

Alive

Romans 6:1-11

Introduction

Dr. Karen Bolla is an associate professor at the John Hopkins School of Public Health. She has done extensive research into the area of memory loss, and notes that every one of us is plagued by forgetfulness at one time or another. Her research reveals these items as the six most common things people forget:

6. People's faces (42%)
5. What was said (49%)
4. A specific word (53%)
3. Telephone numbers (57%)
2. Where something is (60%)
1. People's names (83%)

If any of those resonate with you, you are in good company.

Michael Griffiths once wrote a book with the intriguing title "Cinderella With Amnesia." The cover shows a picture of Cinderella sitting in rags by the fireplace. She is gazing at a glass slipper in her hand, and her face reveals utter bewilderment. She obviously has no idea what it is. Nor where it came from. Somewhere out there the prince pursues her as the love of his life, but she has completely forgotten. She has no idea who she is, nor the wonderful future she could enjoy. What a tragedy!

- The subtitle of that book, by the way, is "A practical discussion of the relevance of the church."

In the book Griffiths states:

Cinderella's misfortune is nothing compared to that of most Christians today. DO YOU REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE? If you follow Jesus, you are a child of the King of Kings! You have been raised from death to life by Jesus Christ!

During these summer months we are focusing on the church – and what Jesus had in mind when He created it during His earthly ministry. The church is the entity to which turned over the ministry when He ascended into heaven.

- Who are we? And what are we called to do?

Each week we are highlighting one word, drawn from the assigned Scriptures, to describe us (His church). So far we have used the words CALLED and SENT. This week our word is drawn from Romans 6:11:

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.
(Romans 6:11)

And our word is:

ALIVE

Because of Jesus, you are ALIVE! That's clearly something we are supposed to know, because three times in this passage Paul uses the word "know" to reinforce the truth.

#1: IN ORDER TO BE ALIVE, WE HAVE TO DIE

Look at verses 3-4:

Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ... just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Romans 6:3-4)

The text uses the practice of baptism as its illustration. This text is not an argument for a particular way of baptizing people. It is a description of what happens when some is baptized – regardless whether they are immersed or sprinkled.

- In baptism a death happens and a new life results.
- Do we physically die? No.
- But something dies and something comes ALIVE.

It all happens spiritually as God works IN CHRIST Jesus. In baptism, we are buried into Jesus – the old Tom dies. And we are raised with Him – the new Tom is born.

I have a new life – a fresh start – a new identity. I was once Tom Brodbeck the sinner. I'm now Tom Brodbeck the child of God. I'm now the new and improved Tom Brodbeck.

That's the teaching of 2 Corinthians 5:17:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

I read this week that this imagery of burial and resurrection was so powerful to the early Jewish Christians that if you had a child born after your baptism, that child would be considered a "first born" and have all the rights your oldest child would have.

The Greek word for "newness" (*kainotēti*) describes a life that has a new or fresh quality about it. The resurrection of Jesus was not just a resuscitation; it was a new form of life. In the same way the spiritual lives of believers in Jesus have a new, fresh quality.

At the very core, we are ALIVE because God's Holy Spirit is living within us.

So, if you are a baptized child of God, part of your identity is that you have a new life empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Paul goes on ...

#2: MY NEW LIFE IS ONE OF VICTORY

Look at verses 6-7:

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. (Romans 6:6-7)

We KNOW this. It is a fact, not a hope, not a wish, not a dream. And since it is a fact, and since I am a new creature through my identification with His burial and resurrection, I can also know that I have been set free from the power of sin. Sin is no longer my master. My master is now Jesus.

He couldn't say it any more clearly: *Anyone who has died has been set free from sin.* It's a fascinating legal concept. Death sets you free.

True story: During the Civil War a man by the name of George Wyatt was selected by lot to go to the front where the fighting was most fierce. George had a wife and six children at home, and they depended on him a great deal.

- Knowing that, a young man named Richard Pratt offered to go in his stead. His offer was accepted and he joined the ranks. As a part of the agreement, Pratt took the name and ID number of George Wyatt.
- Before long the young man (Pratt) was killed in action.
- As the war continued, the government sought once again to draft George Wyatt into service. He protested, entering the plea that he had died in the war in the person of Richard Pratt.
- He insisted that the authorities consult their own records as to the fact of his having died in identification with Pratt, his substitute. They did, and Wyatt was listed as killed in action thereby exempted as beyond the claims of law and further service. The official ruling was that he had died in the person of his representative.

George Wyatt was both ALIVE and dead. And, according to this text, so are we. Like young Richard Pratt, Jesus became our substitute, so that by His death and resurrection we too “officially” die and are brought back to live. When we are IN CHRIST, we are very much ALIVE.

#3: NOW THAT WE ARE ALIVE, WE NEVER DIE

Look at verse 11:

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6:11)

The King James Version translates the word “count” as “reckon.” In some parts of the United States, “to reckon” means “to think” or “to guess.” “I reckon” is also the equivalent of “I suppose.”

- My Grandpa Chivington would always say “Well, I reckon so.”

But none of these popular meanings can apply to this verse. The word *reckon* is a translation of a Greek word that is used forty-one times in the New Testament—nineteen times in Romans alone. It appears in Romans 4 where it is translated as “count, reckon, impute.” It is an accounting term that means “bank on it.”

To reckon means “to put to one’s account.” It simply means to believe that what God says in His Word is really true in your life.

Paul didn’t tell his readers to *feel* as if they were dead to sin, or even to *understand* it fully, but to act on God’s Word and claim it for themselves.

- Reckoning is a matter of faith that results in your action.
- It is like endorsing a check: if we really believe that the money is in the checking account, we will sign our name and collect the money.
- Reckoning is not simply claiming a promise but acting on a fact.
- God does not command us to become dead to sin. He tells us that *we are* dead to sin and alive unto God and then commands us to act on it.
- Even if we do not act on it, the facts are still true.

We live in a society of scammers, so we are sometimes skeptical of guaranteed offers.

- This week I got a text that simply said “Hey Tom, everything is finalized. All we need is your official OK.”
 - Don’t trust that one.

But if it is in the Bible? Trust it completely.

You are ALIVE.

APPLICATION

On March 11, 1974, a Japanese soldier by the name of Lt. Hiroo Onoda emerged from the Philippine jungle. He was a World War II holdout. He told Japanese newsmen he had not come out before because he had not received the order to do so.

Onoda met with searchers briefly and then returned to his hideout to retrieve his Samurai sword. In a formal act of surrender, he presented the sword to Maj. Gen. Jose Rancudo, commander of the Philippine Air Force – almost 30 years after the war had officially ended.

Prior to that day, the last order he had received was in 1945. He had been told at that time to keep up the guerrilla warfare he had been waging. Word had never reached him that the war was over. So he continued to fight, not knowing what was really true.

One of the greatest ways the devil wins victories in the lives of Christians even today is to convince them of a false truth. And when the devil is successful those Christians live defeated lives instead of being what the text calls “alive unto God.”

If you are IN CHRIST you have new identity. You are ALIVE.

- You have a new life
- A life that does not need to be dominated by sin
- But is instead free to live for the God who redeemed you.

We are the church!

Amen