

## Dying to Live

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Unshakeable: Romans / Romans 6:1-14

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My wife and I love watching home renovation shows. How many of you watch those home renovation shows? Yeah, it's a great way to spend a lazy Saturday afternoon.

You know what we love about those shows? We love to see the transformation, the before and after. You watch this house that is falling apart, that's a disaster and by the end of the episode it's like a brand-new home.

And the final reveal usually starts on the outside and you think, well that doesn't look much different. Maybe there's a fresh coat of paint or some updated landscaping, but it looks like the same house.

But the real transformation is what happens on the inside, when they open the door and they first walk in and the dramatic reaction because the owner can't believe the difference. The transformation happens, from the inside out.

Every episode has that moment — you know the one — where they open up the walls and it's worse than anyone expected. And you think, can anything even be done here? Oh, no, what drama! But no matter how dramatic the tear down, the transformation is always remarkable.

I think that's a great image of the work that God does by His grace in those who place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. He doesn't just renovate the exterior. He transforms us from the inside out. There is this transformation that happens, the moment you place your trust in Jesus.

Placing your faith in Jesus doesn't just change your status before God — it changes you. From the inside.

But here's the question I want to ask this morning, it's the question that Paul poses to us in our passage this morning.

What if someone went through that dramatic transformation... and then moved back in and kept living like the house was still a wreck? What if they never actually lived in light of what had been done?

Because the crazy thing is that describes so many Christians. God has done a dramatic work on the inside — but we're still living like the old house. And Paul wants to shake us and say — do you actually understand what happened to you?

Here's what Paul wants us to see this morning, he wants us to see that grace isn't a license to keep on sinning, it empowers you to stop.

Look with me this morning at our passage in [Romans 6:1-14](#).

Paul left off with this amazingly encouraging line in chapter 5, but it's also a line that leaves us with questions.

Let me show you what I mean, just look back to the last two verses of chapter 5...

**Romans 5:20–21 ESV**

***... but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.***

I mean that's an amazing reality that we celebrated last week, that you cannot out sin the grace of God. That grace is infinitely more powerful than sin and death, that where sin increases, grace increases and overflows all the more and praise God for that.

But it leaves the question open then. Does that mean I can just sin as much as I want, because grace is always there? Like if the more I sin, the more grace increases, should I just sin more and more so that grace increases more and more?

See, Paul transitions to chapter 6 and he anticipates that objection, he anticipates that question and so he poses that rhetorical question.

Look at verse 1-2 there.

**Romans 6:1-2 ESV**

***What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?***

Do you see? He's anticipating this question and some of you, who have been journeying with us up to this point are like well, it's about time.

All this talk about grace and forgiveness and unlimited access to grace, well people are going to start thinking that they can just sin as much as they want and God is just going to forgive them.

I'm glad that Paul is finally dealing with this...

Notice Paul's answer, the question is if we have unlimited access to grace, if God loves to forgive sin and I love to sin, why don't we just both keep doing what we love to do?

Do you see Paul's response? By. No. Means. How can we who died to sin still live in it?

By no means, it's an emphatic statement you can't see it as strongly in English, but in the original, it's like absolutely not, what a perversion, how could you say such a thing?

Paul's point is that such a suggestion is a complete misunderstanding of what the gospel is, of what Christ has accomplished. There is no way, no way that anyone who understands the gospel, understands the power of the death and resurrection could ever say such a thing, let alone live that way.

See, I think we as Christians, there are really two pitfalls that we need to avoid, and honestly, I think most of us have an alignment issue where we naturally lean to either one of these.

There is a middle road that we need to drive down, and on each side of that road is two pitfalls that we could fall into one is legalism and the other is license.

See, some of us, we respond to sin with legalism. And legalism is reducing the Christian life and experience down to a set of rules and regulations that we follow.

Do this, but don't do that. There are things that Christians just don't do, we have this ideal in our minds of what a Christian looks like, talks like, act's like and we don't just live our lives according to that, but we judge other Christians by that same standard.

We look down on Christians who don't live and act like we do.

Legalism, this set of rules and regulations, because that makes it easy doesn't it? When things are black and white, crystal clear. It makes it easy when I face a situation to be able to say, I do this, but I don't do this.

And maybe some of those rule and boundaries are healthy. They're good. Like maybe you have rules in regards to what you watch and what you don't watch, maybe you have rules if you're married around not being left alone around the opposite sex or maybe you have strict guidelines that you operate under when it comes to things like drinking and gambling and they're probably good and it's healthy to have those boundaries.

Of the two pitfalls, I gotta be honest my alignment leads this way... but it can become unhealthy.

