

# DEAD AND ALIVE 3

## ROMANS 6:13-23

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness,

and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In 1972 two men were hunting on the south sea island of Guam when they made a startling discovery!

They found a Japanese soldier.

His name was Shoichi Yokoi. And for 28 years this soldier had lived on the island in a jungle cave.

After the Japanese surrendered in World War II, US planes dropped leaflets on the island announcing the news. Yokoi had read the leaflets, but refused to believe the enemy's offer of amnesty. For over a quarter of a century Yokoi lived in fear of capture.

He spent his days in the cave and only came out at night. He lived off frogs, rats, snails, nuts, and mangos.

The war was over. Victory had been decided. A nuclear explosion turned out to be the decisive blow.

News of Japan's surrender had been received, but not believed. Because Shoichi Yokoi didn't know the war was over, he lived a life of bondage and fear.

And sadly, this is the plight of many Christians.

The war in us is over. Victory was won on the cross.

The sacrifice of Jesus has set off a spiritual chain reaction so powerful and far-reaching that it touches and transforms everyone who knows and believes.

The cross of Jesus generates a miracle in the deepest part of a person. At the core of our being we become a new

creation in Christ. Yet like Yokoi, if we don't believe the truth it'll have minimal impact.

The Bible teaches that men are born into sin.

Rebellion is genetic. Sin is in your DNA. Job 5:7 tells us “**sparks fly**” the day we're born. At the outset of our lives there's already friction and conflict with God's will.

We're a piece of work from day one.

Rebellion, pride, stubbornness, and selfishness rule the roost in a human heart. At the controls of a non-Christian is a sinful nature for which we didn't ask.

And here's a crucial truth. There was nothing you could do about it... Jeremiah 13:23 asks a question, “**Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots?**” We can't change the pigment of our skin any more than a leopard can change his spots to stripes.

*What we is, is what we is...*

And Jeremiah concludes, “**Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.**” The odds of you living a flawless life are the same as the chances of a leopard changing his spots - *not very good*. Spiritually speaking, no man rises above his nature on his own.

*We can clean ourselves off and spruce ourselves up on the outside. We can act religious, and put on a happy face, and pray impressive prayers, and even live a kind and sacrificial life - but sin still lurks within us.*

A transformation is needed. This is why our salvation takes **a wow** - a big, bold, colossal miracle from God.

As we've talked about the last two times, in a mysterious, spiritual - *but very real* sense - when Jesus died on the cross we died with Him. We died to sin.

The old man, *the nature governed by sin*, was nailed to the cross once and for all. A Christian is both **dead and alive!** Inwardly we are now **dead to sin** and **alive to God**. **The power of sin is broken in our lives.**

When a person believes the truth about Jesus and is born again, they get a new heart. The Holy Spirit gives them a nature that loves God and loves others.

A Christian still feels the urge to sin, but the desire doesn't originate in his spirit. It's a leftover from the past. Before we became Christians sinful thoughts, and habits, and assumptions, and feelings rooted themselves in our flesh. We taught our minds, and reflexes, and impulses how to sin and desire evil.

But this is no longer us. It's no longer the real you.

When we're tempted we need to say, **"No way, not me."** (again) Renounce the old life - develop a new identity - live in harmony with who you are in Christ.

When I was in High School I dated a gal, who had a dog named *Butch*. Before our first date, she didn't tell me about *Butch the ferocious German Shepherd* - who reacted violently to doorbells... As soon as I pushed the button this beast bounds around the corner, leaps up, and pins me against the brick wall. The girl's mom had to call down her dog to free me. I was petrified.

Somehow I overcame our rocky start and asked her out again. This time I made sure Butch was chained!

On our second date, when I walked up the driveway ole Butch came running out of the garage barking and snarling like the first occasion - but this time the chain on his neck choked him to a stop... I laughed, and mumbled something like, "*dumb dog,*" as I went to the door to escort my date. If I remember correctly, I even kicked a little dirt in his face - retribution for his attack.

But as we walked back to my car I noticed the chain around Butch's neck... the other end was just lying in the garage. It wasn't tied to anything. It was just laying there loose on the floor. It scared me. I raced to my car.

I found out later, when Butch was younger his chain was tied to a tree, and whenever he'd run further than the length of his chain, it would strangle him.

