

INTRODUCTION

I’m too young to remember this, but I am told there used to be a television show in black and white entitled, “Wanted, Dead or Alive,” starring Steve McQueen. My wife says she remembers that show, but I don’t. It refers back to an old tradition among bounty hunters in the wild west that when a criminal was “wanted,” sometimes the same reward was paid whether they were dead or alive. The truth is that God wants you, and he wants you dead, and he wants you alive. I’m not talking about waiting until you go to a cemetery. The passage of scripture we are going to be examining today talks about how we must experience a death to self, and be alive in Christ Jesus.

Please look with me in Romans 6:8. This is the continuation of the discussion Paul started talking about our death to self, baptism as burial, and resurrection. In verse 8, he writes,

“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 that he lived” and this is a constant idea “he lives to God. In the same way,” verse 11 says, “count yourselves dead to sin” if you have a King James Bible, it says, “reckon yourselves dead to sin” “but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” Now, there you have it. dead and alive you are dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ. Look at verse 12. “Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you may 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.”

A problem for a lot of people who name the name of Jesus as Christians is there hasn’t been a lot of growth in their Christian life. If I could have a timeline up here, there would be a point in time when you were B.C. (Before Christ) but then there was a point of conversion where you passed from death unto life. The problem a lot of Christians have is they don’t grow much beyond that point. There is no growth in grace, as the Bible calls it. They stay too close to the point of conversion. It’s like the little boy I heard about who went to bed. After he had only been asleep a few moments, he fell out of bed. His mother heard him crying, and she came in and picked him up and put him back in bed. She said, “Honey, why did you fall out of bed?” He said, “Well, I guess I stayed too close to where I got in.” The problem with a lot of Christians is you are staying too close to where you first got into the Christian life, and you are not moving on and growing. Now, all of this material here in Romans, 6, is about how you can live a victorious Christian life.

1. A healthy Christian must constantly confess, “I am dead to sin (and self)!”

Today, I’d like to extract from this passage of scripture six confessions. There are six things you must understand and acknowledge constantly in the Christian life if you are going to grow; if you want to get beyond the place where you entered the Christian life. Here is affirmation confession number one: A healthy Christian must constantly confess, “I am dead. I am dead to sin; that means also that I am dead to self.” That’s something you must acknowledge. I like what it says

in verse 11, “Count yourselves dead.” The King James version says, “reckon” isn’t that a good Texan word? You can ask someone if they’re doing okay, and they’ll say, “Reckon so.” In Texan that means “maybe,” “perhaps,” “possibly.” That’s not what that word means here. It doesn’t mean “possibly” or “perhaps.” It is an accounting word, *logizomai* where we get our word, “logic.” It means *to compute, to calculate, to consider, to estimate, to esteem something to be true*. What that means is day after day, moment after moment you must keep acknowledging, “I’m dead to sin.” “I’m dead to sin.”

Somebody says, “Well if sin is dead in my life, I wish it would just lie down because it sure is giving me a lot of trouble.” As I have discussed before, some people say, “once a Christian is sanctified, they will never sin again” I don’t think it teaches that. For a Christian, as John Stott has said, “Sin is inevitable, but it is never necessary.” It is never something you say, “I have to do it.” Let me remind you again between sin in the life of a person who is an unbeliever and sin in the life of a Christian: A person who is an unbeliever can run towards sin, and sin all they want to and really enjoy it. But, a true born again, redeemed Christian does not run after sin. They run from sin, and they can never, never enjoy it. Why? Because they have a new nature within them, the nature of Jesus Christ. So, the first thing you have to admit is you are dead!

One of the greatest Christian leaders who ever lived was a man named George Müller. He was called George Müller of Bristol. If you ever read anything written by George Müller, especially on faith, it’s outstanding. One day someone asked George the secret of his success in the Christian life, and this is what he said, “There was a day when I died, utterly died. I died to George Müller. His opinions, his preferences, his taste and his will. I died to the world, its approval or censure, died to the approval or blame of even my brothers and friends. Since then, I have studied to show myself approved unto God.”

