

Sermon preached at Faith Presbyterian Church, Springfield, Virginia,
on Sunday, August 6, 1989, by the Rev. W. Graham Smith, D.D.

ROMANS 6:6, 11, 13, 14

“We know that our old self was crucified with Jesus... So you also must reckon yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord... Do not yield the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life... For sin shall not have dominion over you since you are not under law but under grace.”

VICTORY IN JESUS

What is the key to victory in the Christian life? Romans 6:12 says, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body.” There are so many people who are slaves to sin, and Paul is telling us how to get out from under sin’s dominion. In verse 14 he affirms, “For sin shall not have dominion over you.” Now wouldn’t you like to live that way? Paul is not talking about sinless perfection, but he is saying that we ought not to be slaves to sin. If you are like any normal congregation, there are people here today who are absolutely enslaved by sin in some shape or form. There are some of you who have a habit or an attitude, and you say, “I can’t break it.” There are some of you who bear a grudge and you say, “I can’t give it up; I can’t forgive.” You, my friend, are a slave to sin; it has dominion over you.

Now God never intended that one of His children should live that way, being a slave to any sin; so, through the Apostle Paul He is going to show us how to get victory. You know, there are lots of people who have salvation, but they don’t enjoy it! They remind me of a man who has a motorcycle, but he doesn’t seem to know it has an engine; and so, everywhere he goes, he pushes it! Now that is the testimony of a lot of professing Christians: “Oh, I’m proud of my faith, I’m a member of a fine church, I believe the Bible to be the Word of God” - but there’s no victory in your life; indeed, your spiritual history is one of devastating defeat. Instead of your faith carrying you, you’re trying to push it. Wouldn’t it be wonderful for you to realize there is an engine in your motorcycle? You don’t need to push it -- it will carry you!

Now you will make that same discovery in the Spirit-filled life that Paul is talking about here in Romans chapters 6, 7, and 8, if you really approach the Word of God with understanding, humility, and obedience. There is victory available for you in the Lord Jesus Christ. Sin does not need to have dominion over you. There are three key words in this 6th chapter of Romans which will help you experience victory:

Romans 6:6 — there is the word “know”

Romans 6:11 — there is the word “reckon”

Romans 6:13 - there is the word “yield.”

Now if you understand these three things - know, reckon, and yield, you will understand what Paul is talking about, and you will understand what it means to experience victory in Jesus.

1. Know (6:6). “We know that our old self was crucified with Jesus.” “Your old self” -- that is, the person you used to be. Have you ever thought about the person you used to be?

This “old self” has been “crucified,” says Paul. Now, you’ve got to know this. We have been baptized into Jesus’ death. This is Spirit baptism. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 Paul says, “For by one Spirit have you all been baptized into one Body.” This is the Baptism in the Spirit; it takes place in every believer at the very moment of his regeneration; and water baptism is only the symbol of this Spirit baptism by which we are incorporated into the Body of Christ — the Church.

A keen young Christian said to me not too long ago, “Dr. Smith, have you received the baptism in the Holy Spirit?” And I replied, “By the grace of God I have.” And with a smile he said, “Tell me, when did you experience this wonderful gift?” And I said, “At the very moment when God, in sovereign grace, by the power of His Holy Spirit, raised me from the death of sin to newness of life in Christ.”

He looked disappointed, and I had to explain to him that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is experienced by every believer. Galatians 3:26,27 says, “For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” And 1 Corinthians 12:13 reads, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”

The Scriptures expressly state that all born-again believers have been baptized into the one body of Christ. Paul did not exhort Christians to be baptized in the Holy Spirit in order to become more spiritual. He simply said that in the case of believers the baptism had already taken place -- in the Greek it is the aorist tense which signifies that the event has already taken place.

This explains why there is an amazing absence of exhortation in the Scriptures that we get baptized by the Holy Spirit. The baptism is already a universal gift of God to all believers. We need not seek it, pray for it, try to achieve it, or receive it. We already have it. The Baptism of the Spirit is come -- we have it and we have Him. We are but to seek the fullness of the Spirit - to obey God’s Word, to do God’s will - to engage in prevailing prayer.

