

Romans 6:1-14 – Living A New Life

Introduction

The other day, I read a really interesting article on the site toyokeizai.net. It seems that, due to the recent coronavirus situation, the number of people who identify with the statement “for some reason I've lost my motivation” is growing. Working from home is on the rise, and, apparently, the responses in our brain become sluggish when we are processing only virtual information. Even when we can see that information, the physical disconnect significantly lowers our level of comprehension.

One study found that the responses in babies' brains were stronger when they looked physically at their mother, versus looking at a picture of her on a screen. This is why physical presence increases our brain's level of comprehension. In online meetings, we are not receiving any of the stimulation that comes with being in person.

In the real world, there are certainly unnecessary stimuli, and also things like background noise, the atmosphere, and various smells, all of which are eliminated in digital mediums. More than video conferencing or phone calls, meeting in person allows us to listen intently to a person's tone of voice, and we can understand what they are communicating far more effectively. It seems that physical encounters produce much stronger responses in our brain, resulting in higher levels of motivation.

What about you? Have you lost your motivation? Are you feeling lethargic? Actually, there are often times when we become apathetic as we walk the Christian life of faith.

Romans 6:1-4

- 1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?
- 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?
- 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?
- 4 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.
- 5 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.
- 6 We know that our old self[a] 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.
- 7 For one who has died has been set free[b] from sin.

- 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.
- 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.
- 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.
- 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.
- 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.
- 13 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.
- 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Today's passage shows us how we who believe in Jesus ought to live, and where our power and motivation for this life comes from. First, why should we walk in newness of life? Because we have been united with Christ. Second, what do we walk in newness of life for? Our goal is to be alive to God, in other words, to trust God, to obey him, and to reveal his glory. And third, how can we walk in newness of life? We do this by separating ourselves from sin and living a life that displays the righteousness of God. When it comes to walking in newness of life: 1) our motive is that we have been united with Christ, 2) our goal is to be alive to God, 3) and the way we do it is by displaying God's righteousness through grace.

1. Union with Christ (our motivation)

So then, have you heard the classic opposing objection to the Christian religion and the gospel? We believe the gospel is a gift from God, therefore, people's good deeds and praiseworthy works are not even a little useful for salvation. The gospel is incredibly unique, and there is no other religion or worldview like it.

So the opposing argument goes, "If I simply believe in Christ, all my sins are forgiven and I am saved and declared righteous, so why should I worry about doing any good works? I didn't need any good works in order to be saved, why should I go through all the trouble to do the right thing now? Rather, doesn't the gospel message give me license to sin and live my life as a fallen human being?"

How would you respond to this? What does the Bible have to say in response? Since all our sin has been forgiven by grace, can we sin freely? Verses 1-2.

6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

Paul's answer is clear. "Absolutely not!" If a person thinks this way, it is a sure sign they don't understand the gospel at all. A person who truly grasps the gospel will proclaim, "I have died to sin, so I will walk in newness of life!" With a thankful heart, they will take up the challenge of a new way of living.

The way Paul writes this is really interesting, isn't it? Certainly, if a person has died to sin, they cannot sin. But what exactly does it mean to be dead to sin? Nobody could argue it means that once you become a Christian you become unable to sin. It also doesn't seem right to say that once you become a Christian you no longer desire to sin. Everyone has lusts and temptations.

What Paul is trying to say here is that being dead to sin means to live a life where we are uncomfortable around sin and want to separate ourselves from it, where we resist temptation and more and more rely on Jesus. To be dead to sin means we are no longer ruled by it. Just as it says in chapter 5 verse 21, "that...grace also might reign through righteousness," because we are under the rule of God's grace, we are no longer consumed by sin. On the contrary, we begin to resist sin. Verses 3-5 reveal our motivation for this.

6:3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 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. 5 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.

As it is written here, our motivation to walk away from sin and live in righteousness is our oneness with Christ. We have been made one with Christ, so, consequently, we begin to live like him. The theological term used to describe this concept is "(mysterious) union with Christ."

A couple of weeks ago, we had some baptisms during our worship service. Baptism itself displays a person being made one with Christ, being bestowed with all the blessings of Christ, and walking with him. This sign impresses upon us that we have died and been buried with Christ, and have been raised to resurrection life.

Let's ponder the fact that Jesus is here by our side. He loves you so much that his flesh was torn and his blood was spilt for you. The risen Christ, who knows your weaknesses and your sin, is by your side encouraging you in resurrection life. How could we possibly continue to live in sin?

2. Alive to God in Christ Jesus (our goal)

For that reason, those who have been made one with Christ cannot ignore him. They look to what Christ has done, seeking only after his heart and desires, the Father's will and plan. That is our new way of life, emancipation from sin. Verses 6-7 say,

6:6 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. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin.

