

Dying to Live, Part 2

Introduction

A. The Transformation

1. Of John Newton

Eighteenth century Englishman John Newton ran away to sea early in life and finally settled in Africa. In what seems to be a reversal of normal roles at the time, he came under the direction of a Black woman. He sank so low in despair that he lived on the crumbs from her table. Young Newton ate wild yams, which he dug out of the ground at night. His clothing was reduced to a single shirt, which he periodically washed in the ocean. He escaped his slavery and fled to other African natives, with whom he lived a debauched life.

However God laid hold of him through an African missionary. Newton became a sea captain and later a minister of Jesus Christ. He went on to write many great hymns, one of the most popular being "Amazing Grace." He became the pastor of a church in England and to this day, the churchyard carries an epitaph that Newton himself wrote. According to his autobiography (*Out of the Depths: An Autobiography* [Chicago: Moody, n.d.], p. 151) it reads:

John Newton, Clerk,
once an infidel and libertine,
A servant of slaves in Africa,
was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ,
Preserved, restored, pardoned,
And appointed to preach the faith
He had long labored to destroy.

What was it that so radically changed the life of John Newton?

2. Of the apostle Paul

Before his conversion, the apostle Paul was a violent aggressor against the early church. He said of himself: "[I] was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy" (1 Tim. 1:13). Paul also said, "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*" (Gal. 2:20). Paul was saying that the old self is dead and a new self lives that is one with Christ. But the question remains: What was it that so powerfully and dramatically changed him?

3. Of the Corinthian believers

Paul declared to the Corinthians, "*Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of*

God. And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified" (1 Cor. 6:9-11). What was it that so dramatically changed the lives of all those people?

B. The Truth

We find the answer to that question in the sixth chapter of Romans. The apostle Paul declares that only Jesus Christ can totally change a person from the inside out. The moment a person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ he is crucified and buried with Him by a divine miracle, and then raised with Him to a new life. Believers' lives are literally transformed.

The great theme Paul develops in Romans 6-8 is the inevitable sanctification of the believer. In the fifth chapter of Romans Paul states that the first result of the believer's justification is security. The sixth chapter describes the second result-- holiness. The Lord saves us to make us holy. To the sinful Corinthians Paul said, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (1 Cor. 1:2). Even the Corinthian believers, with all their failures and sins, were nonetheless destined to holiness.

Review

- I. THE ANTAGONIST** (v. 1)
- II. THE ANSWER** (v. 2)
- III. THE ARGUMENT** (vv. 3-14)
 - A. The Believer's Baptism into Christ** (v. 3a)
 - B. The Believer's Death and Resurrection with Christ** (vv. 3b-5)

Lesson

C. The Believer's Freedom from Sin (vv. 6-7)

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin."

When the apostle Paul said "knowing this" in verse 6, he was making an appeal to the common knowledge of his readers. It is sad to say that he could not make such an appeal to the church today. Many Christians simply do not understand who they are in Christ. Because of that, they too often yield to sin.

I know of a pastor who counsels pre-marital couples to take a shower together to get to know each other. He tells them not to worry about sin, saying that when we sin, it is simply a manifestation of our old nature. He believes the old nature is going to sin anyway, so there's nothing believers can do about it. But according to the apostle Paul, the believer's old nature is dead and buried. With that in mind, how can we possibly serve sin? If you hold to the view that sees a dual nature in the believer, you could easily attempt to excuse all kinds of sins by blaming them on the old nature.

1. The believer's old nature is crucified (v. 6a)
"Our old man is crucified with him."

The apostle Paul uses the Greek word *παλαιωσ* for "old," which refers to "things not merely old, but worn out by use" (G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, [Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1981], p. 334). Paul is saying our old nature has been worn out by use and is therefore useless, fit only to be discarded in a scrap heap. Our old nature is what we were before salvation--depraved and damned. Paul said, *"By one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned"* (Rom. 5:12). Being in Adam was to be in sin, but being in Christ is to be in grace. First Corinthians 15:22 says, *"As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."* The old nature, then, is the adamic nature.

