

# Alive to God

 Romans 6:5-11

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We are in Romans 6 and we are studying the doctrine of sanctification. What's sanctification? Sanctification at root is from the root word *ἁγιαζ-* and is variously translated as "holy, saint, sanctify, sanctification." All these words come from the same Greek root and they all relate to an object being set apart for a specific purpose. This is why in the OT certain items such as the altar, the priestly garments, the priests, etc... were said to be holy. Through blood they were set apart for the specific purpose of being used for worship in the Temple.

In the NT we learn that we are objects that have been sanctified, are being sanctified and shall be sanctified. In other words, there are three phases of our sanctification. The first phase is positional sanctification and this is the most common usage. By position we mean that it refers to a setting apart that has occurred in God's mind. It's not something you feel or experience. It is a way that God looks at you from His perspective. At the moment of faith alone in Christ alone He sanctified you, set you apart for a specific purpose. The NT attests to this positional sanctification every time it refers to the believer as a "saint," which is over 60 times. Even the carnal Corinthians are said in 1 Cor 1:2 to "have been sanctified" so the positional sanctification is something that all believers have regardless of how they are living their lives. The second phase is experiential sanctification and this is the usage most people are aware of. By experience we mean that it is the process of the believer being set apart more and more for God's purposes from the moment he became a Christian until physical death or the rapture, whichever comes first. When Paul says in 1 Thess 4:7, "For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but for sanctification," he's referring to experiential sanctification; being set apart by God for the specific purpose of living a pure life. Or when Peter quotes the OT saying, "Be ye holy as I am holy" he is referring not to sinless perfection but to experiential sanctification, being set apart by God for the specific purpose of thinking His thoughts after Him and living a distinct life. The third phase of sanctification is ultimate sanctification and this is the rarest usage in the NT but is attested in other ways commonly. By ultimate sanctification we mean the resurrection of the believer so that he is totally set apart for the purposes of God for all eternity. 1 John 3:2 says that on the day of our resurrection we will be like Christ because we will see Him as He is. The word sanctification is not used but the concept of being totally set apart is. In 1 Thess 5:23 Paul does use the word when he says, "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved

complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." There he is praying for the ultimate sanctification of believers at the rapture when we are given resurrection bodies. So there are these three phases of sanctification found in the pages of the NT.

Which phase is Paul teaching in Romans 6? The second phase, experiential sanctification, the process of the believer being gradually set apart by God for His purposes. Let's point out that the rate of this process for each believer varies. We can, generally speaking, expect growth and challenge believers to grow, but we should not expect all believers to grow at the same rate. What this means is that at any given time on earth there are believers that are at various stages of experiential sanctification. At our church there are believers at various places on the growth continuum. So we shouldn't expect everyone to be where we are and have the identical convictions we have. Some of you are brand new Christians, others have been Christians for many years but never heard sound doctrine and others have been and are more advanced. Paul and the author of Hebrews divided believers into infants and the mature and both indicated that there is certain doctrine that is reserved for the mature, such as the doctrine of Melchizedek. Paul also indicates that among those who are infants there are those who are infants by virtue of being brand new Christians and others by virtue of not applying themselves to sound doctrine. In John believers are divided into little children, children, young men and fathers. My point is that believers are at different stages in experiential sanctification and we are all, generally speaking, at a different stage of growth. Some of us are just learning the doctrines of the Christian faith and others have learned the basic doctrines and are learning how to use them and others have learned more advanced doctrines and are learning how to use them. All this has to be considered when dealing with one another in our discussions. Also we must keep in mind that none of us are sinless, none of us have ultimate sanctification. Instead, God is working with each one of us somewhere in the process and everyone is therefore important. Paul also teaches that those who are more mature and therefore have more freedom have the responsibility of not offending those who are less mature.

What we are trying to learn in Romans 6 is all about phase two of sanctification, the experiential dimension. So Paul is telling those who have already been justified by faith how to live the Christian life. The fact that Paul has to tell us how to live the Christian life implies that the Christian life is not automatic. It doesn't just happen. In Romans 7 Paul will use himself as an example to show that it doesn't just happen and in fact there are wrong ways to try to be sanctified that will end in utter failure. There are principles that must be learned and applied in order to live the Christian life. It's my contention that the reason we find so many people claiming to be Christian but not living the Christian life (in our subjective and limited analysis) is either because they don't understand these principles or they aren't applying these principles. Romans 6:1-8:17 is by far the clearest and most important passage giving these principles for the NT Christian. OT saints could be sanctified too and the principles of sanctification in the OT were similar to ours so we can learn general principles from the OT about sanctification. But they did not have all that we have and so as far as the uniqueness which we have we have to have passages like Romans 6:1-8:17.

