Dead Unto Sin

Romans 6:8-9: "Now <u>if we be dead with Christ</u>, we believe that <u>we shall also live with him</u>: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead <u>dieth no more</u>; death hath no more dominion over him."

In this passage Paul discusses a very precious promise that God has given to all Christians: the promise of everlasting life. The topic of the resurrection is tremendously important one! It's worth spending some time on.

First of all, it's important to realize that this promise has *only* been given to those who are Christians. Jesus has promised everlasting life to those who repent and trust in Him alone for salvation, and everlasting *wrath* upon those who don't. All those who put their faith in Him will find mercy and forgiveness, but all those who reject Him will find only judgment and condemnation.

If we've put our faith in Christ then there are two possible outcomes. If the Lord doesn't return in our lifetime then one day we will die. When that happens our body will be put in the ground but our spirit will depart to be with the Lord:

2 Corinthians 5:6-7: "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be <u>absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord</u>."

Some people teach the idea of "soul sleep", which claims that when you die you stay dead until the Lord returns. That belief is false! When we die we go to be with the Lord. Our body may be dead, but our soul still lives. Although our soul is absent from

our body, it's with the Lord in Heaven.

However, that isn't the end. One day the Lord will return for His church. When that day comes, all of the Christians who are still alive will be instantly transformed. We will become immortal and incorruptible:

> **I Corinthians 15:51-54:** "Behold, I shew you a mystery; <u>We shall not all sleep</u>, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and <u>the dead shall be raised</u> incorruptible, and <u>we shall be changed</u>. For <u>this corruptible must put on incorruption</u>, and <u>this mortal must put on immortality</u>. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

God is going to raise all of the righteous dead! Their bodies will be brought back to life and they will live again. Just as Jesus' dead body was raised from the dead and made more glorious, so our bodies will also be resurrected as well. Right now our bodies are corruptible and prone to disease but one day they'll be incorruptible. Right now we're mortal but one day we'll be immortal. That glorious day is coming. Every passing day brings it a little bit closer:

> **Romans 13:11:** "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for <u>now is our salvation nearer than when we believed</u>."

If we're dead with Christ then we believe we will also live with Him. In this life our bodies are subject to aging, disease, and death, but that won't always be the case. After the Lord returns He

will change our bodies and we'll become very different from what we are now. When Christ raises us from the dead we'll never be faced with disease or death again. Death will no longer have any dominion over us.

There's something else that shouldn't have dominion over us either, and that's sin:

> **Romans 6:10-11:** "For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise <u>reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin</u>, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

In this passage the apostle Paul commands us to consider ourselves to be dead unto sin but alive unto God. To understand what that means, let's stop and think for a moment. How does a dead person respond to a situation? If you tell a dead person a joke, will he laugh? If you tell a dead person some bad news, will he cry? If you insult a dead person, will be become angry? If you threaten a dead person, will he become afraid? Of course not. After all, he's *dead!* He's beyond caring about anything you might do. Since he's dead he won't respond to you in any way. It's *impossible* to entice a dead person to do anything because *he's dead*.

Paul tells us that we should treat temptations the same way a dead person treats temptations. If you tempt a dead person to sin he isn't going to do anything. He's not going to find the temptation enticing. There will be no response from him whatsoever! When it comes to sin we must consider ourselves to be dead. Sin should mean absolutely nothing to us. There should be nothing tempting or desirable about sin at all. Just as a dead person would never consider giving in to sin (because he's *dead*), we should do the same.

You see, Christians are commanded to pursue holiness. This is repeated throughout the Bible:

2 Corinthians 7:1: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, <u>let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness</u> of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

1 Thessalonians 4:7: "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, <u>but unto holiness</u>."

Hebrews 12:14: "Follow peace with all men, <u>and holiness</u>, without which <u>no man shall see the Lord</u>:"

Christ didn't save us so we could dive into sin and do whatever we want! Instead He saved us so we could do whatever *He* wants. Earlier in Romans 6 the apostle Paul rebuked those who said "Since I'm a Christian, God will forgive me. That means I can do whatever I want and it doesn't matter". The truth is that it *does* matter! God's grace *isn't a license to sin.* Those who treat it as such aren't Christians at all:

I John 2:3-5: "And hereby we do know that we know him, <u>if we keep his commandments</u>. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, <u>is a liar</u>, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him."

As Christians we must have a deep and abiding hatred for sin:

Jude 1:23: "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; <u>hating even the garment spotted by the flesh</u>."

Christians must have no tolerance for sin in their lives.

4

They should fight it and consider themselves to be dead to it. We should be at war with the sin in our lives. We ought to be dead to sin – not just to some sins, but to *all* sins. We must not allow it to have its way with us:

> **Romans 6:12:** "<u>Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body</u>, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."

