

DEAD BUT ALIVE

Romans 6:1–14

Dr. George O. Wood

Romans 6:1–14 (NIV)

“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 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. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. 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. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. 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; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

As we have followed along in the Book of Romans, we mark the landmark points in Paul’s letter to the Romans. One of the landmarks began with 3:21, where Paul began to expound what it is to have a right relationship with God. That right relationship is conditioned on the fact that the righteous one—Jesus—has voluntarily taken our punishment for sin on the cross and has risen again from the dead, defeating sin and death and giving to us the opportunity for new life. He

DEAD BUT ALIVE

Romans 6:1-14

who receives this truth by faith is declared righteous in God's eyes. This is called justification, that being reckoned righteous by God.

But our ultimate goal is not simply justification. For that is in the past if we belong to Christ. Our goal is another beautiful theological word used in Romans at the end of chapter 8, and indeed all of Romans 3:21–8:39 is headed toward this theme: the glorification of the body. Where we are forever in God's presence glorified, no longer wrestling even with the penalty of sin as we were before we were saved. But in our glorified condition, we're no longer even wrestling with the power of sin, which is the aspect of sin which we struggle with in our Christian life. In this process of becoming righteous and going all the way through to the process of being glorified, Paul says in Romans 8: "Him who he justifies will he also glorify." In between these two great words is a third word called "sanctification," or the process of being made holy—or the process, as well, as coming triumphant over the power of sin. We have been delivered from the penalty of sin. Now, also, as Christians we are to become free from its power.

In Romans 6 and 7, Paul is grappling especially with two themes which he started at the end of chapter 5. One is the theme of sin as it relates to grace. Now that grace has come in, what do we do? Do we so flatly rely on grace that we sin all the more to prove how good God is? And in Romans 7, he comes to grip with the theme of the Law. How does it increase the trespass? Then in Romans 8, he comes to talk about the life of the Spirit in the believer.

Throughout this whole section of Romans—and we'll continue to see as we work through Romans, because we have not yet hit the most difficult section of Romans to understand. As difficult as Romans 6 is when you initially read it, I sometimes wonder. Romans, to me, is kind of like climbing a mountain. I reach one peak, and I think I've gotten up to the top. Then I look and there's still more to go, and I wonder how I got this high in understanding what's going on. Yet I look and I know that Romans 9, 10, and 11 are ahead! Yet this whole book is probing our

DEAD BUT ALIVE

Romans 6:1-14

level of rationality and intellectuality and ability to comprehend what God is saying. For this book is forcing us into a new thought life. Maybe there is a tendency sometimes to regard our faith in Christ as something which simply stirs our emotions. Romans, however, is certainly coming at our Christian life from another sphere than simply the emotional realm, as important as that is.

Paul moves through this whole section to finally come to Romans 12, to talk about renewing your mind. It's when our minds have been renewed—when we are thinking God's thoughts after Him, when we have, if you will, doctrine—that we can then begin to interpret and explain our experience.

Sometimes we err in letting our experience explain what we believe. But it is what we believe that ultimately defines and explains our experience. If we are not grounded properly in this renewing of our mind, then emotions can sometimes betray us. There are days when I don't feel saved. There are days when I don't feel victorious. There are days when I don't feel delivered from sin. So how must I then come to these levels of feeling against what is doctrine?

Here is our manual in Romans to tell us how we relate as believers, now that we've been brought to Christ, to this whole question and problem of sin. Paul raises the question that is certainly going to be raised by the objector to justification by faith. He has just stated at the end of chapter 5, where sin increased, grace abounded all the more. And the anticipated objection is then raised, "What shall we then say? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" (Romans 6:1).

The same sort of question is asked in a different way in verse 15, "What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?" In the first half of chapter 6, Paul answers the question from a doctrinal standpoint. In the last half of chapter 6, he answers the question from an experiential, or an illustrative, viewpoint: "What shall we say? Shall we continue to sin that grace may abound?"

DEAD BUT ALIVE

Romans 6:1-14

Let's note several things by way of introduction in relationship to this question. First of all, when that question is raised it is almost a sure sign that justification by faith is being preached.

