

The Reality of Regeneration in the Christian's Life

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When Kimberly and I were newly married some three years in, I thought I was doing pretty well as a newly minted husband but, of course, I wasn't. I had carried some sin into our marriage and I was really actively, I thought, trying to rid my life of this sin. I was trying to sanctify myself and I reached some especially frustrating times with God, and I felt that God had not been holding up his end of the bargain. Of course, that was foolish and arrogance and sinful. It was all me all along but I thought God wasn't curing me of my sin fast enough, and it was extremely frustrating for me and in my frustration I said some very evil bad things about God and I felt even worse now about that, and so in that frustrating moment, and I can remember it, in that frustrating moment I called a very dear missionary friend of mine, a guy named David Williams. It didn't matter where he landed, he always seemed to have a ministry going, but he was a missionary in Jamaica after he had been a Bible professor here in Atlanta. And I called him and I poured out my heart to him and I said, "I'm frustrated. I've done this thing. I've attacked God." And David Williams shared something in that pregnant pause, you know, when you're waiting for an answer. He shared and he said, he had a voice like Charles, a just gorgeous voice, slow; you had to listen to it just because it was so beautiful. He'd say, "Ah, yes, it is the process of maturation." And you could tell in his answer the voice of experience, that he knew these frustrations of coming up to the idea that I was going to sanctify myself and that God was leading me to a different place. And as I look back on that, I realize that it was no accident that I was at that frustrating point in my Christian life, and as I looked over the years, God has taught me some things about sanctification that are very different than what I understood as a newly married man, and I was thinking that I needed to work harder at sanctification, I needed to discipline myself more, and mind you, that is a real part and many times we fail in the process of sanctification because we don't take it seriously enough, and we don't take the word of God honestly enough, and we don't obey it. But I believe my real problem was that as I was approaching these sins I was trying to get out of my life, is that I was always defeated before I ever got started, and even when I would try to overcome sin, really in my heart of hearts, I felt that I was going to be defeated before I ever got started.

I am an average tennis player. For 50+, I can swing a racket hard and the felt will fly. It doesn't mean it goes in. But in tennis there's always two victories or two losses. There's always and if you listen and watch tennis, which I understand for many of you is like watching golf, it's very slow activity, but if you watch tennis, you will hear the announcer

say the person is defeated before they even finish the game. They'll say, "The opponent who's losing is just trying to find a way to get off the court," right? He's not trying to engage the game. He's actually defeated. There is a mental defeat before there is a physical defeat and somehow the reality, I knew that I had been sanctified in Jesus Christ as a child of God, I knew that God had declared me righteous in the sight of God, and I knew that I was supposed to sanctify, I knew that I was supposed to work out and walk in grace and get rid of sin, but I had skipped over a very important truth, and I think sometimes in our Christian circles we're aware of this truth but we don't focus on it and we deny ourselves the power that is available to us in Jesus Christ, and the principle that I had skipped over was the reality of regeneration. The reality of regeneration, that idea never sunk in, and so I went from sanctification, I'm sorry, from justification all the way to trying to work out my own salvation and sanctification, and the reality of regeneration never made its root in my heart, and as a result, I was always thinking as I was approaching sin and trying to fight sin, this is who I am. I'm a sinner so I sin. I'm saved in some kind of declarative positional way but it wasn't working its way out in my life because I didn't understand the power of regeneration.

So I felt that all the change fell on me. I'm going to give you the punchline way upfront this morning. Todd Friel is with us, I like the way Todd ministers the word, he just gives you the punchlines way upfront and then he tells you what he's going to tell you, tells you what he told you all the way through. Hopefully it can be that clear this morning. I would like to explain that in the few minutes we have together this morning, I'd like to impress on you and prove to you from the Bible two things. 1. The reality of regeneration. That's the title, "The Reality of Regeneration in the Christian's Life." I don't say the Christian life, I say the Christian's life because I'd like you to take these principles, number 2, and apply them to yourselves, your life, because I'm talking to some people here this morning that like me struggle with sin, and they keep approaching sin and they keep failing in these areas, or God has called you to do particular work and you think, "I can't do that."

I was thinking this morning just sitting there. Years ago back when middle school was junior high, remember those days? I don't know whatever happened to junior high, somehow it all got absorbed into middle school and I've lost track of the count anymore. But in junior high they had chapel. I was a chaplain and I stuttered and stammered and the kids would make fun of me, which is perfectly, I didn't care. Actually, I did care but I tried not to show it. But God's called some of you to ministry and like Moses you're putting up barriers and saying, "It's not me. I can't. I can't do it." So you're either struggling with sin on the one side or you're trying to find your Christian work and you are missing the power and the ministry of regeneration.

