**DEAD TO SIN; ALIVE IN CHRIST**

***Romans 6:1-23***

***“In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” (v.11)***

Today’s passage marks a turning point in our Christian lives. It is a turning from the old life to the new life. That turn occurred when we made a personal commitment to accept Jesus as our Savior and King with a clear confession of repentance of our sins. Through our faith, we were made righteous before God. In this new life, we are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. Being dead to sin, we are now freed from sin. Being alive to God, we now have access to the power of God as our source of strength to live new and dynamic lives. In this new life, we must fully believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Then, we must claim this new life with faith and vigor and offer ourselves to God to live as His servants. May the Spirit teach us the secrets victory of our new life in Christ!

1. **Shall we go on sinning? By no means! (vs. 1-2)**

In the previous passage, Apostle Paul concluded that where sin increased, grace increased all the more. However, to the sinful mind, this glorious truth can be twisted and abused immensely. Look at verse 1, ***“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?”*** For some, God’s grace looks like a license to freely and persistently sin. These same individuals think that the more they sin, the more they’re entitled to receive more of God’s grace. But God’s grace doesn’t work like that.

Look at what Apostle Paul says in verse 2, ***“By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?”*** Apostle Paul answers with an emphatic “no!” His conclusion is that if a person died to sin, why would he or she want to live in it any longer? Here the word “died” means “separation.” Death to sin is the separation of its power, not the extinction of sin itself. So when we are dead to sin it means we are “set free from the power of sin.” Therefore the gospel does not lead us to sin more; rather, it’s a means of separating ourselves from sin. In no way is the abundance of God’s grace designed to encourage us to sin; instead, it should have the opposite effect.

I would like to introduce St. Augustine as an example here. Before becoming a Christian, St. Augustine lived as an intellectual hedonist. As a result, he had an illegitimate son with his girlfriend. But when Augustine accepted Christ, he was totally changed. He died to his sin of intellectual hedonism. Once, he met a former girlfriend on the street. She walked seductively toward him saying, “Augustine, it is I.” But Augustine turned and ran the other way, shouting over his shoulder, “Yes, but it is not I.” He meant that he had completely changed. He was not the same person she had known. He was freed from sin. In this way, Augustine became “St. Augustine.” God’s grace changed him to want to live a different life apart from sin. Basically, he no longer wanted to live that way any longer.

We all have sinful nature. And, let’s be honest with ourselves. There is a part of each one of us that wants to remain in a bad habit, or worse yet, sinful habit because we may think “that is who I am”. Or it is because you cannot give up full control of yourself to God. But Apostle Paul tells us that there is freedom and victory over our old selves. To achieve this victory and separation from sin, he deals with two aspects: One we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection. And two, we must count ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.

1. **United with Christ (vs. 3-10)**

In verses 3-10 Paul explains how Christ’s death unifies us with him and frees us from sin. Let’s read verses 3 and 4. ***“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”*** When a person is baptized, he or she is put under the water, symbolizing the death of the old person. What water baptism symbolizes, the Holy Spirit actualizes. To understand this fact, let’s first look at verse 10a, ***“The death he died, he died to sin once for all…”*** Jesus died for sinners. He did not deserve a sinner’s death because he was sinless, holy and blameless. He was in very nature God. But he took upon himself our sins, the sins of the world. He died for our sins. He died once, for all, for the sins of all people. That was the end of the power of sin that enslaved us over our old self. The price was completely paid. Through our faith, his atoning death brought us and into a new and glorious relationship with God eternally. So the cross of Christ is even more than a payment for sin. It is also the power to completely change our spiritual status before God forever.

Look at verse 5, ***“For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.”*** When we accept Christ by faith, through Jesus’ death and resurrection, we are united with Christ. How? First, we are united with Christ in his death. Let’s look at verse 6, ***“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with,that we should no longer be slaves to sin—”*** When God saved us through his son, Jesus, He did not want us to remain as slaves to sin. It is through the cross of Christ that we die to sin. It is also through the cross of Christ we are freed from the power of sin. Notice what Apostle Paul says, ***“For we know that our old self was crucified with him…”*** Simply, by the death of Christ upon the cross, I have become utterly estranged from (dead to) my former way of life and action. That’s why Apostle Paul wondered why anyone would want to live in sin any longer, because we have died to it and its power.

Second, we also are united with Christ in his resurrection. Now look at verses 8 and 9, ***“Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.”*** Christ’s resurrection was God’s eternal victory over sin and death. Christ’s resurrection is the power source of our new life. It is the power of God who raised Christ from the dead. Thus, our new life is dynamic and victorious and there are endless possibilities for spiritual growth and development. For example, Paul was once a narrow-minded Jewish Pharisee. But the resurrection power of Christ made him into a new man, a shepherd for the Gentiles. While in prison for preaching the gospel, Paul met Onesimus. Onesimus was a slave who had run away from his master. He also was too difficult to endure. But Paul loved him with the compassion of Christ. Paul said of him, *“...who is my very heart”* (Phil 12). Onesimus was changed into a new person and became a useful man in Christ. It was the power of the Risen Christ that empowers and changes people like Apostle Paul and Onesimus.

Not only is Christ’s resurrection a power source, but it also gives us permanent union with God. Look at verse 10b. ***“...but the life he lives, he lives to God.”*** Through Christ we can also live in God’s presence and have access to His mighty power. So there is no need to be fatalistic or sorrowful over ourselves and our situations. In Christ, we can live to God.

1. **Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ (vs. 11-14)**

Our victory over sin and death came through Jesus Christ who died and rose again. Jesus’ victory on the cross is assured once for all. Jesus’ death and resurrection now empowers us to live by faith so that we no longer need to let sin reign in our mortal bodies. So, in verses 11-14, we can see three practical steps we can take to help us live so that we remain set free from sin: Count yourselves dead to sin, do not let sin reign and offer yourselves to God.

**First step is to count ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.** Let’s read verse 11, ***“In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”*** The key word in this verse is the Greek word “count”. Here the word “count” is translated as “reckon or impute”. It means “to take into account, to calculate, to reason or a logical conclusion.” Simply, it means to believe that what God says in His Word is really true in your life. Thus, “to count” is not just claiming a promise as our own, but putting into action on that fact. Think of it this way, God does not command us to become dead to sin. Rather, He tells us that we are dead to sin and alive to God and then he commands us to act on it, like “to count yourselves dead to sin”. “To count yourselves” has a clear meaning. That meaning is that we must train our minds to believe that we died to sin and are alive to God. We must declare this victory in our lives by faith.

This requires us to struggle against our former way of living such as sinful habits and desires. Spiritually speaking, these things have lost their power over us because our old self was already died. And thus, we have to count ourselves dead to them. We must also claim that we are alive to God in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here.”* We are new creation to God. Our new self lives should no longer gratify our sinful desire but to glorify God. Our victory does not come to us automatically, so we must continually count our selves dead to sin but alive to God and claim our victory in Christ by faith.

**Second step is to not let sin reign in our bodies.** Look at verse 12, ***“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.”*** Sin is a pesky thing in this fallen world. Sin, like the devil, is always prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. (1Pe 5:8) Sin, and even our weaknesses, are waiting for the moment we let our guards down. It pokes at us. It wants us. And it attacks us, only for us to give in and become its slave. Temptation is always there. In temptation, there will be a struggle and it will not always be easy, but we have the strength to do it and we have the right to do it. We have the freedom not to sin and the desire not to sin. That is what God has brought to us in Christ.

How then do we not let sin reign? I think James 1:15a tells us what happens when we sin, *“Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin…”* We must understand that letting sin reign is when we have desire to sin, we eventually give birth to sin. Therefore, to not let sin reign, we must make a clear decision not to do it when our desire to sin has been conceived. In other words, when you feel the temptation in your body or your mind, then there are two things you are to do: First, remember that you don't have to obey sin. You just don't have to. You have a right and a freedom to refuse it. So if sin calls our name to tempt us, for example, “Augustine!” or “( !)” we must answer, “It’s not I. I am a new person dedicated only to God.” And, second, remember God’s power is in you to enable you to give yourself to God because Jesus died and rose again to give you power over the power of sin.