He learned how far he could run before he choked.

After a while it became such a reliable habit the family no longer bothered tying up the loose end of the chain. They didn't need to - Butch was conditioned.

And **the Butch phenomenon** is what happens to a Christian. The work of Jesus on the cross breaks the chain and the pull of sin. But because we're use to living under sin's control we continue to serve sin rather than the righteousness we're set free to pursue.

I continued to visit Butch's family for awhile and I was always glad that dumb dog never wised up and realized the

truth about his situation. *And I'm sure Satan thinks the same about many Christians.*

Ignorance is our #1 nemesis. As Jesus told us in John 8:32, "The truth shall make you free."

Here's the first key to living a victorious Christian life: **know that you know!** You're not the same. In Christ, you're a new you! You're now **dead and alive.**

You need to take a good look behind you and realize the chain of sin was severed by Jesus on the cross.

You're now free to be all that God wants you to be.

As Paul puts it in verse 6, "Knowing this, that the 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." Our number one priority... we've got to **know.**

But there's a second key - we *know*, and then we **reckon it so.** Verse 11 says, "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."

Notice, the question is not whether sin is *present* in a Christian's life. Sadly, sin will always be present.

As long as I occupy a *fallen body* and live in a *fallen world*, I'll be tempted by sin. But I don't have to let it have its way and rule over me. *We're not victims...*

When I became a Christian the inner man changed, but not the outer man. I still remember how to sin.

Sin is programmed into my thoughts and reflexes, my actions and reactions. Using Paul's terminology, *the old man* trained *the body of sin*. And additionally, the world around me tries to reinforce those sinful patterns.

But Jesus crucified the old man - the sin nature. And planted in us a new nature - one that's alive to God.

That means we're now under new management.

Using computer lingo, we've received new hardware in our spirit, now we need to update the software - *that is, renew our mind*. If you want to run at peak capacity the software has to be compatible with the hardware.

Run old software on new hardware and don't expect the computer to function much differently than it did prior. You need a renewed mind to make improvement.

We need to learn to think, and act, and even react in harmony with who we are as children of God.

Paul uses the term, "**reckon.**" It means "**to treat a fact as if it's true.**" To reckon is to take seriously what's happened to me *inwardly*, and now apply it *outwardly*.

There's a Jesuit priest in East Los Angeles named Greg Boyle. He's the founder and director of "**Homeboy Industries.**" Greg has put together a team of physicians trained in the laser technology of tattoo removal.

Greg reaches out to former gang members and removes their tattoos. *Which is critical for their future...*

Most employers won't hire someone with a gang tattoo. A tattoo makes the person wearing it a constant target for rival

gangs. A person with a gang tattoo is in danger, just walking down the street.

And most importantly, the tattoo's permanence reinforces the belief that the gang has a never-ending claim on its members. Thus, when a tattoo is removed it gives a person permission to embrace a new identity.

Apparently, the laser removal of a tattoo is a very, very painful. People who've had the procedure describe it as pouring hot grease on your skin.

Yet despite the pain, "[Homeboy Industries](#)" has a waiting list of over a thousand names. Evidently, the longing to be free - the lure of a new life and new identity - are so strong people gladly endure the pain.

This is what it means to reckon yourself *dead to sin and alive to God*. I've got to allow what's true on the inside to fill up and shape what I am on the outside.

These changes may or may not involve tattoo removal, but it definitely involves removing *sinful attitudes*, and *habits*, and *pleasures*, and *relationships*.

In Christ, you and I have a new identity - we've gone from *the devil's gang* to *God's family*.

And now whatever it is *that associates you with your old life*, and *puts a target for temptation on your back*, and *poses a spiritual danger for you or others* - you need to get it removed. *Laser it out of our lifestyle*.

Here's the big thought in today's lesson: **Jesus gives us a choice**. Before we became a Christian we were slaves to sin.

We were the dog that ran to the end of the chain and choked himself. We were tied up.

Sin gave you just enough rope to make you think you were in control, but run too far and your sin snapped you back into bondage... Just because you could go three or four weeks without a drink, or without the pornography - you thought you didn't have a problem.

But try to shake free for longer, and the trap springs.

If you really know Jesus this is the bondage the Lord broke for us *on the cross and in our hearts*. **Jesus has given you a choice.** You and I *can* live differently.