In Romans 6, I have divided the chapter by the use of the indicative verbs and the imperative verbs. The indicative mood is a statement of fact and vv. 1-11 is dominated by statements of fact. These are things that God has done for us. Verse 3, "we have been baptized into Christ Jesus." Verse 4, "we have been buried with Him." Verse 8, "we shall live with Him." These are all facts. Further, these are facts that we are to know. Verse 3, "do you not know..." Verse 6, "knowing this..." Verse 9, "knowing that." So these are facts to know that relate to what happened when we trusted in Christ. They can't be known by having felt them because there was nothing to feel. When you believed in Christ you may have felt like the burden of sin was lifted in Christ, you may have felt psychologically relieved, but you didn't feel what happened in verses 1-11. These are all positional truths, they are revealing to us what happened in God's mind and therefore telling us how God looks at us and who we really are now. Verses 12-23 are imperative verbs. They tell us our responsibility and you can read ahead but we'll get to that next week.

Last week we went through verses 1-4 and we learned that "sin," every time it is used in this section, is used with the definite article. It's literally "the sin" and we said this refers to the sin nature. Walvoord agrees saying, "When the word *sin* is found in the singular as in Romans 6 and 7, for instance, it may be understood as a reference to the nature rather than the act. It is the source of all evil within, that which desires sin and gives ear to the devil. A clear understanding of this doctrine is essential to realizing the need for walking by the Spirit."<sup>1</sup> What Paul is asking in verse 1 when he says, "Are we to continue in sin?" is "Are we to continue living in the sin nature?" The obvious answer is no. Grace is not a license to continue to live by the sin nature. Verse 2 says "May it never be!" or "Perish the thought." How shall we who died to the sin nature still live in the sin nature?" Verse 3 asks, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" This is Spirit baptism and when we first believed in Christ the Spirit identified us with Christ in His death. Just as Christ died for sin so we died to our sin nature so that we are no longer under the power of the sinful nature, relegated to living according to its desires. Note, however, that it does not say that our sin nature is dead to us, the sin nature remains, it has not been eradicated. Verse 16 points out very clearly that we can still present ourselves as a slave to the sin nature and let it have its way with us, which way is death. But as a position we are dead to the sin nature. We don't have to allow it to rule our lives. Make sure you understand that we no longer have to submit to the reign and power of the sin nature. There is another way to live. How might we live? Verse 4, "Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." The new way of life is a life that is dependent on the power of God the Father. Get that word down, depend. It means to rely upon another. When Christ was dead in the tomb He relied on the Father to raise His body from the dead. And when we are dead to the sin nature that is one thing that is very important but what is equally important is that we depend upon the Father's strength to live the new life. This is a new resurrection life. Not a physical resurrection, that's still future, but a spiritual resurrection, that is now. This is a life that is available to us now and in vv 12-23 Paul will tell us

how to enjoy this life. It relates to the responsibility to depend upon Him. It's a new life and we'll leave that for then. For now, the first thing we have to know is the positional truth that we are dead to the sin nature.

The second thing we need to know is in vv 5-11 and this is the positional truth that we are alive to God. There are more indicatives in this section so these are statements of fact. They're just true whether you know it or not but they are things that you should know because they are essential to victory. In verse 5 the translation says, **For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.** The translation **if** could be confusing because it could cast doubt. **If**, and is it really true? However, in the Greek you have five classes of conditional sentences. This is a 1<sup>st</sup> class and the 1<sup>st</sup> class is 'an assumed reality for the sake of argument.' It's the condition of reality and is sometimes better translated as "since." So "since" **we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.** One is just as certain as the other. If in the past we were united with Him in His death then in the future we will be resurrected. Note how this shows eternal security. Before we look at that point observe three things. First, the verb **have become. We have become united with Him.** This is a perfect tense. Most of the tenses we have seen here are aorist. The aorist means a past action, something that just happened and is done. For example, I washed my car. That only tells you what I did in the past. I did it, it's done. It doesn't tell you how long it took or any other information. The perfect tense is different. The perfect tense is also a past tense but means a past completed action with ongoing results. This would be saying, I washed my car and it remains washed. It is something like a once for all time action. That is what we would like for our car, to wash it one time and it once for all remains washed. But in reality when we wash our car it's an aorist. We wash it, we're done, it doesn't stay washed, it gets dirty. So what is being said here with the perfect is that **we have become united with Christ** in a once for all way such that we remain united with Christ. That is one reason I say this points to eternal security because it means you can never become disunited to Him. Once you are united with Him it is a complete work of God that remains forever.

