

Fully Alive!

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Do you sometimes feel like you're going through the motions? Active but disengaged? Do you want to really live? I mean *live*. St. Irenaeus said, "*The glory of God is man fully alive.*" Are you fully alive? How might God's glory make you alive? In Romans 6, St. Paul insists we are "dead to sin and alive to God." But we often we feel the opposite—alive to sin and dead to God? Sin, the proverbial bully, keeps us from where we want to go. Are you appeasing the bully, under the thumb of his power, deflated, flat, lifeless? What if you could get out from under its power? What if there is a way to be fully alive to God? Let's take a look: Dead to Sin, Union with Christ, