

DEAD AND ALIVE 2

ROMANS 6:6-12

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.

For he who has died has been freed from sin.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

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

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

A predominantly Roman Catholic neighborhood was up in arms when a Southern Baptist moved onto the block and started grilling steaks on Friday afternoon.

On Fridays, good Catholics avoid beef, and eat fish.

Well, the aroma of the steaks grilling in the open air waft through the neighborhood and tantalize the residents. The temptation drove the Catholics bonkers.

One Sunday at mass the Catholic neighbors got together and came up with a plan to convert the Southern Baptist barbecuer. For weeks they worked on him, until he finally agreed to become a Catholic.

They took him to the priest to be baptized into the Catholic Church. The priest sprinkled baptismal water on the man and said, “You were born a Baptist. You were raised a Baptist. *And now you’re a Catholic.*”

The neighbors were glad that from then on, every Friday they wouldn’t be tempted with the aroma of a Southern Baptist grilling delicious-smelling steaks...

Yet the next Friday the smell of sizzling beef was all over the neighborhood. The Catholics ran over to the Baptist’s house. And there he was standing over his grill, sprinkling water, and saying, “You were born a cow. You were raised a cow. *And now you’re a fish.*”

The story illustrates an obvious truth. Water baptism doesn’t change the nature of what’s being baptized.

You can dunk a sinner in baptismal water until their fingertips prune, but their inner nature stays unaltered.

The point is, it takes more than religion to change a person on the deepest level. *Water baptism, religious exercises, charitable deeds, self-imposed sacrifices* are powerless to alter a person’s nature. You can clean the outside, but the problem still brews on the inside.

There’re all kinds of ways people seek to improve the outer person - the flesh... People alter their body by dieting, or working out, or changing their hair color.

They alter their psyche with motivational techniques, or self-help formulas, or psychological therapies.

And if they're concerned about God they might even get baptized, or come to church, or read their Bible, or do a kind deed. All this makes them look or feel better.

But it doesn't impact the person on the deepest level.

It doesn't effect them spiritually. And the spiritual you is *the real you*. It's the eternal part of who you are.

Only Jesus Christ can transform your underlying nature. He alone can change who you really are.

We learned last week, that by faith "*our old man has been crucified with Christ.*" Our connection to Christ has made us both **dead to sin**, and **alive to God**.

Once, a five year-old boy, prayed with his mom to become a Christian. He asked for God's forgiveness and gave his life to Jesus. That Sunday the family went to church where they heard a man share his testimony.

It was quite a story... After a very wicked life, he was miraculously saved - snatched from darkness to light.

Well, when the boy got home - still thinking about the amazing testimony he'd heard - he asked his mother, "**Mom, what did I use to do when I was wicked?**"

It's easy for us to see the sin of a bank robber, or a drug dealer, but the Bible teaches that the very same impulses lurk in the heart of a five year-old child. Job 5 tells us "**man is born to trouble...**" We're all born in sin.

Every human being is a sinner by nature - we're all selfish from the start. As I quoted last time, "**At the heart of our problem is a problem in our heart.**"

And only Jesus can change a person's heart!

Christianity is more than steps, and laws, and rituals.

It's more than morality. Christianity is more than *reformation* - it's *transformation*. God's power changes us on the deepest level. He alters our very nature.

Romans 6 explains God's plan to save us from our fallen, sinful state. Christians are *nailed to the cross with Jesus* - and *we rise from the dead with Jesus*.

In Christ, we're **dead to sin** and **alive to God**...

And that's the title of our series... **dead and alive**.

An incredible transformation happens when a person becomes a Christian. At the core of their being they become new and different. Jesus called it "born again."

The Bible calls us "new creations." A Christian differs from the neighbors. We're a new type of human being.

Romans 6 explains that we've been baptized into Christ, and as a result we are now part of His death and resurrection. As we read last week in 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..."

Remember, the baptism Paul refers to in Romans 6 isn't *water baptism, but spiritual baptism*. In response to our faith in Jesus the Holy Spirit grafts us into Christ.

We become part of Christ. We're tied to His triumph and destiny. We're baptized into Christ in the sense of being initiated into Him, and into all His blessings.