2. A healthy Christian must constantly confess, “I am alive in Christ (and He in me)!”

So verse 11 says, the first thing you say is, “I am dead to sin and self.” Here’s the second affirmation, or something we must constantly confess: “I am alive in Christ.” and the other side of that is “and he in me.” Look again at verse 11. It says, “I’m dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” I’m told there is a shop in London whose business is to dye things different colors. That’s their business. They are in the dyeing business. They have a sign in their window that says, “We dye to live, and we live to dye.” That is true of every Christian. We live the Christian life, dying to self, and we die to self so we can live in Christ. That is two sides of the same experience, a beautiful coin on either side. One side of the coin says, “I am dead.” The other side of the coin says, “I am alive in Christ.”

Some of you are saying “Uhhhhhh...run that by me again. That is so ethereal it’s like trying to chew Cool Whip. I just can’t sink my teeth into this idea. It just sounds so hard to grab hold of.” Well, let me explain it to you. You don’t have any problem understanding when I tell you that you must live in the atmosphere around us, and that atmosphere must also live in you. We call it the air. We know it’s mostly oxygen and different chemicals, but the air around us we live in it, and as you breathe, it’s that air that gives you life. That’s a beautiful picture of how we live in Christ, but Christ lives in us. You know when we launch some of those astronauts into outer space; we have to provide a “space suit” for them that provides an artificial atmosphere for them

to live in, and the oxygen to live inside of them. So you must confess, not only am I dead to sin, I am alive in Christ.

Let me tell you the good consequences of being in Christ. When you become a Christian, you are wrapped in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and God looks at you positionally as being righteous in Christ. Donald Gray Barnhouse is a great preacher of the gospel. He tells the story of an incident in the Spanish American War in which an American citizen in Mexico was tried and found guilty of a crime, and was sentenced to be executed by a firing squad. There was a military detachment of American soldiers down there on a diplomatic mission, and when this American citizen was placed in front of the firing squad, one of the American military officers ran up, took an American flag and wrapped that American flag around that American citizen. The American military officer then turned to those in the firing squad, and he said, “If you shoot this American citizen, you are bringing down upon you all the wrath and the authority of the United States of America. They were ordered to lower their guns, and the prisoner was released.

3. A healthy Christian must constantly confess, “I won’t let sin control me (though I’m tempted)!”

The good news is that when you come to Christ, it’s as if God wraps you in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and when he looks at you now, he sees you as righteous. Affirmation number one: I’m dead to sin. Affirmation number two: I’m alive in Christ, and he in me. Here’s affirmation number three: I won’t let sin control me, although I’m tempted. Sure, we’re always tempted, but you have the choice to say, “I won’t let it control me.” Look at Romans 6:12-13. For those of you in this room who have taken what we call, “Master Life,” a discipleship course, you have to memorize Romans 6:12-13, and it’s the hardest passage to memorize in all of Master Life. It is sometimes even harder to obey, but it is a great verse. Look at verse 12. “Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you may obey its evil desires.” For those of you people who are task-oriented, who like to do things, finally after six and one half chapters of doctrine and teaching, the apostle, Paul, says, “Now, there is something you need to do!” Finally, there is something to do about who you are, or what he has told you and there it is in verse 12. “Don’t let sin control you.” Don’t let it rule over you. Here’s the picture. Once you become a Christian, sin is still there. The possibility of sinning is still there, but you are not its slave, and it is no longer your master.

Stuart Briscoe is a great preacher up in Minnesota. He grew up in England and was a member of the Royal Marines, a military outfit there. He says when he was in the Marines they had a mean, awful, drill sergeant. This drill sergeant dealt misery to those soldiers. He hollered and screamed at them if their shoes weren’t shined. He yelled at them if their buttons weren’t clean and buttoned correctly. He yelled at them if their posture was not correct. Stuart Briscoe says this drill sergeant just was a bad dream his entire military career. He said years later, after he was already out of the Marines, he was walking down a street in London, and who should he see walking toward him, but this drill sergeant. He said before he could even think about it, he had this sudden pain in the pit of his stomach. Immediately, he glanced down to see if his shoes were shined. He looked to see if all of his buttons were correctly buttoned. Immediately, he straightened up his posture. Then, as he started walking toward this ex-sergeant, he started thinking, “Why am I doing this? That guy is no longer a sergeant over me. I am no longer in the

Marines. He no longer has any control over me whatsoever. He is powerless to enforce anything over my life. So, when he walked in front of him, he intentionally slouched, and said, “Hey, Sarge.”