Because if one is preaching or declaring that one is saved on the basis of good effort, there's no need to raise this question. So every time I, or some other one, preaches the doctrine of being justified by faith—not on the basis of our works but on the basis of what God has then done for us in Christ, which we received through faith—it may be raised: "Aren't you stating something dangerous? Because if you say that salvation is that free, that invites a person to do all kinds of things. He doesn't have to be any more responsible for what he does because Christ has already done it all for him."

This is the sort of question Paul is coming to grips with here. Paul, however, immediately slams into that question with his statement which he has used before in Romans, where he thinks a question or argument is utterly ridiculous. He says, "By no means" (verse 2). In the King James, it's translated, "God forbid." It means simply "Perish the thought!" No one could be that idiotic in supposing that, could they? Perish the thought!

The person who raises this question—"Now that I've been saved, I can do anything I want"—is almost manifesting a not-saved kind of condition, or a not-saved kind of attitude, because he can't possibly understand what God is up to. For the letter to the Romans is telling us that God is up to bringing us through this whole process of justification, through sanctification, unto glorification. That it's God's purpose to eradicate sin from our life altogether. This has already been done on the cross, but it's being practically worked out in our body in this life. But God's purpose is to totally turn himself in our lives against sin. Therefore, if God's purpose is to eradicate it, what in the world are we doing increasing it and giving it fertilizer and the like so that it grows?

DEAD BUT ALIVE

Romans 6:1-14

So Paul, in answer to this question—“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?”—in verse 2 gives his fundamental statement, his general principle. “How can we who died to sin still live in it?” Then in verses 3–11, he develops the theme of what it is to die to sin and to live in reference to God. So first the general principle, then 3-11 more specifically articulates what Paul means by the statement, “We died to sin.” Then in verses 12-14, he gives some very practical exhortations.

I. We died to sin.

Do you feel like you died to sin? It’s striking how this verse, when we read it, “We died to sin,” seems at such odds to our experience. For when we look at ourselves—and especially look at ourselves in light of Romans 7—it seems like there is so much that we want to do, but don’t, and so much that we don’t want to do, but we do. And sin seems so very much alive. So what does it mean, “We died to sin”?

Maybe we could improve on Paul a little bit and be more comfortable with this verse. How can we who ought to die to sin still live in it? That means we haven’t yet done it, but we ought to do it. I can give you exhortation: “Die to sin!” The only problem with saying that you ought to die to sin is that that is not the word that Paul used. Maybe I should tell you, “We shall die to sin. How can we, therefore, live in it?” That puts it off in the future, when we’re finally with Christ. We’re going to die to sin in the sweet by-and-by. That’s encouraging. It’s going to happen someday. Again, the simple little problem here is that Paul doesn’t use the future tense. He says, “We died to sin.” Paul, maybe you mean, “We are dying to sin.” That allows us to have progressive sanctification. We are dying. Every day, a little bit more of me and sin dies, inch-by-inch. I’m becoming more and more a saint. I am dying to sin. But again Paul says, “We died!” Past tense. In the Greek, it’s past tense—which means it occurred at a point of time in the past, and the action is stopped. It’s already been completed. We died to sin.

DEAD BUT ALIVE

Romans 6:1-14

If it's in the past tense and we died to sin, how does that then explain where I'm at? To get this early part of Romans 6, this first half, one is going to have to realize here that when Paul says, "We died to sin," he is not talking simply about an experience that we have which is alive to our emotions, and touch, and our taste, and our sight, and all these kinds of things. It is something that has happened in Christ. Because experientially, we're still wrestling with the question of sin. For example, if we died to sin so that now we're so perfectly righteous that we're no longer battling with the problem, why would Paul need to say in verse 12, "Let sin not reign in your mortal bodies." So on the one hand, we see Paul saying we died to sin. And on the other hand, in verse 12 that sin is still alive. How can it be that we died to sin when sin is still working through my mortal body?

We have got to come at Paul's way through the Holy Spirit, presenting what is a real tremendous truth that—when we grab a hold of it—gives us a tremendous assurance about being in Christ. That phrase "we died" should be connected to something which has happened in Romans 5:15. Notice last week we talked about being identified with two heads: Adam or Christ. Verse 15 says in reference to Adam, "If many died through one man's trespass..." There was an infection of sin—that was let in through Adam's transgression against God—which has spilled over to the whole human race. We noted this through a number of illustrations last week. Especially noting how infants have a propensity to grow up, if they are unchecked, very violent people because they're always demanding and never giving. So here is this factor in reference to Adam that when we were in Adam, we died.

