

# Dead to Sin Alive in Christ

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[ 0 : 00 ] If you're visiting us today, I have to tell you, you've come right in the middle of Romans chapter 6, or towards the end of Romans chapter 6 in fact.

! We've been working our way through this chapter. It's not that easy a chapter, but I think as we've looked at it, it's become a little less difficult. So I'm going to give an introduction and then look at the verses 15 to 23, which is the passage we've got to, but we need to fit it into a context and that's what we will do first of all.

So the question that this is looking at, the question is, shall we carry on in sin just as we used to do before we were Christians?

That's the question that he's answering. He's asking the question and answering it. And I suppose he's posing that question because it's an important question.

In a way, it presents itself to us in all the choices that we make in life. Shall I do this just like everybody else does?

[ 1 : 16 ] Or, because I'm a Christian, will I do this differently? I noticed that I didn't fill in on the screen the two verses that mention it. It's in chapter 6, verse 1.

Shall we go on sinning that grace may abound? It's in verse 1. And then in verse 15, he asks pretty much the same question in very similar language.

What then shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? So it's in verse 1 and it's in verse 15. And I thought I'd spell it out a little bit.

In our attitude to money, for example, do we approach money in just the same way as we did before we were Christians?

Do we think of the state, to say government, in the same way that we did before we were Christians? What about basic honesty?

[ 2 : 20 ] Do we approach that with a sense that because we are Christians we are under a particular constraint as to how we live and how we speak?

Sexual relationships most likely would be very different before being a Christian and then after being a Christian.

Or do we just carry on exactly the same? The attitude of gratitude. One of the things that marks humanity before Christ gets hold of a person is ingratitude.

That's one of the things that Paul says at the beginning of Romans characterises the world. It says, although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him.

And a thankless attitude is a pre-Christian attitude. Now that we've become Christians, do we draw ourselves up when we're always grumbling and complaining?

[ 3 : 35 ] Or do we cultivate gratitude? The language that we use. The world around us has a set of words that it uses quite normally.

Do we just take that same set of words, including coarse language, and say, well now I'm a Christian, don't have to change that. I get it wrong, I can always be forgiven. Shall we carry on like we used to, now that we've become Christians?

Our attitude to leisure. Is that just the same? Any differences? Our attitude to humour. The things that we used to think were terribly funny.

Do we still think they're terribly funny? Maybe they are, but do we bring it under the sense of, what does Christ think about this? And our attitudes to power.

The way that we can control people, the way that we can manipulate events, or the things that we, the way we seek to deal with the world in front of us.

[ 4 : 42 ] Is that just going to be unchanged when we become Christians? I've just spelt that out in a few ways there. But the question is the same. Do we just carry on as we were?

Because forgiveness is total. And Paul says, absolutely not. Shall we continue the same? Absolutely not. Christian forgiveness is total.

He doesn't wind back on that. But that does not lead to a total license to sin.

That's what he's getting at, isn't it? Forgiveness is total, but that doesn't mean you can just live anyhow because there's no consequences. And he answers it, as we've seen in chapter 6, via talking about union with Christ.

And we've seen that this is not a way that we always think about things. It doesn't necessarily come naturally to our minds. But this is where he takes us in Romans chapter 6.

[ 5 : 52 ] He's taken us previously to union with Adam. That was in chapter 5. He says, that's where human beings are born. They are born in a package, in a tree-like structure with Adam.

It's just the way humanity is. And Adam was somebody and did something. In other words, he had a person and a work. And because of his person and work, and particularly the one act of sin, which changed everything for everybody else, in Adam there is what we could say is guilt and condemnation.

So that's a status. There is the fact that we become sinful in our character. And there is the fact that humanity becomes subject to death.

There's a sort of end result. I put those in inverted commas because they tend to move into one another. But that's a reasonable way of thinking about it. The status of being condemned, the character of being sinful, and the end result of death.

And this is true, just recapping what he says in Romans 5, it's true for the Jew and the Gentile. The fact that the Jew has the law, with a capital L, the Moses package, doesn't change that at all.

[ 7 : 23 ] Still lost in sin. And the Gentile, who doesn't have the benefit of the Hebrew Scriptures, might have a conscience. So I put a law with a little L in such tiny writing that you probably can't read it.

But that doesn't make any difference either. In Adam is the realm of sin and condemnation and death. But it's only through Christ that that can be changed.

Christ's person and work. The work that he did was not to eat a forbidden fruit, but one mighty act, the two sides of it is, two sides of the coin, he died on the cross and he rose from the dead.

And by this mighty act, Paul says, if we belong to Jesus Christ, everything changes for us. And just like Adam made it all go wrong, Christ makes it all go right.

Because of his death on the cross, and his resurrection, we have justification. Justification changes the state that we're in, the way God looks at us and deals with us.

[ 8 : 38 ] He says we're not guilty because of what Jesus Christ has done. But as Adam had wider effects than simply status, so Christ's death and resurrection has wider effects as well.

In Romans 6 verse 10, it says, the death he died, that's Christ, the death that Christ died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God.

And Paul is saying that when Jesus died and rose, he changed things in a earth-shattering, cosmos-changing way.

Christ died to sin and lives to God. And we are told, in verse 11, in the same way, count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

And so what Jesus Christ did changes things for us. We are to reckon ourselves dead to sin as regards its claims and authority and power.

[ 9 : 54 ] And alive to God, a realm of new claims, new authority and new power. And that's where we were looking at previous time.

We also saw that Paul applies this by saying, in verse 11, count yourselves, or reckon yourselves, dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.

And I think we need to have quite an emphasis on the importance of that reckoning. That's the bridge, isn't it, between what Christ has done and how it impacts us.

What's the impact? It's the bridge as far as we're concerned or as far as we're conscious of it. He says, reckon yourselves this. And I just remind us that this reckoning is an act of faith.

It's saying, this is what God said, this is what Christ has done, now you must count on that. And that seems to me to be an act of faith. faith. It's not an act of looking inside ourselves and seeing something.

[ 11 : 12 ] It's an act of hearing what God has done, hearing about Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection, and counting on it, which is faith. Reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in

Christ.

I think we could say it is a mental act. So it's not something you could do when you're asleep, if you see what I mean. It's not, he's not saying an emotional act, he's not saying get yourselves in the mood.

And it's not a mystical act, he's not saying just try and drain your mind of everything and let something fill you. he's saying think in a certain way. Train yourselves to think in a certain way. Count yourselves dead to sin and alive to Christ. And just to emphasise the point I've put, this seems to me to be a reasoning mental act.

It's going from this, Christ died on the cross for sin, he rose again from the dead, I'm told I'm in union with Christ and I put two and two together, reason it out, think it and then act.

[12:22] Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ. And it results in two things or two sides of a coin as it were.

Verse 13, do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness but do offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life.

Offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. So, did I read that right? Do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life.

Offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. So there's a saying yes and a saying no, they're saying yes to God, I offer the parts of my body all that I am, all that I have to you in your service and I refuse to, I abstain from offering myself in service to sin there's a yes and a no the refuse collectors give us a good illustration of this I don't know whether you're aware, has your bin been emptied recently?

No, sorry? Well they're working to rule at the moment and they are refusing to take bags that are not in dustbins, did you know that?

[13:58] So if your bag is in a dustbin they will perhaps take it and if it's not in a dustbin they'll say no can't do that so they are refusing to do things saying yes to some things but no to other things quite reasonable illustration isn't it?

Where to say yes to God and we say no to something else I'm not going to do that refuse to put my hand to this I'm not talking about rubbish bags now I'm talking about what what choices we make in life yeah I'll do that no I won't do that do you see what I mean?

So this is what the result is of reckoning ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ so that recaps where we've got to in the first 14 verses and I hope that makes reasonable sense I'm just going to look up in case it does take that as a yes let's now look at verses 15 to 23 now there's quite a few verses there but if you look at them carefully they nearly all say nearly the same thing so let me tell you the sort of thing that they keep on saying they paint this picture it's a picture of a master or a lord so I've drawn a stickman or rather a big stickman and his servants who are the two little stickmen and the picture is of things like this so the servants in Greek *doulos* which is actually a very strong word for servant it's slave really if you look you'll see that the slave is mentioned in verse 16 don't you know that when you offer yourselves to somebody to obey as slaves you are slaves to the one whom you obey whether you are slaves to sin etc and then verse 17 he talks about being slaves and in verse 19 he talks about slavery and does he mention it somewhere else verse 20 I wrote down when you were slaves so he's talking about the idea of somebody somebody who is a servant or a slave he also talks about offering offering yourselves so that's in verse 16 to offer yourselves and that idea of offering is in verse 16 and it is in verse 19 just as you used to offer the parts of your body and it's in verse 19 again so now offer etc it might be a few other times but those are the ones that came to my mind when I was writing this down the word there is to stand ready or something like that it's used of people standing by and I can remember a line in a folk song which says a servant who was standing by and hearing what was said how does it go after that he swore Lord Darnall he would hear before the sun was set the idea of the servant standing by just have that just think that thought for a moment here is the servant here is the servant here is the family and the servant is standing by ready for what the Lord wants him to do

I went to the Indian restaurant around the corner for lunch with Andy Au once never been in there at lunch time before and while we were eating probably the grandfather of the family stood just a few yards away from us like this I wasn't quite sure what he was there for actually it's a bit uncomfortable to have a conversation where there's somebody just standing there but I realised after a while he was ready to do anything we wanted if we'd said can we have some more rice or

please can you take this piece of string out of the rice that's on my plate or whatever it was he would have been there just to do it he was standing ready for action wasn't he he was presenting himself just ready for to do what whatever we wanted him to do do you get the idea of he was ready for action standing by he was that's the offering himself and please notice the presence of the word obedience which crops up there quite a bit verse 16 offer yourselves to obey your slaves to the one you obey it's in verse 17 you wholeheartedly obey or obey from the heart and I'm pretty sure it must be somewhere else is it maybe not but the idea is there all the way through so we have the servant standing by ready to obey and we have the master not particularly named at least not in comparison with a number of times it says slave but the word to be lord is there actually in verse 14 sin shall not be your master sin shall not lord it over you so it's not mentioned so much but that's the picture of it ok do you get the picture you get the picture of the master and the servant and the servant just simply is ready to do whatever the master says and offers himself here I am it's 6 o'clock in the morning

I'm ready to do whatever you want I'm just standing by in your service yeah oh there's one other piece of vocabulary that engagement to obey is there just as long as or just up until the time that that engagement is cut and the slave is set free the slave is no longer in the slavery of the master but is free and that idea of being set free is there in verse 18 you have become set free you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness and in verse 20 when you were slaves to sin you were free from the control of righteousness and it's in verse 22 now you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God okay so this is the basic vocabulary master slave offering oneself obedience or cutting that and being set free well with that very very long introduction here are four points from the passage about slavery service and offering of ourselves point number one this is the spiritual reality of it this is exactly how it is verse 15 what then shall we sin because we're not under law but under grace by no means don't you know that when you offer yourselves as someone to obey him as slaves you are slaves to the one whom you obey whether you are slaves to sin which leads to death or to obedience which leads to righteousness he says don't you know don't you know that is how it is you ought to know this because this is how it is you offer yourselves you obey someone you become their slave and their servant and everybody is doing one or the other you are either obeying sin with the result of death or you are under obedience to God which leads to righteousness you are either one or the other don't you know that that's fundamental that's basic you're either one or the other so Bob

[ 23 : 07 ] Dylan was right when he sang you've got to serve somebody you can be anything in life but the end result is you're either serving God or the adversary it's either one or the other that's point number one and it's a rather humbling point because each of us as we sit here are either in one camp or the other that's worth pondering isn't it and it also raises the issue of the idea of freedom human freedom in the West we think that political freedom moral freedom freedom of choice is a real important thing but the Bible says well hold on a minute whatever freedom you have say politically is severely limited by the fact that you are not free from your master and unless you are serving

Christ you are serving the other side you are not just free you are a slave of somebody so I offer that as point number one this is how it is this is how it is there's no neutral ground in this number two becoming a Christian was a change of obedience verse 17 thanks be to God that though you used to be slaves to sin you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted you've been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness what happened when you became a Christian what happened was this that you moved from slavery to sin that's where you were you moved from slavery to sin to a new obedience you became obedient he says in this case to the teaching the gospel and that movement was a movement of obedience you started to say

I will do what the gospel tells me to do notice you didn't you weren't set free just to have no master it was a change of masters you were handed over as it were into this new realm of obeying the form of teaching obeying the gospel teaching to which you were handed over and it says you obeyed from the heart and you have now become slaves to righteousness he says think on what it was to become a Christian have you forgotten this hopefully not you called Jesus Christ Lord and you can't have Jesus Christ as your saviour without him being your Lord and you moved from a position where you were obeying the other side to obeying Christ that's what happened when you became a Christian am I right that's what happened you might even have prayed that as a prayer to say