In the New Brunswick Bible (N.B.), Romans 6:5,6 says, “For if we have been united with Him in His death, we shall certainly be united with Him in His resurrection. We know that our old self was crucified with Him.” When you receive Christ as personal Savior, the Holy Spirit takes you and places you into the Body of Christ. And you are, at that moment, identified with Christ in His death; and therefore, when Christ died, you died; and when Christ rose, you rose. Friend, we need to understand that not only did Christ take our sins to the Cross, He took ourselves to the Cross! You see, He died for us. When Christ died, we died. He died as our Representative and Substitute. And this is what Paul is saying in verse 3: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?” And the verse says we died, we rose, we ascended with Him and now sit with Him on the right hand of the Father. We call this identification with Christ -- but you need to know it before you can

experience and enjoy it.

Some professing Christians yearn to live the victorious, Spirit-filled life, and they cry, and they groan, and they say, "Lord, crucify me!" But He already has! You were crucified 2,000 years ago. You don't need to have it done; you need to know that it has been done.

"Know this, that our old self was crucified with Him." It has already been done. When He died, you died. Friend, if you haven't died for your sins, then you're going to. I've already died for mine. I died for mine when Jesus died.

You can't take a man who has died for a crime and hang him again. Suppose they hang a man for murder, and he is pronounced dead. Next day, by a miracle, the man is seen walking down the street here in Alexandria! And someone says, "Bring him back before the judge; he's a murderer!" But the judge says, "We can't do a single thing to him. He was adjudged guilty; he was sentenced, he was hanged; and he can't be killed twice for the same crime."

I've already died for my sins. I died 2,000 years ago. Someone told me that when Dr. R. S. Lee of Memphis visited the Holy Land and stood on Mount Calvary, the guide said to the group, "Have any of you ever been here before?" And Dr. Lee said, "Yes, I have." And the guide said, "When?" He said, "2,000 years ago!" That was exactly true. We have been crucified. Isn't that wonderful good news! There's no such thing as "double jeopardy." I'm not going to die for my sins that have already been paid for! I'm not going to go to the Cross a second time. I've already been there. I've already died.

Now when you really discover this and know it, it will revolutionize your Christian life. You may understand it intellectually, but you must discover it spiritually. Watchman Nee said that when he really discovered this, he jumped up out of his chair and went running -- he was so excited that he started shouting -- he said - "Praise God, I'm dead, I'm dead! Praise God, I'm dead!" He really understood for the first time that he was dead with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now you've got to know this, because if you're dead, then you're set free! The first thing we have to do is just know this. It is true. Whether you feel it or not, if you're saved, it is true.

2. Reckon (6:11). "So, you also must reckon yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

What does the word "reckon" mean? It is a word in the Greek with steel and concrete in it. It is a bookkeeping word, and it means "to put to one's account," or "to put down on the credit side of a ledger." "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin."

Now, how do you know that your sins are forgiven? How do you know that you're not going to Hell? How do you know that you are justified? You reckon it to be so! God said that if you would trust Christ, He would forgive your sins. And when you have the assurance of your salvation, you have it because you reckon it to be so. God puts to your account the perfect righteousness of Christ.

You know, there are a lot of us who "reckon" for salvation who do not "reckon" for

sanctification. Now it's the same thing. The same way you reckon for justification you need to reckon for sanctification. You must count it as so. Know it to be so. God said it, whether you feel it or not. It is so that when Christ died, you died. And because, in Christ, you have died to sin, sin no longer has any power over you. Cancer no longer has any power over a person who has died from it. That is why Paul goes on to say, "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof" (verse 12).

You are to reckon upon your sanctification in two ways:

a. You are to reckon yourself to be dead to sin. In 6:14-23 sin is characterized as a cruel slave master. Now suppose I am a slave and I died. What can my master do to me? Absolutely nothing! He can't make me work for him anymore. "I'm dead!" Paul says. When you died with Christ, you died to sin. It doesn't now have any more dominion over you. You are free forever! When you died with Jesus on that Cross, sin lost its power over you. "Well," you say, "it still has power over me!" Yes, and you know why? It is certainly because (1) you haven't really understood and known that you have died with Jesus; and (2) you haven't reckoned it to be true.

b. You are to reckon yourself to be alive to God. When you talk about "dying to sin" some people look at you as if you had smallpox! They say, "Man, I don't want to die. I want to live!" But Jesus said, "I have come that you might have life and that you might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10). But, my friend, the way to life is death; for Jesus also said, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone; but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit" (John 12:24).

