

Romans, Part 32 2-26-23

How Do You Identify? or Out of The Sin-Zone

We continue to mine the riches of the sixth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans. There is so much here. I was hoping to cover verses 8-14 today, but found it overwhelming to go through. I mean, the great British preacher the mid-20th century – Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in his commentary on Romans, which were his sermons – spends nearly 100 pages on these seven verses. 100 pages? How can I preach it in 30 minutes? Preachers vary wildly on this. I hear of some preachers who preach through Romans one chapter per Sunday and get done in four months. I just could not do that. Others, like Lloyd-Jones will spend four months on seven verses, which is a little more my style – but I haven't the time for that. So, I will try to split the difference. Point is, this is rich and meaty, so we shall dive in, starting at verse eight of this great section focused on the unity of the believer with Jesus – our union with Christ. Romans 6:**8-14** *Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. ¹⁰For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. ¹¹Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, ¹³and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*

I am eager to move into the verses 12-14 which mark a shift in the epistle. Paul's favorite transition word is "therefore." He often goes from teaching to application with that word. For over five chapters Paul has been telling us what is true and real about the world and judgment and the purposes and grace of God. But now the tone shifts. He starts to exhort us, to direct us, to give us practical applications of what he is setting forth. One way to put it is that he goes from the indicative to the imperative. Indicative to imperative. From what is, to what should be. From what you need to know to what you need to do. See that? We are at a pivotal point in this letter and thus in our study. The word of God gives us truth, gives us promises, but also gives us guidance on how we are to order our lives as disciples of Jesus. Some of us prefer the one over the other. Some prefer

theological sermons, others prefer practical sermons, but rightly viewed they go together, and the apostle connects them with that word, *therefore*.

But we aren't starting in verse 11 just yet. We have verses 8-11 to deal with first. And these are not so much about what you are to do but about what Jesus has done for us and we need to understand. Get this – right living can only proceed from right thinking. Unless we believe rightly we will not live rightly. And in our text for today Paul lays out some things that are true of the Lord Jesus. Let's run through those. 9 *Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.* In Hebrews 9 it says Christ has been offered up once to bear the sins of many. His death doesn't happen each time his people take communion. No. He has died once for all. Our text says a few things about that death. It says death is no longer master over him. It certainly is not. In Revelation Jesus is depicted as holding the keys to death and hell. But the language here suggests that at some point death was his master. How can that be? That can be because you sinned and I sinned and Jesus came to take that sin on him and with that sin he took on, he was also submitting to the death that sin deserved. Death, in essence, overcame him until it could no longer hold the son of God. I love what Peter says in that first Christian sermon in Acts 2:**23-24** *this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. ²⁴But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.* But it apparently was possible for him to be under its power temporarily. But, at the resurrection, the bonds of death exploded and now we say *death is no longer his master*.

But there is still more. I have become very fond of saying that. It is so true! We can't get our minds around all that Jesus has done. As my brother Scott Shriver likes to say, *whatever you think it is, it is more than that*. Now, verse 10 *For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.* He died to sin, meaning he separated Himself from it by paying for it – Tetelestai – *it is finished*. That is what He said from the cross just before He passed. He placed himself under that sin and the divine wrath for a season until the debt was paid. And then He was finished with sin and death. While He lived in this world He was in the realm of sin and death. We see Him at Bethany weeping over Lazarus. We see Him in the garden, sweating blood over the cup He would drink and the death He would die. We see Him on Calvary crying out in agony of body and of soul. We used to sing a hymn *Out of the ivory palaces, into a world of woe, only His great, eternal love made my Savior go*. That was the Messiah in this realm

of sin, but no more. No connection to it once He had passed out of this world and into the heavenly kingdom where Paul says *He lives to God*. Jesus actually said in John 17 that before He was on earth He shared glory with the Father and He was returning to that glory. He is in the heavenly realm, that place of perfection to which we all long to go. His involvement with sin and death was only temporary.