The apostle Paul said, *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I [Gk., --not my old nature], but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me"* (Gal. 2:20). It is a serious misunderstanding to think of the believer as having both an old and new nature. Believers do not have dual personalities. Since there is no such thing as an old nature in the believer, what then is the correct meaning of the term "old man?"

- a. Ephesians 4:21-22--Paul said, *"If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former manner of life the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."* The apostle Paul here describes the old man as the believer's former, unregenerate self. He contrasts it in verse 24 by saying, *"Ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."*

Some people assume Paul is giving a command to put off the old nature as if it were still in the believer, but Paul is simply stating the fact that the old nature is dead. He used an infinitive in the Greek text to describe the believer's putting off of the old nature. Commentator John Murray translates Ephesians 4:22 to read, *"So that ye have put off according to the former manner of life the old man"* (*Principles of Conduct* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957] see pp. 211-19). It is not a command but a statement of fact. Bishop Handley Moule translated the verse this way: "Our old man, our old state, as out of Christ and under Adam's headship, under guilt and in moral bondage, was crucified with Christ" (*The Epistle to the Romans* [London: Pickering & Inglis, n.d.] p. 164). Commentator Martyn Lloyd-Jones translates it, "Do not go on living as if you were still that old man, because that old man has died. Do not go living as if he was still there" (*Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 6* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972], p. 64). Even if someone insisted that verse 22 is a command, it only serves to establish the fact that since the old nature is dead, the believer is to practice that positional truth.

- b. 2 Corinthians 5:17--Paul said, *"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."* The popular theological concept of the old man and new man fighting each other is not biblically accurate. According to the apostle Paul, the old man has been put off, having been replaced by the new man.

- c. Colossians 3:9-10--Paul said, *"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, that is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."* This passage provides the best possible interpretation of Ephesians 4:22 because the book of Colossians is parallel to the book of Ephesians. Paul is simply defining what a Christian is--one who has already put off the old nature.

Paul is insisting in Romans six that the doctrine of justification causes a person to be completely divorced with his old sin nature. That is not a process, but a reality. To suppose as some do that the believer's old nature has been crucified but has risen from the grave is to contradict the entire point of Paul's argument. The believer's old sin nature has already been crucified; it is not in the process of being crucified. Some people are constantly saying, "I must crucify my old nature." If you think that way you are wasting your time, because according to Romans 6:6 the believer's old nature has already been crucified.

The believer is a new creation--not a perfected creation--but still a new creation. The old man is unregenerate and the new man is regenerate. The believer is one new man. The old man has ceased to exist. Salvation brings about a radical change in the nature of the believer. So if someone continues to live in the same relationship to sin as they did before professing faith in Christ, they have not been redeemed, regardless of what they claim.

2. The believer's sinfulness is rendered inoperative (v. 6b)
"The body of sin might be destroyed."

- a. The term

"The body of sin" is best seen as referring to sin's absolute domination over the life of the unbeliever. A person's body before salvation is totally possessed by his own sinful nature. "Body" refers not only to the physical body, but to the mind as well. However because of the believer's union with Christ, he is no longer under the control of sin.

The apostle Paul conceived of sin as being associated with the believer's body. In Romans 8 he says, *"If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin"* (v. 10). He then says, *"If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also give life to your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you"* (v. 11). Paul makes a connection between the believer's physical body and sin. In Romans 8:13 he says, *"If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."* And later in verse 23 he says that we *"groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body."* As long as believers have a body, they will always battle with sin. The body is the beachhead of sin.

