

Dead & Alive in Christ

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[0:00] In Pastor Steve's opening sermon to this series called In Christ, he said, If we misunderstand our relationship with Jesus, then we entirely misunderstand what it means to live the Christian life.

! What it means to live the Christian life. What it means to be a Christian determines how we live as a Christian. God gives Christians this understanding in the Bible and in many places.

So we're going to explore some of these passages in this season so that anyone here or tuning in can get a true picture of what a Christian is and of their new life in Christ.

So pray with me and let these words be your own words. Lord God, from your word, would you reveal all that Christ has done for me? Please give me a greater confidence in your grace to me, a deeper assurance of my hope in Jesus, and strength from your spirit to live my new life in Christ. Amen. Imposter syndrome. Most of us know what the feeling of imposter syndrome is, even if we don't know the phrase.

[1:28] It's when we are out of our depth or we feel like a fraud. You might be performing on stage. You might be one of a couple who are bringing a newborn baby home for the first time.

And there's no manuals with babies. You might be writing a report or an essay or a sermon. At any moment, someone might realize that you don't know what you're doing, that you don't belong.

That feeling can come at any time and in any group in your life, that feeling of being an imposter.

And back when I was first calling myself a Christian, I felt like an imposter.

I was 15 and I was watching my youth leaders live out their lives thinking, I don't live like that. I must not yet be good enough at being a Christian.

They seemed to never struggle with sins like I did. I worried that I wasn't really saved. Whenever I counted my sins, I thought sin still ruled me and not Jesus.

[2:46] I felt like a Christian imposter. This misunderstanding is dealt with in Romans 6.

Today's passage in front of us. It answers the question, what should Christians do about their sin in their life in Christ?

What should Christians do about the sin that persists as they live as Christians? There are two extreme reactions to this.

Should Christians be just anti-all rules? If Christians are saved by the unending, unearned grace of God through faith, then can't they just ignore sin going on in their life or even embrace it?

But Paul starts off Romans 6 by shouting, by no means! See, I told you I'd get loud. By no means!

Shall we go on sinning? Every Christian in their life has softened a sin that they are aware of or refused to find sin and root it out in their life.

[4:11] And we may discover that we've defined ourselves by our sins and our feelings rather than Christ. That is not allegiance to Christ.

It is giving him our momentary attention while remaining in allegiance to ourselves, our sins and our feelings.

But what if Christians, at the other extreme, were only saved through obeying all the rules kind of Christians? Anti-grace, legalistic believers.

That is not faith at all. Paul, at the end of our verse, shouts again, you are not under the law, but under grace.

Christians need to be ruled by grace, not Christian rules. feeling controlled or mastered by sin leads to despair.

[5:21] How can I call myself a Christian if I don't act enough like one? This is not an acceptance of grace. This is a desire to just get a little bit of help from Christ and will earn the rest of the way to God.

Have you embraced a Christian identity that is just about living a little less sinful? Or is Christ your new identity?

The gospel doesn't support either of these two extreme perspectives. But as we open the word and go through it in detail, think about which of those two extremes or misunderstandings you might be allowing to dismantle the confidence that you could have being in Christ like I did when I was first a Christian.

In recent weeks, we've heard about salvation and forgiveness in Christ and justification with righteousness credited to us in Christ.

But what do we do about the persisting sin in our life while we are in Christ? What is God's alternative to Christian imposter syndrome?

[6:48] Well, Romans 6 is going to show us that the presence of sin does not dismantle our salvation, doesn't rip it up and throw it in a bin, but that our salvation dismantles the rule of sin over us.

So here are my two points that are going to help us explain and apply this. In Christ, our sin is dead and we have new life. Point one.

Point two. Counting sin dead in our new life in Christ. So, point one. In Christ, our sin is dead and we have new life.

In our community group in this season, we have decided to read the book of Luke, same as Vox is going to be opening up in a few weeks. Luke is, as the Vox video said, it's a historical account written by a non-Jew from eyewitness accounts.

And in our community group, we wanted to see the life of Jesus if it's relevant to us as a group of, small group of non-Jews 2,000 years later.

[8:02] And in Luke 3, the prophet John was baptizing repentant people in the wilderness to ready them to meet their Christ, their saving King, the one who could forgive their sins.