Now, why does Paul think you should know this? Why do these things matter to us? Because we are united with Jesus. We are married to Christ – one with Him. With Jesus we go down, with Jesus we go up, with Jesus we go out. We with Him. Theologians call it the mystical union. It means that what happened to Christ happened to us. What is true of Christ is true of us in Him. See if this illustration works for you. On my iPhone I have this app called *Find my iPhone*. It seems rather odd since the app is on the iPhone that you want to find, but it is an exceedingly helpful app. I use it regularly to locate my wife and our daughter. With the *Find my iPhone* app I can find Beth and Sharon. How does that work? Does the app tell me where Beth and Sharon are? Not exactly. What does it tell me? It tells me where their phone is. But because our family is a very modern family, what do we stay attached to at all times – almost? Our devices. It's not 100% but it is close enough. Find Beth's phone and you have? Found Beth. Where the phone has gone, Beth has gone. Where the phone is, Beth is. Because they are connected and just so it is for the believer in Jesus. Christ died to sin, so we have died to sin. Christ lives unto God so we? We too are alive to God. Yes! This is the newness of life Paul writes about. The believer is in a different realm now. This is what we have been talking about from the previous verses in chapter six. The old life, the old self is in the past. It is not us anymore. We are new men and women. Are you a saint? Oh yes, you are. Not because you are great but because your Savior is great and you are in Him. When the Chiefs won the Super Bowl, Patrick Mahomes got a ring and a check but so too did every player on the team, including the third string quarterback who never played a down. They were on the team and can tell their grandkids that they were Super Bowl Champs. And this blessing is not simply future for us. It is now. We are alive now in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 *if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.* Ephesians 2:4-6 *God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* There is a future implication for all this – but when are we raised with Christ? Already happened. Dead to sin. Alive to God. This does not mean that we are done dealing with sin.

We are dead to it – We are no longer its servants, but it is alive in us, with us. We still have a fight of faith to engage. We will speak to that more in a minute.

But here is where Paul goes with all this. *11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.* As Paul begins to tell us how to live the Christian life, he begins with a movement of the mind. *Consider.* The Greek word is *logizomai*, from which we get our word *logic*. He is saying to follow the argument. Let logic take you to the application. This is where holiness of life begins. Considering, pondering, mentally absorbing the gospel truths of our union with Christ. These are sanctifying principles. We grow by faith in the gospel. Right thinking must undergird our doings. Living Christianly is impossible if we aren't believing Christianly. And what is true doesn't help you practically if you don't remember it and apply it. So, he says, *Consider.* And what do you consider? *11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.* In other words, consider who you are in Jesus. You are in a new place, a new status, a new position. So, act accordingly. Adopt new goals, new delights, new habits, new friends, new values. He makes all things new when you are united with Him.

Now, I am going to make a small leap and talk with you about identity. The great question of our age – *how do you identify?* We mean by that – *what is your self-perception?* One may answer it with the words, *I consider myself.* As in, *I consider myself to be a 5'4" Chinese woman.* Maybe you have seen that video? But that is the language Paul uses here. *Consider yourselves.* How you consider yourself is a huge deal. Nowadays people think they have a right to their own pronouns corresponding to this self-identity. I am from Pennsylvania and my pronouns are *her/she*. I am boring and my pronouns are *ho/hum*. I am a donkey and my pronouns are? *Hee/haw*. You can have a lot of fun with this idea. But it is a deadly serious business and a playground for the devil who is an identity thief. He has made great progress in convincing a whole generation that they don't need to conform their minds to objective truth, they can change truth to fit their preference. My body may be objectively male, but if I am drawn to more feminine pursuits maybe I will get my body altered to fit my tastes, my preferences. Most of us were raised to think we had to come to grips with reality, wrap our minds around what is real, but now people grow up and are told that what is real will adjust or should adjust to your mind. You see that? How do you identify? Paul is saying that Christians are to identify, consider themselves, in a particular way. Dead to sin, alive to God. There are other good answers to that. There is more to our Christian identity. When we had our family beach gathering back in May, we bought our grandchildren t-shirts. Based on a sermon I preached from Romans

one, Beth got this idea to help our grandchildren develop a Christian identity. We bought the girls shirts that said, *beloved*, and we explained that is what they are in Christ. We bought the boys shirts that said, *called*, for the same reason. We could have gotten them Gator shirts or Bulldog shirts or Steelers shirts, but those things are trivial. Knowing you are beloved and called and united to Jesus – these self-perceptions are crucial and valuable. Don't let Satan steal your identity. When he calls you names, just tell him you are in Christ, alive to God, dead to sin and a blood-bought servant of the king of kings. That is how we identify. Paul's exhortation does not ask us to pretend. It asks us to wrap our minds around gospel realities.