I wish I had a more compelling title like Brother James last week. I mean, he had like, I don't know, "Most Favored Nathan," or something. I don't know what his title was. It was actually, it actually, I think, was, "You Need That Man," right? But it's just simply this morning, "The Reality of Regeneration in the Christian's Life." A lot of the thoughts I'm just going to say, are taken from Charles Leiter's book, "Justification and Regeneration," and I commend that book to you as a help in your Christian walk.

I'd like to read Romans 6 just straight through for a second. It's propositional truth. It's truth that's given to us in a straightforward way. It's funny when we hear propositional truth, we think, "Well, man, I don't understand it. I wish someone would give me an illustration." And then Christ gives us illustrations and history like Nathan and we get this, "Like, man, I wish somebody would just tell me plainly." God gives it all kinds of ways and in our, you know, weakness and sinfulness we're always trying to say, "I don't know what God's saying." This is propositional truth. This is, "Thus saith the Lord," truth. It is just presented in a very clear way in Romans 6. Then I'd like to call on a couple of verses as witnesses to the power of regeneration and the reality of regeneration in the Christian's life. I want to call Old Testament witnesses and some New Testament witnesses and I want to establish the pattern and a couple of basic principles about regeneration. And then, lastly, I want to land the plane and I want to apply it to our lives. That's kind of the exercise. Romans 6, establish the reality and then apply that with a couple of verses, specifically the focus verses for us are Romans 6:11-13, those three verses.

If you have your Scripture this morning, I'd like to read Romans 6 and go from there.

1 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. 5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly be united with him in his resurrection. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. 13 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 the dead to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. 14 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace. 15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! 16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you whole-heartedly obey the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to

righteousness. 19 I put this in human terms because of you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. 20 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. 21 What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! 22 But you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we commit this time to you. Christ is worthy and, Lord, I pray that we would lift up the work of Christ in our lives this morning. I pray that we would understand it better. I pray that we would appropriate it more by faith. And I pray, Lord, that you would lead us into these lives that you have already declared us to be victors in. God, I just pray that you would bless this time and I thank you for it in Jesus' name. Amen.

There's two great foundations that are the heart and center of the gospel. The first is justification. Justification is the process by which God declares people to be made righteous. It is a declaration of a judge and I want to show you in a minute that it is, that justification process does not create a new person on the inside, it is a declaration of a judge. The process by which God creates a new man in the inside of a believer at the time of conversion is regeneration. Justification is a declaration, the creation of a new man on the inside is regeneration, and this distinction is important because the Bible's going to talk about these two things over and over and over again, and you're going to see some very common language that regeneration represents. Either directly or indirectly, these two truths show up everywhere in the Bible. They show up in the Old Testament. They show up in the New Testament. And in my own thinking, again, we, I was only applying justification. I was trying to live out a positional truth and as a result, my sanctification was struggling and I was upset at God.

I'd like to prior to coming back to Romans 6, I'd like to call a couple of passages as witnesses to this idea of regeneration, this teaching on regeneration. Titus 3, if you want to turn there with me. Titus 3:3, "For we also were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another, but when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, he saved us not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness but according to his mercy," note, "by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out upon us richly through Christ Jesus our Savior so that being justified by his grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." So note first, man before conversion is in a natural state of foolishness, disobedience, deception, enslaving to various lust. Our lives are characterized by malice and envy and hate and basically man doesn't recognize this lost state. Man basically

considers himself good, basically good, and unless God reaches down in his providence and regenerates that man, he's never going to think of himself as anything but good. But Scripture is clear that that man is lost and enslaved.

