

Dead & Alive – Romans, Part 5

In writing to the Romans Paul states, “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)

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

CHAPTER FOUR: WE ARE “ALIVE THROUGH FAITH.”

“Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Romans 4:3)

CHAPTER FIVE: WE ARE “ALIVE THROUGH GRACE.”

“by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand” (Romans 5:2)

FAITH (“pistis”) = “absolute TRUST” – OUR action toward God

GRACE (“charis”) = “undeserved FAVOR” – GOD’S action toward us

CHAPTER SIX: WE ARE “DEAD 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?

If we are “DEAD TO SIN,” there must be a BURIAL! That’s BAPTISM!

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!

Notice Paul’s repeated use of “YIELD,” “OBEY,” and “SERVANT” in chapter six. **Sin OR righteousness becomes easier when you YIELD!**

Romans 6:20-22 For when ye were the **servants of sin**, ye were **free from righteousness**. What **fruit** had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is **death**. But now being made **free from sin**, and become **servants to God**, ye have your **fruit** unto holiness, and the end **everlasting life**.

Sinners (and backsliders) sometimes say, “I’m free! I can do exactly what I want! No rules! No commandments! No boundaries! No restrictions!” But what they don’t realize is that to be “free from righteousness” automatically makes them “servants of sin.” They are “FREE” from living the way that is BEST for them; they are “FREE” from being SAVED for all eternity; they are “FREE” only in their own blindness and rebellion.

Paul asks, “What FRUIT did you have from your time in sin?” What benefit was there from all the years you spent doing your own thing? What good came from those deeds that you are now ashamed of? His answer: “Only DEATH.”

Anything you worship besides God promises much, but delivers worse than nothing. It delivers DEATH. It delivers SLAVERY – a constant treadmill of seeking something that can never really satisfy. The only “benefit” of idolatry is BROKENNESS.

But now that we have seen through the ILLUSION of sin’s “freedom,” and now that we have become “servants of God,” we bear FRUIT that blesses our lives, both now and in eternity.

Romans 6:23 For the **wages of sin** is **death**; but the **gift of God** is **eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sin is a **MASTER** that always pays, on time and in full. Sin pays out exactly what we deserve for our “work.” The wage sin pays is DEATH.

God is also a MASTER, but He does NOT give us the “wage” we deserve. It’s not just that He forgives our sins; He also looks at our imperfect righteousness, and chooses to see us through His GRACE. We’re not “earning a WAGE” with God by striving to BE righteous; we’re “receiving a GIFT” from God who DECLARES us righteous.

SIN gives us what we deserve. GRACE gives us what we don’t deserve.

John Bunyan (“The Pilgrim’s Progress”) wrote this profound little poem:

**“Run, John, run,” the Law commands,
But gives me neither legs nor hands.
Far grander news the Gospel brings;
It bids me fly and gives me wings!**

Let's review these two realms ... OLD and NEW.
Remember, it is the CROSS that makes the difference!

In the OLD REALM, what was true of ADAM was true of you.
In the NEW REALM, what is true of JESUS is true of you.

In the OLD REALM, you were ruled by your OLD NATURE.
In the NEW REALM, you are ruled by your NEW NATURE.

In the OLD REALM, you were a slave to SIN.
In the NEW REALM, you are a slave to RIGHTEOUSNESS.

In the OLD REALM, you were ruled by the LAW.
In the NEW REALM, you are ruled by GRACE.

In the OLD REALM, you were dominated by the FLESH.
In the NEW REALM, you are empowered by the SPIRIT.

In the OLD REALM, you were condemned to ETERNAL DEATH.
In the NEW REALM, you are destined for ETERNAL LIFE.

In chapter 6, Paul tells us that we have to choose between MASTERS.
In chapter 7, Paul tells us that we have to choose between HUSBANDS.

You can be a slave to sin (unrighteousness), or be a slave to Christ (His righteousness), but you cannot be "free" from having a Master.

You can be married to the law (self-righteousness), or married to Christ (His righteousness), but you cannot remain unmarried.

Romans 7:1-4 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man **as long as he liveth**? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband **so long as he liveth**; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, **while her husband liveth**, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but **if her husband be dead**, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, **ye also are become dead** to the law by the body of Christ; **that ye should be married to another**, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

The law only binds those who are ALIVE. But DEATH breaks the law's power over us, and it can no longer condemn us. When we DIE to our old life through being BORN AGAIN, that frees us from our "marriage" to the law. We can now be "MARRIED TO CHRIST."

CHAPTER SEVEN: WE ARE "DEAD TO THE LAW."

What an incredible privilege! We are MARRIED to Christ – the church is His Bride! To be a Christian is to FALL IN LOVE with Jesus, and enter into a legal COVENANT with Him that is as PERSONAL as marriage!

When you get married, no part of your life is unaffected. So though we are now "dead to the law," we still don't just live any old way – because we are in LOVE with Jesus, and we want to please HIM! This is a better metaphor than "slavery," and yet there are similarities – just the same as someone else might see your marriage commitment as "bondage."