Notice how Paul says *do not let sin reign over you*. Don't allow sin to do as it pleases! Don't give in to temptation. God wants us to fight sin and overcome it.

The Bible repeatedly calls Christians to a life of holiness. Some people today don't care very much about holiness. They think that since they're saved they can live as they please and there won't be any consequences. They just don't take sin very seriously. There are quite a lot of people who don't even feel the need to *read* their Bibles, let alone obey them. But the truth is that holiness isn't optional. Although we're not saved by our works, God *does* command us to give our lives to Him:

> **Romans 12:1-2:** "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye <u>present your bodies a living sacrifice</u>, **holy**, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And <u>be not conformed to this world</u>: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

God commands us to to offer ourselves not only as a living sacrifice, but as a *holy* sacrifice. Jesus Christ said the same thing. If we love Christ then we should demonstrate that love through obedience:

> **John 14:15:** "If ye love me, <u>keep my</u>

commandments."

John 14:21: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, <u>he it is that loveth me</u>: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."

I John 5:2-3: "By this we know that we love the children of God, <u>when we love God, and keep his commandments</u>. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."

It's true that Christians still struggle with sin, and it's also true that sometimes Christians sin. However, there's a *tremendous* difference between a person who's trying to obey God, and one who refuses to obey God. There's a difference between someone who's submitted themselves to God and is trying to serve Him, and one who's refused to submit and is doing whatever they want. God has called us to *keep His commandments* and He's very serious about that. If we refuse to keep His commandments (as many so-called Christians do today) then we don't love Him and, as 1 John 5 teaches, *we aren't Christians at all*.

Another thing to notice is that Paul says we shouldn't *let* sin reign over us. This means we must not give sin permission to do as it pleases in our life. Paul doesn't say "Don't worry about your sins. God will fix them in time. Just live your life and let God deal with it." The apostle talks as if our sin is something that *we can control* and is something we're supposed to be fighting:

1 Corinthians 9:27: "But <u>I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection</u>: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

Hebrews 12:1: "Wherefore seeing we also are

compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, <u>let us lay aside every weight</u>, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,"

Paul says that he *works hard* to keep his body under subjection. He urges us to *lay aside* our sins and run the race of this life with patience! Nowhere does Paul say "Your sin is God's problem, not yours. Don't even give your sin a second thought." Instead he says that we need to be *fighting* the sin in our life. We must be at war with it – striving against it and seeking to live a holy life.

Do you remember what Jesus often told people after He did a miracle in their lives?

John 8:11: "She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: <u>go, and sin no more</u>."

John 5:14: "Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: <u>sin no more</u>, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

Jesus *never* said "I've removed all sin from your life! You'll never sin again." Instead He commanded them to *stop sinning* – as if they had a choice to make and He wanted them to make the right choice.

The truth is that as Christians we really *do* have a choice to make. Before we were saved we were slaves to sin. There was no way we could overcome the sin in our lives. However, now that we're Christians the situation is different. We can fight sin, *if we want to*. We can overcome sin. Since we're no longer slaves to sin we can defeat it. The temptations will still come but we can overcome them. We'll never face a temptation that's impossible to defeat:

7

1 Corinthians 10:13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but <u>will with the temptation also make a way to escape</u>, that ye may be able to bear it."

The temptations in our life *can be defeated!* God Himself promised us that every temptation we'll ever face is one that we can overcome. The real question is this: are we willing to fight against our sin, or would we rather take the easy road and give in to it?

Paul tells us that we do have a choice, and he commands us to choose to serve God:

Romans 6:13: "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but <u>yield yourselves unto God</u>, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

Notice the stark terms that he uses! *We have a choice.* We can yield ourselves unto God or we can yield ourselves unto sin. We can choose to do good or we can choose to do evil. Paul is clear that we must choose to do what's right. We must yield to God and not to sin. We must choose righteousness.

Our lives don't belong to us. The Bible teaches that they belong to God:

I Corinthians 6:19-20: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and <u>ye are not your own</u>? For <u>ye are bought with a price</u>: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

We've been bought with a price – a very high price. The Lord Jesus Christ purchased us with His own blood, and died to save us:

> **I Peter 1:18-19:** "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But <u>with the precious blood of Christ</u>, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:"

Our life *is no longer our own*. We now belong to Jesus and *He* is our master. Since we're His servants we must serve Him instead of ourselves. Our body is *not* our own and we are *not* free to do with it as we please.

This is a big deal! There are many people who call themselves Christians but who are uninterested in obeying God. They think they can do whatever they want in this life and there will never be any consequences. They believe that you don't have to give your life to God to be saved. As long as you ask God to keep you from going to Hell you'll be just fine.

But that's not what Christ taught! He said that in order to be saved we *must* repent of our sins:

> **Matthew 4:17:** "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, <u>Repent</u>: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

> **Matthew 9:13:** "But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but <u>sinners to repentance</u>."