There was a time when sin was your drill sergeant. Whatever sin told you to do, you said, “Yes, sir.” That is no longer true in the life of a Christian. The Bible says, “Don’t let sin control you. Don’t let it rule you.” What I’m going to be talking about next Sunday is the slavery that sin can have on a person. Now is a good time to be asking yourself, “Is there anything in your life that has mastery over you?” “Is there any habit, any addiction that you think you just cannot break, whatsoever?” The truth is the victory over sin is something you must constantly claim, and constantly fight. It’s not something that happens once and for all. Now, you were saved, once and for all. Christ died once and for all. But, our victory over sin is a daily battle.

I remember talking to a recovering alcoholic one time. This alcoholic said, “When I first decided I was never going to drink again, the idea of going without a drink for one year was just too much for me to imagine.” He said, “I couldn’t see how I could go through a year without a drink. Then, somebody told me I didn’t have to do that. I only need to work on one day at a time. Then,” he said, “I found that even one day was too hard for me, so I started working on one hour at a time.” He said, “Since then, every hour I have gone without a drink has been a victory for me and then every day, and every week, and every month, and every year has been a victory. When it comes to any kind of addiction, any kind of sin, every hour, every day you must say, “I won’t let sin rule over me anymore.”

I heard a great story some time ago about a little girl and her brother who went to see their grandparents out in the country. They had a farm. These kids were from the city so they loved going to see the grandparents. The grandfather made a little slingshot for his grandson. Well, the little boy was so excited about that slingshot, he put a rock in it, and he pulled it back and shot... pffhooo...he missed the barn, couldn’t even hit it. He aimed at a tree and missed the tree. He even tried to hit the pond just to see if he could put a rock in it. He couldn’t even do that. He aimed the slingshot at his grandmother’s prize goose, and hit it right between the eyes. The goose fell over dead. He said, “Oh no! What have I done?” He was scared to death. Suddenly, he heard the awful voice of his older sister behind him saying, “You killed grandma’s goose!” “Oh, please, please, don’t tell her.” He said. She said, “Well, I may or I may not tell. He took the goose and buried it in a shallow grave under some bushes. That night at the supper table, he was scared to death. His grandfather said, “Well tomorrow, we’re going to take the truck and we’ll have lunch at the feed store. It’s going to be a lot of fun.” The boy said, “Oh, granddad, I’m excited about that!” Just about that time his older sister piped in, and she said, “Grandpa, I think you’d rather take me than my brother, but my brother really doesn’t want to go to town tomorrow, DO YOU?” He stayed home while she went into town with her grandfather. The next night at supper the grandfather said to his grandson, “Listen, tomorrow we’re going to go down to the lower 40, we’re going to repair some fences. We’ll take a picnic and take the rifle and have some target practice. We’re going to have a great time! Would you like to do that?” He said, “Oh, yes, granddad, that’s great!” Once again his older sister piped in and said, “No, I don’t think he wants to do that, DO YOU BROTHER?” She was driving him crazy. Finally, he couldn’t stand it any longer. After two or three days, he went to his grandmother and broke down into tears and said, “Grandmother, grandmother, I’m so sorry. The other day I shot my slingshot

at your goose, and I killed your goose, and I am so sorry! And I hid it. Please forgive me.” She just laughed. She said, “Honey, when you killed that goose, I saw you do it out my kitchen window the moment you killed it.” She said, “Because I love you and because you are my grandson, I forgave you the instant you did it because of our relationship.” He said, “You did? You’ve already forgiven me? Why didn’t you tell me sooner?” She said, “I just wanted to see how long you would let your sister make a fool out of you.”

When you come to Jesus Christ and you become a Christian, do you know what God does because of the relationship you have entered into? He forgives your sins. But sometimes sin just keeps messing with you, and keeps trying to control you, and sometimes in the lives of Christians sin will make a fool out of you. The Bible says you don’t have to let it do that. “Do not let sin control you.” That’s affirmation number three.

4. A healthy Christian must constantly confess, “I will not allow the parts of my body to be instruments of sin (I know my weak areas)!”

