

## DEAD TO SIN, ALIVE IN CHRIST

Romans 6:1-11  
Key Verse: 6:11

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

Let us briefly review what we learned so far from our Romans study. We human beings sinned against God and came under his wrath, but the good news is that in his grace and mercy, God sent his Son Jesus to save us. We are justified by faith in Jesus. The gift of salvation is given to us freely by the grace of God. This justification by faith alone is based on God’s promise that goes all the way back to the time of Abraham, as we learned in Chapter 4. Paul taught us the fruits of faith in Romans 5 that includes peace, grace, hope and the love of God. Beginning in Chapter 6, we learn what kind of life God wants us to live, now that we have been justified by faith in Jesus.

### I. WE DIED TO SIN SO THAT WE MAY LIVE A NEW LIFE (1-4)

Look at verse 1. *What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?* This question could be raised from Romans 5:20 which says, “But where sin increased, grace increased all the more.” The idea is that you would be more thankful if your debt of a million dollars is forgiven than just \$20. Likewise, you would be more grateful to God for his grace of forgiveness if you committed terrible sins like murder and adultery than some garden variety sins like envy and jealousy. So why not go on sinning so that grace may increase? This sounds logical. But what is in the mind of a person who raises such question? He might be looking for excuses to maintain a sinful life or a license to sin. What is Paul’s answer? *By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?* (2) There is a fundamental change that takes place in a person when he becomes a Christian. His inner being is changed. He is a new person with a new hope, a new value system, and a new perspective in life. Paul declares that we have died to sin, that is, Jesus died on the cross to take away all our sins. By faith, we join Jesus in his death and we have died to sin. This truth is repeated many times in Romans 6. In other words, we cannot go back to our old ways of living a sinful life. If we really know what Christ has done on the cross in order to save us, we cannot crucify him all over again by going back to our sinful life. St. Peter compares such life to a dog returning to its vomit (2Pe 2:22). God’s grace is not a license to sin. It is not an excuse to sin. Rather, it is a reason for us to love him more and serve him fully.

Paul continues in verses 3-4. *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.* Paul says again that we have died to sin when we were baptized into Jesus’ death. Jesus died on the cross as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He paid the price of our sins with his life. So those who believe in Jesus are baptized into his death, dying with him to sin. We were buried with him through baptism into death so that we may be born into a new life, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father. Through his death and

resurrection, Jesus has given us a second chance in life. In Christ, we have a new life to live. This is what St. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” There has been an intrinsic change in our inner being. We are dead to sin so that we may live a new life.

The problem is that there is a disconnect between what Paul declares here and what our reality is. We are told that we are dead to sin, but we don't feel like we are dead to sin. A dead person would not have a lustful desire, but we do. A dead person would not have a prideful heart, but we do. It seems that we are very much alive to sin. We still feel temptations to sin and we do sin, even though we don't want to. In fact, St. John says that if we claim we don't sin, we are liars (1Jn 1:10). So it is clear that Paul does not mean that we are incapable of sinning or immune to sin when he says we died to sin. Then what does it mean that we died to sin and we were baptized into Jesus' death? I believe it means that a fundamental change has occurred in our status and identity before God. Sin entered the world through one man Adam. As his descendants, we lived and died in sin. In Adam, sin was a way of life for us. We were sinners by birth. We were sinners by choice. And we practiced sin habitually. But Jesus came to save us from sin and death. He paid for our sins with his own life. When Jesus died on the cross, we died with him as far as sin is concerned. Again, this does not mean we become incapable of sinning. The sinful nature is still with us until our body is transformed into a heavenly one when Jesus comes back. However, our status has been changed. We are no longer in Adam. We are in Christ. This is a clear change in our status. There has been a change in the ownership. Our master is no longer sin. Our master is Jesus Christ. We still sin, but sin does not dominate our life. We don't actively go out to commit sin. We no longer enjoy sin like we used to. Instead, we struggle to live for God. Paul declares in Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” So to die to sin is to live in Christ.

Still, some people may say, “I really don't feel the change in the status of my life.” We have to make certain one thing here. It is not the feeling we should trust. It is the word of God. It is the promise of God we should trust. God's word tells us that we are a new creation in Christ. It is God's promise that we have been set free from sin and death. It is important for us to accept and believe this spiritual truth as fact and live our new life as God's children. Suppose a king adopts a beggar as his own son. The new identity of the son is prince. He is no longer a beggar. His status has been changed. So he must think and act like a prince, not like a beggar. Likewise, we must accept the fact by faith that we are no longer in Adam, but we are in Christ. Sin no longer rules over us. Sin is no longer a way of life for us, even though we still sin.

Paul began this passage by asking the question, “Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?” Let us remember his answer: *By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?* (2) God has forgiven our sins at the cost of his Son's life. We should not look for excuses to commit more sins. We should not crucify Jesus again and again. Then how can we overcome sin in our daily life? Paul now turns to this question.

## II. COUNT YOURSELF DEAD TO SIN (5-11)

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.* As far as sin is concerned, we are dead and buried at the moment we become genuine believers. We believe that Jesus died on the cross bearing all our sins on his shoulders. And just as Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day, we can experience a new life in him in a resurrection like his. We are dead to sin but we are alive in Christ. Paul repeats this truth three times in this passage, each time using different wording to help us to understand it. It is a teaching that we can understand easily in our heads, but it is not so easy for us to apply it to our daily life. But the main point of Paul is clear. The key phrase in verse 5 is “united with him.” It is used twice. The main message is that the only way we can overcome sin is through our union with Christ. Let us look at the details of Paul’s explanations in this passage with this main point in mind.

In verses 6-7, Paul first explains the meaning of **our union with Christ in his death**. *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—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.* Our old self, the man in Adam, the sinful man, has been put to death on the cross. Our love affair with Adam has been finished. We have been set free from sin. How can we return to the slavery life again?

Many Bible students, including me, are puzzled by verse 6. Paul says, *“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.”* What does it mean that “the body ruled by sin might be done away with”? The trouble is that we still have the same body ruled by sin. We still have temptations to sin. We don’t yet have a new heavenly body that is totally free from sin, sickness and death. The NLT version paraphrases the verse in this way: “We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives.” To be united with Christ in his death means that we are no longer under the power of sin. Sin lost its power in our lives. We have been set free from sin. The shackles of sin on our body have been broken. We are under a new management. The ownership has been changed. Our identity has been changed. So we must accept and believe this spiritual truth rather than follow the feelings of our body. This means that we should act, speak, and live like a prince, which is our new identity, with a clean break from our old identity as a beggar. We should not live as slaves to sin (7). To continue our old ways of sinful life would mean to deny what Christ has done for us. That’s why Paul said earlier: *We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?*

Next, in verses 8-10, Paul addresses the meaning of **our union with Christ in his resurrection**. Let us read verses 8-9 together. *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.* Ben Franklin said that they are only two things in life that are certain—death and taxes. In Adam, we all die. And the sad truth is that no one ever came back to life once he died, that is, before the resurrection of Christ. Lazarus and a few others came back to life briefly but

they all died again. Jesus is the only person who was raised from the dead to never die again. His resurrection crushed Satan's head. His resurrection defeated sin and death. Death has been swallowed up in his victory (1Co 15:54). Death has no longer mastery over him. And those who believe in him also have a guarantee of victory over sin and death. Death has no mastery over us. Sin is no longer our master. We are no longer slaves to sin and death. We are under new ownership. We have a new identity as the children of God.

So how does our union with Christ in his resurrection help us to overcome sin? Again it is important for us to accept and believe the truth about his resurrection and live according to the knowledge. Three times in this passage, Paul emphasizes the importance of **knowing** the truth about dying to sin and living in Christ: "don't you know" (3), "we know" (6), and "we know" (9). We should know the truth and live according to the truth. Why is knowing the truth so important? Why do we have to study the Bible faithfully? Occasionally, we read strange news stories about people living with dead bodies in their living rooms. Some do that to collect Social Security checks illegally, but others do it because of their denial that their loved ones are dead. People do not normally go to such extreme, but the point is that, if you do not realize or refuse to acknowledge the fact that your husband or your wife is dead, it is hard for you to move on with your life. Likewise, if we do not know or acknowledge the fact that we are dead to sin, we cannot have a clean break from our sinful past. That's why Paul wants us to know and accept the truth that we are dead to sin but alive in Christ. Only then, we can approach sin by relying on the grace of God rather than try to deal with it with our own will power.

In addition, Paul used the future tense in his teaching about our union with Christ in his resurrection. He said, "*we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his*" (5) and "*we believe that we will also live with him*" (8). What we believe about our future is an important factor in deciding how we live our life today. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15, if we don't believe in resurrection and eternal life with Christ in heaven, we might as well enjoy all kinds of sinful pleasures here and now. We would say, "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die" (1Co 15:32). *Carpe diem* and YOLO. But if we truly believe in resurrection and eternal life in the kingdom of God, we cannot indulge in sinful pleasures today, because we know that death is not the end of everything.

Verse 10 is a difficult verse to understand. *The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.* The first part is clear. Jesus died on the cross as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He died to sin once for all. The Israelites had to offer animal sacrifices again and again for the temporary atonement for their sins. But Jesus is the Lamb of God. He is the Son of God. He was without blemish. He was the ultimate, perfect, and final sacrifice for our sins. On the cross, he said, "It is finished." We no longer have to offer animal sacrifices. Jesus died to sin once and for all. But what does Paul mean when he says that "the life he lives, he lives to God"? Jesus always lived for the glory of God. Just before his arrest and crucifixion, he prayed, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you" (Jn 17:1). So Paul does not mean that Jesus came to live for God's glory only after his resurrection.

Instead, I think he is encouraging us to imitate the life of Christ. We who believe in his resurrection should live a life that glorifies God rather than indulges in sin.

Finally, Paul sums up his teaching in verse 11. Let us read it together. *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.* This is the conclusion. To overcome sin, we must consider ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ. How can we count ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus? When we become Christians, we are transferred from being in Adam to being in Christ. This is done by the grace of God through his Holy Spirit. This is a fact we must know and put it into practice. It is not a matter of feeling. We don't feel we are dead to sin. But we must count ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. May the Holy Spirit remind us this wonderful truth moment by moment!

We are the children of God. By the grace of God through his Son Jesus Christ, we have been adopted into God's family. We are princes and princesses. Let us live each day as the children of God, not as slaves to sin!