When you are married, you lose a significant amount of your freedom and independence. A single person can make decisions unilaterally, but a married person can't. There is duty and obligation – but on the other hand, there is now the beauty of an experience that you can't have as a single person. **And because of this LOVE, our "loss of freedom" is a JOY, not a BURDEN.** We have been CHANGED because of the holy desires of the person we love! We get great JOY by giving HIM joy!

Romans 7:5-6 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in **newness of spirit**, and not in the **oldness of the letter**.

The "fruit" of mere law-keeping is the same as the "fruit" of outright sin – they BOTH bring forth DEATH. So does the Christian simply IGNORE the law of God? NO! ("God forbid!") Rather, we now look at God's LAW as an expression of His DESIRES. We are not "married to the law," trying to keep it to prove ourselves righteous; we are now "married to Christ," honoring His commandments because we LOVE Him. **Our "obedience" hasn't changed, but our "motivation" has changed!**
WE LIVE TO PLEASE THE ONE WE ARE MARRIED TO!

Paul is constantly "walking a tightrope" in the book of Romans. On the one hand, he wants us to know that the LAW is the "old way," and that we need to be "DEAD" to it – because we can't ever keep it perfectly. But on the other hand, he doesn't want us to go to the other extreme of "discarding" or "ignoring" God's laws, like so many "Christians" today.

There is nothing WRONG with the Law of God, but we need to understand what the Law is FOR. The main purpose of the Law is to show us the nature of SIN ...

- The Law DEFINES sin for us.
- The Law REVEALS sin in us.
- The Law AGGRAVATES sin in us.

Romans 7:7-13 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, **I had not known sin, but by the law:** for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But **sin, taking occasion by the commandment**, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. **For without the law sin was dead.** For I was alive without the law once: but **when the commandment came, sin revived**, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For **sin, taking occasion by the commandment**, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But **sin, that it might appear sin**, working death in me by that which is good; **that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.**

Every LAW that God lays down is an infringement on our absolute sovereignty. The law is GOOD, because it reminds us that we are not God! But SIN is a force that hates any such infringement, because sin desires to be God. Remember the first temptation in the Garden of Eden? “Ye shall be as gods!” (Genesis 3:5) That was the desire behind the FIRST sin, and it’s the desire behind all of OUR sin.

The FLAW is not in the LAW. The flaw is in ME, the SINNER.

In the next few verses, Paul becomes very transparent about his own personal struggle with sin. He is not talking about his PAST, he is talking about his PRESENT. How do we know this?

- The verbs in Romans 6:7-13 are in the PAST tense, but beginning with verse 14 they are in the PRESENT tense.
- In Romans 6:7-13, Paul talks about sin KILLING him, but beginning with verse 14 he talks about his ongoing STRUGGLE with sin, and his refusal to surrender.

Romans 7:14-23 For we know that **the law is spiritual:** but **I am carnal**, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that **in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing:** for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in **the law of God** after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against **the law of my mind**, and bringing me into captivity to **the law of sin** which is in my members.

Yes, this is a “theological tongue-twister” – but it is also the inner struggle that we ALL face. You see, Christians now LOVE the law of God – they see it as “spiritual” (v. 14), they desire to “keep it” (v. 15, 18), and they agree that it is “good” (v. 16). NONE of this was true before we were saved! However, salvation happens in our INWARD MAN (v. 22), so we still have to battle against sinful temptations in our minds and sinful tendencies in our bodies. Verses 22-23 illustrates the struggle:

LAW OF GOD – salvation in my spirit

LAW OF MY MIND – sinful temptations in my mind (the battleground)

LAW OF SIN – sinful tendencies in my body

In themselves, the UNBELIEVER cannot keep the law of God – but neither can the BELIEVER! **That’s why we need the power of God!** No Christian ever gets so “mature” that they no longer struggle with sin. In fact, **the more holy we BECOME, the less holy we will FEEL** – the holier we are, the more we will repent about our unholiness!

Romans 7:24-25 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Bible commentator Adam Clarke wrote that Paul was making a reference here to Virgil’s classic poem “The Aeneid” ... in particular, to a passage about an evil tyrant, an Etruscan king named Mezentius.

What tongue can such barbarities record,
Or count the slaughters of his ruthless sword?
'Twas not enough the good, the guiltless bled,
Still worse, he bound the living to the dead:
These, limb to limb, and face to face, he joined;
Oh! Monstrous crime, of unexampled kind!
Till choked with stench, the lingering wretches lay,
And, in the loathed embraces, died away!

No wonder Paul says, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” But in the next breath, he exalts the only one who can free us from those shackles of sin – Jesus Christ our Lord!

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

The ONLY hope we have is the Holy Ghost! Having “Christ in you” is the ONLY hope of believers have of living above sin (Colossians 1:27).