Salvation is no illusion. **The power of the cross of Christ is real!** It breaks sinful chains. It transforms a believer on the deepest level. You are a new creation.

But just like Butch the dog, whether you live free or stay bound to the chain, is a choice that you make. It's possible to be set free, yet still live as if you're not.

Lying in a hospital bed, on the eve of his open heart surgery, Bruce McIver asked his cardiologist, *"Dr. Johnson, can you fix my heart?"* Dudley Johnson is a skilled cardiologist, but a man of few words. Known for getting to the point, he said, *"Sure,"* and walked away.

After the twelve hour surgery, again McIver asked his doctor, *"In light of the blocked arteries you bypassed, how much more blood supply will I have now?"* Again Dr. Johnson gave a terse reply, *"All you'll ever need."*

Finally as Bruce was being discharged, his wife had a question for Dr. Johnson, *"How will surgery affect my*

*husband's future quality of life?"* Dr. Johnson paused for a few seconds; then answered, "Mrs. McIver, I fixed your husband's heart. His quality of life is up to him..."

And this is where we're at in Romans 6, Jesus has fixed our hearts, but our future quality of life depends on **three** choices that we are called on to make...

First, let's **know**... really know that we're brand new in Christ - that we're dead to sin and alive to God.

Second, **reckon**... we need to **embrace** and **embody**. *Embrace* the identity that's yours in Christ. Then *embody* that identity in how you think and act.

And then third, here's a new term for us, but a very important word, **present**. Read with me again in verse 13, "And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."

*Now what's this business about "members?"*

*Is Paul recruiting members for a new church? Is he selling memberships at the local health club? And why does he mention "instruments?" Is he starting a band?*

What's meant by "members" and "instruments?"

"Members" is an old way of talking about body parts. My members are my ears, and eyes, and brain, and hands, and feet, and tongue, and lips, and glands, etc.

And I use my **members** as "instruments" - or "tools" that produce actions that either glorify God, or promote sin. The

New Living Translation renders verse 13, “Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin... use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God.”

Last time I mentioned that my exterior body is not the real me. There's more to me than meets the eye.

You can't size me up by taking my measurements.

You and I are like an iceberg. You only see 10% of an iceberg - 90% of it is underwater. And the same it true of the real me. I'm under the surface. I'm spiritual.

**My body is not the real me, but it does serve the real me.**

What I do with my members helps to reinforce my inner, spiritual identity... If you think of yourself as an athlete you'll be in the gym - lungs pumping, arms lifting, legs running - getting your members in shape.

See yourself as a scholar, and your eyes will read and your mind will study... Think of yourself as the class clown and you'll use your tongue to crack jokes...

My point is - our body and minds are tools that we use (sometimes consciously - often subconsciously) to bolster our identity. As I said once before, “**Identity determines behavior**” - but inversely, **our behavior also strengthens and reinforces our identity.**

When I was growing up I saw myself as a basketball player. It seems silly now, but my whole identity was to play pro basketball. And to this day all you have to do is toss me a

ball, put me in front of a goal, let me hit a few baskets - *and I'll start to think I missed my calling!*

No kidding! The other day I was at my grandson's basketball game, and afterwards I took a few shots, and all the emotions started flooding back to my mind.

I'm thinking I should've pursued basketball? I gave up too soon? I might've had a chance... Listen, **one afternoon of an activity can conjure up an old identity!**

And this phenomena impacts our relationship with God... One afternoon of indulging a bad habit, and pursuing old sins, and hanging out with the wrong friends - and it weakens our faith. You start to doubt if you were ever a child of God in the first place. *"If I were really a Christian, how could I be doing such things?"*

Paul is telling us to stop the stuff that undermines who we are in Christ. When you allow your eyes and ears to entertain evil it makes it harder to believe and reckon that you're **dead to sin** and **alive to God**.

We need to stop **misusing** our members - and start **using** them for good. Employ your members in ways that will build up and reinforce your identity in Christ.

Do the *right stuff* and it builds up faith...

*When I read my Bible - or attend church and hang with other Christians - or share my faith - or take a stand for Jesus at work - or do a kind deed in His name, I get encouraged. I feel God at work in my life.*

Notice verse 14, “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!” Sadly, on occasion I’ll run across a so-called Christian who uses God’s grace as an excuse to sin. “*Well, since God promises to forgive us, I can go ahead and sin.*” How foolish!