Now something else has happened. We died. When did we die? Paul brings that out beautifully in Romans 6:3-11, where continually using the past tense, he says things like this: "We have been baptized into Christ Jesus...baptized into his death." That means something far more than water baptism, although water baptism may represent it. It's that kind of baptism spoken of in 1

DEAD BUT ALIVE

Romans 6:1-14

Corinthians 12:13, which says by one Spirit were we baptized into Christ and made one body. It is a being placed into Christ's death, a being totally immersed in His death. Not only that we were buried with Him, therefore, by baptism into death.

Verse 5 puts it in another way. We have been united with Him, or planted together with Him, in a death like His. Verse 6: "We know that our old self was crucified." So Paul does not say, "We are being crucified." We have been crucified, and it's kind of rough to crucify something that's already crucified. We have been crucified with Him. Verse 7: "He who has died [again, referring to the believer] is free from sin." Verse 8: "If we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him."

So in all of these verses, continually Paul is working with this past tense. Something has happened to us that is intrinsically bound up with Jesus Christ. When He died, I died, if I have come to faith in Him. What died? My old nature—that part of me which is bound for moving toward separation from God. That part of me has died. Literally died on the Cross.

This is such a difficult concept to get a hold of. In fact, as I have been going through the letter of Romans, I've been praying, "Lord, give me a cultural ability to translate this text of Saint Paul." Because he is using terms that are so thought of and well-known to the person who lived in biblical times, but in our modern state of individuality and democracy and freedom and the like we don't think in terms of solidarity and being linked with other people and linked with family. Our family is so scattered, we hardly remember the last generation we came from, and certainly not three or four generations ago. But we are linked in all of humanity with one of two persons: Adam or Christ. When Adam sinned, he let loose upon the world a flood of sin, which is passed to us all. But Christ lets loose a flood of righteousness and acquittal and life to all who will come to faith in Him.

DEAD BUT ALIVE

Romans 6:1-14

What is simply being said in the letter to the Romans throughout the New Testament is that something happened on the Cross which involved me. When Christ died, He was not simply dying for himself, for He had no sins to die for. He was dying for me. I was there with Him on the Cross—literally incorporated into His nature.

As I try to think of an illustration to represent this—what it means to say we died—I thought of Sunday after Sunday, the opportunity is given to me to dedicate infants to the Lord. A mother and father come here, and they hand me the infant. I give them a pastoral charge, an admonition. Then having taken the infant in my arms, I offer up to God a prayer for that infant and dedicate that child and the parents to God. I give the child, then, back to the parents, and they go on their way, and the child grows. When that child comes to a state of knowledge, it is not going to remember that at one point in life that I, as the pastor, held it and dedicated it to the Lord. It has no consciousness of that having happened. But because it has no consciousness, no experiential relatedness to that, that doesn't mean the event didn't happen. It really happened. I took the child in my arms, and I dedicated the child to the Lord. That doesn't mean the child is guaranteed to be saved, but it means, especially and uniquely, we have asked God's blessing upon that child—whether that child later has an appreciation of that or remembers that, or whether the child doesn't remember it at all.

In effect, it seems to be what happens similarly on the Cross—although with some different ramifications. God—who is outside time and space, and in whose presence all things eternally consist, and for whom there is no past present or future, not who, rather, from his vantage point in eternity is able to see all of life within the compass of one scope—He's able, through Christ on the cross, to see me as being placed in Him. It's even as I take an infant in my arms and dedicate it, at that moment the infant has no knowledge of me doing that. When Christ was crucified, God—looking through the sphere of time—saw our eventual incorporation as human

DEAD BUT ALIVE

Romans 6:1-14

beings into the body of Christ through our faith, and He allowed us to be incorporated with Christ in His death on the cross. So although the crucifixion happened 2,000 years ago, in a very real way I was there. My old nature was being crucified. I was being put to death. And I was in Christ, an event as real to me as a baby dedication would be real—whether when he grew to be an adult he remembered it or not. In that very real way, when Christ was crucified, I—my old nature—was crucified. When He was buried, I went into the tomb with Him. And when He was raised to newness of life, my identity is so bound up with Him that I also have been raised, and I walk in newness of life.