Second, the word **united** is an interesting word. Its *συμφυτοι* and may be the closest Greek word to define the idea of baptism or at least the results of baptism. Remember, baptism has two aspects, the *process* of plunging or dipping and the *resulting* new identity. I used the example of a garment being dipped or plunged into dye so that it resulted in a garment with a new identity. The word *συμφυτοι* means etymologically "with to plant" or "to plant together" and so "to be identified with." The lexicon says, "pertaining to being associated with in a related experience, *identified with.*" The word refers to the resulting new identity that we have by virtue of being baptized by the Spirit with Christ. The baptism of the Spirit puts us through the cross so that we experience the cross with Christ and so become identified with Him.

Third, the word **likeness** is *ομοιωματι* and means to share an experience but only by similarity, not identically. So, for example, the word is used of Christ's incarnation. He is said in Romans 8:3 to have come in the "likeness of sinful flesh." That is the expression Paul uses so that he can at the same time say that Jesus is genuine human

and at the same time not a sinner. It is also the same word used in Phil 2:7 where Paul says that Christ Jesus came "in the likeness of men." This again means that He was a true man but without sin. So the word here is saying that we truly have shared that experience of death with Him but not in an identical fashion. He died *for* our sin whereas we died *to* sin and therefore our relationship to sin is similar to His but not identical. He is the substitute for our sin; we are the beneficiaries of dead to sin.

Now we come to the second half of verse 5, and "since" **we have become identified with Christ in the likeness of His death** then with equal **certainty we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.**<sup>2</sup> Paul's point is that since we have the former with equal certainty we will have the latter. It is perhaps impossible to state something more certainly than is stated here. If this is so then how could we possibly lose our salvation? Having believed we have been identified with Him and remain identified with Him so we shall be raised with Him. There is no room for doubt, no room for loss of salvation. Loss of salvation interpretations are most commonly associated with interpretations not based on the original languages but on translations. And I'm sorry but you don't get good interpretations from translations. That's why it's critical for a teacher to know the original.

In verse 6 Paul uses a key word, **knowing**. There are certain things that you need to know in order for sanctification to proceed. Here is one, **knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.** **knowing this** is essential to our sanctification. However, what exactly we need to know is not clear in the translation and work needs to be done here in the original. The first question is what is the **old self**? In the original it says "old man." Some say it's just another way of saying the old sin nature. That may be but as we said before in vv 2-4 when we were unbelievers we were so identified with the sin nature that we were sin. There is really no difference. It seems that **our old man** is our old unregenerate person in Adam who has a sinful predisposition. That unregenerate Adamic person that we once were, Paul says, **was crucified with** Christ so that we are a new regenerate person with a new disposition to holiness.

The purpose of this crucifixion was **so that our body of sin might be done away with.** The second question here is what is the **body of sin**? The **body of sin** is technically, "the body of the sin nature," or, "the body over which the sin nature has taken possession of as a vehicle of expression." We are conceived with a sin nature and the sin nature is a predisposition that needs a vehicle through which to express its lusts and desires. That vehicle is here referred to as "the body." What's "the body?" We sin in thought, word and deed so it is not enough to say all our sins occur through the physical body. The body is therefore synecdoche for the total person, a part for the whole. "The body" then refers to the total person; body and spirit which compose the soul. This is a way of saying that as unregenerate people we were comprehensively depraved, our sinful disposition affected our entire person. The sin nature was therefore exerting itself through our entire person. But our old man was crucified so that our entire person would not be under the power of the sin nature to be used only as an instrument to commit sin. Now we are a new regenerate man and this new man has a new disposition to

holiness. That disposition, however, is not sufficient to actualize holiness apart from the indwelling Holy Spirit, the subject of Romans 8.