God’s mercy and grace are motivations **not** to sin.

God’s grace is a means of overcoming sin - not an encouragement to commit sin. It’s been said, “Grace provides us freedom **from** sin, not freedom **to** sin.”

Here’s a problem... when you take advantage of God’s grace - or abuse His grace - you’re suddenly right back enslaved to the sin you once escaped.

Notice verse 16, “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?”

Whatever we obey soon becomes our master.

Paul uses an analogy here that was common to all Romans - *a master and his slave*. It’s estimated that a third of the Roman Empire consisted of slaves. And of those who were free about a sixth were former slaves.

But slavery today is just as prevalent as it was in ancient Rome. In fact, there’s an excellent chance you’re sitting next to a slave or an x-slave right now...

*I know people enslaved to pride.*

They won't admit their faults and failures - and their refusal drives away the people that love them most.

*I know folks enslaved to stuff.*

In their life possessions come before people. They ruin relationships... I knew a man who put fishing ahead of his wife. His *bass boat* sunk his *love boat*.

*I know folks enslaved to pleasure.*

They chase *the highest high* and *biggest buzz* even to the detriment of their marriage and kids and health.

I'm sure you're getting the point... In this room today there're slaves to success - slaves to sports - slaves to money - slaves to alcohol - slaves to control, and ease, and food, and fear, and drugs, and porn, and hate...

There's an old Bob Dylan song. Here're the lyrics, "[You've got to serve somebody, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you've got to serve somebody.](#)"

And it's true. *Everybody* serves *somebody* - or *something*. Paul is telling us to make sure our members - *our toes and nose* - *our hips and lips* - all that we are - serves God as a tool of righteousness.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century two brothers, Raynald and Edward, fought for the right to rule Belgium. After a heated battle Edward won, and took his brother to live in his castle. A special room was built for Raynald.

Edward was criticized for imprisoning his own blood brother, but he insisted Raynald wasn't a prisoner at all. He said Raynald could leave whenever he wanted.

And true to Edward's word, Raynald's room had no guards - and no bars - and no chains - just a normal size door... So *what was it that held Raynald?*

You see Raynald had the nickname, "**Crassus.**" It's Latin for "**fat.**" The man was horribly obese. In fact, he was so big he couldn't fit through a normal size door.

And everyday Edward would send his best chef to his brother's room with all kinds of scrumptious foods, and desserts, and pastries. For ten years, Raynald ate, and ate, and ate - and remained confined to his room.

All the brother had to do was stop eating, slim down and he could've walk out. Yet, Raynald was a prisoner, *not of his brother, Edward*, but of his own appetites.

Be careful not to abuse God's grace. We're all slaves, just to different masters. It's our choice...

Verse 16 reminds us, "**Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey.**" To whom do you present your members? You're *a slave to sin* or *slave to Jesus*.

Here's the great tragedy, and a real possibility. You can be dead to sin and alive to God - transformed on the inside by Jesus - yet live as if nothing happened.

Allow your members to serve sin, and it sucks you right back into a downward spiral. The Living Bible's rendering of

Galatians 5:1 warns us... “Christ has made us free. Now make sure that you stay free and don’t get all tied up again in the chains of slavery.”

*Why watch movies that are laced with obscenities and blasphemy? Why subject yourself to vice and violence? Why go back and feed on the very things God saved you from? Why are we reminding yourself of the thoughts and habits we ought to forget?*

Our old man was crucified with Jesus, the last thing we should do is try to resurrect him. *He's dead - so let the dead dog lie!* Let's dwell on the new man, and use our members to reinforce who we are in Christ.

When I read God's Word, it shines light into my life that I can follow... When I serve God and others, I start to see myself as a servant... When I hang out with God's people, I begin to feel a part of His Church...

*What kind of a follower never takes instructions?*

*What kind of a servant never bothers to serve? What kind of family never hangs out together?*

Unless you present your members in ways that support your identity in Christ your faith becomes diluted and you lose all your spiritual momentum.

I read of an Afghan woman who told a foreign correspondent why her friends continued to wear burqas - the full-body covering required by the Taliban.

