

Consider Yourself Dead to Sin

By Marco Scouvert



In Romans 6:2, the Apostle Paul says that all believers have died to sin. At the time of our conversion, through our response to the gospel, we were united to Jesus. And in union with him we died and we were buried with him (Romans 6:3-4). Our old man was crucified with Christ, setting us free from our former enslavement to sin (Romans 6:6-7). There was a decisive death blow dealt to our previous relationship with sin such that it no longer wields absolute power over our lives.

More than that, just as Jesus died to sin and its dominion and was then made alive to God through his resurrection (Romans 6:8-10), we also, in union with him, have been spiritually resurrected. We are now one new man with one new nature and one new pure and righteous heart, alive to live for God in the power of Christ's indwelling Holy Spirit (Romans 6:4-5; cf. Romans 7:4-6; Ezekiel 36:25-27). Though we were slaves of sin, we were not only set free in Christ, but we became slaves of righteousness (Romans 6:17-18).

Therefore, Paul instructs us: "Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. Do not let sin reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 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" (Romans 6:11-13).

But if in Christ we are really dead to sin, free from its mastery, and radically transformed at the control center of our being, why do we still commit sin?

To answer that, let me share a historical illustration I once heard, and have since adapted. On January 1st, 1863, United States President Abraham Lincoln issued the final form of what is known as the "Emancipation Proclamation." For the sake of argument, let us assume that this executive order authoritatively declared all slaves to be free from their masters. Their relationship with their former lords was radically and forever changed. Remember though that many slaves at that time had not known any other life or way of relating to their previous masters. Some had been born into their bondage and had lived all their lives under their master. But now they had "died" to their former lords. Their old masters' power over them had been broken and they didn't have to obey them or live under their authority any longer. They were truly free even if they didn't feel free.

Imagine that one day a group of former slaves is walking down Main Street in their hometown. As they do so, they hear a familiar voice yell, "Hey!" They look up and see their old master across the street. He then shouts, "Come over here right now!" The former slaves instinctively run over and stand at attention in front of him. He then proceeds to bark orders to them: "Go to the house and

get my wheelbarrow. Then go fetch ten bags of corn seed. Dig up the field west of the house and plant them there." The former slaves, now freemen, promptly obey his voice, yielding their physical bodies to the service of their previous sovereign.

What just happened? What were these men doing? Although they were no longer slaves or under their former master's authority, they were thinking and acting as though they were still enslaved to him. To use Paul's language in verses Romans 6:12-13, they were allowing their former master to "reign over them." They were "presenting themselves" and "the members of their bodies" as obedient slaves to him. They failed to "consider" that their old relationship had ended, which would have enabled them to refuse his attempts to rule and present themselves and their bodies as free men.

Do you get the picture? Even though we as believers have been set free from sin, it is still possible for us to wrongly think and act as *though* we are still slaves to sin. In a case of momentary amnesia, we may forget that our old relationship with sin has ended and that we have been set free from its power over us. At those times we relate to sin as *though* it were still our master rather than denying its claims on us and living as the true free men that Christ has made us. But the good news is that even when we commit individual acts of sin, we are no longer slaves of sin.

Christian, sin wants to reign over you, in and through your unredeemed physical body (including your mind), that part of you with many years of thinking, evaluating, desiring, responding, and reacting in ways that need to be put to death and to be renewed according to Christ. Sin wants to use your face to communicate anger, your tongues to gossip or speak evil about someone, your eyes to take in pornography, your hands to hurt and steal, and your bodies for sexual immorality.

But since sin is no longer your master, do not let it do so. In those moments of temptation, remember and believe that you are dead to sin and alive now to live unto God. And therefore, do not take the members of your bodies and present them in service to sin so that it will use them as instruments through which it accomplishes unrighteousness. The grace of God has set you free from the power of sin. It has caused you to die to sin and it has made you alive now unto God.

So instead of yielding yourself to sin, take the members of your body and present them in service to God who has saved you in Jesus Christ. Offer yourself alive to God and your body as a living sacrifice to him. Allow the Spirit of Christ to make proper use of your members as instruments through which righteousness is accomplished in your life and to produce the gracious fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

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