The third question is what does the expression **might be done away with** mean? The word is *καταργηθη* and has a number of definitions. If we take it as this translation does, as **done away with**, it means the total person that the sin nature has taken possession of is gradually being eradicated. This is impossible. It is enough here to say that we are already new people. Verse 16 seems to indicate that we have an option as new people to submit to the sin nature or not to. It is better to understand that this word has another definition that is very fitting contextually; “rendered powerless.” What Paul is then saying is that **our old man was crucified with Christ so that our total person as a vehicle through which the sin nature expresses itself might be rendered powerless.** This means that we are no longer the old man that we once were. Now we are new people and the old person that exerted its sinful desires has had its power broken. This does not mean that we can’t submit to the old person and allow it to exert its sinful desires, we still can, but we don’t have to because that person is dead. We are in some sense new people with a new disposition to holiness and a new way of life made available to us.

The final clause completes the thought. **So that we would no longer be slaves to sin. We no longer have to serve the sin nature.** That is what we were required to do as unbelievers. But **no longer.** We may but we do not have to. The term **slave** reminds us of the Hebrews in Egypt. There they were slaves to Pharaoh and the Egyptian taskmasters. They had to obey. But at the Passover they were set free, no longer to be slaves to mighty Pharaoh. Still they could want to go back and serve him and on many occasions they did. But they were no longer slaves to him. They no longer had any obligation to him. In the same way, when we were unbelievers we were **slaves to the sin nature.** But at salvation we were set free, **no longer to be slaves to the sin nature.** Still we could want to go back and serve the sin nature and on many occasions we do. But we are **no longer slaves to the sin nature.** We have no obligation to the sin nature.

Verse 7 says, **For he who has died is freed from sin.** Paul could not state it clearer. The Greek tense for **is freed** is the perfect tense. The perfect tense is the past tense that refers to a completed action with ongoing results. That is to say, “he who has died has been freed and is freed from the sin nature.” We no longer are slaves that must submit to it. We are freed from that domination. The word **has died** is the aorist tense, a tense that refers to a past event. We have died. Death ends all claims. The old man has no claims on us. Paul in Romans 7:3 makes the same point that “Death ends all claims.” He says that a married woman is bound to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies she is released from him. Death ends all claims and therefore our old man has no claim on us. It was crucified as verse 6 says, another aorist tense, it was crucified once for all with Christ, retroactively put through the cross. We are free from the power of the sin nature. We no longer have to live by it. There is another way of living.

Verse 8 begins, **Now if we have died with Christ,** and this is another 1<sup>st</sup> class condition, like verse 5, not really **if** but “since” and you may translate it that way quite properly. **Now since we have died with Christ, we believe**

**that we shall also live with Him.** Paul's making an argument and he begins by showing that since A then B. A being we have died with Christ, B being that we shall be resurrected with Christ. Do you have a resurrection unto life with Christ waiting for you? If you have A then beyond all shadow of doubt you will have B. This is another evidence of eternal security. It's saying that God doesn't leave unfinished what He started. Salvation from beginning to end is His work. When He starts a work in us He doesn't leave it half-finished but takes us all the way to the end. God is not a quitter like some people. God doesn't start projects and leave them unfinished. What He starts He finishes. There is no question that those who have died with Christ will be raised with Him.

Verse 9, another thing to **know. Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.** It may seem obvious to say, but is Jesus Christ going to ever **die again**? In Roman Catholic blood mass they have Jesus dying over and over and over again. In Catholic doctrine the elements are the actual body and blood of Jesus. But Paul says he **never dies again** and certainly not again and again and again. Christ died once and Christ rose from the dead once. Because death eliminates all claims then the final conclusion is necessary; **death no longer is master over Him.** Death has no claims on Him. It was master over Him when He was on the cross but once it was finished and He was raised from the dead, it **no longer** had any claims on Him. Think what this means for history. A genuine human being has conquered death! A genuine human being is right now sitting in heaven at the right hand of God in an immortal body. He is undefeatable. Friend, since this is so there are more that will join Him. Verse 8 tells us who they are; all who have died with Christ...shall be raised to live with Him. There is a new breed of humans in the making and the old breed is already becoming obsolete. The new breed will rule the world to come. We are that breed of humans. We will rule from immortality.

Verse 10 is an explanation of Christ's no longer being mastered by death. **For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.** Now Jesus lives continually to God, present tense. He died once, aorist tense, but He lives to God forevermore, present tense. This is setting up Paul's argument for how we should live. If He died to sin once for all and lives to God forevermore then how ought we to live? We too died once for all, our old man was crucified with Him. How then should we continually live in the present? As alive to God.