Some Bible commentators interpret the phrase "the body of sin" as representing the entire realm of sin, but I believe that Paul is simply referring to the crucifixion of the old nature and the end of sin's reign in the life of the believer. However that is not to say the physical body is always and only evil. Our bodies obviously have the potential for good--how else how else could they be offered

as living sacrifices (cf. Rom. 12:1-2)? Before the believer is saved, sin totally dominates and controls his being. After a person is saved, however, sin is no longer the tyrant and the believer is no longer its slave. That is why it is foolish for a Christian to sin, because he doesn't have to. Sin's tyranny has been broken.

b. The translation

The King James Version incorrectly translates the Greek word *καταργεο* as "destroyed," giving the impression that the believer's sin nature has been eradicated. Therefore many have taught that the believers sin nature is eradicated at the moment of salvation. This is known as the doctrine of perfectionism. However *Καταργεο* literally means, "to render inoperative or invalid." This particular Greek word occurs twenty-seven times in the New Testament and is used six times in the book of Romans.

- 1) Romans 3:3--Paul said, "*Shall their [Israel's] unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect [καταργεο]?*" The phrase "without effect" could not mean destroyed because nothing could destroy the faithfulness of God.
- 2) Romans 3:31--Paul said, "*Do we then make void [καταργεο] the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law.*" The verse cannot refer to the destruction of the law because the law is eternal.
- 3) Romans 4:14--Paul said, "*If they who are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of no effect.*" The same Greek word is used here and is correctly translated "made of no effect." The promise of God can never be destroyed. Likewise, the believer's sin nature loses its dominance and is rendered inoperative.
- 4) Romans 7:2--Paul said, "*The woman who hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed [καταργεο] from the law of her husband.*" The verse is not saying the woman is destroyed as Romans 6:6 translates the same Greek word, it simply means that her marriage is now of no effect. She is no longer considered married to her deceased husband.

Greek scholar Joseph Henry Thayer says *καταργεο* means "to render idle, unemployed, inactive, inoperative," to deprive of its strength, to deprive of force, influence, or power, bring to nought, make of none effect" (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962], p. 336). The believer's body of sin has been deprived of its controlling power. J.B. Phillips' New Testament correctly translates Romans 6:6 to read, "Let us never forget that our old selves died with him on the cross that the tyranny of sin over us might be broken."

c. The task

- 1) 1 Corinthians 6:19-20--Paul said, "*Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body.*"

Paul was saying that since your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and not under the domination of sin, you should not be involved in sexual sin.

- 2) Romans 12:1-2--Paul said, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*
- 3) Romans 7:18, 23--Paul said, *"I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing... I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."* In both verses, Paul is referring to his humanness--that innate tendency to pursue evil and sin. Sinful instincts, bents, and propensities become a beachhead for the attack of Satan to lead believers into sin. The body in Paul's terminology is the vehicle by which sin manifests itself in the believer. The body is the unredeemed portion of believers and it is here that Satan tempts believers to sin.

An unregenerate person can do no good work for God. A non-believer can do acts that may appear to be humanly good, but they are not good works as far as God is concerned because all is to be done for his glory (1 Cor. 10:31). An unbeliever might do something that benefits other human beings, but it won't be of benefit to God. Only when a person becomes a Christian can the tyranny of sin be broken. Only then is he able to secure a new controlling agent--the Holy Spirit--in which to rightly glorify God.

- 4) Romans 6:16-18--Paul said, *"Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked that whereas ye were the servants of sin, ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being, then, made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."* God is the believer's new master. Sin is no longer the controlling monarch!
- 5) Galatians 5:24--Paul said, *"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."* The believer's flesh has been neutralized in terms of its dominance, but not necessarily in terms of its presence. That is why the believer must control his flesh and not allow it to control him.

3. The believer's master is no longer sin (v. 6c-7)
"We should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin."

* **Two Fields**

Martyn Lloyd-Jones gives a good illustration describing the believer and his humanness or sinful nature. Picture two fields with a road dividing them.

Throughout his life before Christ, Lloyd-Jones lived in the field where Satan is king.

