

WANTED DEAD BUT ALIVE

Romans chapter 6

Sounds like an oxymoron, dead but alive; however, this is precisely what Paul concludes from Jesus' own words. How can it be? Those who have died with Christ in His crucifixion (All believers) are those people who are now reborn; believers die to flesh to be made alive in the Spirit. Far too often, we fail to realize everything God is doing inside of us as we seek and focus more on Him and others and less on ourselves.

Romans 6:1-4, NKJV; “What we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so, we also should walk in newness of life.”

What is it that drives our sin and separates us from God? It is not constantly sinning, such as sexual immorality, drug addiction, stealing, and other traits we often look down on others for. No, it can be a simple attitude problem, God calls you to help others, but you can't be bothered. Perhaps it's something as simple as smiling at others, but you don't see the need. Maybe it is in your lack of desire for more of God and less of you, but you insist you have it all figured out. You, all by yourself, are responsible for setting others straight in their understanding of God. You're the one person God has chosen to tell others how they should lead Godly lives. This is prideful and dangerous ground. We are to walk in humility and esteem others above ourselves. Philippians 2:3.

Our attitudes can place us in the sinner's camp; have we not observed those who serve others first? Finding time to set aside our busy schedules makes it very easy to hand out excuses as to why we fail to see the needs of others. If serving others is difficult for you, then perhaps you need to slow down for a couple of hours and talk to the Lord about it. Yes, you can speak to the Lord, don't let people mock you for doing so or saying so. What's even more critical is our Lord answers back. YES, HE talks to us. There is a difference between hearing from God and hearing what you want to hear. If God is telling you to tell others what they should and should not be doing, then you need to re-evaluate your walk with the Lord. God is powerful enough and is not hesitant to correct those who are His. Jesus verbally admonished the leaders and teachers of the law when He embarrassed them in front of the multitude, Matthew 23:3-4.

We must accept that until we come to Christ, we are dead people walking, and most of us in the old life look to champion ourselves above others. We must put on the new man and walk with a new attitude. Look here at what Paul says in **Romans 12:3-8; 3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5**

so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Today's message is about focusing more on others, and less on us, so much of this is the foundation on which the church has been built and operated since Jesus came. There are good reasons why we are to do so, not to be busybodies but humble servants, as was the example of our Lord Jesus.

John 13:3-5; Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

Jesus was on His way to be crucified, yet He took time and commitment to wash His disciples' feet. He came not to be served but to serve. Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45. It seems strange when we begin to help others how much better we are with our own struggles. Jesus could have gone aside from everyone else to mope about all that would occur. Yes, we see Him agonizingly in the garden. His spirit asked for another way, as He cried droplets of blood, Luke 22:44. Yet His focus was on and about obedience to the Father and Salvation for man. On the cross, Jesus turns and tells the thief he will be with Him in paradise this very day. Luke 23:43. Again, as the end approached, Jesus looked up to the Father and said, **"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."** Luke 23:34.

In all the pain and suffering, Jesus still put others first, and those who walk in the Lord's ways will do the same. When we look at Stephen as they stoned him to death, he cried out to the Father to receive him and not charge these men with any sin. He thought of others first. Acts 7:59-60. Paul, in Romans 9:3-5, wished he was accursed from Christ that his own countrymen would believe. Moses asked to be struck from the Book of Life so that God's chosen would not be destroyed and that the other nations would not mock God, saying He brought them out of Egypt to kill them. Exodus 32:12.

Our bibles are full of faithful people who put others first and think of others' situations, not their own. Pastor Jack Abeelen said about his growth after the Lord began to change him. "I found myself praying for others constantly, and then one day I stopped and asked myself, why am I praying for them? I need more help than they do." We do not see the work He is doing in us until one day, something happens, and you see yourself changed, wondering how and when you got here. Our God is amazing.

Coming to a deeper faith, we must first understand and accept that we were dead but alive? So many things we read in the Bible seem backward; we must die to live? **Jeremiah 38:2; says, "Thus says the LORD: 'He who remains in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by**

pestilence; but he who goes over to the Chaldeans shall live; his life shall be as a prize to him, and he shall live." Chaldeans, people dwelling on lower Euphrates and Tigris; in proper name, of a location, Chaldean = "clod-breakers" especially those under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar. What can we draw from this that is important to us today? We need to turn from the life we live to the flesh and let the Holy Spirit lead us; we need to surrender. We need to leave that city that entangles us in sin and corruption. It is much of the same choice given to Israel as they were told to leave this city and go to the Chaldeans. God was looking out for His people; we must also look out for one another.