It can become dangerous when we equate rules with relationship, and when our rules are not rules that we see found on the pages of Scripture. When those rules aren't just personal boundaries, but things we force on our brothers and sisters in Christ, limitations that Scripture does not place on them.

But there is this other pitfall called license. And license is just what Paul is describing here... that because there is unlimited access to grace, that we have this blank cheque to keep sinning, because all is forgiven, right?

So why worry, let me just live my life, what's the big deal? God is going to forgive, so long as I've prayed the prayer, walked the aisle and been baptized. So long as I'm in church on Sunday and say the right things, and do the right things, I'm okay, grace gives me license to live the way I want.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor and theologian who was executed by the Nazis in 1945 for his resistance to Hitler.

He describes this as cheap grace, because that's what it is.

"Of course you have sinned, but now everything is forgiven, so you can stay as you are and enjoy the consolations of forgiveness."

But he says Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance... grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ.

And what Paul is saying is it's not about legalism and it's not about license to sin....

It's about knowing who you are in Christ. It's about understanding just what Christ has accomplished for you and in you.

Grace doesn't give you license to sin... grace empowers you to stop.

He gives us three things to remember in this passage when it comes to our battle with sin.

The first is this...

Remember. You're not who you used to be... You're not who you used to be.

### **NOT WHO I USED TO BE**

Remember that who you used to be has died with Christ.

That's what he's getting at in these verses, do you see it?

It's why he asks the question in verse 2, how can we who have died to sin still live it?

Look at verse 3 and 4.

**Romans 6:3-4 ESV**

**<sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.**

Do you see what he's saying? He's telling us that when you place your faith in Jesus, something miraculous happens... a baptism happens. But he's not talking about the water baptism that we see here on Sunday morning's, he's talking about what that water baptism symbolizes, it symbolizes something that happens internally, inside of us.

That when we place our faith in Jesus, we are miraculously, spiritually united with Him and immersed in His death, we died with Jesus on that cross, we are united with Him in His burial.

What does that mean? Well he explains it further in verses 6-7 look there.

**Romans 6:6-7 ESV**

**<sup>6</sup> We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup> For one who has died has been set free from sin.**

Paul is saying that old self was crucified with Him. Who is that old self? Well it's who I used to be before Jesus found me. This is where it's helpful to know the flow of Paul's letter.

That old self there is the old self that was in Adam, do you remember that? That old self that was under Adam, the place where sin and death reigned and ruled over me.

That old self that was dead in my trespasses and sin, that old self that once walked following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the old self that lived in the passions of my flesh, and carried out the desires of the flesh and mind, that old self that was by nature a child of wrath.

That person died with Jesus on that cross, you know what that means, it means I'm not that person anymore.

But if we have died to that old self, it's this realization that I am no longer enslaved to sin, that I have died so that I can be set free from sin.

Oh, brother and sister, it means that sin is no longer you're master, you don't have to do what it says any longer.

I know, I know that you're so used to listening to that voice, you're so used to being in bondage to sin, but you have to remember you are not who you used to be, you have died to that old self and sin is no longer your master.

See, I think the reason that so many of us still struggle so severely, is because we forget this. We forget, or we just don't realize that when Jesus died on that cross, you died with Him and so did sin's power on your life.

And the question of course is, then why do I still struggle with sin? Why do I still battle against sin, why is it still such a struggle?

Well, think of it this way, think of it as a ruler, an emperor who has been dethroned and removed from it's throne, but it still tries to gain that seat of power back. The emperor has been removed from power, but it still fights, it still attacks; trying to gain that seat of power back and sometimes, sometimes we give it that seat of power.

Sin still comes at you, still fights, still attacks, but it has no throne to return to.

Sin in the Christian life is much like a hurricane... the most powerful hurricane is a category five hurricane, and under a category five hurricane you are

completely powerless, you will not be able to withstand its damage, it is destructive.

But you come to Christ, and that category five hurricane is still a hurricane, but it's been downgraded. Left unguarded it can still do damage, it can still wield destruction, but there are things you can do to stand against the storm.

See, most of us give more power and authority to sin in our life than we have to, because we don't realize this, we don't remember.

That I'm not who I used to be, that I have died with Christ and sin no longer has authority or dominion over me.

But there isn't just power in the death of Christ is there? In fact, if He stayed dead there wouldn't be any power at all.

Jesus Christ is resurrected and alive today.

And the power of the gospel in us isn't just that I have been united to Jesus in His death, but I have been united to Him in His resurrection.

That's the second thing we need to remember this morning.

If we are going to overcome the power of sin in our lives, we need to remember...you have new life in Christ.

## **NEW LIFE IN CHRIST**

Look what Paul says to us in verse 5 there.

