

Dead to Sin, Alive to God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 November 2025

Preacher: Matthew Capone

[0 : 0 0] In the book of Romans. You'll remember that the book of Romans is a letter. It's a letter written by the Apostle Paul in the 50s A.D. It's called Romans because Paul writes it to the churches in the city of Rome.

And at the end of the day, it is a letter that is about the gospel. It's about the good news of Jesus' life and death and resurrection. Last week, we started chapter 6, and we had this question.

If God forgives sin, why not just sin more? And that's the question Paul asked in verse 1. He said, what shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

If you were here last week, you'll remember the answer was no. That doesn't make any sense. It doesn't make any sense because you've died to sin, and you know that you've died to sin because of your union with Christ.

And then Paul ended verse 4 talking about walking in newness of life, which is the life that's empowered by the Holy Spirit, the life where the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is at work in you.

[1 : 1 0] This week, we continue that same question, but we expand on it. It's the same topic. We're picking up where we left off with verse 4, walking in newness of life.

And this passage takes us the next step, which is this. How do we walk in that life? If the glory of the Father raised Christ from the dead, and that power is at work in us, what do we do with it? How do we walk in it? It's going to be what we look at this week and next week. Now, in these verses, verses 5 through 11, Paul is actually going to repeat a lot of what he said in verses 1 through 4.

He's even going to repeat some of what we looked at in chapter 5, verses 12 through 21. Okay, so we're going to focus this morning. Not every verse is going to receive the same amount of attention because some verses are repeating what's come before.

Our focus this morning is on two new concepts, verses 6 and 7. We're going to see that we are free from the slavery of sin. Verse 11, Paul tells us, consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

[2 : 2 3] So our focus is in those two areas, focusing especially on verses 6 and 7, the idea of being free from the slavery of sin. Focusing also on verse 11, we consider ourselves dead to sin, alive to God in Christ.

Jesus. It's with that that I invite you to turn with me to Romans chapter 6. You can turn in your Bible. You'll also find it on page 7 of your worship guide. As we turn to it, remember that this is God's word.

And Jeremiah chapter 23 tells us that God's word is like a hammer that breaks a rock into pieces, which is a way of saying that there is nothing more powerful than God's word.

So that's why we read it now, Romans chapter 6, starting at verse 5. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

[3 : 3 4] For the one who has died has been set free from sin. Verse 8. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again. Death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died, he died to sin once for all.

But the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we do thank you again for your word that you've given to us. We thank you that you've united us to yourself.

That when Christ died, we died. And when he rose, he brought us new life. We ask that you'd remind us of those truths this morning, that you would bring them to life in our hearts, in our lives, in our minds.

[4 : 38] That you would help us to understand your word. Even more than that, you would show us Jesus Christ. We would see his great glory and power and majesty and holiness.

His authority, his mercy, his grace, and his love. And we ask that you would use our time together to grow our love and affection, our reverence in all, our obedience to Christ.

We ask these things in his mighty name. Amen. A couple of years ago, a friend of mine took a trip to the sand dunes in southern Colorado.

And as she was hiking up the sand dunes, she came to the hardest part of the trail. She's hiking barefoot through the sand, and the trail becomes narrow. And as she was coming along, trying to get to the top, there was this obnoxious woman who was spread out, laying down on the ground, just blocking the path entirely.

And not only was she just spread out, lying down, blocking the path entirely, but she was actually smirking. And refusing to move as people would come up along this trail.

[5 : 52] And you'd think, on a normal trail, this wouldn't be a big deal. But this is the sand dunes. And so it's hard enough as it is to walk on the trail. It's even harder to navigate around someone who is spread out on the trail.

And my friend was hiking barefoot, so that makes it even more challenging. And so as she told this story, she said this, I wanted to kick sand in her face.

Which is understandable. And the plan, of course, would be she's going to pretend it was an accident. Oh, sorry, I didn't mean for my foot to move in that direction. But she said, but then I remembered, I'm a child of God.

So she didn't. She didn't kick sand in her face. I tell you that story because that is the point of this passage. In fact, that might capture some of the point of the end of chapter 5 and what we saw last week.

That is what it looks like to walk in newness of life, according to Paul in this passage. Walking in newness of life is remembering who you are.