Luke 9:24; Any of you who try to save the life you have will lose it. But you who give up your life for me will save it. I hope what you can take from the simile here is that those who would not move from the city would lose their lives, but those who go over the Chaldeans shall live. It is the same issue we face today, **John 12:25; "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."** Which life are you seeking? Where is your citizenship? This is a repeating scenario throughout the Bible, and the parable of the soils addresses it exceptionally well.

Jesus was not saying we are to beat ourselves with sticks or bricks, pull our hair out, or bludgeon ourselves. Still, at some point, if we are walking in faith and we have died or should be dying to the sinful self, we should begin to find many things in our old nature somewhat repulsive in the new. Believers are to be reborn and made anew. Ephesians 2:15, 4:24, Colossians 3:10. If this is so, why do you carry your old burdens around with you? Jesus says, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28. If you are beating yourself up and weighed down with your struggles, what good are you? How can you serve others? Stop and open the door that Jesus is knocking on, let Him in, and you find the new self.

Lot's wife made the terrible decision of looking back when the promise was ahead. How often do you hear someone say, "if I could only do it again," or "I wish I was back in my twenties." I'm happy with how things are turning out, and I'm envisioning a better promise. We must not live in this world in the sinful flesh; instead, we live in the Spirit; it is here we find the strength to rise above this world.

Romans 6:4; Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so, we also should walk in newness of life.

People ask how we were buried with Him and baptized into His death? When Jesus rose from the tomb, sin no longer had power over all who believed. The curtain in the temple was opened so that all have access to God. No longer is there a need for atonement through the priest. Our calling is not much different than getting a call on your phone wanting to know if you like to go out for a great meal. However, this call is much more critical. Jesus has come and prepared a room for you, a banquet, and a table full of the best foods ever. "The great street of the city was

of gold, as pure as transparent glass" Revelation 21:21. We hear the promises but too often, we dismiss them as they are not really all they are made out to be, that is at least as we believe them to be. And so we turn and go back to the things of this life. No, we should walk in the newness of life. Get excited; you are a new creation; sing a song like never before, raise your hands, praise your Lord and Father in Heaven, and thank the Spirit for all He does in your everyday life.

Romans 6:5-11; 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It is you and me that Jesus died for; if you believe that Jesus is Lord and that He died for our sins, then you need to hold onto that thought day in and day out for the rest of your life. Now that you are alive, you can open your heart and breathe in the fullness of the Spirit, take Him in, and feel the newness of the new man. Our old man was crucified with Him. What does that mean? How does it work in our daily lives? Think for a moment when you have your first child, the joy and excitement of something so close to you; all you want to do is stare at them, hold them close and love on them. You go to work and yawn, telling everyone about your baby, the most intelligent baby ever. However, after the illusions fade as they get a little bit bigger, they get stingy and selfish, fussy and out of control. You realize your innocent little baby, so cute and cuddly, has become a terror. This tiny little ball of cute love is now possessed; God, what do I do?

Do you know what to do? We place our trust and faith in God, turn to Jesus and talk with Him. Once we realize we are all this way, born sinners in need of a savior, we will call upon our Lord with much more diligence. "Now, if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him," How do we do this? First, we learn what it means to believe in Him, have faith in Him, and trust Him. After surrendering to Him, we see that this life is not all about us; it is about others more than ourselves. Once we realize our responsibilities, our faith, that promotes works of faith that works with the other members of the body that leads to the promise of a better eternity. We turn, and we seek God. I want to know you better; I want to serve you. In this request, God gives a measure of faith, and you act on that faith, you begin to help others in a joyfulness that encourages them. Knowing God gives you the power and strength to walk from death to life **you will start to understand your calling. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. 1 Corinthians 10:24. Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."** 1 Peter 5:5. We do not come to this change for the

purpose of becoming better than others but instead to serve others; when our minds are focused more on others, we will not find time to feel sorry for ourselves.

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is an important lesson from Paul; likewise, you reckon yourselves to be dead to sin. Who is Paul instructing to reckon themselves? You and me, he isn't saying you have the power to remove your own sin, Jesus has done it for us, but we need to work it out.

Philippians 2:12-13; Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

When we are doing all that we have been called to do and are no longer focused on our own woes, our lives become fuller and our souls are put to rest. Those battles we fought within are diminishing and no longer do they bind us to that which held us captive.

John 13:34-35; "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."