### **Romans 6:5 ESV**

***<sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.***

Do you see the two sides? It isn't just about the old you dying, no. It's about who you have been raised to be.

If you and I were united in His death, that means we have also been raised with Him in His resurrection. That means you don't have to be defined by who you used to be, you aren't even defined by the person who died with Jesus, that's not the point, that's just half the story.

The real power is that just as Jesus Christ has been resurrected from the dead, so have we and the power to overcome sin in our life, lays in the power we have in the resurrected life.

See if we have been united with Jesus in His resurrection, then what is true about Jesus in the resurrection is true about us!

Look at verses 8-10 with me.

**Romans 6:8-10 ESV**

***<sup>8</sup> Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup> For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.***

What is true about Jesus in the resurrection is true about us. And I want you to notice two things here.

First — this resurrection life has a future dimension. Just as Jesus has been raised never to die again, those who are in Christ will one day be resurrected with glorified bodies to live with Him forever. Death no longer has the final word. That is the hope of the Christian life.

But the resurrection life doesn't start then. It starts now.

Right now, today, you are living in the power of the resurrection. And that changes everything about how you live.

Notice what verse 10 says about Jesus — the life He lives, He lives to God. Not for Himself. Not on His own terms. He lives fully focused toward the glory of His Father. And what is true about Jesus is true about us. This new life we have been given — we live it to God. To His glory, not our own.

So don't think of this as a second chance to start over and do things your way only better. You have died to your old master and been raised under a new one. The Kingdom of God is your dominion now.

It means that you don't live life on your terms, by your rules, and your way, no. This new life is lived to God, your desire, your longing is to glorify Him and that changes everything, doesn't it?

But here's the question — how do I actually live that way? By trying harder? Stricter rules? More discipline? No. The key is relationship, not rules.

Go back to that phrase in verse 8 that says if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him... not live for Him, or live beside Him or even through Him, no, in the resurrection life, we live with Jesus.

I think it's this emphasis on relationship, isn't it? To live with Jesus. See, it's a mistake to limit the purpose of the Christian life to simply avoiding sin, because that's not life, that's just another form of bondage.

The focus of the Christian life is to live for God, in relationship with Jesus, we live with Jesus.

I think marriage is a great illustration of this, like when I married my wife, I didn't just marry her for the things I gain from it, there were some very practical things you gain from marriage. But the greatest reason I married my wife is because I wanted to live with her. I may not always be the easiest to live with, but I wanted to be with her, and I still want to be with her.

But the purpose of our marriage is relationship, isn't it? In marriage you seek to honour each other, not by obeying a set of rules you give each other or regulations or rituals, no, but I simply honour my wife by investing in our life together, building my intimacy with her.

I build my relationship with her by spending time with her, talking with her, listening to her, by showing up and prioritizing our relationship and it's the same way with Jesus, isn't it? We build relationship with Jesus the way we do in any relationship, spending time, listening to His Word, showing up, prioritizing.

And when we do that, sin begins to lose its appeal, not because you're trying to avoid it, but because your relationship with Jesus takes priority.

It's like the old hymn we used to sing turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face and things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.

But knowing who you are is only half the battle. The third thing Paul calls us to is this — live like it.

The third thing to remember is this remember that you're called to live like it.

### **CALLED TO LIVE LIKE IT**

Live like you've died and been resurrected with Christ.

But how?

I'm grateful that Paul ends this section with 4 practical directives to put in place. He moves from telling us who we are, to how we live this out, what does this look like in my life?

Look at what Paul says in verses 11-14.

#### **Romans 6:11-14 ESV**

***<sup>11</sup> So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.***

***<sup>12</sup> Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. <sup>13</sup> Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. <sup>14</sup> For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.***

Four directives, four applications, the first is this – to consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to Christ. The NIV uses the word reckon. In essence Paul is saying

get this in your head and your heart, embrace this, truly embrace this as your identity.

Consider or reckon. It carries the idea of taking something and making it a settled reality, Paul is saying make the new life in Christ your identity, like this is who you are now.

Paul is trying to move us from intellectual knowledge to heart application. Like I know, I know that the gospel says I am a new creation, that I'm not who I used to be, but I don't always feel like it. When I fall, I wonder am I really changed?

Like, I've talked with some Christians, especially new believers who said, man I've seen such victory in these areas and then I fell, and immediately the enemy's voice says, hah, not as much a new creation as you thought.

It's kind of like imposter syndrome.

Imposter syndrome is that feeling that you don't actually belong where you are. That despite your title, your position, your accomplishments — you're going to be found out. That sooner or later someone is going to tap you on the shoulder and say — we made a mistake; you don't actually belong here.

