

Dead or Alive – Romans 6:1-14

¹ What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

1. Paul poses this provocative question because of what he'd just said. 5:20 –

Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound.

2. The Law is a *spiritual diagnostic*.

3. Let me explain . . .

a. A few years ago, I started having problems in my hand & arm.

b. My doctor figured it was a pinched nerve in my neck.

c. After a long dance with the insurance, they finally sent me for an MRI.

d. Sure enough, the cause for all the itching, burning, pain & weakness that was intensifying as the weeks went by was due to a neck injury.

e. One epidural took care of it.

4. Before the insurance approved the MRI, they made me go to physical therapy, which only dealt with the symptoms & in the end, made them worse.

a. Treating symptoms isn't the solution; you have to get at their cause.

b. An MRI machine is a *diagnostic tool* doctors use to look *inside* the human body to discover the root cause of various symptoms

c. But the MRI isn't the *remedy*. It only helps identify the problem.

d. In my case, it was an injection that took care of the root of my distress.

5. The Law God gave Israel was a kind of *spiritual MRI*, a diagnostic meant to reveal the real problem.

a. Which is *sin*, buried deep in the heart of the human race because of the Fall.

b. *Individual sins* are just *symptoms* of our *deeper, fundamental brokenness*.

c. Religion & philosophy are a form of *spiritual therapy* that can only address the *symptoms*.

d. God gave the Law as a way to reveal that *no matter how hard we try* to be & do better, our efforts never get at the root cause of our trouble – **Sin**.

e. But the Law can no more help us than an MRI could bring relief to my neck.

- That MRI made it clear what I needed was an epidural.

- The Law makes it clear we need a Savior.

6. As Paul says, the Law brings us face to face with the reality that the problem isn't *sins*. It's **SIN**, the *inability* to consistently do what's right.

7. But Paul doesn't leave us in that depressing place. He goes on to say while we're overwhelmed by the abundance of sin, God is not about to be overwhelmed by it.

But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.

8. For where sin abounds, His grace super-abounds!

9. So, Paul asks, what conclusion are we to draw?

a. Then he poses a question that had been slanderously attributed to him by his critics.

b. It goes like this →

If God gets glory through the demonstration of His grace,
shall we sin like crazy so His grace can be *even greater?*

² Certainly not!

1. This is the strongest possible form of denial in Greek.
2. No way! God forbid! Perish the thought. No way, Jose, Get outta' here!

3. Paul considers it utter foolishness to think that continuing on in sin would be acceptable because *when* grace abounds, it effects a *difference, a change* in us.
4. Grace doesn't *just forgive* the debt our sins earned – it reaches inside us & removes the root cause of those sins.
 - a. It heals our brokenness & reverses the lingering effects of the Fall.
 - b. It begins the process of bringing us back to what God created us to be.
5. Sin is no longer the direction we move in.
 - a. Yes, we still commit sins because we're not perfected yet.
 - b. But as time passes, we sin *less* because we're on a spiritual journey with the Holy Spirit *back* to the heart & purpose of God.

6. The word "sin" in Greek was an *archery* terms that meant to "miss the mark."
 - a. Picture an archer with a bow & a quiver full of arrows.
 - 1) There's a target downfield, but he's blindfolded & has been spun around several times so he's completely lost direction.
 - 2) Then he's told to start shooting.
 - 3) He lets fly with arrow after arrow, none coming anywhere near the target.
 - 4) If he does hit it, he has no idea. It's mere chance.
 - b. That blind archer is fallen humanity & those arrows are choices.
 - 1) What people do with the life they've been given is shoot their arrows of choice where ever it pleases them, then they go & draw little targets around where they land. "Look, a bull's-eye."
 - 2) That's what man-made religion & philosophy are, the targets we draw round our errant choices.
 - c. But when we come to faith in Jesus Christ, God takes our blindfold off & shows us the Target of His will.
 - 1) Seeing what's right & good, we take aim at it.
 - 2) We still miss the center, but at least now we're pointed in the right direction & *trying* to hit the mark.

7. Paul makes all this clear by asking then answering another question -
How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?
8. What does he mean? When did we die to sin? V. 3 . . .

³ **Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ 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.

1. Our faith in Jesus accomplishes a *real spiritual event*.
 2. When we repent & believe, something *real happens* in us.
 3. Because of what Jesus did, when we turn from ourselves to Him, in that crisis-moment we call being born-again, our identity as fallen men & women is *ended* & we become children of God! **REALLY!**
 - a. Some people have a *profound sense of that change* – it touches them at a deep, emotional level.
 - b. Others are less moved emotionally.
 - 1) In fact, they see others weeping or celebrating & it causes them to wonder if they really made contact with God; if their faith is genuine.
 - 2) **It is**, they just aren't the kind of person that has that reaction.
 4. You see, it's not the feelings or emotions we experience that validate our faith; it's God's promise.
 - a. When we turn from sin to faith in Jesus, we're born again,
 - b. **Regardless** of what feelings accompany that moment.
 5. Let me use an example.
 - a. For years Lynn & I rented. The prospect of buying a house was not on the horizon.
 - b. We'd *identified* ourselves as *renters*, beholden to a landlord.
 - c. Then, my sister & brother-in-law graciously offered to assist us in buying a house.
 - d. We found one we liked, made an offer, it was accepted, & we signed the papers.
 - e. The instant we signed, our *identity* changed from renters to *owners*.
 - f. Now, I didn't *feel* any different. Really, the moment went by without it registering what change had just taken place.
 - g. But the fact was, legally & *actually*, something massive had just taken place.
 - h. When escrow closed & we got the keys, I drove over to the house, parked across the street, & just sat there looking at – *my* house. It was beginning to dawn on me what that meant.
 - i. Then I walked in the front door & looked around. It was empty; a house but not yet *home*.
 - j. I tried to imagine what it would look like with our stuff in it.
 - k. It was then that I really began to *feel* different.
 - l. A couple weeks of work, moving in, then eating, sleeping, & living there have made that house truly my home!
 6. Today, 10 years later, I no longer identify myself or “feel” like a renter. I'm an *owner* & *feel* very much at home.
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7. Christian, you have a *new identity*!
 - a. Because of what Jesus did you are no longer in bondage to sin & death.
 - b. You've been born again into a new identity as a child of God.

8. And just as moving in to that house that was already mine was a way for me to demonstrate my legal ownership, baptism is the way we demonstrate our new identity as the people of God.
9. What a fitting picture baptism is, as Paul says here.
- a. When we go under the water, it represents our *union* with Christ Who died & was buried.
 - 1) Even so, our old identity as sinners dies.
 - 2) Our spiritual connection to Adam is forever severed.
 - b. And just as Jesus rose from the dead & came out of the tomb on Sunday morning, so we come out of the water to mark our new life in Him.

10. But Paul says something here that *signals* the *reason* for why he pens this. It's seen in his use of the word "*should*" in v. 4

even so we also should walk in newness of life.

11. The verb tense for the word "walk" here speaks of *potential*, of *possibility*.
- a. Paul knows the great challenge facing us is deciding who we want to be.
 - b. The fact is, faith in Christ unites us to Him & changes our identity from sinner to saint.
 - c. But many don't grasp their *potential*; they fail to step out of their old identity into the new.
 - d. Though God has taken off their blindfold & shown them the target, they continue to shoot their arrows where ever they please.
12. Let's be clear on this in a day when multitudes claim the label "Christian" but nothing about them looks or sounds like Jesus.

Following Christ *ought* to look different than those who don't.

13. There ought to be something fundamentally *NEW & special* about our living.

⁵ For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness of His resurrection*,

1. Identifying with Christ is a *package deal*. We die to self & live thru Him. There's no *just* dying.
 2. When we baptize, we don't put people under the water & *keep* them there.
 3. We lower them into the water, **HEAR THIS = SO THAT** we can bring them *back up*.
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4. Unfortunately, some forms of religion, including Christianity are all about *dying*.
- a. They put all their emphasis on *mortifying the flesh*.
 - b. Groups like the *ascetics*, who refrain from any form of pleasure because they think it's sinful.
 - c. During the Middle Ages the *flagellants* went around mutilating themselves with cruel devices.
 - d. By the thousands, *penitents* would engage in torturous practices because they thought it pleased God to see them suffer!

5. But God is not into death – As Gayle shared so brilliantly last week – ***God is all about LIFE!***
6. Jesus said, *I have come that you may have life abundant! It's the devil who wants to kill, steal, & destroy.*
7. God offers **life** – it's just that the life He offers & we need is **incompatible** with the life we're born with, the life we got from Adam.
8. So we lay **that** down, we **die to that** puny, petty, self-life, so we can be born-again into Real Life.
9. This is one of the reasons we don't use the **crucifix** as an emblem of our faith.
 - a. Jesus isn't on the Cross anymore. He died once for all.
 - b. Look at v. 9 –

knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more.

- c. His body was taken down from the cross, placed in the tomb, from which He rose.
 - d. The Garden tomb in Jerusalem is one of the last places we visit on our tours.
 - c. You read the story of Easter Morning, then step in to that tomb & you can picture what happened that day when the women & the disciples came.
 - d. What they saw is what you see when you look in – the tomb is empty!
10. God is all about LIFE. →
- a. Dying to self is but the means to the ultimate end – our new identity in Christ.
 - b. But first we must lay down the old identity, or as Paul calls it – “the old man.”

⁶ knowing this,

1. Or, “Keep this constatly in mind”
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.
 2. When Jesus died, He forever severed the connection between us & what we inherited from Fallen Adam.
 3. Faith in Jesus is what brings that truth to reality for us.
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4. This verse brings some much needed light on a long-running **debate** among believers.
 - a. It has to do with the sin-nature.
 - b. One side says the believer has 2 natures; the old sin nature & the new nature bestowed by God.
 - 1) They say while the **tyranny** of the sin nature has been broken, its still **operative**.
 - 2) And it's seen in the moral struggle that goes on in every believer's life.
 - c. The other side says faith in Jesus doesn't **just** break the tyranny of the sin nature, it **kills** it.
 - 1) The “old man” & the sin nature are the same thing;
 - 2) They are our identity **drawn** from Adam, but **ended** by Christ.
 - 3) Paul makes it crystal here – the old man **WAS** crucified with Him.
 - a) It's the **arist** tense – single completed action in the past.

- b) When Jesus breathed His last & said, “It is finished” He was announcing that our spiritual connection to Adam was *terminated*.
- 4) So the believer doesn’t have 2 natures, he/she has *one* – the new nature!
- 5) 2 Corinthians 5:17 verifies this –

If anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

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- 5. Now, those who argue for 2 natures come back with this, “If the believer has *only* the new nature & the sin nature has been put to death – why do Christian still struggle with sin?
 - 6. Read on . . .
- 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.**
- 7. The problem isn’t a lingering sin nature. It’s *the habits* our bodies have developed after years of making selfish choices.
 - a. Listen, if we still had a sin *nature*, Paul could never have said we can be *done with sin*.
 - b. Because our *Nature* is the *inner life* that *propels* us.
 - c. The reason we *can* be done with sin is because we have one new nature.
 - 8. So why *do* we still struggle with sin? An illustration may be helpful here.
 - a. What’s the purpose of a screen-saver? It’s to keep the screen from getting an image burned into it.
 - b. In older computer monitors, the cathode ray tube fired electrons onto a piece of glass that had been coated with a special material.
 - c. The problem is, if the image wasn’t changed often, over time, it would get burned into that coating & leave a residual picture there even when the tube was sending a different image.
 - d. Some older ATM machines still have this problem.
 - e. Think of your *body* as the glass of a computer monitor & your inner nature is the CRT.
 - 1) For years what you did & said was simply the screen upon which your inner nature projected itself.
 - 2) We can’t see your heart, but we can get an idea of what your heart’s devoted to by watching what you do, where you go & what you say.
 - 3) Jesus said, it, “It’s out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.”
 - f. Because for years we lived according to the sin nature, *patterns* got etched into the screen of our body – we call them *habits*.
 - g. These patterns go beyond mere physical things; they go all the way to the level of our *attitudes*.
 - 9. In the believer, the old man is dead & gone – but his stink lingers on in the habits we developed.

10. The whole reason we can be done with those habits is because God has imparted a new nature to us.
11. The process of Christian growth is the Holy Spirit taking us like an Etch-A-Sketch, turning us upside down, & giving us a good shake!

⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin.

1. Not sins, *plural*, because Paul isn't referring to individual wrongs here –
 2. He's speaking of *sin as a principle*, as a *mode of operating*.
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3. Faith in Christ is such a complete deal, we *really do possess* the potential of living without sin!
 - a. Now let me be clear – No one does! We all sin; BUT the *potential* to live sinlessly exists.
 - b. It's our failure to achieve our potential that *ought* to keep us humble.

⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. ¹⁰ For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

4. Paul returns to emphasize the importance of remembering that Jesus' death was not the end, it was the *means* to the end of bringing eternal life.
5. Because He now lives & faith identifies us with Him, His life is our life.

¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. The key here is the word *reckon*. It means to *count* on something.
 - a. Originally, it was an *accounting* terms used for *taking inventory*.
 - b. When I worked in a restaurant, we took inventory every week.
 - c. It was done by taking a careful look to see what was there, then figuring out what needed to be done.
2. That's precisely what Paul means here.
 - a. Where to take careful consideration to what's true & adjust our decisions appropriately.
 - b. *What* we're to take stock of is the **FACT** that we are *new people*.
 - c. Sin is no longer an appropriate lifestyle – but **LIFE** is!
3. Again → Sin is no longer appropriate, but Life is.
4. I need to emphasize this because Satan has done a masterful job twisting things around so badly that most people think sin is what makes life interesting & fun
5. It isn't! Sin always brings death.
6. But God is in to Life! He's all about Life! He IS LIFE. Never forget that because it's one of the main truths the devil hammers away at.

¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 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.

1. Here's what he's saying – Christian, that body God gave you & you once devoted to sin, devote it now to God.
2. *Instruments* here means the parts of your body; your hands, feet, ears, mouth.
3. Stop letting them be tools to work what's contrary to God's will, & set yourself before the Lord to be used by Him; body, soul, & spirit.

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

1. I am not under law, but under grace. (Say with me.)
2. Jesus has set us *free* from rules & regulations INTO a warm, intimate relationship with God.
3. That's available to *every person* in this room this morning!
4. If your relationship with God is more about duty, obligation, responsibility, & what you think God *expects* of you than a real experience of His Love & Life then I'm convinced God wants to *touch* you.