A poem writer has put it like this: “Buried in the grave of Jesus, I believe what God has said. Faith reckons that now I am dead. Death and judgment are behind me. Grace and glory are before. All the billows roll o’er Jesus, there exhausted all their power. Firstfruits of the Resurrection, He has risen from the tomb. Now I stand, a new creation. Free because, beyond my tomb, Jesus died and I died with Him. Buried in His grave I lie. One with Him in Resurrection. Seated now with Him on high.”

One could go through the letters of Paul in the New Testament, or the teachings of Christ himself, and continually find this phrase that we have been raised to newness of life and something happened in Christ which involved our death. We died in Christ to sin. How that may be translated, maybe I could use this kind of illustration as well. When we think of a person dying, we don’t generally think of them dying *to* something. We think of them dying *from* something. So that, for example, if a person dies from cancer, we understand that cancer is the agency which produces the death. They have died from it. But how does a person die *to* cancer? A person only dies to cancer when they’re either healed or they die from cancer. Let’s take the latter. If you die from cancer, you are going to die to cancer. Because cancer, in killing you, has killed itself. For once having killed you, you are no longer under its power and its reign must

DEAD BUT ALIVE

Romans 6:1-14

come to an end. Because you are dead and there is nothing, therefore, living that it can keep on consuming. So in dying from it, I have died to it.

Christ died from our sin. Our sin is placed upon Him. But once He is dead, sin has exhausted its power because it can no longer do anything with Him. He is dead. The Law has no power over somebody who's in a grave. If you've run a speeding ticket of late and are facing a trial in court and you die between now and the court, the judge cannot come and get you in the grave. You have died to the law. This is what has happened with Christ. In a very real way, His nature is such that although He dies from our sin which is placed upon Him, because He dies, He takes sin down with Him and He dies to sin. Sin no longer has any power over Him. Death no longer has any power over Him. He comes up triumphant. Because of my new nature and justification with Christ, I already, in Christ, have died—past tense—to sin. So that now, in God's sight, I am not a combination of half-and-half, or three-fourths, and one-fourth, or the like. I am completely righteous in Christ Jesus. I have died to sin.

You say, "That's rough to believe. Sin seems so very much alive in my life." We'll comment on that in a moment. But initially, that taxes us. "Are you really telling me to believe that I died? That at Calvary I died, if I'm a Christian?" I say, "Yes, your old nature, the Adam nature within you, really died at Calvary."

So there was a fourth person that day on Golgotha's hill. Not just Jesus and the two thieves, but you. You were in Christ dying. You might say, "I have to take that on faith, don't I?" That's the point. You really must take that on faith. Because I cannot unroll the movie screen of Golgotha 2,000 years ago and prove it to you that that was happening. I can't even have a spiritual spectroscope that would somehow show that you were somehow there in Christ's heart when He died. You must take it on faith.

DEAD BUT ALIVE

Romans 6:1-14

That's what Paul is saying about Abraham in chapter 4—that this whole matter of being in Christ is something which is received by faith. Romans 4 said, "And Abraham looked around, and he considered the deadness of his own body." He looked at the circumstances. He looked at the fact that his name was already Abraham, "Father of many nations," yet he had no child. In looking at the circumstances, considering the deadness of his own body, the deadness of his wife's womb, he yet believed in God and saw himself as the father of many nations. And God gave him according to his faith.

So also we believe before we finally see that indeed Christ has done this. We accept the fact that I am dead in Christ. Faith is required to accept this, as noted in verse 11: "So you must also reckon or consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." There has been something really happen in respect to sin. The old nature has died. I am dead to sin. This is one side of the coin that is being presented here in Romans 6.