Satan always told him what to do and his humanness simply responded in sin. The field on the other side of the road is controlled by Christ. By the grace of God he crossed over the road into the new field by placing his faith in Christ. The field is under the dominion of Christ and controlled by His righteousness and holiness. Christ was the new ruler and new monarch in Lloyd-Jones' life. The only problem Lloyd-Jones said he experienced was sometimes he could hear Satan from across the road still barking orders at him. Satan had a clever way of making him interested in what he was ordering him to do, even though he was no longer under Satan's dominion. Many fall prey to the very one from whom they've been delivered.

a. The constant fact

The apostle Paul wasn't saying believers won't sin, only that sin is not the dominating force in the Christian's life. The non-Christian does nothing but sin (cf. Isa. 64:6) whereas the Christian is enabled to do righteous deeds. Through our participation in the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:3-5), our old nature dies, the body of sin is rendered inoperative, and we are no longer slaves to sin. Paul said, "*Ye were the servants of sin, [but] ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being, then, made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness*" (Rom. 6:17-18).

b. The controlling force

The controlling force in the believer's life is grace, godliness, righteousness, and holiness. Paul reaffirms that in verse 7: "*He that is dead is freed from sin.*" The believer's old nature died, rendering it powerless. That is why it is so foolish for a Christian to sin--he doesn't have to! Now the apostle Paul was not saying the believer has been freed from sin's presence. As long as the believer lives, he will continue to struggle with sinful habits and propensities. Paul's point is that in dying with Christ, sin is no longer ruling over the believer. If a Christian should fall into sin, however, he is not exempt from the effects of sin. The iron law of the principle of cause and effect (Gal. 6:7-9) still applies.

- 1) 1 Peter 4:1-2--Peter said, "*As Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men but to the will of God.*" Peter was simply reiterating what Paul said. Because the believer has died with Christ, the tyranny of sin has been broken.
- 2) Romans 7:20--Paul said, "*If I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*" What happens when a believer sins? The new nature within him is not to blame, but the sin that dwells in his body is the culprit. It is the only part of the believer that is not redeemed.
- 3) 2 Peter 1:3-4--Peter said, "*According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; by which are given unto us exceedingly great and precious promises, that by these ye might be*

partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

The new nature of the believer is the divine nature of God planted within his life. It is the life of God in the soul of man. When the believer sins, it is the sin in the world that surrounds him and tempts him to sin. But as the believer is obedient to God on a daily basis, he will refuse to yield to that temptation. A justified person has been set free from the power of sin.

D. The Believer's Death to Sin (vv. 8-10)

"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."

1. The certainty (v. 8)

"If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him."

The apostle Paul reiterates the same ideas he communicated in verses 3 and 5 that as believers have died with Christ, they have also risen to walk in new life with Christ. By using the future tense Paul isn't pointing to heaven; he's pointing to the believer's certainty of holiness from the moment he believes. All true believers participate in the same holy life of our Lord.

2. The conqueror (v. 9)

"Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him."

The certainty of the believer's new life in Christ is rooted in the fact that Christ will never have to die again. Because when Christ came out of the grave, He proved that He had broken the dominion of sin and death. When Christ conquered death, He also conquered sin because sin and death are inextricably linked. Christ's resurrection was a decisive, complete, and final victory over death (cf. 1 Cor. 15:54-57).

3. The climax (v. 10)

"In that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God."

a. Christ died once for sin

That Christ died once for sin is an important theological concept in the New Testament. It is especially prominent in the book of Hebrews. Hebrews 10:10-14 says, *"We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering often the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified."* The writer makes the point many times (Heb. 7:27; 9:12, 26, 28,). When Christ rose from the dead, He proved He had broken the power of sin. And since the believer identifies with

Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5), he too has permanently broken the power of sin.

b. Christ died to pay for sin

Many theologians have wrestled over Paul's phrase, "*[Christ] died unto sin.*" Some have tried to teach that it means believers are no longer sensitive to sin, but we know that's not true from experience. The phrase specifically refers to Christ, not believers. Christ was never sensitive to sin because He could not sin (Heb. 4:15). He was never victimized by sin's dominance because He was sinless.