So, all of that was our main point, but just our first point. Consider your union with Christ. Now on to point two which is combat. Combat the allurements of sin. 12 *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts.* This verse assumes two things. One is that you will be tempted to let sin reign, and that you are able to not let sin reign. It suggests some competition, combat going on. In his book, *Holy War*, John Bunyan depicts the Christian soul as a city that is under attack from without and marked by conflict within. Holy war indeed. Piper does the same thing with the idea of the soul as a castle. He says incremental surrender is possible. Christians may have surrendered part of the castle to a deceiver who undermines the sanctifying Lord. So, don't surrender. Sing *I surrender all, all to thee my blessed Savior*. But sin is presented in the New Testament as a real force that puts pressure on us and seeks to capture us through deceit and lusts, a duo that usually works together. Ephesians 4:22 *Lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit.* Lusts of deceit – You see that? The devil wants you to indulge your fleshly appetites, your pride, your greed and he bombards you with the message that doing so is the way to happiness. But it's a lie. Tell the devil you know that. I Peter 1:14 (NLT) *So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then.* Remind the devil that the old foolish guy is no longer who you are. Remind yourself of that. I mean, the devil is like your former boss calling you up saying, *Hey, we need you to show up at the office this weekend.* How do you respond to that? Laugh if you like but say to Satan, *do you realize who you are talking to? I am dead to you, alive to God. I have a new master.* And then block his calls and messages. *Do not let sin reign.*

Our third point and third C is *Commit*. Commit yourself to your rightful Lord. 13-14a *Do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and*

*your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you. Who is Master? Jesus. Not sin. So, what do you do for your Master? You say, Here I am Lord. Take me, use me. Romans 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice. Yes! Just as in Romans 6:12 we see that word therefore. And then we are admonished about living that is consistent with the gospel. In Romans 12 Paul will focus on devoting our minds to the Lord. In Romans 6 the focus is on the body, the members of your body. We sing a hymn that says, take my hands, take my feet, take my lips and let them be consecrated Lord to thee. That is what Paul is calling for in our passage. Listen to it in the NLT – **13** Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. You see, your physical capacities will either serve sin or the Savior. Piper, in his castle analogy says that weapons in the castle may be captured and used by the enemy. Boy, that's for sure. He notes the parts of our body, eyes, ears, tongue, hands, feet, the sexual apparatus most certainly. These will all serve someone – whom shall it be? The call of Romans is to look gratefully at your Lord and say, I surrender all. All to thee my blessed Savior, I surrender all. And that surrender is strangely, the key to victory.*

All of this presumes, of course, that we are in a fight. Ephesians 6 speaks of it and the armor provided for fighting it. Paul speaks of himself fighting the fight of faith. In other places the Christian life is described as a race to similar effect. Listen to the language of the apostle in I Corinthians 9:**24-27** *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. ²⁵Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; ²⁷but I discipline my body and make it my slave. Wow! Take that it in. Many people become slaves to their bodies. Their bodies become slaves to sin. The vision for our lives, as followers of Jesus is this – bodies that are disciplined, under control, and a servant to the mind and the master. Amen?*

One more C-point to make from Romans 6. Consider, Combat, Commit, and finally celebrate. Yes, celebrate! We should all like this one. **14** *Sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. And under grace we are free from the dominion of sin. Glory be to God! We will say more on this next time, but note for today that our victory involves some important remembering. We remember we are dead to sin, alive to God and under grace. And these are*

things we don't just remember, we celebrate. And in that celebration, we exult, we overflow with joy which becomes our strength which dooms the enemy and ensures our victory.

In 2 Chronicles of the Old Testament there is a story about one of the righteous kings of Judah whose name was Jehoshaphat and he faced a great danger to his kingdom. The Moabites and the Ammonites had joined forces and were on the march against Jerusalem and the odds in Vegas greatly favored the invaders. But Jehoshaphat heard from the Lord and followed His instructions for engaging the enemy. 2 Chronicles 2:**20-22** (NLT) *Early the next morning the army of Judah went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. On the way Jehoshaphat stopped and said, "Listen to me, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem! Believe in the Lord your God, and you will be able to stand firm. Believe in his prophets, and you will succeed."*²¹*After consulting the people, the king appointed singers to walk ahead of the army, singing to the Lord and praising him for his holy splendor. This is what they sang: "Give thanks to the Lord; his faithful love endures forever!"*²²*At the very moment they began to sing and give praise, the Lord caused the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir to start fighting among themselves.* To the world this makes no sense, but in God's wisdom, we find victory when we worship, when we remember the saving love of our God, when we celebrate grace. There is plenty we can do to live a godly Christian life and walk in the fruits of the Spirit, but we never get beyond simply remembering who we are in Jesus, remembering what has been done for us and celebrating His grace. Each and every day, we consider our union with the Lord, we combat the dark forces of sin, we commit our bodies to the Master and we celebrate His grace. More to come on this next time, but for today, we will call that a wrap. Let's pray.