II. The other side of the coin is that while I am dead to sin, sin is yet alive.

It has not yet completed its ravaging. Therefore we come to the exhortations in Romans 6:12 through 13. We connect verses 12 and 13 with something Paul says in verse 6: "We know that our old self, our old nature, was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be rendered inoperative or ineffective." What Paul is really saying is when we consider ourselves a new creature, we have died to sin, but sin is yet reigning in our mortal bodies. I want to say that Paul here is making the distinction between what I really am and, now, what is the outward appearance of me—the body. I want to make this distinction without doing what some Christian mystics are doing, and ascetics, by saying the body is the spirit through which sin is being expressed. Therefore, what you do is go live on top of a pillar for fifty-three years and mortify the body as much as you can. The body is called a "mortal body." Paul calls it a body of death. He calls it, also, a "body of sin." Through my mind, through my emotions, through my

DEAD BUT ALIVE

Romans 6:1-14

expressions, through the way I receive and give input, sin is yet reigning or attempting to reign.

It is expressing itself through my mortal members. But in reality, I have died.

How do you put that together? I do in several ways. One is, just recently, I was watching a TV program where I was teaching the Gospel of Mark. It was neat to look at it because it was taped now almost five years ago. As I looked at that, I recognized the person who was speaking. I recognized the voice that was speaking. I thought to myself, having looked in a mirror lately, that person really looks good! There was a youthfulness, a boyishness. I don't notice that as much any more. Then I thought of some of the struggles I was going through when I made that particular series of tapes. Simultaneously, as I was watching these things were going on in my mind. My body isn't what it used to be, but when I consider what I was going through in those moments and look at what is happening, I recognize that with God's help I've really worked my way through some struggles I was having then that I'm not having now.

But while the outer man—this body of sin, this body of death—is winding down, the opposite is happening. The real me is coming alive. I'm getting more and more alive and new every day.

Why is this? Because once, in Christ, I died to sin.

III. I was given a new nature.

And that new nature, which you can't see with the outward eye, that new nature is alive and growing. It's the reign of grace. So, therefore, since I died to sin, yet I find that in my body—in my thought life, in my emotions, in my actions—sin keeps trying to express itself, I eventually come to the conclusion that Paul comes to in Romans 7. The real me, the new man that is in Christ Jesus, does not sin. It is sin reigning in my body which continuously tries to express itself, but the real me is truly a transformed person in Christ Jesus. The question of sin—in terms of its power over my nature—has been fully and finally and completely dealt with in Jesus Christ, my Lord. Therefore, when sin occurs in my life, as a believer it is not the real me, not the new

DEAD BUT ALIVE

Romans 6:1-14

nature. I detest it. I hate it. I recognize it's there. But the new me is a transformed, renewed person in Christ Jesus.

Paul continually skates on theological thin ice. This doctrine of justification by faith means you really trust God completely for your justification, for your wholeness, for your new identity and linkage with Him. Therefore, since my nature—the old nature—is gone and I have a new nature, sin is occurring in my members, not in me. Paul is not saying, “It is reigning in me or occurring in me.” He’s talking about it occurring in my body, in my members. What am I to do with this vestige, this leftover of my old nature that is still working in me? Paul gives us some very profound advice on being sanctified—or being holy and respected—taking care of the sin question and it expressing itself within our mortal bodies, in our thinking, our emotions, our action, and the like.

Some things Paul does not say here are important to look at. Often in Scripture, what a person doesn't say is as important as what they do say. Paul does not say—in reference to the believer that finds sins reigning in his mortal body or through his members—he does not say, “Gather together, and cast sin out.” Wouldn't it be nice if you could cast sin out? If you've got an angry temper, just gather around and cast the temper out! Or if you're dieting, just pray and cast the fat away.

We would like an instantaneous solution to sin continuing to reign in our mortal members, and one way we'd like to do it—especially since we're charismatic—is cast it out. Paul doesn't say anything about casting it out. He doesn't say anything, either, about binding the devil, although in some unique situations this would be necessary. But he is not here talking about oppression or possession or anything like that. He does not even say things like, in reference to sin in your mortal body, if you're struggling with an area of your life as a Christian like impatience or anger or depression. He doesn't even say things like, “Let go and let God do it,” which is kind of the

DEAD BUT ALIVE

Romans 6:1-14

frequent advice that comes. In reference to our basic nature, God has already done it in Christ.

We died to Christ.