Though Paul is talking about a spiritual dynamic, water baptism does paint a symbolic picture of spiritual baptism. Both speak of *a rite of passage...*

Water baptism harkens back to the dramatic changes that occurred in the national life of Israel - at the Red Sea and at the Jordan River. In both cases God rolled back the waters and Israel crossed through.

When the Israelites exited Egypt they passed through the waters of the Red Sea. They entered the Sea as slaves, and exited the other side as freemen.

The next big step in their national life came when they passed through the Jordan River. They came to the bank as wanderers. And as they walked through the riverbed they were in essence coming home.

Thus, baptism - as a rite of passage - is symbolic of *a new identity, a new freedom, a new belonging*. It's about putting the old behind, and starting over afresh.

And this is certainly true of the spiritual baptism Paul is discussing in Romans 6. When you become one with Christ an important passage occurs - you pass *from death to life - from darkness to light - from slavery to freedom - from guilty*

to righteous - from wandering to coming home - from orphan to child of God.

And as His child we become a recipient of all that Jesus acquired and accomplished. When Jesus died to sin, you died with Him. When He rose to new life, you rose with Him. We're now dead to sin and alive to God.

In the old westerns the bad guys were wanted "dead or alive." But Jesus seeks out bad guys like you and me, and vows to bring us back, "*dead and alive.*"

We're **dead to sin** and **alive to God**.

Again, as a Christian you're a new person.

Ephesians 2 tells us that *without Christ* we were "dead in sin." But Romans 6 teaches us that *in Christ* we are "dead to sin." Sin loses its grip on the Christian.

In Christ the power of sin gets broken. Sin no longer has a stranglehold on a follower of Jesus. It doesn't dominate our decisions and direction. Verse 7 says it best, "**For he who has died has been freed from sin.**"

Of course we don't always feel dead to sin. At times we feel very alive to sin... You're driving to work on a Monday morning, and some knuckle-headed driver cuts you off. You're almost side-swiped. You shout out a few choice words. "**Dead to sin**" is not your reaction.

Or you're watching football on a Sunday afternoon when the camera cuts to the semi-nude cheerleaders. Suddenly, you no longer feel "**dead to sin**"...

There's a cartoon... It portrays a Ladies' Bible Study and the topic is Romans 6. One of the ladies is trying to be honest with the group. She says, "Well, I haven't actually died to sin, but I did feel kind of faint once."

You might be thinking something similar. I've run from sin - wrestled with sin - struggled with sin - *but died to sin?*... that's a bit of a stretch. Even now you feel very alive to tempting desires and sinful thoughts.

So here's the million dollar question, "If I died to sin when I converted to Christ; then why do I still sin today, and why do I continue to feel the pull of sin?"

The answer is in verse 6, "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." Notice, Paul mentions two pockets - or sources of sin in our lives - "*our old man*" and "*the body of sin.*"

Last week we talked about Paul's understanding of the human composition. He sees people in two parts.

The theologians refer to this thinking as a *dichotomy*. Humans consists of a *spiritual* part and a *physical* part. We're *eternal* and *temporal*. There's an *inner man* that lives forever, and *outer man* that returns to dust.

Here's an illustration... my kids loved Oreos. But they liked the sweet creamy centers a lot more than they liked the chocolate cookie outsides. I had one child who would twist apart the cookies, lick off the icing, and then put the cookies back in the package.

Whenever I got a craving for Oreos I'd pull out the package and all that was left were the outsides.

Well, think of me as an Oreo...

The outer man - the Bible calls it "**the flesh**" - is the cookie part. It includes muscle, skin, hair, blood, organs, glands, and gray matter. It's the part of me that will stay in the grave when I die. In other words, it's the part of the Oreo that gets put back in the package.

But is that all there is to an Oreo? Of course not!

The cookie isn't even the best part. The sweet creamy inside is the tasty part of an Oreo. And likewise the most valuable part of a human is the inner person.

When you came to Jesus, what changed - *the outer man or the inner man?* Obviously, it's the inner man.

The day before I became a Christian, I was 6'2", had brown hair, blue eyes, and was *dashingly handsome*.

The day after I became a Christian, I was 6'2", brown hair, blue eyes, and now *humbly handsome*.

The colossal transformation Christianity promises occurs not in the outer man, but in the deeper part of the person. My spirit is nailed to the cross *with Christ*, and *with Christ* I walk out of the tomb with new life.