For those of us who have been made one with Christ, what exactly is the kind of life that we aim for? Or you could ask, what is our life's direction, our life's goal? Our goal is to walk, not as a slave to sin, but as a new person. Verse 6 uses the term "old self," right? Please don't be behind the times! I'm guessing there are many modern people out there who, even though they have mastered all the recent technology, are still living just like in the olden-days.

Living in the "old self" would be like this. Currently, we're about to elect a new prime minister. Let's say the new prime minister has been elected. Everyone is following a new political platform, and new policies are being carried out one after another. But regardless, there is a person who prefers the former prime minister and wants to continue his platform. So, even though, for example, the sales tax has been reduced down to 5%, this person goes out of his way to keep paying a 10% tax whenever he goes shopping! No way is there anyone who would do something like that...

However, even though you have been crucified with Christ and been set free from sin, are you still living as though you're a slave to sin? A new king has ascended the throne, and he has set all the slaves free. And yet, you are obeying the ruler of the old era, living as though you are a captive to sin and evil, not receiving Christ's liberation. It says, "For one who has died has been set free from sin"!

So, the goal we ought to be bound for is to live with Christ, who was crucified and raised from the dead. This is our clear standard, our guiding principle for living. One of our biggest problems in life is that our guidelines are messed up. Verse 8.

6:8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

Often when I'm talking with people, the conversation turns to how they're walking through life and what the purpose of their work is. It's really unfortunate how many people are living without any kind of goal or clear guideline to measure their life by, because the Bible has already made it clear. Even when you're working non-stop, day in and day out, you are working 'with Christ.' Even when, practically, the purpose of your work might feel ambiguous, you are 'living to God.'

What does this mean? The Bible presents us with a concrete model for what it means to be alive with Christ.

For example, right in the middle of the disciples' prideful argument amongst themselves about who was the greatest, Jesus showed his love for them by taking on the role of a slave and washing their feet. Also, Jesus' most distressed moment not knowing the Father's will was the night before he was crucified in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus fell to his knees and prayed, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

When we begin to seek the will of Christ and live to God, we begin to taste the joy of a life set free from sin. Of course, this doesn't mean we will always succeed. We are tempted and go through trials, we experience suffering, and we sin. But, Christ, who is with us, has accomplished a perfect salvation on our behalf.

6:9 "We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him."

3. Displaying the Righteousness of God through Grace

If we have been made one with Christ, what should we do in order to live with Christ and be alive to God? If you look at verses 12-14, you can hear Paul's crystal clear message. Don't let sin reign in your body, and don't obey it's passions. Don't present any part of your body to sin as an instrument for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as an instrument of righteousness. Fueled by God's grace, let everything you do display God's greatness.

Paul doesn't just want us to believe God in our head and in our heart, he commands us to use our bodies to do good, just, fitting, and beautiful things. Philippians 4:8.

4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

God has not only saved us through Christ, he is inviting us to live with Christ as a new person, alive to God. This is actually the restoration of our original humanity, and, in other words, it is the way that we become our true selves.

People often say that they are on a journey to find themselves. However, our intrinsic identity, our true life, the self we are most comfortable with, the end of the contradiction between who we are on the inside and what people see on the outside, this is all only able to be received from Christ. In his book *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis says,

"In that sense our real selves are all waiting for us in Him. It is no good trying to "be myself " without Him. The more I resist Him and try to live on my own, the more I become dominated by my own heredity and upbringing and surroundings and natural desires. ... It is when I turn to Christ, when I give myself up to His Personality, that I first begin to have a real personality of my own."

It seems that many people are living with spiritual amnesia, for, over and over we are trying to remember the things we already know, as well as the things we've forgotten. Just as Paul writes things like, "do you not know?" (v3), and "we know" (v6,9), and "we believe" (v8), we must first remind ourselves of the things we already know.

The reason Christians continue on sinning and regressing back to the way of the old-self is because they don't know, or they have forgotten, the gospel. We must understand with our heads, grasp with our hearts, and take joy in what has been done for us through Christ's death and resurrection.

However, that's not normally what we do. Let's examine the wrong response we tend to have. Somehow or another, we realize we have sinned, so we pick ourselves up by our bootstraps and try not to do it because we're not supposed to sin. This is a moralistic effort that tries to conquer sin by our own willpower.

However, this is legalism. Acting out correct doctrine on your own willpower sounds like a great thing, but in the end, no one can succeed at this. Christ came for us precisely because no one can do this.

6:11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

In other words, our inability to overcome sin isn't because our will is weak. Rather, it's because we haven't considered what kind of person we are. We haven't meditated on the gospel until our hearts overflowed with joy. So the key is knowing, remembering, and acknowledging.

Please know this. Through Christ, you have been redeemed and set free from being a slave of sin. Please remember this. You are now God's child and have received the privilege of conquering your sinful desires. Please acknowledge this. You have been given the Holy Spirit, and have been empowered to do what is right. This is grace!