Here’s acknowledgment number four: Every day, several times a day, you must confess, “I will not allow the parts of my body to be instruments of sin.” If that’s going to happen, you must say, “I know what my weak areas are.” Look at verse 13 again. I’m preaching exactly what the text says. Verse 13 is a pretty unusual verse. “Do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness.” Notice it says you can use the parts of your body for one of two purposes, either as instruments of wickedness or as instruments of righteousness. Did you notice he doesn’t say, “Don’t offer your spirit to sin.” The truth is when you become a Christian the Holy Spirit inhabits your spirit. It’s redeemed, and so your spirit is okay. It’s just that we still have to deal with this old flesh, this physical flesh, this body, this old nature. One way you are victorious over sin day after day after day is you guard even the very parts of your body. That’s why later the apostle Paul, is going to write in Romans 12:1, “I beg you by the mercies of God that you present even your bodies as a living sacrifice unto God’s holy acceptance.”

Let’s just talk about body parts for a minute. Everybody has body parts. Everybody knows body parts. Let’s start at the top. What about your mind? Did you know you can offer your mind as an instrument of wickedness? It’s kind of funny that the Bible teaches you can sin with your mind. There is such a thing as mental sin—and it’s not temptation. I’ve told you before tempting thoughts may run through your mind, but it’s only when you tackle those thoughts and grab hold of them and entertain them that it can become sin. Did you know it is possible to come to church on a Sunday morning, and sit in church and sin even while you are in church? That’s right. You can sin mentally.

Let’s move down a little bit. What about your eyes? That’s a body part. Did you know you can offer your eyes to look at things that are unholy, impure, wicked and evil such as pornography, the wrong kind of literature, the wrong kind of movies or the wrong kind of television? The Bible says “the eyes are like the windows to the soul” You’re just inviting a bunch of trash and garbage into your mind when you do that. So, it says don’t open your eyes for that. The Psalmist says, “Turn away my eyes from seeing evil.”

What about your mouth? Has anybody in this room ever gotten in trouble with this part of your body right here? I know I have, and probably you can get in more trouble with this body part right here, than just about any other body part. James says, “The tongue is like a poison, like a serpent, like a fire.” I heard about a lady one time with a problem. Everybody knew her as a long-tongued gossip. She was in church one Sunday, and she got convicted by the Holy Spirit, and she came forward during the invitation. She said to the pastor, “Oh, pastor, God’s convicted me. I want to lay my tongue on the altar.” He said, “Well, the altar’s only 45 feet long, but do the best you can.” She’s not the only one. Some people use their tongue and their mouth for gossip, others for tearing down people, hurting people. Others use it for dishonesty. Others use it for profanity, crude, vulgar speech. Your mouth is a part of your body that you can use as wickedness, and the Bible says, “You have a choice.” You must constantly say, “I’m not going to do it!”

Now, I’m not going to go any further south, but you have a lot of body parts, and every one of them can be used for what’s wrong or they can be used for what’s right. During a time when all America seems to be debating about what constitutes sexual sin and what does not, I remind you that the Bible says sex is an intimate experience between a *husband* and a *wife* and any other, any other, ANY OTHER use of sex is an abuse of sex according to God’s plan. Body parts can be used as instruments of wickedness, or they can be used as instruments of doing what’s right.

5. A healthy Christian must constantly confess, “I surrender all that I am to God (including the parts of my body)!”

Here’s the fifth affirmation we make according to this passage of scripture: I surrender all that I am to God. That includes the parts of my body because it says in verse 13, “rather offer yourselves to God as those who pass from death unto life and your body parts as instruments of righteousness.” The problem with a lot of people is that they come to Jesus and they have allowed him to be their Savior. In other words, they don’t want to die and go to hell. “Dear Jesus. Save me from hell. Forgive my sins.” For a lot of people they have only allowed Jesus to be their Savior, but they have never really surrendered to him and allowed him to be the Lord, the boss, the ruler of their life.

Just this week I was talking with a person on the phone. This girl had been visiting our church, and she spontaneously gave her testimony to me. Not everybody understands this, but I did. She said, “For years I only allowed Jesus to be my Savior, but just recently I have surrendered to Jesus, and now he’s my Lord.” I understood exactly what she was talking about, and I rejoiced that she had made that commitment in her life. You say, “What’s the difference between making Jesus your Savior, and making him Lord?” If he’s your Savior, he’s just a little part of your life. He’s just one little cubbyhole of your life. You have your business life, you have your home life, you have your hobby life, and you have your Jesus life over here. When he is your Lord, he is your life. He’s Lord over everything. Somebody said if he’s not Lord of all, he’s not Lord at all! Can you honestly say today that God has all of you that there is to give.