Here's a crucial truth... When a person becomes a Christian, God doesn't just add to their life (His love, joy, peace, and power), He subtracts from their life.

He eradicates the old. God crucifies our sin nature. 2 Corinthians 5:17 puts it "**Old things have passed away.**"

And for years this is what I missed. I knew when I was saved Jesus entered my life and brought with Him His many wonderful blessings. But I thought the old nature remained to slug it out with the new nature.

I was taught by well-meaning but mistaken teachers that nothing died at my salvation. *My sin nature* stayed side-by-side with *God's new nature*. The net result was two natures in one person competing for control.

That meant it was up to me now to deny the old, and yield to the new. It was my work, my responsibility. And through moment-by-moment submission I would be able to put to death the old man slowly and gradually.

Of course this leaves a Christian as a kind of spiritual schizophrenic - a split personality - part of me is evil and part of me is good. I'm torn between the two.

Here's an illustration you've probably heard...

Two dogs are living in your heart - a good dog and a bad dog - and the dog that you feed the most is the dog that grows the strongest and takes control.

But that's not biblical. You're not a doghouse with two dogs. According to Romans 6 the old dog died. He's dead and the new dog now has run of the house.

Verse 6 says it best, **"The old man was crucified with Christ."** The part of me governed and dominated by sin was crucified, and is now as dead as a doorknob.

Notice, the solution for the old man is not starvation. You don't starve him to death. He doesn't die a long, slow, agonizing death. He gets crucified with Christ.

And the word "**crucified**" is in the past tense.

Dealing with the old man is not an action we have to take. It was done for us by Jesus on the cross. Again, look at verses 2 and 7. It's not that "*we're dying to sin,*" it's that "**we died to sin**" - past tense. It's a done deal.

A Christian's sin nature was nailed to the cross.

But you ask, "*So why do I still sin?*"

Our problem is **the flesh** - the outer man - the cookie. What's referred to in vs 6 as "*the body of sin.*"

This is the part of me that didn't change when I was saved. "**The body of sin**" retains the memories of sin and sinful reactions - sinful thoughts, and sinful habits. And it includes all of sin's rationales and excuses.

Before I became a Christian I spent twenty years programming my mind to think sinful thoughts. I taught my hands to do sinful stuff. When I opened my mouth I spoke sinful words. My feet ran to sinful places. My emotions reacted in sinful ways... *And I didn't forget it all when I came to Jesus. **Old habits die hard!***

Have you ever made the mistake of waking up at 6 AM on a Saturday morning, thinking it was a weekday, and you headed off to work? Our auto-pilot betrays us.

I use to drive a stick shift, but Kathy's car was an automatic. So whenever I drove her car I would find myself reaching for the shifter that didn't exist.

Hey, **some actions take time to stop even when the reason for those actions no longer exists.**

And this is what happens to a Christian.

Deep inside I'm a new person - but my feelings, and thoughts, and emotions have been conditioned to act and react in sinful ways. Again, **Old habits die hard.**

Especially under pressure. It's easier to revert back to an old habit - just fall back on what you know - than it is to cultivate new habits and new patterns... *A new creation needs to form new habits and build a new life.*

And there's another problem...

I live in a world that bombards me 24/7 with sinful suggestions. I read my Bible and come to church and learn a new way of looking at life, but starting on Monday I'm pressed back into the mold of this world.

I'm reminded of what I use to be - how I use to live.

We've got to stop listening to the world, and its advertisements, and recalibrate our feelings, thoughts, and assumptions so they line-up with our life in Christ.

In the inner man I've been transformed! **"In the deepest part of me I no longer want to sin!"** *If you can't say that you're probably not a Christian.* The power of sin is broken. Sin no longer **reigns** in our life.

But that doesn't mean sin won't be present. As long as we're in this body - *the flesh* - we'll wrestle with sin.

We're subject to sinful thoughts, and impulses, and reactions. We have to train the outer man to live in harmony

with the inner man. It's a process - but it's *a doable process*. Romans 12:2 encourages us, "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God re-mould your minds from within..."

Here's the Christian's dilemma - the inner man is pure and perfect - in love with God - but the flesh, *the body of sin*, is susceptible to evil and temptation...

The Philadelphia baseball team has a mascot called the "Philly Phanatic." On the outside he's a green, furry monster, with a long, ugly snout - and he does crazy stuff. He rides his motorcycle on the field - taunts opposing teams - incites the crowd. He's a real fanatic.