So what does Paul say? He says something we may not initially like to hear. “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies to make you obey its passions. Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness. But yield yourselves to God as persons, men and women who have been brought from death unto life” (Romans 6:12-13). In other words, there is an action now that we take. Having been given a new nature, we are to take on this mortal flesh, this mortal sphere in which we live, and win victories in Christ over those vestiges of sin which are still at work trying to destroy us. We have already been set free ourselves and become dead to sin. Before we were Christians, this was impossible because we could never win that kind of victory. We would no sooner try than we would fall on our face, and we would be condemned because we could not be perfectly righteous. We could not do everything right in respect to God’s law.

Now we find that since we died to sin, Christ has already made everything all right with God for us. So being in Christ, we have power in Him that we did not have before we were Christians. We already have a standing with Jesus that we did not have before we were Christians. So we have real armament in our control to yield our members not to sin, but to yield unto God.

That’s what God was saying in reference to justification. Justification is not a license to go out and do everything you want. That would be a perversion of what it means to be saved. Because justification involves us being caught up in the wonder and the love of God and wanting to please Him. So the active passion of a justified person is to not only have died to sin, but to conquer sin as it reigns in our mortal members. He says we do this by an activity on our part. We yield our members—our instruments, our minds, our thoughts, our eyes, our limbs—we yield them to God rather than to sin.

DEAD BUT ALIVE

Romans 6:1-14

Notice how many times in the Scriptures we are exhorted to practical advice—James, for example, about the control of the tongue. And Paul saying in Ephesians 4 about putting off the old nature and putting on the new nature. And about not gossiping. And about not being angry. And about not being wrathful. And all these sorts of things. We would like to be intensely mystical at that point and say, “That is a victory which somehow I’m going to win. I don’t have to do anything about it. The Spirit will just come upon me and I’ll have victory, just like that.” Yet this is part of what Paul is talking about in Philippians where he says, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” God is at work in you. They’re two sides of the coin. God’s already at work in Christ Jesus, but there is something that we are to do.

So what should I do if I have a problem with my tongue? I am to consciously begin to bring it under control—not yielding it to sin, but yielding it to righteousness. It is an activity in which I participate—not something God does for me, but something I offer up in presenting my body as a living sacrifice unto God. So I am to fight the good fight of faith, and I am to work with every passion in my being for righteousness. So that, indeed, in a very real sense, sin in my mortal members decreases and decreases its hold.

Already recognizing this is happening, I reckon on the fact that my new nature has already been given and my salvation with the Lord has been attained. That’s why Paul wraps up this statement in verse 14 by saying, “For sin has no dominion over you since you are not under law but under grace.” How does that relate to this whole question of having died to sin and sin yet reigning in our mortal members? It simply means this: Before we were a believer, if we wanted to please God, we tried and tried to fulfill the Law. Whenever we failed to keep the Law we would immediately be condemned and we would say, “I can’t make it. I can never be righteous with God.” But now that we are under grace, now that grace is reigning—remember, the Law is not reigning, but God’s grace is triumphing, and it’s stronger than Law—now that grace is reigning,

DEAD BUT ALIVE

Romans 6:1-14

when we work to put sin in our mortal members to death and we fail, we are not under Law. The Law would come at us and say, “You failed. You’re condemned. You can never be righteous with God.” Instead, we are under grace which tells us, “Ok, you failed. I realize the intensity of the struggle you’re going through. Now get back up. You’re in right relationship with Me. You keep on moving. You keep on growing. You keep on conquering. You keep on waging the battle because you are going to come out in the end. You are going to be glorified. Whom God justified, He will also glorify. So keep on moving.”

It’s that same kind of thing that happens, I think, when a small child is learning to walk. I think that’s how we are in God’s eyes. When a child falls down, the parent does not say to the child, “You stupid child. You fell down again. Get up!” No, we simply have the good grace and the common sense to bend down, realize that the child is only going to learn how to walk if it takes the risk and falls down a few times. It is not under Law, but it is under grace—the grace which picks it back up.

In saying all this, I open myself to the same charge Paul is opening himself up to here. When you preach justification by faith, you immediately open yourself to the question posed by some who are going to take advantage of this doctrine. There are some that are going to say, “If I’m this safe, then let me sin that grace will abound.” Paul says, “God forbid! By no means.”