Jesus told us also to take up our cross as His disciples. The Cross meant death to Him, and it means that to us -- the death of our old nature, the old self that was nailed to His Cross 2,000 years ago. Our cross is His Cross, and His Cross is our cross. And we take it up, we embrace it. Now you need to reckon this to be true. And when you start to reckon it to be true, it becomes true, because there is the attitude of faith and trust in our minds which God honors and rewards when we say, "Thank God, I am no longer a slave to sin. I know this to be true because God says it is true. I know that when Jesus was raised from the dead, I was raised. Not only do I know this to be true but I reckon on it." Immediately that just throws the doors open. The Holy Spirit takes that truth and makes it true to you, and operable in your own experience. When you reckon it to be so, it starts to be so! Now of course the Devil hopes you won't understand or believe this! He hopes you will not really learn how to reckon yourself dead to sin and alive to God.

Actually, the Greek here means "Keep on reckoning." It is not something you do once. It is something you keep on doing day after day. I am to keep on reckoning myself dead to sin. The old Devil comes and wants me to do something, and I say, "I don't have to obey you. I'm dead to sin, and I'm alive to God! Thank God, I've got victory, and I do have victory!" At that moment, when I reckon it to be so, it becomes so; and what has happened to me in my justification begins to happen to me now in my sanctification.

Lindsay Glegg used to tell a story about two girls who became converted, and shortly thereafter they were invited to go somewhere, and they didn't think their Lord would like them to go there. It smacked of the old life, and they had entered into a new life. And so, they wrote a courteous

letter. They said, “We thank you for your invitation, but we are unable to come because we died a week ago last Tuesday!” (If they had known their theology better they would have said, “We died 2,000 years ago!”) But the point is -- they reckoned themselves dead to all that would displease their Lord; and they were right, and they were well on the pathway to holiness, for that is the only way to deliverance. That is saying “No” to self. The Devil has no power over us if we are dead, and know it, and reckon upon it!

Well, let me give you the third word:

3. Yield (6:13,14). “Do not yield the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness, but rather yield yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and the parts of your body to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not have dominion over you since you are not under law but under grace.”

Now this word “yield” really means “present.” Just present your body to the Lord. It’s instructive to note that the two words translated “yield” in this verse are a little different in the Greek: they are different in their tenses. Translated literally and precisely the verse would read, “Neither keep on yielding the parts of your body as instruments of righteousness to sin but yield yourselves once and for all to God” -- Don’t keep on obeying sin but make a once-and-for-all surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ!

Now you must keep on reckoning yourself dead to sin but alive to God, but we need to get sold out to Jesus Christ. “Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.” Do you know anything of what it means to make this absolute, unconditional surrender to the God Who died for you on the Cross? The real reason why most of us are not victorious in our Christian life is because we have never said, “Once and for all, now and forever, so much as in me is, with every inch and every ounce and every fiber of my being, till death, I surrender to you, Lord Jesus.”

Most of us do not really intend to be any more holy than we are right now; and that’s the reason we will never be. I don’t know how much of God you’ve got, but you’ve got all you want; and if you don’t have any more, it’s because you don’t want any more. But when we know that when Jesus died, we died; when Jesus arose, we arose; when we begin to reckon on it; and when we say with all of our heart, soul and being, “I yield to You, Jesus Christ my Lord -- I take myself off the throne and put You on the throne” - then you’re going to move into a new dimension of victorious living and fruitful service; and it’s going to be a glorious experience of God’s power to work in you and through you.

Paul talks about yielding the parts of our body as instruments of righteousness to God. He’s talking about our hands and feet, our lips and our tongues. The Lord wants to use them. That’s what victory in Jesus is all about. The Lord doesn’t want you to do anything for Him. He just wants you to yield to Him, and then He wants to begin doing things through you. He wants to take your lips and make them His lips. He wants to take your hands and feet and use them as instruments of righteousness.

You may be orthodox in all your Christian beliefs, but, tell me, has the power gone out of your life?

Discover this truth (or rediscover it) that when Jesus died, you died; and when He arose, you arose. Reckon it to be true, keep on reckoning it to be true; turn everything over to Him, so that He may take your members and use them as instruments of righteousness!

AMEN.