> **Matthew 11:20:** "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were

done, <u>because they repented not</u>:"

Mark 1:14-15: "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: <u>repent ye</u>, and believe the gospel."

Luke 13:3: "I tell you, Nay: but, <u>except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish</u>."

Notice how clear Jesus was! If you don't repent *you will perish*. A person who says "I'm not sorry about my sins and I'm never going to stop sinning" is *not* a Christian. It doesn't matter if that person also believes Jesus is the Son of God who died and rose back to life again. It's true that you do have to believe that to be saved, but guess what? Even *demons* believe that. You must do more than just believe. *You must also repent*.

It all comes down to the issue of authority. Many people today don't want to go to Hell, but they also don't want to give God control over their lives. They foolishly think that they can be saved without repenting of their sin and without ever seeking forgiveness for it. They think they can be saved without giving up control over their lives. They believe that as long as they've asked God to take them to Heaven they're covered and can continue living like the devil.

But they're wrong. In order for us to be saved Jesus must be both our Savior *and* our Lord. If we refuse to make Him our Lord then He won't be our Savior either. All those who tell Jesus "I'll never obey you" are lost. The Bible says that those who mock the words of God and refuse to obey Him are lost:

1 John 2:4: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, <u>is a liar, and the truth is not in him</u>."

This doesn't mean that we're saved by our works, or that we somehow maintain our salvation through our obedience. Our salvation has been purchased for us by the blood of Christ. It was bought by His works alone and imputed to us. We're saved by His death, not by our works:

> **Galatians 2:16:** "Knowing that a man is <u>not justified by the works</u> of the law, but <u>by the faith of Jesus Christ</u>, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for <u>by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified</u>."

However, genuine salvation *always* results in a changed heart and a changed life. It creates people who love God and want to obey Him. Anyone who mocks God's commands isn't a Christian at all.

The only way to become a Christian involves wholly submitting to God's authority. If you won't do that then you can't be saved. Either God is your master or He isn't! You can't have it both ways.

God requires Christians to fight the sin in their life and choose to serve Him instead of their own lusts. We have a choice to make and He commands us to choose righteousness. The reason we have the power to choose righteousness is because sin no longer has dominion over us:

> **Romans 6:14:** "For <u>sin shall not have dominion over you</u>: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

Since Christians are no longer slaves to sin we must not act like we're slaves to sin! Since sin is no longer our master we must not serve sin anymore. Instead we should consider ourselves to be dead to sin, and serve God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Verse 14 has another powerful truth: we are no longer under the law. Before Christ died the Law of Moses reigned supreme. People were bound by its laws of purification, its system of sacrifices, and to its many commands. This law proved to be a heavy weight that no one could carry. Since no one could keep the law, everyone was condemned by it. Also, since no one could keep the law perfectly it was impossible to be saved by it. Instead people constantly fell short.

But that doesn't mean the law was pointless. Paul tells us that the law was intended to show us our need for Christ:

> **Galatians 3:24:** "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster <u>to bring us unto Christ</u>, that we might be justified by faith."

Since we couldn't keep the law we also couldn't obtain salvation by the law. This means we must look to another source for salvation from our sins – and that source is Christ. Jesus was able to keep the law perfectly. Since He was sinless, He could suffer in our place and die for our sins. That's why He is the only person who can save us from our sins! Since we're saved by Him we're no longer under the law. Instead we're under His grace. Instead of trusting in our own righteousness to save us, we trust in His righteousness. The reason our salvation is assured is because His righteousness is perfect.

However, that doesn't mean we have a license to sin:

> **Romans 6:15:** "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? <u>God forbid</u>."

There are some people who use God's grace as an excuse to sin. They say that since God will forgive them they can do whatever they want. God gave us His grace to save us *from* sin, not to save us *to* sin! God didn't free us from the Mosaic Law so that we could be lawless. Instead He freed us so that we might

obey Him. While it's true that we're no longer bound by the law of Moses, it's *not* true that God has freed us from all commands. The New Testament is full of commands that *are* binding on the church, and God commands us to obey them. Sin is still sin and it's still wrong. We're *not* free to sin. No one can serve two masters:

> **Romans 6:16:** "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of <u>sin unto death</u>, or of <u>obedience unto righteousness</u>?"

Sin isn't harmless. It's not a "victimless crime". Sin leads to *death!* It's fatal. We can choose to serve sin or we can choose to serve righteousness, but we can't choose both. Do we want to be the servants of God or the servants of the devil?

Our choices have consequences. Before we became Christians we were the servants of sin, but God saved us from that terrible life:

> **Romans 6:17-18:** "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. <u>Being then made free from sin</u>, ye became the servants of righteousness."

God has freed us from our sin! We're now the servants of righteousness – and that means we must seek righteousness with all our heart. If we refuse to seek righteousness and instead live a life of sin then we aren't Christians at all.