The repentant were sinners and they knew it. They were on the extremes of society like the tax collectors and the soldiers ruling over the people.

But they came asking, what shall I do? What should I do about my sin? But their answer came in a person who asked to be baptized.

Jesus came to be baptized alongside repentant sinners. even though he was not a sinner. And when Jesus was baptized, the proof that he was not a sinner came from heaven.

A voice came from heaven and said, you are my son whom I love. With you, I am well pleased.

Jesus wanted to be baptized to align himself with repentant sinners a hint to how he would forgive their sin by being baptized again but in a different way.

[9:28] That's what Romans 6 helps us get into. I don't know if you've been baptized. You've stood in front of people and been baptized and declared your faith amongst us.

A couple of Fridays ago, one of our youth was baptized at youth. It was an amazing thing to witness and be a part of. It's a symbol of going from death to life.

We go down, dunked into the tank of water to show our desire to die to our old way of life but we don't stay under the water. We come out of the water set free to live a new life.

And so, let's have a look of Romans 6 in verse 3, Paul used the baptism practice of Christians to show us something deeper about what being a Christian is.

He says, all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. All Christians were baptized into Christ the moment we decided to follow Jesus.

[10:45] Now, just as an aside, that doesn't mean all Christians have to be baptized or dunked underwater or splashed on the forehead. When we come to faith, this baptism happened.

Verse 4, 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 might have life.

Jesus' death and his resurrection were a kind of baptism. Jesus was dunked under and drowned under the ocean of the sin of all mankind.

And when that sin was justly punished on the cross. But on the third day, Jesus was raised out of the water to everlasting life.

To pledge allegiance to Christ is to join in his baptism of death and new life. In a similar way to Jesus choosing baptism in Luke 3, but with the rolls completely backwards.

[12:00] Because when we go under the waters of Jesus' death and declaring our faith in him, as he took our sin and died for it, we are raised to a declaration from heaven, God is pleased with us.

What a grace. Look at verse 6. We see that just like our symbolic church baptisms, this spiritual baptism in Christ is the moment, happens at the very second, when we turn from our own way of life to follow Christ.

It says, for we know that our old self was crucified with him, so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with. In a way, when you come to Christ, you are baptized, and that moment is your funeral.

Baptism was your funeral, in a way. When you followed Christ, you said, I die to my old way of living.

I die and I turn to God and live for him in all I do. It's a moment of death where every old allegiance is dead, killed, so that we may follow Christ.

[13 : 36] Another way of putting it might be that the eye of the Christian died with Christ and was replaced with Christ in me.

When Christ died, my sin was killed. Verse 7, anyone who has died has been set free from sin. That's how sin works. When the person who committed the sins dies, the sin is paid for and dealt with. It's gone. So if our sin goes to Christ and his death has already died, then our sin is completely gone.

When Jesus died, the sinner's death, their sin died with him. sin is no longer our master.

In our new life in Christ, verse 6, we should no longer be slaves to sin. sin. When sin once reigned over us, our enslavement from sin is over and we are freed spiritually, completely, once and for all in Christ.

[14 : 54] Sin is no longer our master, for we have a new allegiance. We are in sin no more, but we are in Christ.

That's why Paul's shouting at the beginning, like in verse 2, is so strongly worded, we are those who have died to sin, how can we live in it any longer?

Well, one answer might be that like a reflex, sometimes we continue to hear and respond to the voice of our old master.

Now, when I was a child, the first movie, I think the first movie I ever went to see at the movies, in the small town where I grew up, in the one room theater in my small town, was the movie Aladdin. I don't know if you've ever seen it, it's a very old Disney film, it's one of the best films ever, in my opinion, I love it. And in that movie, there is a genie.

[16 : 08] He lives in a lamp, and Aladdin finds the lamp, tries to clean it up, and the genie comes out. The genie must grant three wishes to anyone who finds his lamp.

The genie is a prisoner to the lamp, and a prisoner to the will of his master.

Genie says, phenomenal cosmic powers, itty be living space. He wears these gold shackles on his wrists to show us that he's a slave.

He may only grant wishes and then disappear, unless, unless his master uses one of those three wishes to set him free.

Of course, no one ever had. It would have been thousands of years, according to genie, that he'd been in slavery. And why would anyone do that?