The second thing I want you to see is that regeneration in Titus 3, regeneration always accompanies justification. You see that according to his mercy by the washing of regeneration and the renewing by the Holy Spirit so that being justified by his grace. Over and over and over again in Scripture, and once this became, once I became reminded of the truth of regeneration, I tell you, I started seeing it everywhere. It's almost like providence. It's like understanding the blood of Christ. It's understanding the deity of Christ. You remember sometimes you're just like, well, somebody will say Christ never declared himself to be God. Oh, but he did over and over and over, and once you understand that and you see it, it's everywhere in the Scripture and this concept of regeneration is everywhere in Scripture and it's always going to be linked to the concept of justification. You were regenerated at the same time you were justified and that understanding comes with power and this is why Christ is going to say to the Pharisees, "You travel, you know, miles and miles and road and valley to make people obey the word that you say, the law that you say, and yet you're just making them twice the children of hell because you won't lift a finger to help them." And the power of regeneration is available to the Christian. God doesn't do that. He's not a Pharisee. God is going to take the declaration of justification that accords, that happens in the court of heaven before the law and throne room of God, the courtroom of God, that's the declaration. You are declared righteous. And he's also going to implant in you a new principle, a new life-giving principle. You have been made new.

So here we see God is dealing in both cases with the problem of sin, and I just want to do a once-over on this problem of sin. We know the concept of justification, we know the concept of sin, but I just want to bring out one specific aspect as it relates to sin. Sin is the ultimate problem of mankind but I'd like to go further and say sin is the only problem of mankind. Sometimes when I have the privilege of presenting Christ, I'll make the statement the only way forward for the human race is Jesus Christ. That's the only way forward. It's not a question of whether you believe it or you don't believe it, it's the only way forward for the human race. It's not that Christ is Lord of eternity and he's Lord of the future, Christ is Lord of everything and this whole world that we're participating in, the only way we get out of this alive is Jesus Christ. That's it.

So a lot of times we separate, especially in our current environment, we kind of separate. We've got my real life over here. We've got, dare I say, politics over here. You know, we've got the pressures of our culture and sickness over here. And then we've kind of got this spiritual thing and it's disconnected, and according to Scripture they're not disconnected. They're not disconnected and I'm going to show you that and there's two ways that sin is the ultimate problem and the only problem of mankind. First, every sinner has a bad heart. Exhibit A. Here I am accusing God in my youth of God being the problem, right? Arrogance. I carried that burden for years, let me tell you. Man has a bad heart. Secondly, man has a bad record. So I have a problem on the inside that my heart is not oriented towards God. Titus 3, all of those evils that my heart is inclined to do. If you

want to know the condition of your heart, you can tell by what are your affinities, what are your affections, what are the things your heart naturally is disposed to do, and the sinner's is only evil continually.

The Bible's going to say that sin is not playful. We play with sin, right? Something comes across television and somebody makes a joke off something that's rude or sexual or evil, and we say, "We shouldn't laugh at that," right? At the same time, we chuckle, right? But that's not how the Bible presents sin. The Bible presents sin as utterly sinful. It is utterly enslaving. So many people have sacrificed their lives for one morsel of bread. So many people have given their families for one illicit pleasure. Sin enslaves. Sin debases. Sin degrades. Sin hardens us. Sin defiles us. You know, one of the biggest things, sin is irrational. Have you ever come off of doing a sin and you think, "Well, I'm glad I did that. That made perfect sense." Sin is irrational, so much that the prodigal son had to come to his senses in order to overcome and realize how utterly sinful he was.

So at some level, I want to elevate sin in your thinking because God is going to deal with it in two counts. So sin, first of all, has a heart problem, and sin in man gives me a bad record. So sin's penalty is always crying out for my death. I tell you, God will not rest, we like to think of the good side, on the Christian side, God will not rest until his wrath is satisfied. He won't. He is angry with the wicked every day. He wants them to come to the knowledge of the truth but he will not rest if they will not, he will not rest until they are condemned, and for the Christian he will not rest until you are brought home to glory and you are glorified next to his Son Jesus Christ.

So God's concept of sin, he is going to pursue sin every day, but sin's power also is reigning inside of me, and so justification, I want you to see this, justification deals with the problem of my record. I'm a convict. I stand before a judge. That judge declares me to be innocent. I have a question: am I really innocent? Well, I've been declared to be innocent but if I'm an evil, vile person on the inside, that declaration deals with my record. That judge hasn't made that criminal any better through the process of justification, that sinner is still on the inside evil. His record's been purged. You can see it if you play it the other way, condemnation. If that judge were to condemn the sinner and that sinner were righteous, does that condemnation make him anything different on the inside? No, it's an external justification. Justification deals with my bad record. It does not fix my inside problem. It does not convert my heart. Regeneration converts your heart.