[7 : 03] Now, my friend could have said, you know, I remembered what I remember from Romans chapter 5, that I was in Adam and now I'm in Christ and the power of sin has ceased to have authority over me and that when Christ died, I died, and that the reign of sin no longer controls the center of my heart and so I've risen to resurrection life, which is the newness of life that's empowered by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

She could have said all of that, but she captured all of that by simply saying, I remembered I am a child of God.

That's why I don't kick sand in people's face. Romans chapter 6 is detailed and technical and complicated. Romans chapter 5 was the same way, but at the end of the day, as we move through those things and understand them, I want you to remember that.

The Christian does not continue in sin because the Christian is a child of God. It's as simple as that. So as we move through this passage, that is the big idea.

The Christian instead grows to look more and more like Jesus Christ. So as we navigate through verses 5 and 11, if you're tempted to get lost, I want you to remember that is the big idea.

[8 : 22] I am a child of God. Much of this passage, as I mentioned, is repetition from last week, so we're going to move quickly through some of it.

Verse 5 tells us why we have the newness of life that was mentioned in verse 4. Sin, this is what verse 5 is telling us, sin lost power because of Christ's death.

Life gains power because of Christ's resurrection. Sin lost power because of Christ's death.

Life gains power because of Christ's resurrection. Jesus died, you died. Jesus rose, you rise.

By the way, that's the same thing that verse 8 is telling us. Verse 8 is also saying, Jesus' death, our death. Jesus' life, our life. That takes us then to verse 6, which is the most confusing verse in this section because of two phrases.

[9 : 34] It uses the phrase, the old self and the body of sin. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing.

And when he says the old self, he is talking about what we discussed at the end of chapter 5, you when you were in Adam. So the old self is the self when sin controlled and owned your heart. The old self is you when sin owned and controlled your heart. The body of sin is related but not identical to the old self.

The body of sin is how the old self in the totality of your person played out in real time and space. So we could put it this way.

You are no longer in Adam, so no old self. Therefore, your entire life has changed. No body of sin. That's simply what Paul is saying in a sense.

[10 : 42] That's again what we saw last week. He's telling us again, sin doesn't rule over you. You don't have to obey it anymore. Sin does not rule over you.

You don't have to obey it anymore. That takes us to the new concept for this week at the end of verse 6, which is the concept of slavery.

Verse 6, he says, you no longer be enslaved to sin. That's the negative. You're not enslaved. Now verse 7 gives us the positive. You've been set free from sin. And Paul's again basically saying, remember what I told you in verses 1 through 4.

You are free from the power of sin. So verses 6 and 7, two sides of the same coin. You're no longer a slave, but free. And so that's the new idea that he introduces in this passage.

And so as we think about what it means to be enslaved to sin, I want to return to my non-sand-kicking friend. If you're not a Christian, you might be thinking, that's the stupidest illustration of Christianity I've ever heard.

[11 : 53] I actually don't need Christianity to not kick sand in people's faces. I'm an adult. I have something called self-control. And if you thought that, you would be right.

You probably do have self-control. Most of you are adults. And you would still be a slave to sin. Whether you do that specific action or not, sin is still the ruling power in your life.

Whether you do that specific action or not, sin is still the ruling power in your life. Remember, we talked about this in Genesis chapter 20.

I think that was over the summer with the story of Abimelech and Abraham. And we said, look, sometimes Christians act poorly and pagans behave really well. The Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck explains it.

He says, look, non-Christians can refrain from sinful actions. But, non-Christians can refrain from sinful actions, but it is a battle, this is what he calls it, a battle from the outside.

[13 : 09] They cannot do what he, he cannot invade the inner forces of the heart. They cannot attack the evil at its roots.

They cannot invade the inner fortress of the heart. They cannot attack the evil at its roots. Then gives us another category. If you're not a Christian, you can, by exercising your self-control, restrain and limit sin.

You can, even if you're not a Christian, restrain and limit sin. But there are some things you can't do. Bavinck says, you cannot cleanse it or renew it.

You cannot cleanse it or renew it. In other words, yes, you can be someone who's not a Christian and you can live a moral life in certain ways.

And you can refrain from certain actions, but when you do that, at your very best, you are white knuckling. You are holding on with your strength to restrain your lusts and your impulses.

[14 : 30] You're trying to keep those things at bay. But you cannot cleanse your heart. You cannot renew it. Of course, we've talked about this other idea before, that something is only truly good and pleasing to God if it's done for the right reasons, which is for God's honor and his glory.