The person who says this kind of thing manifests by his own life that he is really not Christ’s at all. If you are in Christ, if you have truly died to sin, then you recognize that you’re not under Law, but under grace. And grace gives you the room to grow and develop and flower into that person uniquely made in Christ’s image. So God is bringing us from justification to glorification and giving us the mental tools to recognize, as we wrestle with sin in our mortal bodies, what we are to do about it. We’re to consider ourselves dead to sin. We are alive in Christ. Christ, being raised from the dead, does not die again. So we, being raised with Christ, have the sureness of

DEAD BUT ALIVE

Romans 6:1-14

our identity with Him into eternity. And having that sureness, therefore, when sin is occurring in our mortal members, we recognize we've died to sin. We then do not become passive about the question of sin. We fight it. We fight it with our abilities to fight it. We fight it with our natural ability to resist it. We fight it, if need be, with the counsel of other Christians who will join us in gaining a victory in that area of our life. We fight it through the weapons of the Spirit. We use whatever is at our disposal because we will not accept that dominating influence of sin still wrestling in our mortal bodies. We are out to eradicate sin. We have a passion for holiness. But in that passion for holiness, it is occurring within the context of Jesus our Lord.

David Wilkerson put it all together beautifully a number of years ago—when at a very deep time of despair for him personally in his work in Teen Challenge in New York City, when it was just getting off the ground—he had been at work so much that he had neglected his family very much. One evening he had come home, the late hours of the morning. He was depressed. He was feeling terribly abandoned by God. He felt his ministry was totally unfruitful. He was just in complete distress and disorientation. He went into the room where one of his girls were sleeping. And he tells the story of going over to her and picking her up, and the little girl just clung to him in her sleep with all the strength she had. He recognized that this was the manifestation of the fact that the child had felt neglected and was now reaching out for Daddy. Not awake yet, in her sleep she was reaching out for him. He was just sobbing. Through his sobbing, there was an inner voice of the Lord to him saying, “David, drop that girl.” Immediately his response was, “No! How could I drop this girl who I love and who's reaching out just to receive something of my life? How could anything be so abrupt and so cruel as to drop my girl?” And again stabbing the darkness and his emotional pain was the inner voice of the Lord saying, “Drop that girl!” Again Dave refused. And again, like Samuel, the voice came, “Drop the girl.” But unlike

DEAD BUT ALIVE

Romans 6:1-14

Samuel, David said, “No, Lord, I will not drop this girl.” To which the inner voice of the Lord responded to him again. “And what made you ever think I would drop you?”

Hear the Lord say that to you in your struggle with this. He has won you by His grace. He intends to bring you through to glorification and to life. Trust in Him. Reckon yourself as dead to sin, alive to God, and yield your members as instruments as unto God and unto life. He doesn't intend to drop you.

Closing Prayer

Our heavenly Father, we thank You today as we pray to You that You know the struggle that we go through. You know the tremendous war that we have in our life with sin. You know the war that we have in reference to being more than we are and in stopping the action of things which we do not wish. We are counseled in Your Word not to simply be passive about this whole engagement with sin, not to tread upon Your grace, not to simply casually walk along as if Your death was of no meaning or of no emotional value to us. But instead, You are summoning us to consider our position and to put into practice in our experience that which You want of us. We thank You, Lord Jesus, for the deep, abiding assurance that we have died. We thank You for the assurance that when we have come to faith in You, we are really in You—not half-in, and half-out. You have given us a whole new nature, and we are now made in Your image, created after Your likeness. The only thing that remains yet to be completed is the glorification of our body, when like You we shall be. We thank You, Lord Jesus, therefore, for this gift of righteousness which is ours in Christ. We pray, Lord Jesus, that from that gift of love which You have given to us in our lives, there will be that active pursuit of righteousness—recognizing that it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And that You who died to sin, died once for all. And I have also died, and I'm alive now in Christ Jesus my Lord, therefore winning the victory over the enemy. Break this Word to us, Lord, in the daily occurrences of life as we live out the

DEAD BUT ALIVE

Romans 6:1-14

implications of it even this week. Give us experiences, and help us to understand, over and over again, this meaning of dying and being dead and yielding ourselves unto You. We ask in Your Name. Amen.