But when you see him on TV remember the exterior is just a costume. There's an actual person on the inside - *making a six figure salary BTW* - and of course, the person on the inside is the real person.

And the same is true with me. At times I can get green with envy, and reveal a monster-like temper, and do crazy stuff... *but that's not the real me*. Like the Phanatic, the real Sandy Adams is under the fuzzy exterior. The spiritual part of me is pure, and clean, and holy in the sight of God. I'm *in Christ* - a new creation.

The first step in reprogramming the outer man to act in harmony with the inner man is **to know** - *to really know* - become wedded to the idea - that I'm no longer the same person. That the old man has been crucified with Christ, and the real me is now dead to sin... *I'm dead and alive...* I love verse 6, "**knowing this...**"

To experience victory over sin - and to walk in God's presence and power - there's a truth you need to know.

You've heard, "Ignorance is bliss." That's not true if you're ignorant of verse 6, "*Our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with...*" That's the big truth you have to live if you want to walk in victory. Do you know that in a mysterious, and spiritual way you were crucified with Christ?

Here's what derailed my Christianity for years, **I failed to grasp my identity in Christ.** I didn't really understand the transformation I'd experienced. I was new inside, but I kept falling back into my old ways.

I could never decide where I truly belonged.

Was I a sinner at heart, trying to become a saint - or was I a saint at heart, learning how not to sin?

And it makes an enormous difference! It's been said, "Identity determines behavior." It's a truth, **How I see myself, shapes how I live my life.** Proverbs 23:7 puts it like this, "**As (a person) thinks in his heart, so is he.**"

I have a friend who was going through an intense time of temptation. She was a new believer and an old friend had resurfaced in her life. He was trying to suck her back into her old lifestyle. *She was distraught...*

One night she jumped in her car and started to drive. She doesn't know why, but she pulled into a graveyard. Her headlights hit a tombstone, and to her amazement the name carved on the tombstone was *her* last name.

The Lord reminded her that she was not the same person. The old man was dead and gone. She was a new creation. Her name on that tombstone encouraged her in her faith and helped her say “no” to temptation.

This is the result when *we know that we know* - when we truly believe. Confidence in our spiritual identity causes strength to rise up within us. Rather than try to be something we don't think we are - *which is one of the hardest things in the world to do*. A Christian's goal is to know who we are; then live in light of that truth.

In verse 11 Paul reiterates this point, "**Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord...**" Which proves Paul was a southerner... he uses the word "**well I reckon so...**"

Of course, the way Paul's uses the term is not how a Southerner uses it. Ask me if it'll rain tomorrow, and I'll respond, "**I reckon so!**" I'm saying, "**I guess so**" or "**it might**" or "**I hope it will**" - but if Paul said, "**I reckon it's going to rain**" he'd be taking an umbrella with him.

The Greek word translated "**reckon**" means "**to consider it so**" or "**to treat it as if it's true.**"

When Paul tells us to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God, he's saying consider it a *done deal*, and act accordingly. Learn to see yourself in Christ!

Hey, God wants you to change the way you see yourself... Don't just see yourself as *a sinner struggling to stay pure* - see yourself as *a victorious saint*.

And this isn't just mental gymnastics, or the power of positive thinking. Paul isn't telling us to think into existence something that's not true. *Considering it so doesn't make it so. We consider it so because it is so!*

The real you is indeed dead and alive.

You are spotless on the inside. You've been given a new nature that's in-tune with God - always desiring what He desires - a nature that loves God and others.

This is what John means in 1 John 3:9. *"Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God."* When you become a Christian the inner man is made pure, and fit for God's presence.

Realize, nothing else needs to happen to you to get you ready for heaven, other than what Jesus has already done for you on the cross, and in your heart.

In Romans 7:17 Paul makes one of the most incredible statements in the Bible. He says of his sin, *"It is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me."*

Paul says that when he sins it's not the real Paul that sins. Oh, he's responsible for his sin, but as a Christian it doesn't originate from the deepest part of his person.

It's his flesh. It's the outer man, not the inner man.

"To reckon it so" - is to learn to see yourself as God sees you. Realize, the image you see in the mirror is not the real you... The person all your old friends remember is not the

real you... The guy who rebelled against God and godliness is no longer the real you...