Lord I give my life wholeheartedly to you now you might not have prayed that as a prayer but unless you meant something like that you had not actually moved from not being a Christian to being a Christian because that's what being a Christian is it is changing to a new obedience and Paul says thanks be to God verse 17 thanks be to God that that's what happened thanks be to God that that's what happened which master would you prefer to serve sin or the saviour the Lord Jesus Christ which place would you prefer to be in where you used to be or where you are now would you agree with Paul thanks be to God hallelujah sorry to shout but that's what it demands isn't it hallelujah as the song writers would say

Jesus dropped the charges hallelujah my chains fell off my heart was free I rose went forth and followed thee there's something absolutely glorious about moving from one place of obedience to another thanks to God he says didn't shout but I think he might have done so third point that's what happened that's the past that's you used to and you changed verse 19 he sort of excuses himself a little bit he says I'm putting this humanly because you're weak in your flesh okay Paul thank you very much because it does help us to understand so let's carry on listening to what you have to say just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever increasing wickedness so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness he says that's what it used to be like you used to go round in a circle of lawlessness and lawlessness but the circle has that circle has been broken the chains that kept you there have been shattered by

[ 28 : 54 ] Jesus Christ and now now you are able to offer yourselves willingly repeatedly gladly thankfully in slavery to righteousness which leads to holiness and I want to suggest to you what a good way to begin each day to make that part of our daily routine maybe you read your Bible in the morning maybe you pray in the morning here's something to pray Lord today I offer myself afresh to you all that I have all that I am I offer it to you without reserve I used to offer the parts of my body in slavery to impurity and to ever increasing wickedness but today

I offer the parts of my body in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness when you were slaves to sin you were free from the control of righteousness you were free you weren't enslaved there you were freed from that and this is where you were but now you've been freed from that and this is where you were so point number three make that your present day activity now offer number four last point ask yourself what benefits you get ask yourself what benefits you get what benefits do you get well that's what he says verse 21 what benefit did you reap what benefit did you reap at that time from the things that you are now ashamed of he uses a word for fruit or crop you know what what's the harvest and he says the harvest was things that lead to death and shame what fruit verse 21 what fruit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of was life better was it more wholesome was it more enriching was it more fulfilling really in the days before you became a

Christian wouldn't it be true to say that really the things you look back on you are ashamed of and they weren't leading to life and fullness although they might have said they were doing that but in fact as it says here leads to death and what about the benefit in terms of obedience to God now you have been set free from sin verse 22 and have become slaves to God the benefit you reap the crop is to do with holiness and the end result is eternal life so he says ask yourself that question try and give yourself a sober answer I was just talking to somebody the other day who had back slidden very catastrophically and he said that at some point he began to think he began to think one thing was what have

I actually gained in the new things that I am involved with what do they actually mean how will they stand up long term and he began to realise that they meant nothing and long term wouldn't get him anywhere and he said that Christians had tried to befriend him and he said he had just been impressed by the way that they had life they were interested in the same things they could talk about things that he was interested in and yet with a warmth and with a sense of wholesome enjoyment a sense of not being making those the be all and end all but valuing God's good gifts and he said which of these two lives is better and that's what helped him to turn back from back sliding to the Lord Jesus Christ Paul's asking a similar sort of question what come on what's what's the what benefits what's the long and

Paul says as far as he's concerned and actually as far as God's concerned the benefit of the life of obedience to Jesus Christ far far outweighs anything that the other life might pretend to offer and he summarises it this way that the wages of sin is death wages is what you get for the work that you've put in a fair day's pay for a fair day's work death pay sorry sin pays wages fairly earned fairly

deserved paid on exactly death which is a pretty awful statement isn't it he says but on the other hand there is this realm of obedience and righteousness and justification the realm of grace folks you don't earn it he doesn't say the wages of sin is death and the wages of holiness is eternal life he says the wages of sin is death but the gift of

[ 35 : 21 ] God is eternal life you're not earning this but this is what you get this is what is at stake think then about the benefits you reap I would like to conclude with this prayer which I just wrote down don't claim anything particular for it but I think it summarises what we've been looking at and I would invite you if you agree it to make it your prayer on the basis of exactly what we've said here's the prayer Lord Jesus thank you for setting me free from the chains of sin that lead to death I gladly and freely and totally offer myself to you in your service according to your grace grace and gift in Jesus

Christ just have a look at that prayer prayer so I'm saying amen to that and maybe in your heart you're saying amen to it as well let's sing together a Thank you.