen as holier-than-thou hypocrites who look down their noses at unbelievers. None of us are Captain Perfect, and can do no wrong!

The slogan had a good intention, but biblically it’s inaccurate. For the statement implies the only difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is the Christian is forgiven and the non-Christian is not.

Other than their status before God they’re essentially the same. *But that’s not true - not by a long shot!*

For Jesus not only delivers us from **the penalty of sin**, He also delivers us from **the power of sin**.

Jesus changes us radically and dramatically. In essence, when we give our lives to Jesus we don’t just get a new paint job. God installs in us a new engine!

He works **in** us, and **on** us - *not just for us*.

And in the rest of the chapter Paul pops the hood on our lives, and unveils the workings of His salvation.

Verse 2 explains why a Christian won’t continue in consistent, repetitive sin. Paul tells us, “**How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?**” *Did you hear what Paul says about **you**?* All Christians have “**died to sin.**”

In fact, in our passage Paul refers to death quite a bit, and surprisingly he speaks of it in a positive light.

The next few verses mention that *in Christ we've been baptized into His death, we've been buried with Him, and united together in the likeness of His death.*

Of course, it sounds strange to speak of death as a positive thing. Usually it's something we try to avoid.

It reminds me of the French Revolution and three men sentenced to the guillotine. A pastor, a lawyer, and an engineer were scheduled to be beheaded.

The pastor was first to meet the executioner. He was asked if he preferred to die *face up* or *face down*. He said, "Face up, so I'll be looking to God when I die."

He was placed in the guillotine and the henchman pulled the lever. The blade flew downward, but jammed just inches from the pastor's throat. The executioner took it as a sign from God and set the pastor free.

Next, the lawyer was asked whether he wanted to be executed *face up* or *face down*. The lawyer, hoping for the same plight as the pastor, asked to die face up.

Again the executioner pulled the lever, and the blade came screaming downward - only to jam inches from the lawyer's throat. This was also interpreted as a sign from God, and once again the lawyer was set free.

Finally, the engineer was led to the guillotine, and asked if he wanted to be executed *face up* or *face down*. He also chose to die facing up at the guillotine.

But just as the lever was about to be pulled - the engineer **pointed**; then **shouted**, "Wait! I think I see your problem."

Hey, death is a negative experience for most people, *just not for engineers and **Christians***.

Here Paul is acting as a spiritual engineer, as he describes what happens when we come to Jesus - **we die...** Yet “*dead to sin*” and “*buried with Him*” and “*united in the likeness of His death*” are all good things.

In verse 2 Paul starts with “*dead to sin.*” This is really good. As Paul puts it, since you’re *dead to sin* how can you “*live any longer in it?*” Sin loses its stranglehold.

When a Christian “*dies to sin*” it puts an end to sin’s governing influence in that person’s life. The person might stumble into sin from time to time, but sin is no longer the driving ambition in that person’s life. Sin is no longer calling the shots and setting the pace...

In the next few verses Paul explains more clearly how the Christian “*dies to sin*” by “*dying with Christ.*”

Verse 3, “*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of 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...*”

In this section Paul uses two terms to describe the change that’s happened to us as Christians - one phrase is *theological* and the other is *biological*.

The theological term is “baptized.” In the Bible, the word “baptism” has two different meanings. At times it means “to dip, or immerse.” In antiquity when a garment was dipped in dye it was said to be baptized.

This is how we use the term when we hold a water baptism. We dip new believers in the water... This is also how it’s used when a person is baptized by the Holy Spirit. They are immersed in the Spirit’s power...

But there’s another way to define “baptism.” It can mean “to initiate or join.” When a rookie quarterback plays his first game in the NFL, and he’s crunched by bigger, faster, smarter players we call it “*his baptism.*”

It’s his initiation into a new football environment.

And when we’re saved by grace we too are initiated into a new spiritual environment. We’re now “in Christ.”

This is the meaning here, *we’re joined to Christ!* We now have access to a new environment - “in Christ.”

Notice also the biological term Paul uses to explain our relationship with Jesus. Verse 5 tells us we’ve been “united together” in the likeness of His death and resurrection. It means we’re “grafted” into His work.

When a twig is spliced into the trunk of another plant, and the two begin to grow as one, we call it a “graft.”

And you’ve been grafted into Jesus’ death and resurrection. What He accomplished there, is living in you. A Christian is spliced into Christ. We now draw from Jesus. We share in all that He *is* and *has done*

Author Beth Moore tells the story of an interview she saw one night on TV. Two teenagers, best friends, got drunk and decided to drive home. They were involved in a crash. The driver survived, but the passenger died.

Now here's the survivor, with the victim's parents on television. The parents had forgiven their son's killer.

Even more, they'd taken him into their home, and made him a part of their family... He now sleeps in their deceased son's bed, and sits in his chair at the table...

When Beth saw this she was bewildered, "*How can these parents do this?*" She had difficulty relating to the mother. That's when the Holy Spirit whispered to her, "*Beth, you can't relate because you've put yourself in the wrong position. You, my child, are the driver.*"

It hit her, the way these parents were treating their son's killer is the way God chooses to treat us...

For like the boy in the story, our sin was the reason God's only Son died, yet He now treats us the way He treats Jesus. We share in all Jesus has *acquired* and *accomplished*. This is what it means to be "*in Christ.*"

God sees us being and growing *in Christ.*

This means when Jesus died on the cross to put an end to sin, *we died with Him*. He put an end to sin in us... *And* when He rose from the dead, *we rose with Him*. We're resurrected to walk in His newness of life...

In the Ole Wild West days bad guys were wanted "*Dead or Alive.*" But today, Christians are wanted "*Dead and Alive*" - *we're dead to sin and alive to God.*

Spiritually we share in Jesus' death and resurrection.

The Christian philosopher, Blaise Pascal, once wrote, "One of the greatest principles of Christianity is that what happened in Jesus happens in the soul of the Christian." It's strange to think that we can share in an event that occurred 2000 years before we were born, and in a place we may've never been - *yet it's true!*

As surely as the nails were driven into Jesus' hands, **you died with Him**. As surely as He walked out of the tomb **you live with Him**. Theologian Frank Gaebelein once put it, "Our spiritual history began at the cross."

When the Prophet Elisha raised the Shunammite's son from the dead we're told how he performed the miracle. 2 Kings 4 puts it, "And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands; and he stretched himself out on the child..." *How weird is that...* Elisha interfaces with the child, and the virtue in him transfers to the corpse. Life flowed through the connection.

And likewise, when Jesus was nailed to the cross, in a spiritual, mysterious way your old sin nature was nailed there with Him. On the cross you were laid on Jesus. You interfaced with Jesus and His work for you.

This is how when Jesus died you also "died to sin." What Jesus did *for all mankind*, He also did ***in you***.

I know these concepts are foreign to our thinking and our logic, but here's where we need to really believe.

Just because something is spiritual doesn't mean it's not real. *God, the Holy Spirit, angels, heaven, and the devil* are all spiritual entities, but most of us would agree they are very real and relevant? Just because something is *spiritual* doesn't mean it's not *actual*.

And just because God works through a spiritual process doesn't diminish the impact His work will have in the physical world. *The cross actually changes us!*

Here's another way to stretch your mind and grasp what Paul is teaching... In the production of a movie, scenes are shot first with just the actors. The film has no special effects, or music. Later the effects and score get transposed on top of the original recording.

Well, in God's plan of salvation, the original recording was Jesus' death on the cross. But when you came to Jesus, *your spirit, the deepest part of who you are*, was dubbed in over His crucifixion. He transposed *your old man* onto *His only Son*. The life you had lived at odds with God, died with Jesus. Now when God rewinds the footage there you are crucified with Christ.

Paul tells us in verse 6, "**Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with...**" Paul states, "**Knowing this...**" I'm sure you've heard the old expression, "**What you don't know won't hurt you.**" I hope you realize that's not true.

Don't tell it to the guy in Bristol, England who dove 25 feet headfirst off a pier into the ocean. He didn't know it was low

tide and the water level was 18 inches. What he didn't know had a profound *impact* on his life.

The same is true for a Christian who fails to grasp that spiritually he's *both dead and alive*. Ignorance of the truth will keep you from the victory you seek!

Paul says we need to know that “**our old man was crucified with (Christ).**” Once a little boy came home from Sunday School, and said he had learned that Paul's father was one of the thieves on the cross.

His mother was puzzled. Where did the child get such a wild idea? But the little boy quoted Paul in Romans 6:6, “**my old man was crucified with Christ...**”

Of course, that's not what Paul meant!

But it's close... For Paul's father had a father, who had a father, who had a father... all the way back to Adam. And what did Adam do? **Adam sinned.**

Adam bombed. It was *the original Adam bomb*. And worse, the Bible says the sin of Adam passed down to all of Adam's descendants - to all humans who've ever lived. We're all born with Adam's sinful nature.

This is what Paul calls “**the old man.**” It's who you were before you came to Jesus. It's the you that was governed by sin. It was the inborn inclination to sin and rebel - the natural tendency to be selfish and stubborn.

But when you and I came to faith in Jesus our “**old man**” was crucified with Jesus and we died to sin.

Perhaps, this will help you understand... Throughout the book of Romans, Paul sees humans divided into two partitions. Theologians call us **a dichotomy**. Each of us is made up of an *inner person* and *outer person*.

The inner you is the part of you that lives forever. While the outer you is that which returns to the dust.

The outer man is also called **“the flesh.”** This is you apart from God - left to your own devices. But the inner man is spiritual. It's the deepest part of who you are. It's the real you. It's the you that's connected with God.

