

Dead or Alive (To Sin)

Romans 6:1-14

March 1st, 2009



Scripture

“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to

God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”

Based on these verses, I believe the question of whether you are dead or alive to sin is a matter of life or death. I will only cover the first two verses in this lesson.

Have you ever tried to teach someone something and they jump to a wrong conclusion? You said one thing, and later, you found out they understood it the wrong way. What they understood wasn't even close to what you said. Paul knew people had that tendency to sometimes hear what he was saying, yet jump to a false conclusion. In Romans 6, we see Paul explaining exactly what he meant because they could have possibly come to a wrong conclusion. He is basically saying they didn't really get it if they had indeed come to that conclusion.

Review

Paul started out in Romans telling us the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes, to the Jews first and also to the Gentiles. He tells us the reason he is anxious to take the gospel to the nations is because he believes all nations are in bondage to sin. Basically, all mankind has the same problem, which is a sin problem. As a matter of fact, Paul believed at the very moment he was writing to the Church at Rome that God's wrath was being poured out against sinners. God was letting sinful man be as sinful as they wanted to be. But God knew the day was coming when they would face His wrath in an entirely different way. They would be cast out of His presence forever. Since it was universal, Paul believed the only remedy for man's salvation was for there to be a universal salvation in the death of Jesus Christ for all men.

Paul goes to great pains to teach that the only way a man can be made right with God is by God's grace. God's grace, bestowed upon us, came without cost and without cause in us. God worked His grace in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. On that cross, He became our propitiation. This

propitiation can only be received, on a sinner's part, by faith. Paul labored in Romans to teach the principle of justification by faith alone with no work on the part of the sinner included at all.

In Romans 3:20 through 5:11, Paul has labored to paint the picture of the salvation we have in Christ. So that none of us missed it, he takes verses 13-21 and summarizes the whole of his theology. He summarized that man did not do anything to get into this mess called sin, Adam did. And neither do we do anything to get out of this mess. Christ is the one who completely gets the sinner out of the mess he got into because of Adam.

In Romans 5, beginning with verse 12, Paul spans salvation history from Adam to Christ. But the religious person in the audience would think that Paul left someone out. He did not talk about Moses and the Law. He gave us the trespass, which is sin. The power of sin came into the world because of Adam's sin. Death came into the world and spread to all men because all sinned. Man is born spiritually separated from God. Now, we would have been fine if Paul had not said what he did in verse 20. He said that the Law came in to increase the sin, and where it increased, grace did much more abound.

When I was a child in Sunday school, I was taught that God gave the Law to the children of Israel so that when they got into the land of Israel, they would know how to live as a redeemed people. Therefore, it just made sense to me that if God gave them a code in which to govern their conduct, they would be less sinful if they followed that Law. It would bring great glory to God to go into the land less sinful, and it would make the nations around them understand who they were. Paul turns that teaching on its head. While that is true and rooted in the Old Testament, Paul also said that while there was a purpose for the Law of God generally as a whole to the people of Israel, there was also a personal reason for the giving of the Law. It was so that sinners, personally, would be more sinful.

We will get to this in Romans 7, but I just want to give you a nugget to chew on. Paul will teach that when you are born into sin, you will not really

know how bad you are unless you come under the Law. When you come under the Law as a sinner trying to do and be good, you will actually realize you are bad. So the Law that you tried to live by to do better actually causes you to do more sin.

The Doctrine of Grace

But the good news is that while the Law is given to make man more sinful, every time he becomes more sinful, grace abounds even more. A grace that is greater than all our sin! But Paul knew that some of us would jump to the wrong conclusion.

Sometimes I know I am right in certain things when I get the same reaction from people that Paul did. You know you are preaching a doctrine right on when the audience thinks the same thing about you as they did Paul. This church teaches that your salvation is not based on what you do; it is based on what God has done for you in Christ. You have to respond to what God did on the cross by faith.

But even faith itself is not a work you do. It is simply a response to what God says is true about what He did for you. Paul is teaching that where grace abounds, it covers all sin of a believer; past, present, and future. But if all sin is covered by the death of Jesus on the cross at one moment and applied to you at the moment of faith, and because grace is greater than any sin that can ever be committed, then some could draw the wrong conclusion. I mean, if we are saved by the work of another and do not have to do anything to get that work, then it makes sense that we wouldn't have to do anything to keep the work. If you did not do anything to receive the gift, then it makes sense that once you received it, then you wouldn't have to do anything to keep it. So then, some might conclude that they can live anyway they want and still be saved.