Even though they thought burqas were unbearable, they continued to wear them. The woman said, [“We’ve lived in darkness so long we are afraid of the light.”](#)

This is why some Christians don’t dare to mature. It’s easier to stay put in sin, than to open up to what’s new.

It reminds me of Danny Villegas. He served seventy months in a federal penitentiary for bank robbery.

As soon as he was released he walked into a Florida Credit Union and told the clerk it was a hold up.

She called the cops. Danny sat on the couch in the lobby and waited on their arrival. Turns out Danny had enjoyed prison life so much he wanted to return.

*And as crazy as it sounds, a lot of Christians have done exactly the same.* Rather than embark on a new life in Christ, they’ve opted to remain imprisoned to sin.

I know Christians who find it easier to walk in the rut of sinful habits than to climb out of that rut and take the high road - develop new patterns. To them, hanging with old friends, even if they’re obnoxious and detrimental, is more convenient than making new ones.

They’re more at home in the bar than at church...

They watch TV because it’s less effort than reading their Bible... **They’re content to live in bondage.**

Because they’ve never use their members as tools of righteousness their outer life never reflects the inner man. Their salvation gets wasted. Just like Raynald they’re free, but they remain a prisoner by default.

Verse 17 commends the Romans for choosing to be slaves of Jesus. “But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” God frees us from sin, not so we can sin again, but so we can be slaves of good.

In verse 19 Paul issues an apology. “I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh.”

Paul admits it’s a silly illustration to compare *slavery* with *righteousness*. Far from confining, a slave to God is truly free. He lives an unhindered life. Righteousness is the most merciful taskmaster a slave will ever serve.

It was the famous church father, Chrysostom, who was asked, “*What is God’s slavery like?*” He replied, “*It is better than any freedom.*” Sin is a cruel boss, but our heavenly Father treats His slaves as sons.

And Paul adds in verse 19, “For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.”

Here Paul mentions **the snowball effect**.

Life tends to snowball. Get rolling in a direction and it builds momentum. One step leads to another - that leads to another. It’s true with good *or* evil. The further you go in a direction the easier it is to take a next step.

And this is why we now need to chase after righteousness with the same intensity and eagerness and aggressiveness with which we once pursue sin.

Some of you guys were really rowdy sinners. You didn't just sin, you sinned with gusto! You could party with the best of them. *Drink'em under the table.*

Today I enjoy worshipping Jesus with you, but in the day, I wouldn't have wanted to meet you in a dark alley.

Charles Spurgeon once observed, "The most useful members of a church are usually those who would be doing harm if they were not doing good..." You were a rambunctious sinner. Now turn that rambunctiousness toward God. *Be rowdy for what's righteous and godly.*

In the chapter's last few verses, Paul directs our attention forward. Up until now he's pointed backward to the cross to stir up a desire for righteousness. But now he points ahead to the results of our choices...

Verse 21, "What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death." The life you lived before you came to Jesus was full of pain, and shame, and death. *Why would you ever want to continue down that path?*

Here's the first rule of employment. *If you don't like the wages don't take the job?* And we're wise to compare **the paycheck for sin** with **the gift of God**.

Moving forward in your life what kind of payday looks best to you? *A brief fling with pleasure, or an eternity of joy? Fame on*

earth, or favor in heaven? Respect or embarrassment? Peace or conflict? Love or hate?

Verse 22, “But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.” Walk into work tomorrow and ask the boss if you can set your own wages. He’ll say, “*You’re nuts.*” But this is exactly what God allows us do. Here we’re offered a choice...

You can choose sin and death - or you can choose righteousness and life. The choice is, really up to you!

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” God is warning us that sin always causes death... *Of course, that’s not on the price tag.* The devil is deceitful. He swaps the tags.

He makes you think righteousness is burdensome and boring, while sin is exciting and pleasurable.

But just the opposite is true. Sin causes death - if not immediately - in time. And it may not be someone's physical death - it can be the death of a relationship, or your sanity, or your reputation. *But sin causes death.*

Sin's wages are death, but God's gift is eternal life. And if I can set my own wages... I choose God's gift!

So let me sum up our three weeks in Romans 6...

**Know** that you're dead to sin and alive to God.

**Reckon** outwardly what's true inwardly.

And now **present** your members - your body and your mind - as tools of righteousness to please God.

Remember the words of the cardiologist. **Jesus fixes your heart - your quality of life is up to you...**