Today, your impulses to sin are merely leftovers from the past. They are not *the real you*. **Your connection to Christ means the *real you* is now a *new you*!**

I love this picture of a frail kitty cat looking into the mirror, but the mirror reflects not his outward appearance, but the lion on the inside. The caption reads, **“What matters most is how you see yourself.”**

Your friends and relatives might see you as a kitty cat - *or an old alley cat they use to roam with* - but you need to look into the mirror of God’s Word, and see yourself on the cross - **dead to sin and alive to God.**

Realize, a lion does lives within you. A biblical name for Jesus Christ is **“the lion of the tribe of Judah.”**

Before coming to Jesus, the great church leader, Augustine, lived a wicked, rebellious, immoral life. He refused to marry, and shacked up with a gal named **“Claudia.”** She even gave birth to an illegitimate child.

Shortly after his conversion to Christ, Augustine bumped into his former mistress on the street. Claudia raced toward him calling out, **“Augustine, it is I, it is I.”**

But Augustine started running in the opposite direction, shouting, **“But, it is not I, it is not I.”**

We overcome temptation when we see ourselves in a new light - and begin to build a new identity in Christ.

Once, I was at a bookstore looking for some new jokes. (*Don't get your hopes up, I didn't find any!*) As I was browsing the shelves, I glanced at the magazine rack, and just happened to see a "Playboy" cover.

For a second I sensed the pull of the flesh... the life I once lived was calling out... but that's when I recalled who I was in Christ! I remember actually thinking, "*Wait, these thoughts are no longer me! I'm a new person in Christ, a child of God!*" Immediately the temptation *vanished*, and I walked away *victorious*.

And understand it had zero to do with *my* resistance or *my* willpower. Because I considered myself a new creation, I could disown the desire, and walk away.

If you reckon yourself dead and alive - you can renounce an ugly urge, and make a right choice.

When temptation raises its ugly head learn to say, "*No way, that's not me*" - and walk away. We should say, "*No way, not me!*" Reckon yourself dead and alive.

Understand, it's hard to live the Christian life, if you don't see yourself as a Christian... And this is where many of us fall short. We listen to our doubts, our guilt, our failures - rather than listening to God's Word.

Romans 8:1 tells us, "*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...*"

But do we believe? Do we know that we know...

This past week I saw the slogan, “**Become who you are.**” This speaks to Christians. On the cross we are made new in Christ - *dead to sin and alive to God.*

Jesus did for us what we could never do for ourselves. But now we need live like it, and think like it, even act and react like it. Let’s **become who we are!**

Remember the story of the ugly duckling?

He was actually a beautiful swan, but was bred to be a duck. The other ducks considered him strange, and odd, and always put him down. He was an *ugly* duck...

Every afternoon he would look across the lake at the elegant swans on the shore, and wish he was a swan.

Until one day, when he was older, the ugly duckling noticed his reflection in the water... For the first time he saw himself as he truly was - not an ugly duck after all, but a gorgeous swan. The realization changed his life!

And if you’re a Christian you too are a beautiful swan, not an ugly duck. It’s time you looked into the mirror of Scripture, and saw yourself as you really are!

Ephesians 4:22 tells us, “**Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man... and be renewed in the spirit of your mind... that you may put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness.**” You cultivate a new identity by *putting off* and *putting on*. Put off the *old habits that gratify yourself*, and put on *new habits that glorify God*.

Some of you know my favorite actor of all time is John Wayne. Once, the Old Duke made a revealing statement, "When I take a role I play John Wayne regardless of the character I happen to be portraying!"

And that's exactly how he acted. John Wayne always had the same persona... Dress him in a Civil War uniform, or in World War 2 fatigues, or put a cowboy hat on his head... ship him off to the jungles of Vietnam, or the beaches of Normandy, or put him on Main Street in Eldorado... Call him John Elder, or Jacob McCandles, or Rooster Cogburn... it didn't matter since *John Wayne always played John Wayne*.

He lived the same character and communicated the same image. The Old Duke knew who he was!

And this is how Paul says we should live our lives...

No matter *where we're at*, or *what we're doing*, or *who we're with* - reckon yourself to be dead to sin and alive to God. See yourself in Christ... *then live like it!*

You're *dead and alive* - know it, believe it, and certainly rejoice in it! *Show the world what it's missing!*