So my bad record, God making me good on the inside is regeneration. God declaring me to be righteous on the outside is justification. Please think that. Please think about that and understand that. That's important because the miracle of regeneration always occurs at the same time as the miracle of justification, and that regeneration on the inside is what creates the power for you to live out sanctification. That's it. It's the new life on the inside. I'm going to throw the young people a bone for a second. There's a gaming engine, a developer engine called the Unreal Engine put out by Epic Games many years ago. It's still the most popular gaming system. It is a system whereby you can basically create imaginary worlds. You know I'm telling you the truth. Unreal Engine, and I tell you,

regeneration is not an unreal engine. It is not something where you're faking it, right? Regeneration, being converted on the inside and made a new man, it's not fake it til you make it. It's not pretending that God has done something for you. If I can just fake it long enough, if I can just maintain holiness long enough, I will somehow prove to myself that I'm a Christian. No. That's not what working out your own salvation with fear and trembling means. Working out your own salvation with fear and trembling means that you are aware of the miracle of regeneration on the inside and you are appropriating that miracle by faith and you're applying it as God works out your sanctification together with you on the outside. It's not faking it. It is understanding the reality of regeneration.

And my friends, I'll save you all kind of trouble because you can fight through the other way but I'm telling you, your life will be much more blessed and much more enjoyable, and your Christian walk will be much more relational with Christ if you understand that it's his work flowing out of you and not your work somehow trying to gin up a proof on the outside. Justification solves your outside problem, regeneration solves your inside problem. Does that make sense? I'm sorry, I'm more of a teacher than a preacher.

Paul deals with this. Paul deals with this in Romans 3, this idea of justification. Romans 3:23, and as I was going through this, I remember my parents teaching me the Roman's road. Have any of you guys ever learned the Roman's road back in the day? So Romans 6:23 is part of it, Romans 3:23 is part of it. Anyway Paul says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement through the shedding of his blood to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness because in his forbearance he left the sins committed beforehand unpunished. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time so as to be just and the one who justifies." And so in justification, God's going to do two things. He's going to make the sinner right with God, that is justification. He's also going to make God, himself, right with the sinner. That's what it means. He's both going to be just and the justifier. He's going to correctly, judicially satisfy his requirement for holiness by the application of Christ's sacrifice to you. That allows him to satisfy his justice requirement and because of that he can make you now just. He can declare you to be righteous. Do not confuse that with regeneration. Regeneration is a holy, related, but separate miracle. He's going to go on the inside of you and make you new in the inner man.

And I want to just go through a couple of passages quickly on regeneration, just the way the New Testament phrases it. What is regeneration? What is regeneration? Regeneration biblically is simply a new creation by the divine Creator. You're used to hearing in your thinking, "I have been born again. I have been made a new creation." 2 Corinthians 5, you don't have to look it up, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come." All this is from God. This, my friend, is regeneration. It's not the declaration of justification. This is the inside work of regeneration. When God makes a Christian a new creature, he makes something exactly as he did in the original creation. And Ty taught me years ago, I have notes all over Romans from Ty's teaching, maybe you have the same. Some people make notes, I make notes in my Bible because I lose whatever else I write on. But Ty taught me it is a more difficult act to justify and

regenerate somebody because you're taking a mess. It's one thing to make something nice out of nice materials that you have. It's another thing to try to make something nice when somebody else has already made a mess out of it. Have you ever tried that? Try to build a car out of parts, try to build a car that's been wrecked, that has been totaled. Well, my friend, it's much harder to build the totaled car because you've got to fix all the.... Regeneration is a greater higher miracle than original creation. You're starting with worse stuff. You're starting at a lower level.

So here Paul is going to say that we have no part in bringing this to pass. You can't create yourself. You can't create yourself physically and you can't regenerate yourself spiritually. I want to call out Galatians 6:15, "For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision but a new creation." So it's not surprising, then, as Paul's teaching on regeneration, he's going to make the case not only is regeneration important, regeneration is ultimately important. All of your circumcision, whether you choose to do good, this work or that work, or your baptism, or your church attendance, or whatever religious rites, or your coming forward, or your accepting Christ, that doesn't matter. What matters is the new birth. What matters is Christ, God has come, he has caused you to understand, he's cleared away the insanity of sin in your thinking, he's caused you to start to understand what the word of God is saying about you, about him, about sin, about the sacrificial death and work of Christ, and he's causing you to receive that. It's an inside work. It happens to work itself out in your accepting of what God is saying. It happens to work itself out in your coming to Christ. But make no mistake, you're a new creation. Not us, all of God.

Nothing else matters. You've heard a new man, you've heard Ephesians 4, "Put off your old self which is being corrupted by your evil desires." We have a counseling ministry, we talk all the time about putting off your old self, putting on your new self. What is he talking about? He's not talking about you ginning up more energy and more discipline so that you can be more holy. That's not it. He is mentioning you understanding the reality of the generation, the real engine that's been put inside of you at the moment of your salvation and you have been made new on the inside, and now, true, work that out. Work that out, and we'll see where that happens.

I want to just call out Ezekiel because I want to have two Old Testament references here. It is a new man. We are supposed to put on the new self created to be like God. That idea of creation, it's creation over and over again with regards to regeneration. A new heart. Justification is the authoritative declaration by a righteous judge. Regeneration is a creative act by an almighty Creator.

Ezekiel 36. You know this passage. You don't have to turn to it but I'm going to read it here because I want to make a point. "I will sprinkle clean water on you. You will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness, from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you." Now stop just a minute. It sounds a lot like justification, right? I will sprinkle clean water on you. I will make you clean. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. It's justification. You're being declared righteous by the judge. But wait, there's more. "Moreover, I will give you a new

heart and put a new spirit within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes. You will be careful to observe my ordinances so you will be my people and I will be your God. I will save you from all your uncleanness. Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good." Not beforehand, after justification, after regeneration, then you will remember your evil deeds that were not good and you will loath yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and abominations. I'm not doing this for your sake, it will go on to say, I'm doing it for my sake. And I want you to see it's all of God. It's "I will. I will. I will. I will." Just look at the passage, it's always of God.

And it's very important that we understand that this passage like Ezekiel, these statements that God is making in Ezekiel, they're promises. They're not commands to you, they're promises of what God does for every Christian. He makes them available to you. These promises are always unconditional and they're always fulfilled. They're always fulfilled.

Quickly, Jeremiah 31 and then I'm going to go back to the passage here in Romans for these three verses. Jeremiah 31, it's talking about the new covenant. Verse 31. There are some verses that are easy for you to remember, kids, one of them is Jeremiah 31:31. It tends to be easy to remember. But he's going to say, "Behold, the days are coming declares the Lord when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers, bringing them out from the land of Egypt, my covenant they broke although I was a husband to them, declares the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, I will put my law within them and on their heart I will write it." Regeneration, same thing. I'm going to take the stony heart out, give you a heart of flesh. Now regeneration, I'm going to write my law on your heart. If you're struggling with sin, if you're a sinner and you have not come to Christ this morning, the law always comes to the sinner from the outside. It's always coming from here.

I don't know if you're one of these people, I'm one of these people, stop signs yell at me. Have you ever had that? Stop. No, I don't want to stop. What in the world? Why would I stop, right? The law always comes to me from the outside. God's law always comes and it always says, "Thus saith the Lord. Do this. Don't do this." And Paul's going to say in Romans, he's going to say that law is going to make sin, it's going to make sin grow in the heart of the sinner. It's going to become, you already kind of know you're a sinner and then God's going to say, "That's wrong," and you're going to go, "Uh, I want to do it anyway. I want to do it more because you said it was wrong." Because the sinner always wants. It's always the same thing. We always want to be God and we always want to know good and evil for ourselves which is another way of saying, "I want to be God." If I want to know good and evil for myself, I want to declare good and evil.

You look at our culture, and I don't have time for this so I'm not going just make a passing comment, but look at our culture. People want to declare everything about themselves, for themselves, and they want you to say it's good and they want to say it's good, and they want to know good and evil for themselves. They want to self-declare

their divinity, and the Bible has offered a solution that's real and they've offered a solution that will condemn them.

He says at the end of this passage in Jeremiah, verse 34, "Know the Lord for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest, declares the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity, their sin I will remember no more." Here we have, again, regeneration, justification sown together and God is the author of all of it and when that law comes to the sinner from the outside, he has no ability to comply. He may clean up his life, he may have bad effects from his sin, and he's trying to overcome those effects, and all he's going to do is trade his outside sin for the inside pride and arrogance at his efforts at trying to fix himself. He's just trading sin. He's not fixing anything. But whenever God writes the law on the inside, if he writes the law on the inside, this is regeneration.

This book, Charles Leiter brings out the point, regeneration is, he said he went to college and he said, "Like everybody else, I sat there and tried to get an A." He said, I was in this one small class in my senior year only taken by upper-level classmen, and in the class the first day, the professor started the lecture and he says, "Oh, by the way," there's like five people, four or five people in the class, he said, "Oh, by the way, everybody's getting an A. Now just settle down and enjoy the material." This is regeneration. Everybody gets an A.

Do you imagine that somehow your future state is not going to be ruled and reigned by righteousness. It is. Who is the real you? Is the real you the person who's struggling with sin? Or is the real you the person who is ultimately going to be enjoying God's presence forever? It's the forever you. The fact that you're struggling here, that's not the real you. The real you has been regenerated. It is the future you that matters.

Alright, I want to switch back to Romans and just make a couple of concluding thoughts if you'll allow me to. Romans 6, it's divided into two major big questions. The questions are really similar. Verse 1, "What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means," right? And then he's going to say a similar question in verse 15, "What shall we say then?" I'm sorry, "What then, shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means." Both of these are Paul's anticipated questions from chapter 5, verse 20, "The law was added that the trespass might increase but where sin increased, grace increased all the more." And Paul's going to anticipate that some people are going to say that let's just sin more so that we can have more grace in our lives, so that we can have more success for Christ. But I want you to see something very specific. He's going to make this question and he's going to say, "What shall we say then," verse 1, "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means." He's going to give the question in verse 1, he's going to give the entire answer in verse 2, and he's going to phrase the answer based on union with Christ. He's going to phrase the entire answer based on regeneration. Then in verses 3 through 10, he's going to go on and say, "Here's what I mean by verse 2. Here's what I mean by that explanation." Then the first imperative he makes is in verse 11.

He's going to do a similar thing in the second part of the chapter. He's going to say, "Shall we continue in sin, shall we sin because we're not under the law but under grace?" He asks the question a little differently. He answers it a little differently. Now he's going to say we should not continue in sin because we are now slaves to righteousness, not slaves to sin. But when were we made slaves to righteousness? Conversion. So he answered, he asked two questions and he answers them both in terms of union with Christ. He answers both of them in terms of regeneration and then he goes on to explain what he means by regeneration.

But I want to come specifically to verse 11 and verse 13. Verse 11 says, "In the same way," first imperative in the chapter. And by the way, Paul does this all the time. You get truth, truth, truth, truth, then he pivots on this idea of realizing and renewing our mind, and then he says, "Okay, go live it out." He does the same thing in Ephesians. Truth, truth, truth, pivot on renewing your mind, and then living it out. And here's the pivot, verse 11, "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus." Well, what does he mean count yourselves dead to sin? He's saying it means reckon, it means realize. It's the same thing as other passages of Scripture when it says renew your mind. He's saying that consider what is real about you and act that out. Count yourselves as dead to sin.

You know, if you're really a Christian, sin doesn't fit you anymore. Satan will try to tell you that when you sin, that is your native state. You have to sin, that's who you are working itself out. That's not true for the Christian. When you sin, you're a hypocrite. When you do righteous, you are totally consistent with your native state. That is who you are in Christ. Now you can present your members to sin and we're going to see that in one second, but your native state, who you are is somebody who is alive from the dead. It's past tense. You're not becoming alive from the dead. It's a gift, you are alive from the dead. And in various passages Paul's going to say you have already put off your old self, and you've already put on your new self, and in some places he's going to say you still need to put off your old self and put on your new self.

Well, what is he saying? The same thing. Reckon what is true about you, understand that, appropriate that by faith, not by ginning up additional effort. "I've gotta do it. I'm gonna do it. I'm gonna have a good week. It's gonna be a good week." Not if you're not relying and appropriating on what God has done by faith. That's the point. I'm not saying you don't have to struggle. My friends, we have to struggle but I tell you, you are defeated before you started unless you understand the mystery and miracle of regeneration.

Verse 12, "Therefore," therefore, what? You've already reckoned that regeneration is the reality in your life. Verse 12, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires." I want to make three really encouraging statements, if I may, about this short couple of three verses.

1. If you're a Christian this morning and you are struggling with sin, this passage says that's normal. It says do not let sin reign. Why? Why do you not have to let sin reign? Because it's trying to reign. Sin tries to reign in the life of a believer. How can that

happen seeing I've been given the ministry and the miracle of regeneration? How come sin is still trying to reign? Sin is trying to reign because it's trying to prove it still has life left even after it's been declared dead by the divine act of God.