A friend of mine who is a pastor had this experience. He has two young daughters. One day he came home from the office and when he walked in the front door his two daughters came running down the hall to greet him. “Daddy!” The older of the two daughters reached him first,

jumped up into his arms, hugged his neck, and he was hugging his older daughter. Finally, the younger one comes huffing and puffing up you know, they’re always trailing behind and you know, sometimes older siblings can be a little mean to their young siblings. the older one up in her daddy’s arms looked down at her younger sister and said, (in a catty kind of way) “I’ve got all of daddy there is to get!” like there is no more left for you. But the father didn’t agree with that so he just shifted the older daughter over into one arm, bent down and picked up his younger daughter in his other arm, and she just hugged his neck. Then the younger daughter turned and said something to her older sister that is priceless. She turned to her older sister and said, “Well, you may have all of daddy there is to get, but daddy’s got all of me there is to have!” I like that.

When you became a Christian, you got all of God there was to receive. He didn’t hold back on you. The question is, are you holding back on him? Have you honestly surrendered everything you have, everything you are to him? Well, you are not going to have victory until you do that.

6. A healthy Christian must constantly confess, “I am living under grace (not law)!”

Now, there is one final affirmation, one final confession we constantly make: I am living under grace, not under law. I am living under grace, not under law. That’s what it says in verse 14. Sin is no longer your master because you are under grace, not law. Picture two mountains, both represent reaching God. One is Mt. Sinai; that’s where God thundered down the law, the Ten Commandments, to Moses. There are a lot of people today who are groping their way up the mountain of law trying to find God. They think he’s some white-haired guru on the top, and if they can just be good enough and do good enough one day they will ascend to the heights, and they will reach God on their own efforts. But the other mountain is not Mt. Sinai, it is Mt. Calvary. God thundered down the law on Mt. Sinai, he showered down grace on Mt. Calvary. You don’t have to climb Mt. Calvary because the person who climbed it has already finished the work. His name is Jesus. He went all the way to the cross. He’s the one who reached up and grabbed the hand of God, and he reaches down to us and takes our sinful hand and he brings us together. Every person who ever lives will either try to meet God through the law and performance, or through the cross and pardon.

CONCLUSION

Any of you who channel surf and like baseball will recognize the name Harry Cary. Harry Cary was the voice of Cubs baseball for many years, and just this spring he died. He had an unusual sounding voice and everybody recognized him when he lead folks in the seventh inning stretch singing, “Take Me Out To The Ballgame.” Whenever a ball was hit toward the outfield, he would always say, “It *might* be. It *could* be. It *is!* Holy cow!” That’s what he was known for, his “Holy cow!” Did you know before he died, there was a book written about him? The title is *Holy Cow*. I read an excerpt from it the other day, and I want you to know it broke my heart, because before he died this is what Harry Cary said. It represents the attitude of millions of people. He wrote, “I am not a religious man. I have had too many wives and paid too much alimony in my time, but I have always believed there was a God. I’ve always believed if you live your life as a decent person, the umpire in the end will say you did it right. Harry Cary represents millions of people who think if you just are honest most of the time, are good most of the time, are kind most of the time that one day some heavenly umpire, some unknown, mysterious, heavenly

umpire is going to look at your good deeds and your bad deeds, and either say, “Safe!” or “Out!” I’m here to tell you that every one of us is “Out” by a mile! We’re “Out!” everyone of us.

I’m not depending upon some arbitrary umpire to call me “Safe” or “Out.” I’m trusting the nail-pierced hands of Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for my sins to embrace me with his grace and his righteousness. And I want to say, “dressed in his righteousness alone.” Only then am I faultless to stand before the throne. You’ll either try to climb to God by performance on Mt. Sinai or you’ll fall on your knees and accept the grace and mercy of God at the cross. The choice is yours.

OUTLINE

A healthy Christian must constantly confess:

1. I am dead to sin (and self)!
2. I am alive in Christ (and He in me)!
3. I won't let sin control me (though I'm tempted)!
4. I will not allow the parts of my body to be instruments of sin (I know my weak areas)!
5. I surrender all that I am to God (including the parts of my body)!
6. I am living under grace (not law)!



DISCLAIMER: These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. There is no legal copyright on this material. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material to stimulate your own Spirit-driven imagination. Additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners. You have my full permission to use any of this material as long as you cite the source for any substantial amount used in your message.

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, I encourage you to simply preface your remarks by saying something like: ***“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”*** This simple citation may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you.

To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes