

Dead & Alive – Romans, Part 4

The book of Romans has been called “Paul’s Defense of the Gospel.” But exactly what is he defending? Well, because the church started in Jerusalem and because the first Christians were Jewish by nationality, New Testament Christianity had some difficulties separating itself from Old Testament Judaism for a few years. At the beginning, many of these believers had difficulty separating their new RELATIONSHIP with Jesus from the old RELIGION they had been raised in.

Even as Christianity began to spread beyond Israel through the missionary journeys of Paul and others, and even as Gentiles began to come into the church in places like Rome, this issue hung on. There was even a group called the Judaizers who followed Paul around from place to place, trying to subvert his teaching by telling people they had to essentially become “Jewish” before they could become “Christian.” And some of these influences had obviously made their way to Rome.

It’s not that these people DENIED Jesus, it’s simply that they DEMOTED Him. They were basically teaching that Jesus was not enough. To be fully accepted by God, they taught that you had to continue to perform all the ceremonies and rituals of the Mosaic Law. **If Christianity had gone that direction, it would have ended up just like Judaism (legalism).**

If that weren’t bad enough, on the other extreme there were many voices during this time saying that you could totally ignore the Law and live however you pleased, taking their cues from the Roman Empire all around them. **If Christianity had gone that direction, it would have ended up just like Paganism (liberalism).**

Both extremes would have been (and still are!) damaging and dangerous to the Gospel message. So, in the book of Romans, Paul is defending the true Gospel by teaching that it is NEITHER of these extremes.

LEGALISM says, “God is HOLY and He must judge sin.”
LIBERALISM says, “God is LOVE and He will accept you.”
The **GOSPEL** says, “God is holy AND God is love. He must judge sin, but on Calvary He took that judgment Himself because He loves you.”

LEGALISM says, “You must earn your own righteousness – you’re NEVER good enough.”
LIBERALISM says, “You don’t need righteousness – you’re ALWAYS good enough.”
The **GOSPEL** says, “You must have righteousness, and it’s true that YOURS won’t be good enough. But God has given you HIS righteousness, and that’s always good enough!”

That is why Paul says unequivocally, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ” (Romans 1:16). Literally, “I am not offended by the gospel of Christ.” Why does he say that? **Because the Gospel has to be “bad news” (i.e. you are a sinner) before it can become GOOD NEWS.**

First 3 chapters: The bad news is **we are SPIRITUALLY DEAD ...**

CHAPTER ONE: WE ARE “DEAD IN CARNALITY.”
“the wrath of God is revealed” (Romans 1:18)

CHAPTER TWO: WE ARE “DEAD IN HYPOCRISY.”
“therefore thou art inexcusable” (Romans 2:1)

CHAPTER THREE: WE ARE “DEAD UNDER THE LAW.”
“by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20)

God’s Law is not a checklist we KEEP; it is a benchmark we FAIL.

Next 2 chapters: The good news is **we can be SPIRITUALLY ALIVE ...**

CHAPTER FOUR: WE ARE “ALIVE THROUGH FAITH.”

Romans 4:3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham **believed** God, and it was **counted** unto him for righteousness.

Chapter 4 introduces us to an extremely important word: **LOGIZDOMAI**. It is used 11 times in this chapter alone. **LOGIZDOMAI** is an accounting term meaning “to count, to credit, to put on the account of an individual.”

My sin is no longer COUNTED AGAINST ME (v. 8) – instead, God’s righteousness is now COUNTED FOR ME (v. 6)!

CHAPTER FIVE: WE ARE “ALIVE THROUGH GRACE.”

Romans 5:2 By whom also we have **access by faith into this grace** wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

FAITH (“pistis”) = “absolute TRUST,” it is OUR action toward God
GRACE (“charis”) = “undeserved FAVOR,” it is GOD’S action toward us

The second half of Romans 5 compares the TWO ADAMS ... Adam’s disobedience brought DEATH, but Jesus’ obedience brought LIFE.

Romans 5:20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But **where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:**

MUCH MORE! (v. 9, 10, 15, 17, 20) – **Grace is greater than sin!**

Because denominational Christianity has so badly mangled the concepts of FAITH and GRACE, and because the book of Romans strongly emphasizes FAITH and GRACE, sometimes Apostolics have avoided parts of this book. It's like we skip over them, or don't look too closely. Some of you have even been thinking, "We're five chapters deep in the most theological book in the New Testament, and Paul hasn't even quoted Acts 2:38 yet!" But Paul has just been laying his foundation.

In chapters 1-3, we've seen that we are DEAD IN SIN ... whether through carnality or hypocrisy, whether we ignore the law or attempt to keep the law, we are all DEAD IN SIN.

In chapters 4-5, we've been given hope – it is possible to be ALIVE! Through FAITH (absolute trust in God), we can access God's GRACE (undeserved favor). Our miniscule action toward God results in God's miraculous action toward us!

Now in chapter 6, Paul turns his attention to SPECIFICS of the Gospel.

The gospel of "received righteousness" (as opposed to "earned righteousness") is RADICAL. The gospel says that our efforts cannot contribute one bit to our salvation – and that message is unique among all the world's religions and philosophies. But such a radical message brings up some obvious questions, and many people still ask them:

LIBERALISM: "If the gospel says our good works are worthless for earning our salvation, then why bother doing good works at all?"

LEGALISM: "If the gospel says we are saved by grace and not by good works, won't this lack of rules leave the door open for people to sin?"

Romans 6:1-2 What shall we say then? Shall we continue **in sin**, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are **dead to sin**, live any longer therein?

Anyone who asks these questions really hasn't understood or experienced the power of the Gospel in their own life. (Paul says, "God forbid! You've got it all wrong!") Chapters 1-5 told us what the Gospel has done **FOR** us, now chapters 6-8 will tell us what the Gospel will do **IN** us when we really experience it. We were "**dead IN sin**," but now ...

CHAPTER SIX: WE ARE "DEAD TO SIN."

When you become a Christian, you are no longer under the ruling power of sin; it can no longer force you to do anything. As a sinner, you couldn't resist sin (sometimes you couldn't even see it!); now, you CAN resist!

DEAD TO SIN means that sin can no longer dictate to you. Yes, you MAY obey it (and the Bible even predicts that sometimes you WILL obey it – 1 John 1:8), but the fact remains that you no longer HAVE to obey it! **You have DIED to sin! Why would you live any longer in it?!**

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

As Apostolics, we know how to experience the New Birth, simply by reading the account from the very first day of church history ...

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

What we sometimes miss, however, is how this foundational passage CONNECTS with some of the other passages in the Bible (like those in Romans). The "triple truth" of Repentance, Baptism in Jesus' Name, and the Baptism of the Holy Ghost is EVERYWHERE in the New Testament!

For example, REPENTANCE comes from the Greek word "METANOEO" which means "to think differently." Repentance is literally "a change of mind that leads to a change in behavior." That why FAITH (ch. 4) and repentance are so closely linked. Faith ("pistis") is "absolute trust" in God and His Word. BEFORE, you were trusting in a your own way of thinking; NOW, you are trusting in GOD'S way of thinking, found in His Word. And that "change of mind" is REPENTANCE. **So, faith EQUALS repentance.**

What happens next? What do we do next if we have truly BELIEVED?

Romans 6:3-4 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

If there has really been a "DEATH TO SIN," there must be a BURIAL!

The Greek word "BAPTIDZO" means "to dip, to plunge, to fully immerse." It has the further meaning of "being overwhelmed" (i.e. fully covered with a fluid), and was often used in reference to being SUNK or DROWNED. That's why baptism has the connotation of being "DEAD AND BURIED."

Baptism is the FUNERAL SERVICE for my old life! If I've really died to sin (repentance), then I need to be buried in water (baptism). And I need to be baptized in the name of JESUS, because HE was buried for me!

Romans 6:5-7 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. **For he that is dead is freed from sin.**

Baptism is not just a “dead end” – it is a “new beginning.” We rise to “walk in newness of life” (v. 4). Baptism is a **LEGAL DECLARATION** before God and His Law that my old sinful life is gone – I am “DEAD TO SIN.” And that’s why the Bible refers to baptism as “remission of sins” – it declares my old man dead and buried. **Sin is no longer IN CONTROL.**

Romans 6:8-11 Now if we be **dead with Christ**, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise **reckon** ye also yourselves to be **dead indeed unto sin**, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In chapter 6, being “DEAD” is a GOOD thing, because we are DEAD TO SIN – it no longer has CONTROL over us. And we are also DEAD WITH CHRIST – if we have “died with Him” we will be “raised with Him.” **Only if we are willing to die to our old life can we experience His new life!**

RECKON (“LOGIZDOMAI”) – there’s that “accounting word” again! (v. 11) Why does Paul say this? Because your new life is not automatic! It’s now your legal right to live above sin, but you have to EXERCISE that right. New life has been “credited” to your account, but you have to make daily “withdrawals” from the “Trust Fund” that God has set up for you!

You can still be a slave EXPERIENTIALLY, even when you are no longer a slave LEGALLY. If you sin, it’s because you’ve forgotten who you are! You are no longer in Adam – you are now in Christ! **RECKON IT! REMEMBER IT! REALIZE IT!** Paul is not saying that Christians cannot commit sins, or have ongoing struggles with sins. But he is saying that, if they are really “DEAD TO SIN,” they cannot go on LIVING in sin. They cannot continue in it DELIBERATELY, because they are DEAD to it.

When a non-Christian sins, they are acting **ACCORDING** to their identity. When a Christian sins, they are acting **AGAINST** their new identity.

Romans 6:12-14 Let not sin therefore **reign** in your mortal body, that ye should **obey** it in the lusts thereof. Neither **yield** ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but **yield** yourselves unto God, as those that are **alive from the dead**, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have **dominion** over you: for ye are not **under the law**, but **under grace**.

When we were sinners, we could only obey SIN. Now that we are Christians, we have a CHOICE – to obey SIN, or to obey GOD. Sin cannot CONTROL us, but it can still FIGHT us. Sin has been pushed out of our HEARTS, but it still fights for control of our MINDS and BODIES. But because of the Gospel, you are now FREE TO FIGHT – and win!

DO NOT yield yourself to sin – “let sin reign in your mortal body” (v. 12).
DO NOT yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness (v. 13).
DO yield yourself to God (v. 13).
DO yield your members as instruments of righteousness (v. 13).

You can be EITHER a slave of sin or a slave of God. You cannot be NEITHER – and you cannot be BOTH. We do not control ourselves – we are a “servant of something” – whatever CONTROLS us is our LORD.

If we were waging war against sin “under the law” (v. 14) we would have to use our own power – and we would LOSE. But because we are now waging war against sin “under grace” (v. 14), we get to use God’s enabling power – and we WIN!

The Gospel sets you FREE TO FIGHT the power of sin in your life:

- **REPENTANCE** gives you the WILL to fight.
- **BAPTISM** gives you the RIGHT to fight.
- **The HOLY GHOST** gives you the POWER to fight!

JUST SAY “NO!” TO SIN. JUST SAY “YES!” TO GOD.

Notice Paul’s repeated use of the words “YIELD,” “OBEY,” and “SERVANT” in this passage. SIN became easier, drew you deeper, and had more power over you every time you would YIELD to it. In the same way, RIGHTEOUSNESS becomes easier, draws you deeper, and has more power over you every time you YIELD to it.

Romans 6:15-19 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye **yield** yourselves **servants** to **obey**, his **servants** ye are to whom ye **obey**; whether of sin unto death, or of **obedience** unto righteousness? 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**. Being then made free from sin, ye became the **servants** of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have **yielded** your members **servants** to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now **yield** your members **servants** to righteousness unto holiness.

“FORM of doctrine” (v. 17) = “mold, stamp, model, pattern, example” – a SPECIFIC message demanding a SPECIFIC response