And you see it in the second part of verse 12. Sin tries to reign. I want you to let that sink in, though, understand that. Sin tries to reign in the life of a believer. I'm not promising you some kind of nirvana, no effort, name it-claim it. No, no, no, no. Sin tries to reign in the life of a believer. Where does it try to reign? Sin tries to reign in your mortal body. Isn't it interesting, Paul doesn't say, "Don't let sin reign in you." Sin has to reign in your mortal body. That's the only place it can reign. Your inner man has been renewed. Your inner man has been regenerated. It's been declared totally recreated in righteousness. The best a Christian can do, a Christian cannot offer themselves wholly to sin. According to the Scripture, impossible. You can offer your members to sin but you cannot offer your entire self to sin. You don't have the capacity. Your inner man has been regenerated. It's been made totally new.

And this is really important because Paul now is going to separate your mortal body from the real you. You are not your mortal body. You're not. You have a life, an inner life that has been redeemed and miraculously made new at the time of your salvation. But sin is still going to try to reign. Why is sin going to try to reign? Sin is going to try to reign because those old patterns that you had before your salvation, even the inclinations of your flesh after your salvation, sin is going to try to keep coming back and those old grooves that you're running in, it still tries to prove it's got life left. It's still trying to work its way out. That is not the real you. The real you has been alive from the dead. The real you has been now taken from the realm where sin is reigning, you have now been moved to the realm where grace is reigning. It's a wholesale change.

So two encouraging things. Sin tries to reign. You sit there and say, "Well, I'm struggling against this. I'm working against this." Hallelujah! Continue, my friend, continue to struggle. It is an indication that you're still in the arms of Christ even as you're struggling with sin. And it's also helpful that Paul separates you from your mortal body, not the real you. It's not you and you can see this illustrated. Paul, I'm sorry, James brought up David last week. How can you have a murderer, a liar, a proudful person, an adulterer, and it's not just Bathsheba, God is merciful enough to give us many examples in David's life of failures, how can you have that guy be a man after God's own heart? Have you ever... I've asked myself this question for years. How did that guy get that title? It's regeneration. Look at Psalms. Who's the real David? Is the real David the one who sinned with Bathsheba and murdered Uriah? Well, his members did it. His flesh did it, that's what the Bible calls the flesh. But as soon as he's confronted with his sin, he says, "I'm guilty." He goes and he writes Psalms. Read Psalms, the beautiful Psalm that Ted read this morning where he's, David again just pouring out and saying, "I look to God for all of my deliverance." That's the real man. That's the real you.

I want to bring an illustration to the table and then close. I want you to really understand this separation between you and your mortal body. Sin tries to reign. Sin tries to reign in your mortal body and in verse 13 it's going to say you don't have to let it. You don't have

to let it. Do not let sin reign. There is no command the Bible gives you, "You cannot obey." You have been given the power. The Pharisees, that legalistic approach and I have friends that are Catholics but I tell you, the Catholic approach, the Roman Catholic approach trying to force you to behave from the outside, no power. You know the verse, "These things touch not, taste not, handle not. These things are destined to perish with the using." These things have no power to accomplish sanctification. Only regeneration has that power.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones' wife wrote a little book when they were at their first church, their first Welsh church in a place called Sandfields, and they gave this illustration, gave this example, this testimony from a guy named William Thomas. William Thomas came to Christ at about 70 and he was the town drunkard and William Thomas used to sell fish in the square, and basically he would sell his fish, he would drink, then the horse would carry him back home, and you'd see William Thomas, he was called Staffordshire Bill, that was his nickname, Staffordshire Bill would be fallen back into the fish with his feet straight up and his horse would take him home every night up the hill, and his wife would get him out of the fish and clean him up and here we go. But William Thomas came to Christ. Interestingly, he was at a bar, two folks were talking about Martyn Lloyd-Jones' sermon and he said they were saying, "That preacher said that anybody can be made new, anybody can come."

And so twice Staffordshire Bill showed up at the doors, didn't have the courage to go in. Finally, a church member invited him in and said, "Sit with me." And that night he was converted and when he was converted, his drinking problem totally left him. He was cured like that. That sin was gone but he had a long list of other sins and one of them was foul mouth, blasphemies and cursing. He couldn't say a word without cursing and I just want to read this section from Mrs. Lloyd-Jones' book on this.