[17 : 10] Why would anyone give up one of three wishes? Have you ever played the game, if you had three wishes, what would you do? And you can't wish for more wishes. It's really hard to only think of three things, isn't it?

I wish I had five, I wish I had ten, I wish I had twenty wishes. You're not going to burn one on setting the genie free. But, spoiler alert, Aladdin does. Genie, I wish for your freedom.

Immediately, Genie is kind of overpowered and his shackles fall off, powerless, on the floor. And as if to test his new freedom, looking down at his wrists, and then at Aladdin, he grabs Aladdin and says, wish for anything, say, I wish for the Nile, wish for the Nile.

And Aladdin says, I wish for the Nile? No way! Ha ha ha! And he laughs in his face. Because he's free. He's truly free. But imagine if that movie ended with Genie getting back in the lamp.

Why would the Genie get back in the lamp? Genie was no longer enslaved by his old master. That is how dead our sin is against God.

[18 : 29] The shackles are gone and we are dead to sin. Sin is no longer our master once our allegiance is in Christ.

But so often Christians live like their shackles are still on. So what does this new life in Christ look like without shackles on?

There is a new life to be lived. Look at chapter verse 8. Now if we died with Christ we believe that we will also live with him.

Paul's logic is this. Jesus was bodily raised from the dead and cannot die again. Unlike Lazarus who Jesus did raise from the dead but who did die again.

This proves that the consequences of our sin, our death, has been died along with all our sin. Even the sin from after we believed in Christ for all of the rest of our life.

[19 : 45] Christ already died it dead on the cross. Verse 10, the death he died, he died to sin once for all.

But unlike the death of our sin, the life we are to live in Christ is in the present and ongoing. Our sin has been dealt with, that our life and being alive in Christ is now and into the future and then beyond the grave.

For Jesus, the life he lives, he lives to God, lives, lives, happening now. As we are unified with Christ, his baptism of death and resurrection, we are made dead to sin and we are raised from the dead, verse 4, raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. The resurrected life of a Christian has already started. While we will die one day, our relationship with God will not.

In Christ, our life is Christ's. To another church, Paul said that we should think of Jesus as Christ, who is your life.

[21 : 26] It's hard for someone claiming to be a Christian to hold on to the ownership of the choices of their life, choosing to live in line with their feelings, or their desires, or their sins, or their plans, any longer because their life is no longer theirs to live but Christ's.

My second point is counting sin dead in our new life with Christ. This is what we do about it.

Spiritually, we are no longer slaves to sin, and yet, the living experience of a Christian, every single Christian, is a continued struggle with sin.

Sin has no spiritual hold on us. So while it remains in our life, how might we take hold of it? In the same way, Paul says, count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

That's a verse in your Bible worth highlighting. Verse 11. Count yourselves as dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Paul suggests that we choose to witness the death and resurrection of Christ like the ticking seconds hand on a watch or a clock, counting the proof that sin is dead.

[23 : 04] Paul doesn't expect you to live without sinning anymore or command you to be dead to sin. Instead, he says, count your sin dead.

And there are two ways that Paul encourages us to do this counting. He says, let sin reign in you no more, in any part of you.

We're to be Christians who resist the power of sin over us, yet without despair. Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness. We're to pay internal and external attention to the avoidance, rejection, fleeing from, repenting of, and talking openly with other Christians about our ongoing, yet dead, sin.

Internally, we must battle our desires towards sin, as if our old master sin is still directing our reflexes, our longings.

[24 : 26] We can still hear and feel sin's voice. Almost like we are addicts who hate and flee from their old behaviour, yet cannot stop leaning back on it, yearning for another hit.

It is good that there is infinite grace for those who sin. But externally, we must not let our bodies be wicked instruments of sin.

Look at your hands, hold them in front of your face. Do it. There's still some crossed arms, pull your hands out. I want you to do this. Yeah. These hands can hold another's, in comfort.

But they can also strike in violence. Now move your tongue around in your mouth. Mm-hmm. Your tongue creates your words.

They can heal. They can bring joy. They can even carry the words of God. But they can also lie and lead away from Christ. Do even more damage.

[25 : 45] It does not follow logic and is not good that our lives in Christ be called new without a constant set-free battle against sin being openly waged alongside others in community, alongside others who are living that new life alongside you.