- **License to Sin?**

If you have forgiveness for all of your sins, then does grace mean a believer can continue to live the way he has lived and still be saved?

In verse 1, Paul said:

"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?"

The thought is the more sinfully I live, the more grace will be applied to my life. So if there is more grace to cover my sin, then God will be glorified in my sinning. In other words, the more I sin, the more I prove that it is really His work and not mine that saves me. Therefore, this doctrine of grace could lead people to believe they can go out and sin and still be saved. That is what Paul is saying, and there are Christians that still wrestle with this today. They have come under the preaching of the doctrine of grace, but have been taught all of their life that God did His part, but now they have to do their part. And then they have to do more to keep it or they will lose it. To them, grace is a radically different thought! But years ago, Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, anticipated what they would be thinking. Is grace a license to sin? Does grace mean you can get saved and still keep on living in sin and still be saved?

- **God Forbid!**

When we talk about free grace on the basis of faith, it leads some people to jump to a wrong conclusion, but listen to what Paul says in the King James Version:

"God forbid!"

The English Standard Version tones it down by saying:

"By no means!"

In West Kentucky, that means “get out of here with that thought! Don’t even bring that thought to the table because all that I have said in no way implies that!”

- **Dead to Sin**

Sometimes when someone is thinking differently than you because they have been taught something else all of their life, you cannot just answer their question. You have to make them think about what they are asking. You want them to think about the answer, so you turn a statement into a question. Jesus was the master at that. Jesus told His audience many times that they were asking the wrong question. They didn’t get it, so He would ask them a question to make them see they didn’t get it. The question would make them verbalize what they believed, and then to come to see the fallacy of what they were thinking. This is what Paul did. He raises a question that he knows some in his audience believes. He said:

“How can we who died to sin still live in it?”

My daughter-in-law, Katie, told me a story about her great-grandmother, on her dad’s side. Her name was Katie Crider. Katie’s grandmother on her mother’s side was also named Katie Crider. They are both from a small community in Crittenden County. When Katie’s great-grandmother died, the small community began to share that Katie Crider had died. People began to hear the news of Katie Crider’s death. Now, friends of the other Katie Crider began to call her house to express their sorrow to her husband and children. Can you imagine the shock when a friend called to express sympathy and Katie answered the phone? Wouldn’t that be shocking? Dead people do not answer the phone! When you die, you die to the things of this world, so when the phone rings, you do not respond to it. Can you imagine the shock when people saw Grandmother Katie walking on the street while believing she was dead?

Now think of this: If it is a fact that Grandmother Katie was alive, then it is a fact that she is not dead. If it is a fact that Great-grandmother Katie was

dead, then it is a fact that she was not alive. The one who was alive was still walking on the street, but the one who died was not walking the street because she wasn't alive anymore. You are either dead, or you are alive.

Paul was asking how they could live in sin if they were dead to it. They cannot. Do you see what Paul is teaching? The moment God put you into Christ, the person you were in Adam, dies! When you die, you are dead. When you are dead, you are no longer alive to what you used to be alive to. Paul taught that our identity is either based on being in Adam or in Christ. There is no in between, no other choice.

Nature to Sin

When you are physically born, you are born with a nature to sin. A person born in Adam has a nature to sin because, in their nature, they are dead to God and alive to the power of sin in their body. A sinner, upon birth, is a sinner because they have a nature to sin. He is dead to God, separated from Him, because he does not have the Spirit within him. The only spiritual part that is alive in him is alive to sin, and because of that, he will sin. Therefore, a sinner, because he does not have the Spirit of God within him, will not live according to the Spirit of God. He cannot, because he has an unredeemed flesh. He will live according to his unredeemed flesh and will sin. Sin comes naturally to a sinner. Now, a sinner can occasionally do an act of goodness and rightness. But this does not make a sinner right. While he may occasionally do a right thing, he is still a sinner at his core. A sinner lives a lifestyle of sin.