And a lot of Christians live with a spiritual version of imposter syndrome. I know the Bible says I'm a new creation. I know the gospel says I've been raised with Christ. But when I fall, when I fail, when that old voice comes back — I wonder, am I really who God says I am? Maybe I'm still just the old me dressed up in Christian clothes.

And Paul says — reckon it. Consider it. Make it your settled reality. Not because you feel it, but because it's true. It's what Christ has declared about you, if we are going to see victory over sin in our life, we need to settle this in our hearts, settle this in our minds, I am not who I used to be, I am a new creation in Christ... Preach it to yourself everyday.

Look at verse 12.

**Romans 6:12 ESV**

***<sup>12</sup> Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.***

It's this understanding that because sin is no longer your master, you don't have to obey its voice any longer. You have a choice now, and I know that sometimes we don't feel like it, like I know because that voice of sin has reigned over us for so long that voice still has a ring of authority, we want to obey it.

But you don't have to. Because of what Christ has accomplished, because you have been united in His death and resurrection you have been given the authority to say no to sin, sin is no longer your master.... Just say no!

You know, I was raised in Windsor, part of the black community. I grew up in black Baptist churches that were established by freed and former slaves. A rich and powerful history. I remember one church that still has the trap door where they used to hide runaway slaves on the Underground Railroad.

And I remember being taught this history. Being taught about the moment slavery was abolished. Millions of men and women who were now legally free. The chains were gone. The law had changed. Freedom had been declared.

And yet there were those who stayed. Who went back to the plantation. Who kept obeying the master's voice. Not because they had to. But because that voice had commanded them for so long, that freedom didn't feel real yet. They didn't know what freedom looked like. They didn't know how to live as free men and women.

They were legally free. The emancipation had happened — but it hadn't gotten from their legal status into their minds and hearts yet.

That's exactly what Paul is describing here. Sin has been abolished as your master. The declaration has been made. You are legally, spiritually free. But that

old voice is still familiar. Still feels authoritative. Still commands with the same tone it always did.

But you don't have to obey it. Not anymore. You have been emancipated. Christ has set you free. And Paul says — live like it.

But then he gets really practical here, do you see it?

Verse 13.

**Romans 6:13 ESV**

**<sup>13</sup> Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.**

Your members here are literally the members of your body. He's talking about your hands, your feet, your eyes, your brain... your mind, your intellect, your skills, your abilities, those are you members and you have a choice in how to use them now.

I think this just gets really practical here, what are you spending your time doing, what you're using your strength for. It's quite simple...if you keep using your eyes, ears, hands, feet, mind and presenting them to things that lead to death and as instruments of unrighteousness, well no wonder you're still struggling with sin.

Paul is saying take those members of your body and use them as instruments of righteousness, use them as instruments of the gospel, to the glory of God, fill your time seeking after Jesus and the things of Jesus.

What are your eyes spending time on? What is your mind dwelling on? What are your hands reaching for? What are your feet carrying you toward?

Because here's the thing — you will become what you consistently present yourself to. If you keep feeding the old nature, don't be surprised when it grows. But if you start deliberately, intentionally presenting your members to God —

your time, your attention, your energy, your skills — you are literally starving sin of the fuel it needs.

It's not complicated. It's just a choice. And now, for the first time, you actually have one.

But look at the last piece there in verse 14, it could be the most important.

**Romans 6:14 ESV**

<sup>14</sup> ***For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.***

You are no longer under the dominion of the law, but you are under the dominion of grace.

Grace reigns over you, oh child of God, grace is the air we breathe. And maybe grace seems a bit strange to talk about when we're talking about fighting against sin, but grace is the ammo, grace is the fuel that saves you from making this just about rules.

Because when you and I fall, and we will fall, we need to be reminded of grace. In those times when we fall we can be overcome with guilt and shame, because we've failed all over again and when we are overcome with guilt and shame it leads us to seek out relief, relief in places we shouldn't, which leads to more guilt and more shame, which leads us back to our sin, and leads to more guilt and more shame... if we forget about grace, this is the cycle we fall into.

But if we remember grace, we remember that when we sin, we have an advocate with the Father, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin and if we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

That's grace. And we need to be reminded that on our worst day, the day when we fail miserably and get it all wrong, we are not so far gone that we are beyond the grace of the cross and the love of God for us in Jesus Christ.

But we need even to be reminded that on our best day, the days when we do everything right, we are still in desperate need of the grace of the Lord Jesus.

Remember the house? God has done a dramatic work on the inside. The transformation has happened. The question is whether you're going to keep living like the old house or step into the new one.

Grace isn't a licence to keep sinning. It's the power to stop. You are not who you used to be. You have new life in Christ. So live like it.