



NEW LIFE: Dead Means Dead

By: Peter Bales

No. 12, January 14th, 2024

It's always amazing to hear the stories of families who lived during war time. Ordinary people become heroes that inspire us. Many truly sacrificed and lost loved ones. They often lived in such uncertainty, wondering what would happen and how things would turn out. Can you imagine how it would feel to finally see the headlines that the War is Over? The relief? The gratitude?

When we become followers of Jesus, it's a similar announcement for each of us. Your war is over. Jesus won. Jesus paid it all. We sometimes call it the "*Finished work of the cross.*" It means that Jesus finished his mission. He accomplished his goal. He took care of it. Nothing has been left undone. But what if you didn't know the war was over?

There's an old parable about how elephants can be trained from a young age to be tied with just a small rope. When they are young, they learn that they can't get away, so they quit trying. As adults, they could easily break the rope, but they no longer attempt to get away. The elephant could go free at anytime!



What if we were living in a similar condition? In Romans 5, Paul talks about how sin entered the world in the beginning through Adam. Sin is separation from God. This condition of being separated was passed down to all of Adam's descendants, which is everybody! This is what we mean when we say through Adam, we've all inherited a *sinful nature*.

Sin entered the world through one man, but the gift of righteousness also entered the world through one man, Jesus Christ! Paul says that this "one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people." (Romans 5: 18)

Like those elephants we get used to the rope of our old ways. We are descendants of Adam. No one has to teach us to sin. We have inherited this disconnected state of sinfulness. But what if things had changed and we didn't know it? What if we could be free of the rope!?

One of the reasons we don't live in our identity in Christ is that we've believed lies instead. I believe that one of the biggest lies is that light and dark are evenly matched. It's like those cartoons that show an angel and demon on each shoulder. Neither has much of an advantage. But this is NOT reality! God's strength is so much more superior! READ Revelation 20:1-2.

- 1. Who did God send to bind Satan? Does this surprise you?**
- 2. How do we normally picture the battle between good and evil?**

For some reason we tend to think evil is more powerful than it is. Let's READ Romans 6:1-14. Read slowly if you need to. As you read, think about this question: "What died?"

- 3. What is Paul describing? What are some of the ways he illustrates this?**

Some might complain that we talk about death too much in the church. In this case, this is VERY GOOD NEWS! Our old sinful nature that was passed down to us from Adam has been crucified with Jesus. It's dead and no longer has a hold on us. We aren't slaves to its sinful ways anymore! What fantastic news!

A paraphrase of Romans 6:6 puts it this way, "Could it be any clearer that our former identity is now and forever deprived of its power? For we were co-crucified with him to dismantle the stronghold of sin within us, so that we would not continue to live one moment longer submitted to sin's power (TPT)."

What do we do with this information? Paul helps us get a bit more practical in Romans 8:12-13 which says, "Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live."

You might read that and picture a war going on inside. Let's look at it a different way. Perhaps Paul is pointing out that we don't *have* to live according to the flesh. We can stop doing those misdeeds, or sin, because in the Spirit they are already dead! In the Spirit, we are no longer slaves to sin! We just need to start acting like it! It may not be easy, but verses like this (and many others) show us that freedom from sin is not only possible but is meant for us!

4. What are some ways we "put to death" our sin? How do we do this?

It helps to start from agreeing with what God says. One commentator writes, "To beg God for victory over sin is a refusal to understand that we have already died to sin." (TPT study notes for Romans 6:6)

The good news is that the chains that bind us have been cut. Our old sinful nature no longer has power over us. Dead means dead. But why don't we do more about it? Why doesn't that elephant just break free? One person described it this way, "I suppose the reason the elephant doesn't break free is because they are *reasonably contented*." Reasonably contented!?!

Are you reasonably content with being bound up with sin? What is your struggle? What are the strongholds in your life?

5. Are there areas in your life that you've put up with sin? How much sin is acceptable?

After reading Romans 6, maybe we will stop being content with sin in our life! We may not ever be perfect, but we can have hope of living free from a life of sin! The plan might be simple, but it may not be easy! The first step is to put your faith in Jesus. This gives us access to his grace and life in him. We also want to get baptized. Baptism is the outward profession of putting to death the old sinful nature. When we go under water it shows we have been crucified and buried with Christ. Then we come up, raised with him in the same resurrection power! It's a bold declaration to everyone that we are living a new life from now on!

If sin is still a struggle, we want to let others know what is going on and ask for help. Don't let sin hide in the corners and hang around. Bring it out in the light! In the end, that rope that used to keep us bound can now be used to help others get free!

6. Have you been baptized? What is your baptism story?

7. What was a time you asked someone for help?

8. If someone came to you for help, how would you feel?

GOING DEEPER> Read 1 Corinthians 15:55-56. Meditate on the victory available through Jesus. How can you take action to live in the victory that Jesus has already won?