

How to Think and Live As Christians

Studies in Romans

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Bible Text: Romans 6:11-14

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We return to Romans chapter six tonight. We read again the passage verse eight to the end of verse 14.

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. 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.¹

Amen. The Lord will add his blessing to the reading of his Word for his own name's sake.

We are completing tonight a study that we started last sabbath evening. What we are dealing with is a very important subject for every Christian. It is simply how to think and live as Christians. I am not selecting the subject as a subject to run with. This is part of Paul's ongoing argument as he opens up the great truth of justification as it leads to sanctification in the lives of the people of God. verse eight sets the whole argument in its place.

"Now if we be dead [or precisely, if we died] with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him."²

The apostle is saying that because we know that the Lord Jesus Christ died and when he died he died unto sin once and for all, because we know that death hath no more dominion over him and because we know that now he is raised from the dead and he lives

¹ Romans 6:8-14.

² Romans 6:8.

forever unto God, we believe certain things. And he says we believe that we who died with Christ died unto sin once and for all. And we now live unto God in the power of Christ's resurrection. And then through the rest of the passage he goes on to say what we conclude from all of this, the truth that we take to our hearts by which to live. We conclude that what is true of Christ, of his death and of his resurrection is true of our death and of our resurrection with him. Grace, he teaches here, has once and for all destroyed the right of sin to reign over a Christian, because it has taken the believer out of the kingdom of sin, out of the realm of sin, out from under the reigning power of sin. And it gives us the right and the ability to live free from the tyranny of sin in the victory of grace in righteousness unto God in holiness of life.

What he is saying is that justification is that—and if I may be forgiven for using this big theological term—it is important to it. Justification is a forensic term. It is a term that is taken from the law courts that states our standing legally before God. It is not a term that has anything to do with our experience. Justification is not primarily a description of subjective sensations. It is a statement of our legal position before God in union with the Lord Jesus Christ. But he is saying that that justification can never be isolated from Christian experience because it is the ground and the guarantee of sanctification and the genuine personal experience of holy living unto God.

Remember that in this passage the apostle is answering the slander that since you believe salvation is all of grace, since you believe that the greater the sin, the greater the grace in forgiving and in justifying and in saving, since you believe that you are secure solely through the merits of Jesus Christ and that nothing you do before or after you initial coming to Christ contributes anything to your justification and your acceptance with God, since that is true, then let us sin all the more in order that God may be able all the more to show his grace and thereby all the more to get glory to his name. Paul is answering that slander and he is showing that far from justification leading to that conclusion, it actually does the very opposite. When a man sees the grace of God and the understands the merits of Christ and he grasps that he is justified freely by grace without any input of merit from himself, far from wanting to live in sin, that will be a compulsion to live in holiness and in victory unto the Lord, because we believe that having died with Christ we shall also live with him, not merely in the future resurrection, though that is true, as we see, but also in this present life.

So what he is dealing here with is the life of faith. For most people, you know, the life of faith is a sort of a strange thing. They think of nowadays in charismatic terms, name it and claim it or blab it and grab it. You know, that is the life of faith. Somehow or other, you know, we conjure up a picture. In fact, there are, believe it or not, there are so-called Christian teachers who admit that they have taken over from eastern mysticism and particularly from Buddhism, they have taken over various techniques whereby when you pray you actually create an image in you mind of what you want. You give some objectivity, at least in your mind—of course that is a contradiction in terms—but forget about that. You give some objectivity, at least in your mind. And as you visualize, visualization, that has become one of the buzz words in modern so-called charismaticism, but it is actually modern apostasy.

This is supposed to be the key to releasing your faith, the key to living by faith, the key to getting things in prayer, being able to visualize. Now I want to be very delicate in what I say. I have been practicing to express myself more clearly. I have been practicing to make you understand when I am vehement. I find that difficult to do coming from Northern Ireland. But very humbly and very quietly I would say of that whole technique of visualization as a technique in prayer, in Ireland we would call it hogwash. You don't know what hogwash is, do you? You do? Well, we call it hogwash, claptrap. Do you know what that is? Another lovely word is {?}. If you ever get a slap in the face with a cold, dead cod, you will know exactly what that is, {?}. In other words, it is nonsense. It is blasphemous nonsense. And it is absolutely nothing to do with the life of faith. The life of faith is not some mystical form of wishing things into existence. Nor is the life of faith going away out on a limb. And the more out on the limb you are the more faith you have got. Oh, the life of faith at times may take you to someplace that the world may think is out on a limb. But in actual fact, the life of faith goes to the heart of the gospel. It takes the great truth of the gospel. It understands that truth. It takes its stand on that truth. And it never wavers from the central issues of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now in this passage we have three main elements in the life of faith, how to think and act as Christians. First one is recognizing what Christ has done. And you will find in verses nine and 10, we are not going to go through that all again dealing with the death he died, the resurrection in which he rose from the dead and the life he now lives forever unto God. But we have got to understand what Christ has done.

Now the second element flows right out of that. And that is reckoning on our union with Christ in his death and resurrection. Verse 11 tells us:

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”³

The word reckon means count. It means, as it is translated in Romans 3:28, conclude. You have looked at all this truth about Christ. He died unto sin. He is alive unto God. We died with him. We rose with him. Now he says you have got all this truth in your mind. Reckon on it. Count upon it. Think it through and make certain conclusions from it.

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin.”⁴

Actually, as Paul penned this, the Greek text has a strong emphasis on the ye where he says, literally, so also ye reckon yourselves to be dead.

You remember I pointed out, though the form of words is different, the emphasis is the same. When he was answering this slander, let us continue in sin that grace may abound, he said, “How shall we that died to sin live any longer therein?” And there was an

³ Romans 6:11.

⁴ Ibid.

emphasis there, we, we of all people. How shall we, we who died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein? There is this emphasis on we. That emphasis arises here again. And he is saying likewise ye also reckon yourselves. There is an emphasis on the people to whom he is speaking here. Think of who you are. Think of what you are. Think of what you know concerning your position in Christ. And he says now reckon on that.

Notice the word likewise or ye also. But think of this and you will see immediately that there is a direct and a definite correspondence between Christ's death and resurrection, what happened to him in those things and what happens to us in our death and resurrection when we become united to him by faith. Think again of this so also ye. What is he saying here? Take this context very carefully, verse 10, in that Christ died. You remember I said last week the death that he died, what he died. What he is saying is I want you to see the full impact, the full meaning of the death that he died. I want you to see the full meaning of the life that he lives. And he says, verse 10:

“For in that he died, he died unto sin once.”⁵

Now verse 11, so also ye. You died unto sin once. Verse 10, Christ we are told liveth unto God. So also you who died in Christ, you now live unto God. This is what he is saying. Now when you have got that in your mind he says, “Reckon on this. Count upon this.” What is he telling us? He is saying, “Look. If you want to think like a Christian. If you want to act like a Christian, first and foremost recognize what Christ has done and then, second, understanding what happened to him, that he died once and for all, that he lives never to die again. Grasp that spiritual reality that this establishes for every believer. What is that spiritual reality? Verse 11 spells it out where he says:

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God.”⁶

Now the authorized version says alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. In actual fact, Paul said alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord. And this is the first occurrence of this little phrase which is so popular with Paul, so much a favorite when he talks about in Christ. It is so popular with Paul that he makes that phrase the key note of the whole epistle to the Ephesians, for example. He builds the entire epistle around that one phrase, in Christ. He does the same in Colossians, in Christ. This is its first occurrence in Paul's writing. There is something similar in chapter three verse 24 where we read that we have redemption in Christ. But here we learn it is not just the redemption that is in Christ, but we are in Christ. That is what he is saying. We are in Christ. Now he says:

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”⁷

⁵ Romans 6:10.

⁶ Romans 6:11.

⁷ Ibid.

Reckon on this union with Christ. For this is the ultimate spiritual reality upon which all our experience must rest. Now let me repeat that. All true Christian experience rests on this reality, the reality of our union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

So he says count on it. Now let me clear up a couple of misconceptions here. When he says reckon on this, this reckoning is not wishing. It is not make believing. It is not trying to make yourself be something that you are not. It is not conjuring up some mystical, magical notion. We are not a version of Christian Science. Remember Mary Baker Eddy's great thesis that God is spirit and God is all in all. Therefore, nothing is matter. There is no such thing as matter. So you bump your head on that and there is no pain, because, first of all, there is no head and, second, there is no pulpit. There is no pain.

Now if you want to go down that road of stupidity, please go alone, for I am not going there with you. We are not talking about that sort of crazy making yourself think a lot of rubbish. We are talking about getting to the truth, grasping the truth and thinking it through.

Something else. Let me make this clear, because this is something that most Christians don't really grasp. When he says, "Reckon yourselves to be dead," your reckoning doesn't make you dead. Now follow me carefully here. It is not the reckoning that makes you dead. Paul says, "We who believe, we died with Christ." That is it, over and done with it. Finished once and for all. We died with Christ. Reckoning on it doesn't bring it to pass. It has already come to pass.

Now I am emphasizing this because we are not called to try and create something that has already happened. I said last week God never tells us in his Word that we are to crucify the old man, never once. Why? Because the old man has already been crucified. That is over and done with. Similarly here. It is not the reckoning that makes you dead. It is your union with Christ that says you are dead with him. Now he says see the truth of it. See what you are.

You know, I remember as a little fellow seeing Brian here reminds me of when we were little fellows. And when I was a little fellow, I was about 10 years old and I fell and I cut this thumb. Still got the scar to this day. And I had to go up to the Royal Victoria hospital in Belfast and in those days all the boys were short trousers. You didn't get into long trousers until you were 14. That is why our legs are so sturdy and strong and beautiful. I tell you. What a sight that was. But anyway, it was all right for me for I was knee high to a grasshopper. But when you saw some of these big fellows about six feet running around in short trousers it was a sight to behold.

But I was up there and this {?} was around this area I had to get a tetanus shot. Well, it was very easy. She just looked at my leg, half exposed anyway, took the trouser leg, pushed it back, rubbed the leg and stuck the needle in.

Well, I must be honest that it wasn't painful. I didn't feel anything much at all. And if I

had I still gritted my teeth, kept my mouth shut and I would have been ashamed to make that nurse think that I was a coward.

Sitting up beside me was a fellow. Now to me he was a man. Remember I was 10. So he might have been 20. He might have been 40. I haven't a clue. He was a grown man. And he needed a tetanus shot and she came to him and she rubbed on whatever it was she was to numb the skin and she took the needle and I heard this yell. And she told him, "Would you shut up? I haven't even touched you with the needle yet." And she gave him a good bit of advice which was be a man.

Now what did she mean by that? She didn't say suddenly, "You have got to become a man." He was already a man. What she was telling him was, "See what you are and live accordingly. Act accordingly." And that is what Paul is telling us here. See what you are. Understand your position. See that you died in Christ, that you rose again in Christ, that the old man is dead, that the old position in Adam is gone, that the new position in Christ is now a reality. See what you are and live accordingly. Reckoning is not bringing a truth into existence that doesn't already exist. Reckoning is not causing something to happen because you wish it to happen. Reckoning is recognizing what is already the situation and acting accordingly. Reckon on this union with Christ, for this is the ultimate spiritual reality. And on this real union our whole experience must rest.

So understand what he is saying. We died unto sin once and for all. That is what Paul is saying. Now this is where—and I can't take time tonight if you haven't been there. I am afraid I cannot keep going back up the chapter to preach every verse again. Otherwise I will fulfill Dr. Barrett's prophecy of taking a long, long, long time on this chapter. But this is where the definitions that I gave earlier in these studies in chapter six of Romans come into play. What it means to die unto sin. This is not what most people have been taught where you somehow or other convince yourself that you don't feel any more temptation to sin, that you are as impervious to every approach of sin as a corpse is to feeling pain. That is not what it is saying. It is saying not that you are delivered from all contact with sin, not that you are delivered from all temptation to sin or all ability to sin. What it is saying is that you are delivered from the reign of sin and from the realm and from the tyranny of sin. You died unto sin once and for all. You satisfied God's justice and wrath in Jesus Christ. You have now passed into condemnation unto acceptance with God. You are out of Adam. You are into Christ. You died unto sin once and for all. Having died unto sin there is a new man now. So he says we rose again never to go back into death.

This is one of those great passages on the security of the Christian which is a theme that Paul is dealing with in this particular section of Romans and he comes back to it again and again, the security of the Christian. As Christ died and rose again never again to fall under the dominion of death, so when we died in Christ we rose again in Christ. In other words, we came out of Adam. We are put into Christ and thank God there is no falling out of Christ. That is what Paul is teaching us here. Death has no longer power to rule over us and, therefore, since death is the servant of sin, it is the result of sin, sin has no

longer power to be the tyrant over us. We now live in the power of an immortal life unto God.

What does it mean to live unto God? It means to live, obviously with reference to God. That is something the ungodly don't do. They can never live with reference to God. The essence of sin is selfishness. The essence of sin is to replace God as the chief end of existence and to replace him with self as the chief end of existence. Therefore, when repentance takes place and faith takes place and we enter into Christ, now we are living unto God. He is the chief end of our existence. This is what I was trying to make clear this morning, that to a born again believer, to a true Christian, Christ must be all in all. We live with reference to God. You cannot set your life in compartments. This is my Christian life. This is my business life. This is my secular life and this is my life of relation with the world. There are so many people and they want to live out their lives in all these ungodly ways and then pay lip service to God and his Christ, say, on the sabbath day. You can do that. He is all in all. This is the great reality of being saved. We live with reference unto God. We live with life that God has given us. Not only so, but we live as his subjects, because he is our King. We have been introduced into his presence as we saw studying Romans chapter five. We have been introduced into his presence by the Lord Jesus Christ and we stand accepted by him because we are in union with Christ.

So we live unto God in the power of immortal life. And we shall live. There is no end to that. Verse eight. There is no end to it. We shall live, not only now, but forever. In other words, we should reckon on the absolute security that we have in Christ.

Now when Paul says reckon on these things he says, "I want you to reckon." You are in a world where you are struggling with sin. You are struggling with the opposition of the devil. You want to know how to think right, how to live right. Well, reckon, I died with Christ. Understand that. I rose again in the power of immortal life with Jesus Christ. I will never die again. I cannot revert unto the power of sin and death. I live forever in absolute security in Jesus Christ.

Can I suggest something to you? The trouble with Most Christians is when they get into trouble in their lives they stop thinking through the gospel. That is the big trouble. They are not thinking right. When you see Christians who are not living right you may be absolutely certain you have got Christians who are not thinking right. When Christians get themselves into bother and trouble, they start searching around for answers here and there and everywhere. We have a plethora of counselors and psychologists and Christian psychologists. Now there is an oxymoron. But Christian psychologists and they come up with all sorts of crazy little notions, this little bit out of Freud, this little bit out of Karl Jung, this little bit out of somebody else and they stick a Bible text on it and they tell you this is a divine principle. Christians are casting about for help here, there and yonder. There is some psychologist who will tell them to let it all out. And think some of these people had a... and this is true. I am not making this up. They actually had a compound. It think it was in the extreme northwest of Ireland. I always get these... yes, northwest of Ireland. They had that ... this way out in a wilderness area. And they were teaching the people there scream therapy. True, scream therapy. Yell as hard as you can. Let it all out.

This is how you deal with your problems. This is how you deal with your sin. This is how you deal with the great crises of your life. When you have yelled all you can yell, you haven't changed anything. You need to be able to think through the gospel.

The promise of Isaiah 26 and three still holds good.

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.”⁸

That is where we get our anchor. That is where we get our stability. That is where we get to the place of dealing with sin and its attack with the world and its attack, with our problems and our troubles. I am not saying they will all fly away. That is a false promise for any preacher to give you. I am simply saying in a world that is hostile to us, in a world in which life can be complicated and difficult and the conflict that we all are engaged in can be long and arduous. I am saying what we must learn to think through the gospel. Get back to basics. That is how you are to think. And you will find something. That right thinking produces right living, which is the final element in how to think and act as a Christian. The final element in this life of faith. The first one is recognizing what Christ has done. The second one is reckoning on our union with Christ in his death and resurrection. And the third one is rejecting the reign of sin in our bodies. Verse 12:

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body.”⁹

Notice the therefore. Paul is severely logical here. He is answering this slander that here is your gospel, Paul. If I take your gospel of grace, therefore let us continue in sin that grace may abound. Paul is saying, “No, no.” That is not the proper deduction from the truth of justifying grace. Here is the proper deduction. It is not let us continue in sin, but let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies. Here is also proof of the meaning of the body of sin. Remember, I pointed out that there is a great deal of controversy over this expression the body of sin. John Calvin takes it to mean the great mass of sin. Charles Hodge took the body of sin to be a figure of speech likening sin unto a body as if it had head and hands and feet, but it is only a metaphor. Again, it is the mass of sin and corruption. I believe that the body of sin is a reference to the literal body as it may be used as an instrument of sin. And here is the proof of that, for he is saying, “Do not let sin reign in your mortal body.” Why? Because, listen. That is where you are vulnerable.

That body of yours is not yet glorified. The real you, if you are a believer... and I know this is a hard thing for us to conceptualize and, obviously, you can't really do that. But I want you nonetheless to get the truth of it. When he says I died and I rose again, he is saying, “I came out of Adam. I am into Christ. That is my legal position with God. I am in Christ.” Now where is Christ? He is at the right hand of God. He is in heaven. Where am I? I am in Christ. Where is Christ? He is in heaven? Where am I? I am in Christ. Do you see what I am getting at?

Ephesians chapter two:

⁸ Isaiah 26:3.

⁹ Romans 6:12.

“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”¹⁰

And he goes on telling you what God has done. And then he says that he has raised up together and he has made us sit together. Where? In heavenly places in Christ.

In Romans chapter eight verse 28 and 29 and 30 he talks about the purpose of God for believers.

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”¹¹

How do we know that? All you Arminians listen up, quickly. All you people who don't like the doctrine of predestinating and electing grace, listen up carefully. All Christians are very quick to say, “Oh, we know that all things work together for good.” How do we know that?

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.¹²

And do you notice the use of the past tense in every case? He foreknew. He predestined. He called. He justified. He glorified. Hey, hold it a second. We are still on earth, are we not? Well, our bodies are, but our being in Christ, our union with Christ is clear here. He is in heaven. We are in heaven.

Listen. Here is the security of the believer, in Christ. His glorification is as much a fact of history as his justification. There is no way around that. God called. God justified. God glorified. That is a position in Christ. But, you see, that is the real you, if you are a believer. But now where are you? I am not a Christian Scientist. I am a Christian. I am surely not a scientist and if I were a scientist I would not be what is called a Christian scientists. So when I see you, that is a real body you have. And where is it? It is sitting right in front of me. And I can tell you by the look of you I know rightly that body hasn't been glorified. Nor is it going to be glorified until the day of resurrection, the day of redemption, the day of the adoption Paul calls it. Only then will it be glorified. So while we are here, this body is vulnerable to the attack of sin.

Sin can never bring you out of Christ and back into Adam. Sin can no more do that than it can reach up to the throne of God and take Christ out of heaven and put him back in the grave. It can't do that. But sin can attack through your body, through your earthly human

¹⁰ Ephesians 2:1.

¹¹ Romans 8:28.

¹² Romans 8:29-30.

existence here. So what do we do? We must refuse obedience to sin in the lusts of our body. That is, we must not obey sin by yielding to carnal appetites.

Notice what he says. These belong to mortal body. Let not sin therefore reign. Don't let it tyrannize, let it hold the rule over you in your mortal body. You see, again, what he is saying is I want you to think. I want you to keep thinking. I want you to keep reckoning. Don't be dictated to by the lusts of the body, the cravings of the body. Now the cravings of the body are not wrong in themselves. At least not every craving that the natural instincts of the body have a place. But they must not be the ruling force. Christians must be ruled by the gospel, by Christ in the gospel. They must constantly be thinking what it is to be in Christ. They must allow this through process, this reckoning on the truth of what they are in Christ. They must allow that to impose itself on the body and on every desire of the body and bring that desire to submission to the gospel. What Paul is saying is, "Do not take even the legitimate longings of the body and let them rule you to such an extent that they become your king, your tyrant."

Remember the body is mortal. It is dying. It is not only subject to corruption, it is subject to death. Its corrupt desires and pleasures are but for a moment. But so, also, are its innocent pursuits and pleasures. They are also but for a moment. What Paul is saying is I want you to be like Moses. Remember what he wrote in Hebrews 11:25-26 about Moses that by faith—and you will notice the by faith throughout that chapter. What is this? He is saying there reckoning on the truth of the gospel. By faith Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

Paul is saying look at your body. Every ache and every pain reminds you it is a dying body. Every wrinkle, every lost hair. It all reminds you it is a dying body. You are living in the power of immortal life. Don't therefore yield to the momentary demands of a mortal body.

Now what he is saying here is if we reckon, that is if we think right, if we are thinking according to the truth of the gospel, sin cannot reign over us. He is not saying you can't sin. He is not saying you will be sinless. In fact, he makes it very clear that is not the case, but he says sin can't reign over you. It can't any longer be the dominating tyrant that it was. It can't enslave you. I And thereby you can go on to the experience of verse 13 where he says you do not present your body, your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. The word instruments here is the usual word for weapons. That is a very telling expression. For the members of your own body are the weapons that sin and Satan would use to enslave you.

That is why Paul said to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 9:27:

"But I keep under my body."¹³

¹³ 1 Corinthians 9:27.

I buffet it. Paul obviously knew a bit about the science and skill of boxing, for this is a term taken from the old boxing matches. And he says I buffet my body in order to reduce it to powerlessness. I do not feed the flesh and the lusts of the flesh, but I buffet it, I keep the flesh under. As he says late in the book of Romans 13 verse 14, he says you do not make provision for the flesh. Don't yield your members, your hands, your feet, your tongue, your eyes, your ears, don't present them. That is the word yield. Don't make them an offering of unrighteousness unto sin.

What a tragedy when Christians take the body that is the temple of the Holy Ghost and they make it an unrighteous offering made unto sin. It says, no, understand this. Yield yourselves unto God. Do you see what he is saying? The very same members of this body can be used as weapons on the cause of God and the gospel or in the cause of sin against the gospel. And that is a serious thought. And it explains a whole lot of things in church life. We have all seen people who have been greatly used of God and blessed and have been used to bless our own lives. And they then bring a curse on the very people upon whom they brought a blessing. What is happening? They have yielded the very same members as instruments of sin. Those hands of yours can be used in building the kingdom of God. And they can be used in tearing down the work of God. You take the most obvious member of the human body as far as our interrelations are concerned. That is your tongue.

I have heard people... I have a woman in mind at this moment. Brian and his wife and my wife will know exactly who I am talking about here. I sat in a prayer meeting in Martyrs Memorial Church. I heard her pray. You would have thought it was an angel from heaven. She prayed. That tongue was used and she had eloquence. Oh, she could pray apparently. But that same tongue was a vicious, wicked, blasphemous thing. The hands uplifted to God were the same hands that whipped her daughter because she refused to be a prostitute.

Those members may be used for God. They may also be used for sin. And Paul is saying therefore yield to God as people who are alive from the dead. You died with Christ. You see, he keeps on coming back to this. Think it through. You can't live giving your body up to present itself as an offering for sin. You can't do that if you are thinking through the gospel. We shall live because he lives.

Now all this is talking about a degree of Christian victory. Let me be very honest with you, that for most of us it is pie in the sky. It sounds that way anyway. For most Christians this sounds a very empty hope. Now behind most or many—I will not say most for how would I know—but experience tells me that behind many a pious face, a countenance, there is a soul in absolute turmoil. And I am not talking about people just worried. I am talking about people who have the awful problem of putting on the face of holiness while they are struggling internally with the heart and the horror of sin, great wickedness.

And the old life keeps coming back. And the old accusations keep rearing their ugly head. And when they hear things about Christian victory it sounds oh so good, but it is too good to be true.

Well, now let me be honest with you. Most of what is preached on Christian victory is not true, because it is a perversion of what Paul is teaching in Romans chapter six. I don't want to repeat myself ad nauseum, but I have talked in the past about... I mean I heard this. I thank God I never heard it from my own minister. He had too much sense to preach this way. But nonetheless I heard this as a young fellow who was reading and trying to get victory and live in the joy of the Lord and the assurance of grace. And I heard this rubbish that most of you heard, that you have got to become a corpse. You have got to believe yourself to be a corpse and therefore you will not react to sin anymore than a corpse will react if you stick a pin in it. You will not feel anything. You will not react in any way.

I read what I could, did what I could and I found it was all so much nonsense. But that is not what Paul is teaching. Listen to how he brings it all to pass in verse 14.

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”¹⁴

Do you notice the two fors in that verse?

“... 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.”¹⁵

You can yield yourself unto God because sin will not have dominion over you. How do you know sin will not have dominion over you? Because you are not under the law, but you are under grace. What does that mean you are not under the law, but you are under grace? It means your old man has been crucified with Christ. It means you are not in Adam any more. It means you are not being dealt with on the basis of the covenant of works. It means that you are now in Christ. You are being dealt with on the basis of the merits of Christ. You died with him. You rose with him. He has looked after the entire work of your redemption. In other words, you have been justified freely by the grace of God received through faith alone. That is what he is saying.

Now understand that. If you have been justified because of that, verse 14, you are not under the law. You are under grace. Sin cannot be the tyrant over you, because if it were, it would bring you back into Adam. It can't do that. In other words, verse 14 comes full circle. Verse 14 has to do not so much with experience, again, as with our position in Christ. It is a description of justification. He is saying, “Look at this. We are now coming full circle. You are justified.” And the more you understand that the more that grips your heart the more you will be able to live accordingly.

¹⁴ Romans 6:14.

¹⁵ Romans 6:13-14.

So here is the answer to the calumny of verse one, let's continue in sin that grace may abound. No, no. Grace produces holiness. Understand that. Grace produces holiness. Nothing else can produce holiness. Now understand that as well. Holiness is never produced by principles. We may set a rule in this church that every woman has to have black hair. Go and dye your hair black. That will make you a real Free Presbyterian. Now, we are not going to do this, by the way. Every man must wear brown shoes and shave his head. You would like that, wouldn't you, Scott? Yeah. We may do that. And if we brain wash you well enough the way some so called churches, sects and cults do, we may even get you to conform. You do this, you do this, you do the other thing. Do you know what? At the end of the day none of those things would make you one hair's breadth the holier. Isn't this what Martin Luther found when he tried to make himself holy and he went into the cell of the Augustinian monastery? He lay on the stone floor all night. He flagellated his body. He made it a mass of blood and gore. He kept the body under. He starved himself. He spent hours in prayer. He did everything he could to shut out the world, close the gates of the monastery, keep the world outside. But he found there was a world of sin in his heart. Nothing could make him holy, but one. And that was grace received by faith alone in Jesus Christ.

Now take this to your heart, because if you tell me that you have received grace and you are happier in the horrors of sin than the holiness of salvation, you are fooling yourself. Grace installs Christ as King and righteousness as the ruling principle of the life. That is what grace does, because those who died with Christ must live with Christ.

So recognizing what he has done, reckoning on our union with him in all that he did we now refuse to allow sin to dominate us. And that is why we are not sinless and why we grieve over the very presence of sin in our lives. We do rejoice that its reign is over. As I said at the beginning of this chapter, sin is no longer our natural element.

Give you the well known example from farming life. Not that I am a farmer, but I lived for 15 years among farming people. Some of our friends were sheep farmers. Some of them were pig farmers. Ireland is famous for both its pigs and its sheep.

Contrary to what most people think, give a pig a clean environment and it will stay as clean and as white as snow. A modern pig farm, go and see it and you will see for yourself. But equally put that old hog out in the muck and the mire and it is just as happy wallowing in it up to its ears. And the sow returns to her wallowing in the mire. But you get a sheep and let it fall into the mire and that sheep will be in distress, such distresses that it may well kill it. Until and unless it gets rid of the muck it can't stay there. It is not its element.

That is the way it is with the Christian. Once we were among the hogs, at home in the muck and the mire. But now we are in the flock of Christ and that is not our element anymore. And if we fall into it is a horror to body and soul until we get it right. That is the mark of a Christian. We rejoice that the reign of sin is over. We stand accepted as men and women who are new creatures in Christ. Not because we strive against sin, but because we died to sin We are not new creatures by striving and by conquering. We are

new creatures by faith in Christ and therefore we strive and therefore we conquer.

This is Paul's argument here. Here is how you are to think and live as a Christian.

Now I said at the beginning this is a very vital thing. There has never been a day, I suppose, of greater confusion among God's people. How do you think? What am I to think? I want to tell you what to think. And I have tried to do that in these messages. But I am more inclined to lay emphasis on how you are to think. In other words, if I can teach God's people to think rather than just spoon feed them in such a way that they will give me back the answers that they think I want. I mean, what good is that? I want to teach you how to think, because if you know how to think as a Christian, you will know how to live as a Christian. And those hands and feet and eyes and ears, that entire body of yours will be yielded as an instrument. As Paul says in Romans chapter 12 and it is the same word. You will present your body unto God a living sacrifice holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. May the Lord teach us and make us teachable.

I am not telling you these things as somebody who has arrived. I also have to think. Many a time people come to me and ask me: What do you do when you are in this position and that position? Probably like you my first reaction will be to fall apart. You ever get down? No, no. I would never get down. You don't know there is a devil until you have got to stand every week where I stand. Then you know there is a devil all right.

So what do you do? I can tell you quite honestly and simply. I have got to take this book. I can take the whole book, but there are particular passages that I take and over the years scores and scores and scores of times I have gone in as the Savior said, shut the door. Get alone with God and open that book until the truth of the gospel again penetrates my heart and grips my soul and I think through and praise my way through and pray my way through the gospel. Because it is when I understand the gospel. Then I can reckon on that gospel and then I can refuse the reign of sin and yield myself afresh unto God.

May the Lord teach us all how to think and live as Christians.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Let's all pray. We want every head bowed and every eye closed. In just a minute this meeting will be over and you will be free to leave. Are you a Christian? You can't think like one unless you are one. You can't live the Christian life unless you are a Christian. Make sure tonight you know what it is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to pass from death unto life. And if you are saved, may God indeed teach you how to live as a Christian. We can help you in the things of God. Mr. Brame and Dr. Barrett and I are here as your servants for Christ's sake. We would be happy to point you christward, especially if you are not saved, to show you how you may be saved and sure of it.

Father in heaven, bless thy Word to every heart we pray. We ask thee that thou will set Christ evidently before us all. Grant that none of us will in any way fail to recognize what Christ has done. And, Lord, we pray that that recognition will by the grace of God lead

souls to saving faith in Christ. Bless those who are saved, Lord. Enable us to reckon ourselves, indeed, to be dead unto sin and alive unto God in Jesus Christ. And, Lord, we pray teach us to refuse the tyranny of sin, to refuse to let our bodies be instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. Lord, take these lives. Take these bodies. Consecrate them to thy service recognizing Christ's work for us and reckoning on our union with him we would present our bodies unto thee, living sacrifices, instruments, weapons in the warfare against sin and Satan, weapons of righteousness unto God. Hear our prayer and part us with thy very richest blessing. Be the abiding portion of all thy blood bought people both this sabbath evening and until the Lord Jesus Christ either calls us home or comes again in all his glory. We pray in Jesus' precious name. Amen.