When I die the pastor is going to look down at my corpse in the casket, and say, **“This isn't the real Sandy Adams. This is just the shell. The nut has gone.”**

When you come to Jesus the changes we are talking about occur in the inner man. The outer man remains the same. Thus, the day after I gave my life to Jesus I *looked the same, talked the same, smelled the same*. I was just as ugly and corny as I was the day before.

But inwardly, in my spirit, I was a new creation.

A radical change had taken place in the depths of who I truly am - through Jesus **I died to sin**.

The old Sandy was crucified. My sin nature was eradicated and I received a new nature. Now my inclination towards sin and selfishness has been replaced with a love for God and a love for others.

Rather than me trying to change myself, in Christ God's Spirit has worked His changes in me. Notice the wording Paul uses, **“the old man was crucified.”**

It's not up to us to crucify the old man ourselves.

When a person was subjected to Roman crucifixion it was never a suicide. Nobody could crucify themselves. It was physically impossible. It would take someone else to drive in the nails and inflict the wounds.

I've heard Bible teachers say that we need to crucify the old man by denying ourselves and our desires. By saying "no" to sin - by disciplining our bodies - we can master our passions. But I don't think so. *No amount of my physical discipline can change what I am spiritually.*

Realize "at the heart of our problem is a problem in our heart." Take a pig off the farm - clean the mud off of him - dress him in pants, and shirt, and little boy shoes.

Now take him home and treat him like a child.

But understand, the first time he gets near a mud puddle he's going to dive right back in, because *a pig is still a pig!* You can dress him up on the outside all you want, but you can't change what he is on the inside. You can make him look like a child, but he's a pig at heart. *And this is the problem with humans...*

Apart from God's help, we can't change what we are... *we're sinners at heart.* We can dress ourselves up in religious garb, and speak religious phrases, and develop religious traditions, and go to religious places.

We can clean ourselves up on the outside.

I can make improvements to the outer man. I can exercise, and diet, and get a face lift, and get a new tooth. But none of that changes what I am on the inside. Deep inside we are still

sinners waiting on an opportunity to sin and act selfishly...
Until something gets done about our nature, there's no hope for us!

Only God has the answer to this problem, and it's the cross of Jesus. God's solution for the old man isn't reform. You don't *spruce up* or *clean up* the sin nature.

So what if all you do is sober up an alcoholic, and he goes to hell sober rather than drunk. *What have you accomplished if you don't change the man's nature?*

Behavior modification is not enough. It's not a 12 step approach we need, but **one step** - the old man has to be crucified, and we can't crucify him ourselves.

That's why we're crucified with Christ, and our death to sin activates when we believe. The answer to our sin nature, and its control over us, is to trust that our sin has been dealt with through the power of Jesus' cross.

Realize, when you came to Jesus, He didn't just add to your life - *His love, His peace, His joy...* You also "**died to sin.**" The sin nature was subtracted from you.

Next week we're going to tackle the inevitable question. *If I died to sin at my conversion, then why do I still sin today, and why do I still feel the pull of sin?*

And we'll answer those questions, but for now here's what you need to believe, *and as I said in the beginning this morning, the key is to **really** believe...*

Know the truth, that by the work of Jesus on the cross you've been transformed on the deepest level.

You're a new creation. The work was done by Jesus. And the victory is yours not by *trying* to reform yourself, but by *trusting* that you've been crucified with Christ.

Let me close with a great illustration...

Two country boys were playing with a turtle they'd found crossing the road. One ole boy pulled out his pocketknife and chopped off the turtle's head, *yet the turtle's body kept walking across the blacktop.*

It caused an argument... The first fellow said, *"That turtle is dead, it doesn't have a head."* The other guy replied, *"How can a turtle be dead when it's walking?"*

Just then up walked Bubba. They asked him to settle their dispute. *"Bubba, is that turtle dead or not?"*

Ole Bubba pondered the situation for a few seconds, and then he answered them, *"Boys, it seems like to me the turtle is dead, but he just don't know it yet!"*

Now listen carefully, there're two conclusions...

First, if you've been struggling with sin in your life. If you're mired down in wicked habits, and pride, and selfish behavior, and nothing substantial has changed in your life since you professed faith in Jesus; *then here's a real possibility... You might not be saved!*

Remember verse 2, *"How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"* Don't overlook the obvious.

If a life is completely powerless over sin, and its pull; you might not be *dead to sin* and *alive to God*... You might need to seriously repent and truly believe today.

But Bubba points out another possibility...

It's possible to be in Christ - *dead to sin* and *alive to God* - yet not *know* or *fully believe* this wonderful truth.

Doubt - or ignorance - can rob us of victory. Let's be confident that in Christ we are **dead and alive**.

Again, verse 6 declares, "*Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him...*" Do you know that simple, yet powerful truth? Do you really believe it?

It's time to stop trying to crucify the old man on our own, and trust in the finished work of our Lord Jesus.

Be dead to sin and alive to God - **dead and alive**. The answer for us all is to come to Jesus and believe.