Verse 11, **Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.** This verse is a verse to memorize because the three things about sanctification in Romans 6 are all in this one verse. First, there is the fact that you are **dead to sin**, second, there is the fact that you are **alive to God in Christ Jesus**, and third there is the command that you are to **consider** these facts to be so. Clearly Paul is transitioning from the indicatives of verses 1-11 to the imperatives of verses 12-23, from statements of fact to commands to follow. This verse contains both. Memorize it! Burn it on your brain because every day what this verse says is essential to sanctification!

The new thing we find here is the command to follow; **consider yourselves**. The verb **consider** is λογισθε and is a mathematical term of reckoning or calculating something to be so. When you work out a math problem and what my wife likes about it is the definiteness of the answer.  $1 + 1 = 2$ , not 2.0000000000000001. Mathematics has a precision about it that leaves no doubt. What is never said from the pulpit in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that the truths of the Bible are just as definite as mathematics. This is entirely true. When we talk about what the Bible teaches and we say it's true we don't mean what some people mean when they think of religious truth, that it is something that is true for you. No, we mean it in the sense of mathematics, that it's true whether you believe it or not. Whether you believe it is irrelevant, truth is. And here is a truth you are to calculate to be true with that level of certitude; you are dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. That is just as true as  $1 + 1 = 2$ . It is not even one particle different. God is the God of all truth whether it is mathematical truth, scientific truth, political truth, economic truth, religious truth. The whole of creation is a unified reality under His sovereign direction.

And here is a vitally important truth to reckon daily to be true. You are dead to the sin nature and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Now then, if this is so, and it is, then how should you live? Quite clearly as Christ lives in verse 10, ever and continually to God. But how? The first thing is to reckon it to be so whether you feel like it or not. How you feel is irrelevant. You may feel like you are a slave to the sin nature. You're not! You died to your sin nature. So you must be presenting your members to the sin nature and that is why you are failing. The second thing will be in chapter 8, and that relates to the Holy Spirit and the word of God. But for now you already have some of the word of God. The word of God says you died to the sin nature. You don't need to die to it every day. You died to it once for all. And the word of God says you are alive to God, or literally "living to God." These truths are there for you, you just need to follow the command to reckon them to be so each day.

In conclusion, in verse 5, "Since we have become planted along with Him in the likeness of His death," certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection. As surely as one is true the other is true, resurrection is surer than death or taxes. Verse 6, "knowing this, that our old man was crucified once for all with Him at the moment of faith in Christ. Why? In order that our person as the vehicle of the sin nature might be rendered powerless. Our old man has no claim to use us as a vehicle to express the sin nature any more. This is stated to be "so that we would no longer be slaves to the sin nature." We were slaves but no longer do we have to be enslaved to it. Its power has been broken, our obligation to it has been annulled. Verse 7, "for he who has died once for all is freed once and for all and forevermore from the sin nature." Its power, obviously. Verse 8, "Now since we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. Just as surely as one true the other is true, resurrection is surer than death and taxes. Verse 9, "knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead once for all, is never to die again; death is no longer master over Him." Never again. He is immortal. Explanation verse 10, "For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives now and forevermore to God." On that basis, verse 11 is a command to follow, "Even so, calculate yourselves dead to the sin nature, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." This is something to daily reckon to be so. The death to sin and alive to God is once for all but the reckoning is a daily responsibility to follow and a necessary one to sanctification in phase 2.



What can we learn today by application? Four things. First, we are no longer the old man we were in Adam. That is not who we are. Therefore to continue to submit to the power of that old man is to live not as we are but as who we once were. Now we are a new man in Christ. We should live as the new man in Christ. Second, the old man had to be killed so as to have no legal claims on us. That was the only way to set us free from the power of the sin nature. Third, we are alive to God. We have a new life in our identification with Christ. If He lives in resurrection we shall live too because His destiny is our destiny. Fourth, there is one command to follow relative to these truths, "consider them to be so." How you feel doesn't matter. This is truth and you can never operate on your emotions. Operating on emotions is a roller-coaster ride. Operating on truth gives stability. The challenge is to go and consider yourselves dead to the sin nature and alive to God each day. That is the only way to truly live.

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<sup>1</sup> John Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, p 207.

<sup>2</sup> **In the likeness** is added by the translator but rightly so.