**Third step we must offer ourselves to God.** Look at verse 13,  ***“Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.”*** Our body parts can be used either as instruments of wickedness or as instruments of righteousness. There is no middle ground in this battle of temptation. So, what Apostle Paul is admonishing is that we “stop habits of continuing sin and devote ourselves wholly to God, immediately.” Since our body is God’s tool or weapon, He wants us to use it to defeat the strongholds of Satan and sin.

For example, temptation comes in various ways. It comes in the form of harboring ill feelings for co-workers and strangers. It is to harbor lustful thoughts. Or it is to covet someone’s possessions to name a few things. When these desires come to fruition, they give birth to sin and we become instruments of wickedness. So ill feelings toward co-workers and strangers becomes hatred and pride. So lustful thoughts turn to adultery. And coveting possibly becomes stealing, but more likely, it becomes jealousy and unthankfulness. Instead, when temptation comes, we must give every part of ourselves to God as an instrument of righteousness.

As we do this, we must have the attitude of one who has been brought from death to life. This means that we must acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and the one worthy of our life sacrifice. There was a woman who simply wanted to express her love to Jesus before he was facing arrest and trial. She brought a jar of very expensive perfume and poured it on Jesus. In this way she offered herself to God. Jesus accepted her act as a most beautiful thing and an eternal part of his gospel history. When we offer ourselves to God like her we can have great joy and the privilege of being used by God in his history. Christ Jesus has brought us from death to life. We must offer our new lives to him in deep gratitude and wholehearted appreciation.

1. **We are slaves to righteousness (vs. 15-23)**

Apostle Paul clearly states that we are not under law, but under grace (14). We no longer live in bondage to sin or under the yoke of legalism. We can come to God freely through Christ and ask for his grace and mercy to help us in our struggle. However, we must not abuse this grace by living at random. In verses 15-23, Paul explains that we must have a clear direction for our new lives. Look at verse 16. ***“Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?”*** When we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior, he becomes our master. Submission to him sets the new direction in our lives. Paul calls this submission being slaves to obedience, slaves to righteousness and slaves to God.

Some people resist the idea of submission to God. They feel that if they submit to God they are giving up their freedoms. This is one of the great lies of Satan. In God, we have true freedom. Man was made to serve. Either he will be a slave to righteousness or a slave to sin. There is no middle ground. Slavery to sin is a nasty downward progression like being on “a highway to hell.” It is slavery to ever-increasing wickedness. Slavery to sin destroys our peace and robs us of our joy. The final result is death, both physically and spiritually.

God gave us His one and only Son Jesus to rescue us from slavery to sin. Through His word we gain access to a new life. When we wholeheartedly obey the word of God, the power of sin loses its grip on us and we actually have true freedom. We become slaves to obedience that leads to righteousness. We grow in holiness. The final result is eternal life. How wonderful it is to grow in God! Let’s decide to obey the word of God wholeheartedly and grow in holiness.

Through this passage, I learned from verse 1 and 2 I have a choice to sin or not. That choice is predicated on Jesus giving me freedom from sin through his death and resurrection. Although he paid the price for my sins, my faith needs to be expressed in my obedience to deny my sinful nature. I learned that I need to have faith in Jesus’ death and resurrection as fact—the truth that sets me free. It happened and it was for me. The other aspect is that through Jesus’ death and resurrection I am united with him to have freedom to be set free from my sin. And through this fact, I can say no to sin and offer my body as an instrument of righteousness, by faith. I realized that my flesh counts for nothing, but in faith I can do anything because of Him who gives me strength. I must understand that my calling to follow Jesus must result in my submission to Jesus as my Lord. I must not be afraid to be a slave to righteousness. Again, this is another oxymoron that the Bible gives. Who would think that being a slave actually results in freedom. Lord, I ask that You give me the spiritual fortitude to live by faith in the cross of Jesus. Lord, help me to understand that being a slave to Jesus as a slave to righteousness is actually freedom from sin. Lord, guide me to count myself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.

Through this passage, we learned that as followers of Jesus, we should no longer live as our old self because we have a new life in Christ. This unity in Christ’s death and resurrection brings freedom and victory over sin. Also our unity in Christ leads us to live as slaves of righteousness for His goodwill and purpose. May the Spirit guide us to “count ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ” by faith.