"After his conversion, his desire for alcohol left him and it was never a problem anymore in his Christian life. There were, however, areas of other fierce struggle. At the heading of the list was bad language. With his conversion came the conviction that he must do something about this. He realized it was dishonoring to God and he must stop swearing. But now he discovered he was up against something that was too strong for him. He could not speak without swearing. He couldn't utter a sentence without swearing and the realization that these horrible words came from his own lips sickened and shamed him and he was driven to a frenzy of despair."

My friends, if you're honest perhaps as a Christian struggling with sin, you've been here. I know I have.

"It came about this way. He was getting up one morning, gathering up his clothes to get dressed and he couldn't find his socks, so he hollers out the bedroom door to his wife, 'Where are my blank socks? I can't find the blank things.' As he heard himself and realized what he had just said, a great horror possessed him and he fell back in despair and he cried out, 'O Lord, cleanse my tongue. I can't ask for a pair of socks without swearing. Please have mercy on me.'"

Now let me ask you: Staffordshire Bill, who's the real man? The swearer or the man who is aware and struggling and fighting and praying to overcome it? The real man is the man who he is in Christ. And it's amazing that Paul says don't let sin reign in your mortal body. He doesn't say let not sin reign in you. Sin cannot reign in you. It can only reign in your mortal body. You can only give your members. Your self has been redeemed. That self will be your eternal self and the link between the spirit, as it were, that inner man and these outer members that we can either yield to righteousness or yield to sin, is the mind. Why does he say renew the mind? Because it's this link between the inner man and the outer man. You say, "Well, what about bad thoughts, are bad thoughts the inner man or the outer man?" Try thinking your bad thoughts without your brain. It's one of your members.

"As he got up from that bed, he realized God had done for him what he could not do for himself and he said it was his testimony from that day forward he never again used foul language."

And so in this case, God broke that sin in an instant, like his drunkenness before then, but what we do as we're working out our sanctification and relying on the regeneration power of God, we start saying, "That's just the way I've always been," right? "That's just the way I've always been. I have to sin." You know what's even better? "My momma was like this. My family was like this. This is a generational problem for me." And it's not, I mean, drunkenness and swearing is one thing, it can be other things. Anger, right? The angry man. All of a sudden he's in a pressure situation and he overflows with anger and he says, "Oh no!" And he apologizes. Who's the real man? It's not the angry person. It's who he is in Christ and those patterns of evil behavior that existed and continue to exist in our flesh, we have to arrest those and we have to present our members as instruments of righteousness instead of instruments of sin but it happens on the pivotal point of understanding who we are in Christ.

You know, it is so important for us to have an understanding of this concept of regeneration and, you know, as it says in 13, don't offer the parts of your body as instruments of sin but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and offer your parts of your body to him. Do you hear the difference, verse 13? You can offer your members as instruments of sin but on the positive side, you can offer yourselves and you can offer your members, two things you can offer to God on the positive side. You can only offer your members on the negative side. Martyn Lloyd-Jones brings this out. It's very important. You don't have the ability to offer yourself to sin, you can only offer your members.

My friends, I'd like to just remind us: you are not as the old Puritan used to sign his letters, the painted hypocrite. I'm the painted hypocrite. No, you're not. You're not a painted hypocrite. I think one of the worst things that a Christian can do is a Christian can say, "I am just this way." Do you ever hear somebody say, "You just have to take me the way I am"? No, you don't. Your parents were this way, you've been walking in this way, so what? It's not who you are now. It's not who has been regenerated. You are not a painted hypocrite. You are new in Christ. You are raised from the dead and you have the

power of God living and breathing and working in you, and I pray that you would appropriate that by faith. And I really hope this encourages you this morning as it has me.

Let's close in prayer.

Father in heaven, I thank you that we do not have to offer our members as instruments of sin. Lord, I thank you that you have separated the real me from my members, Lord, that we have the opportunity based on the miracle and power, the real engine of regeneration, that we have this opportunity to work out sanctification in partnership with you, Lord, realizing we've already got the A and, Lord, you've created in us a desire for the material and a longingness to apply it. Lord, if there are those that go, "That's not true of me. I don't desire. I have no repentance. I have no brokenness after I've offered my members to sin." I pray that they would understand that if this miracle is not effective in their lives, Lord, that they're not saved. Justification has neither happened if regeneration has not happened as well. Lord, I pray that you would encourage us with these truths and I pray that you would give us of your Spirit so that we could mortify the deeds of the flesh. In Jesus' name. Amen.