Nature to Obey

But when God backs up His moving van to the door of your heart and opens the door of the gospel to you, and you step by faith into God's salvation in Christ Jesus, He moves you out of Adam and brings you over to a new neighborhood. That new neighborhood is Christ. Now, all of a sudden, what you enjoyed in the old neighborhood is not in the new neighborhood. I mean sin is still there for both guys, but while the old you

enjoyed sin, the new you in Christ cannot enjoy sin. The new man in Christ died to sin as a power, and you are now alive to God. My new nature is to obey. That is why Romans 6 talks so much about obedience. In Adam, I had a nature to sin, but in Christ, I have a nature to do right. You cannot live in sin if you have died to sin, because you are not who you used to be!

However, there is a problem with how some of us view sin in ourselves as believers. Now, I believe this generation has more opportunity to get doctrine right than any generation who has ever lived. We have tools at our hands that our granddaddies did not have. So I do not mean any disrespect. My own Granddaddy Bogard had a profound spiritual influence on me. But I can remember as a kid, my Granddaddy would stand up to give a testimony or pray, and he would say, "God, you know I am just an old sinner saved by your grace." Everyone in the church would say amen because we felt like we were just old sinners saved by grace. Granddaddy was a grace man and wanted to reflect all glory for his salvation to God and did it the best way he could. But it pains me to say that while my granddaddy had his eye open to salvation in Christ by grace, he did not ever fully have his eyes open to what happened once you came to Christ by grace.

Those of you who are struggling with this doctrine please hear this. Yes, the doctrine of grace teaches that upon being placed in Jesus, you are forgiven of all sin; past, present, and future. But it is not a license to go out and sin, because the old sinner would want to go out and do that and still want a free ticket to Heaven!

Death: Man in Adam

When you come to Christ, the guy you were in Adam dies. The tense here is an aorist tense. It means an activity that has been finished at some point in the past. Aorist tense doesn't refer to time; it refers to the act of the action being finished. But when it is used in the accusative, it can always be placed in the past. Paul is saying there was a time when you were alive to sin, and suddenly you died. When you died, you were dead. But this

tense is not referring to the state of being dead; it is referring to the fact that there has been a death.

When each of my grandparents died, we mourned and cried because we knew they were gone. While we would still have a memory of them, we would never see them or have them in our presence again. Death is permanent. Paul said the sinner died! You cannot be dead and alive at the same time.

Birth: Man in Christ

Grace does not simply forgive you of what you have done, are doing, and are going to do, and then leave you like you are. Grace transforms you into someone you have never been! If God places you in Christ, the new you is a different and radically new. While the old you enjoyed sin, the new you cannot enjoy sin because it is not your nature. When the new you sins, you are not sinning against Law, you are sinning against who you are in Christ.

In this Baptist church, we will not argue for you under the true doctrine of grace and security of a believer. If you get yourself back into sin and start living a lifestyle of sin and die in it, do not expect me to stand in front of your family and tell them you are with God based on the blood of Jesus. I will be true to the Word. You were not ever saved! You cannot die to sin and come back alive to it. When your personal experience denies the Word of God, I will go with the Word, no matter what you think you did. Paul, in no way, would let his grace teaching lead someone to believe they can be saved and still go out and live a sinful life and get into Heaven. I do not mean that they had it and lost it. I mean they never had it. When you get it, you are not getting something that you hold on to, that you choose to let work or not. When you get it, it gets you and makes you someone you have never been before.

Now, Paul will later teach that we can still sin as a saint. But when we do, it is an occasional act of sinfulness. It is not a continual life of sinfulness. But when someone gets into a lifestyle of sin, year after year, he is not

alive in Christ, he is dead in sin. When you are dead in sin, you are alive to sin and dead to God. If you are alive to God, you are dead to sin. It is your nature that determines your behavior, not your behavior that determines your nature.

Preview

In the next lesson, Paul will ask a serious question. If you are a believer still living in sin, why did you get baptized? When Paul appeals to sanctification, he does not appeal to faith, but to your baptism. It is so important to your sanctification in becoming like Christ to understand what happened to you in your baptism.

Because of the depth in which the passage speaks, I respectfully disagree with those who water this down and believe it is spiritual baptism. I believe it is water baptism. When you got into the waters of baptism, you said the sinner is dead and you are a brand new person in Christ. That is what baptism expresses. It is not a rite into membership of a local church. It expresses your personal saving faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is not to be minimized. It is to be meditated on. You publicly profess your faith by going down into the waters of baptism.