Others teach that the phrase is an exhortation for believers to die to sin. But that contradicts the whole of Romans 6, which state that believers have already died to sin. And it certainly could not be said of Christ that He too ought to die to sin. Still others say the phrase means that when Christ died to sin, He became perfect. But that can't be true because Christ was always perfect. That Christ died to sin has a double meaning.

1) The penalty of sin

Romans 6:23 says, "*The wages of sin is death.*" Jesus' death on the cross met sin's demand. Since believers have died with Christ, their debt has been paid. The ultimate choice for anyone is this: Either pay for your own sin in hell forever, or allow Christ to pay the penalty for you. The choice is yours.

2) The power of sin

Christ not only died to abolish sin's penalty, but also to break sin's power. Paul declared that God had made Christ, "*who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*" (2 Cor. 5:21). It is incomprehensible to imagine the sum total of the world's sin on Christ's shoulders, but by dying on the cross and rising from the dead, He bore that great weight of sin and also broke the power of sin. He then allowed the believer to enter a new state of no longer being under the domination of sin.

Augustus Toplady no doubt had the two-pronged nature of Christ's death in mind when in his hymn "Rock of Ages" he wrote, "Be of sin the double cure, saved from wrath and makes me pure." As the believer dies with Christ, he is saved from God's wrath and is also made pure because he died to the power of sin through Christ.

Conclusion

David C. Needham, in his helpful book *Birthright: Christian, Do you Know Who you Are?* (Portland: Multnomah, 1979), points out that a Christian is not simply a person who gets forgiveness, who gets to go to heaven, who gets the Holy Spirit, or who gets a new nature. A Christian has become someone he was not before. A Christian in terms of his most essential nature, is a saint, a child of God, a masterpiece and citizen of heaven. It is not only positionally true in the mind of God, but also actually true here on earth. As was mentioned in the introduction, John Newton's life was wretched before he came to Christ. After his conversion he wrote, "I am not what I ought to be. I am not what I wish to be. I am not even what I hope to be. But by the cross of Christ, I am not what I was."

Focusing on the Facts

1. What was it that irrevocably changed the lives of John Newton, the apostle Paul, and the Corinthian believers?
2. True or False: There are many different organizations and religions that can transform an individual.
3. The great theme that Paul develops in Romans 6-8 is the inevitable _____ of the believer.
4. What is one of the main problems in contemporary Christianity?
5. What happened to the believer's old nature?
6. What is the difference between being in Adam and being in Christ?
7. True or False: It is a serious misunderstanding to think of the believer as having both an old and new nature.
8. What is the correct meaning of the term "old man" in Scripture? Support your answer with the Bible.
9. If someone continues to live in the same relationship to sin as they did before professing faith in Christ, they have not been _____.
10. True or False: After coming to Christ, a person can no longer sin.
11. What is the controlling force in the believer's life?
12. What certainty is the believer's life rooted in?
13. What proves that Christ broke the power of sin by dying?
14. What is the double meaning in Paul's words that Christ died unto sin?

Pondering the Principles

1. According to Romans 6, the old nature represents a person before salvation, who exists solely in a state of habitual sinfulness. The new nature, however, describes a regenerate man who lives a life of righteousness and holiness that is honoring to God. Scripture does not here speak of the perfection of believers, but certainly the direction of it. Is your life characterized by the old or new nature? Are you living in a state of habitual sinfulness or is your life marked by a pattern of righteousness? Study the following passages from 1 John to help you answer that question: 1:6-10, 2:15-19, and 3:9-11. If your life is characterized by unrighteousness, repent of your sins, and acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.
2. Every believer has died with Christ and has therefore been freed from the penalty, power, and ultimately the presence of sin. Have you been freed from the penalty of sin? Are you still in bondage to it? Would you like to break sin's power? Read the following verses in the order given and ask God to allow you the privilege of one day being separated from sin's presence: Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, and Romans 10:9.