Of course, that's not the function, right, of someone who is white knuckling certain behaviors. Bob Vink says, you know, someone might behave because they want respectability. They might behave because of the morals of the culture around them.

But, if sin controls the inner fortress of your heart, you are indeed its slave.

We can think again of what happened with my friend.

You might notice what her reasoning was not. Notice what her power was not. She didn't say, I was going to kick sand in her face, but then I thought, what will people think?

[15 : 49] What if someone saw me? That would be the power of shame. She'd be using shame to kind of hold her behavior at bay. She didn't say, what will happen?

What if this woman stands up and wants to have a fist fight with me? That'd be the power of fear, right? That would be what's motivating her. That would have been fighting from the outside, right? That would have been the fortress that she can't penetrate, but she's holding, restraining, and limiting sin. But no, when she said, I didn't do it because I'm a child of God, what she's saying is this.

The inner fortress of my heart has changed. The power center of my life no longer has sin in the chair.

In my command center, at the very inner place of my heart, it's actually Jesus Christ ruling and reigning as king.

[16 : 46] And so I'm not white knuckling, not controlling my behavior for respectability or because of the society around me. No, I'm a child of God.

The power of God by his spirit, the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is at work cleansing, renewing, and transforming me.

Even more than that, what my friend was saying was I did the right thing for the right reason. I didn't do it to escape consequences, I didn't do it to escape shame, I did it for God's honor and his glory. I'm his child. Why would I do anything else? That's what we sang about our second song this morning.

We sang Run and Run. It says this in the first verse. Run and run, the law demands, which is saying, this is when you're trying to fight from outside the fortress, but gives me neither feet nor hands.

[17 : 54] In other words, your only tool is white knuckling. Better news, the gospel brings, it bids me fly, it gives me wings.

Wings. Those wings, the power of the Holy Spirit, the glory of God that raised Christ from the dead at work in the heart and life of the believer.

We also saw it in our Old Testament reading this morning from Ezekiel chapter 36. What does God promise? This is on page three of your worship guide. I will cleanse you, I will give you a new heart. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. That's in a sense what my friend was saying. God has given me a new heart.

When she did that, she was following, in a sense, the other new concept in this passage, verse 11. Verse 11 says, so you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

[19 : 02] And what Paul is saying there is, hey, remember what's true. It's true that you are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Now you need to consider yourself that way. You need to remember that. You need to think about yourself in those terms. You need to remind yourself of what's already true. That is how you take hold of the power that we saw last week.

It's also saying, hey, it's actually really easy to forget that you're in Christ and to think that you're still in Adam. It's easy to forget that you belong to God and he's changing your heart.

And so you have to constantly be reminding yourself, remembering, coming back again and again to what is true. And what is true is this, when Jesus died, you died. when Jesus rose from the dead, he gave you new life.

Scottish pastor named Sinclair Ferguson illustrates this with this concept of being called up to military service, the draft. And so I've taken this illustration and I've adapted it to be about yours truly.

[20 : 20] When I turned 18, as a man in the United States, I had to register for selective service so that the military would know who I was if they ever wanted to have a draft.

Now that hasn't happened for me, but I want you to imagine for a second that our neighbors to the north, our great Canadian friends, decide they're going to have a military draft. They're calling up names and the name Matthew Capone pops up.

Matthew is called to fight for the Canadian military. And so Canada calls me up, and they say, guess what? You showed up in the draft. This is your date to show up and serve in the military.

You're going to help us fight our war against whomever. What am I going to do in that moment? Do I shake in my boots? Oh no, I have to go to war for Canada. No, I'm going to laugh in their face.

And why would I laugh in their face? I'm not a Canadian citizen. You have no, what? You have no power over me.

[21 : 34] Point is this. Sin is going to call you up as a Christian. Hey, you know what would be a great idea?

I think you, I think you should flirt with someone who isn't your spouse. Actually, I'm going to command you to do that. I'm sin. I'm going to speak to you. What do you do? You laugh. That's really silly. Why would I do that? I'm not a citizen of sin. That doesn't make any sense. That actually sounds kind of miserable. That sounds like slavery. Sin calls you up.