It's not in my script. But that young kid who thought himself a Christian imposter, when I got to uni, I found two others.

We together felt like imposters and we went to the Bible together and saw that our sin was dead. But without their help, I would not have seen it.

Their actions and their words led me to the grace of God in Christ. So the alternative then is to, verse 13, rather offer yourselves to God and to those who have been brought from death to life and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.

We want Christ to reign in every part of us, inside and out. To offer ourselves to God is not just to give him only our attention sometimes, or when it suits you, or when you feel like it, when you've finally answered all your emails and your task list is completed, when you've answered all your text messages and you've got every response in return.

[27 : 36] No. To offer yourselves is worship language. It's whole body and life sacrifice. It's full allegiance as if Christ was living your life now.

Galatians, another church that Paul wrote to, he wrote this in verse 20 chapter 2, I, Paul, a Christian, 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. So if someone asked you, what is being a Christian about? What does it mean to be a Christian?

Would you say, I no longer live, but Christ lives in me? Our offering of ourselves to Christ is to be complete, or we are not living in Christ.

If we are to be instruments, of righteousness. For instruments make noise, don't they? Like my guitar this morning. Instruments make noise for all to hear.

[28 : 53] We are to be instruments of righteousness. We must count ourselves as dead to sin and alive to God, alive to Him, and alive to righteousness.

Now that train of thought, Paul continues in the rest of chapter 6, and we don't have time to go through that this morning. I encourage you to read it. In light of hearing about verses 1 to 14.

But next week we're going to hear about how allegiance to Christ, how being in Christ inspires a grace-born desire for holiness. Count yourself as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Christians receive God's grace through faith. God's grace through faith in a relationship with Christ. And it's a relationship that is dynamic and it's living.

And it's formed once for all by the saving worth of Jesus on the cross, proven at His resurrection. salvation. And it includes the gift of Christ's righteous life when we are justified in Him.

[30 : 11] But now we must add to that what a Christian is and does counts themselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

So if you feel like a Christian living with imposter syndrome or you've stopped caring about the sin in your life as you follow Jesus, let me say that whoever you once were, you no longer are if you follow Jesus.

Whatever sin characterized your life in your past, no longer characterizes your life and your present. In Christ, sin is dead.

A Christian who sins experiences their dependence on Christ in a way that keeps them coming back to Him.

Look for your sin. Repent of your sin. talk to others about your struggles because in Christ, sin is the imposter, not you.

[31 : 35] The presence of sin does not dismantle your salvation but Christ's salvation dismantles its effect on you. So count.

count. In verse 11, the word count, in different English translations it's translated as reckon, consider, regard, look at, count.

They're all an action that we are to do in rhythm. They're for you to do repeatedly. Count, reckon, consider what being a Christian really is.

Start by exploring Scripture in rhythm as often and as regularly as you can because no single Christian ought to stop counting the graces of Christ towards us.

The Bible is thick with unending joys for the Christian, fuel for our righteousness and grace for our struggles with sin on every page.

[32 : 39] You will never get away from your daily need for counting your faith in Christ. Paul wrote Romans 6 because he knew or was witnessing or even experienced himself how prone we are to forget to count our blessings in Christ.

That's why this service is on weekly. we're counting together in corporate worship who we've been made to be in Christ.

And if you're struggling to open the Bible on your own and do that, take the example of me as a young kid, open the Bible with other people.

Weekly we have community groups on where we open the Bible and we see how it is shone onto our lives so that we can see the sin in our life and wrestle with it, even as we are in Christ and it is dead.

Join a community group. If you're here today or you're watching online and you are not in a regular pattern of coming to be a part of a service, stick it in your diary, make it a priority above everything else in your week, over your work, over your rest, over everything and gather with God's people and count the grace of God every week together.

[34 : 17] But if you're not yet a Christian, consider reading the Bible with someone else. There are people in this room who long and are excited to read the Bible with you.

so come speak to me and I will connect you to them or I will read the Bible with you. There's a time and a place that suits.

Can you put up verse 11 on the screen, Dean? What we're going to do is we're going to sing a response to God. It's a prayer, very much in line and in a helpful way, reflecting on Romans chapter 6 and everything that I've just shared.

Before we do, take one minute to reflect on this verse and be thankful for all you have in Christ. For you are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.