Hey, I have a great idea for you. I want you to rehearse all the ways you've been hurt. Whatever grudges you have, I really want you nursing those. Actually, I don't just want you doing that. I command you to do that. What are you going to say? You're going to laugh. I'm not a citizen of sin. I don't have to do what you tell me to do.

[22 : 33] That actually sounds kind of miserable. That sounds like slavery. If you're falsely accused, sin's going to come to you and say, you know what? Punch them back. They hurt you.

You hurt them. What are you going to say? You're going to laugh. You're going to say, I'm actually a child of God.

And you know what God says to his children? He says he's going to defend them. He's going to vindicate them. I'm not going to worry that someone's falsely accused me.

I know that God is the bringer of justice. I don't need to punch back. I'm what? I'm free. I'm free. Not a citizen to sin.

Of course, it's easier said than done. Which is the point of verse 11. Paul has to remind us to do it.

[23 : 30] Paul is saying, look, think in this way. Remind yourself of what's true. The Christian life, one way of thinking about it, it is a battle to remember who you actually are.

It's a battle to remember that you are in Christ, not in Adam. It is a battle to remember you are no longer under the reign of sin.

It has no power or authority over you. You have died to sin. You are no longer in Adam. You have been set free. I don't care what sin says.

Sin calling me up and telling me what to do is as silly as Canada trying to draft Matthew Capone to their military. I'm not part of that reign.

I'm not part of that rule. By the way, and this is stretching back to last week, how do I know I am now in Christ? I've been baptized.

[24 : 32] Yeah, what sin? When sin comes to you, you remind it. Actually, that's silly. I've been baptized. I died when Christ died.

When he rose, I was given life. Now what I'm about to tell you is going to sound a little weird. It's going to sound weird because it is, but it's also brilliant.

I have a friend. She's a member of Generation Z, and she has trained ChatGPT to remind her of truths from Romans.

So one time I said, okay, I want to watch you do this. Show me what you do. So she opened up ChatGPT. She's trained it. She said, hey, ChatGPT, I'm having a really bad day. I really need you to help me get back on track and remember what's true.

And ChatGPT said, remember, you have actually died to sin. You are no longer a slave to righteousness. You actually belong to Christ. Sin has no power over you.

[25 : 32] And that, my friends, is a modern solution to an ancient problem. She, in a sense, is working to live out verse 11. She's reckoning herself dead to sin and alive to Christ Jesus.

That is what this passage is telling us. We return again and again. We remind ourselves over and over of what is true and not just reminding ourselves, reminding each other.

You may still feel like a slave. You may still act like a slave at times, but you are a slave no more. You are free.

So act like it. Behave like it. Now, I don't mean to oversimplify this. There are other pieces to consider in our battle against sin.

It certainly is more than this, right? But it is not less than this. And this is the place that Paul leans in in this passage. In this passage, as we think about what all of the Bible teaches about fighting sin, Paul says, this is one of the tools in your belt.

[26 : 43] Remember what is true. Reckon yourself. Consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Finally, Paul reminds us it's not just that we're free now. He also goes out of his way to tell us we will always be free. There's, in fact, no chance of going back into slavery.

That's the point of verses 9, and 10. Verses 9 and 10, he's saying one thing, essentially. Look, it's a done deal. You actually can't unresurrect Jesus.

And if you can't unresurrect Jesus, you can't be a slave to sin anymore. Jesus has risen, verse 10, once for all. It's done.

There's no threat of Jesus being pulled back into the tomb. Verse 9, never die again. Okay, it can't be clear. You are free from sin forever because Jesus rose from the dead forever.

[27 : 51] You're free from sin forever because Jesus rose from the dead forever. Jesus is not going back in the tomb, so you can't go back into slavery to sin.

It's done. The deal's sealed. return windows over. Of course, what Paul teaches us, Jesus taught first.

Jesus tells us this in John chapter 14, if you love me, you will keep my commandments. how do we live the resurrection life?

How do we walk in the newness of life that Paul talked about last week? We live it remembering that we are children of God.

We're no longer slaves. We are free to obey. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

[29 : 06] May the mind of Christ my Savior live in me from day to day by his love and power controlling all I do and say.

let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we praise you and thank you that you always empower what you command.

You bid us fly, but you also give us wings. You've given us freedom through the power of your Holy Spirit and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus, and we ask that you would remind us, especially this morning, that that is true and that we would live into it as we follow you.

We ask all of these things in Jesus' name. Amen.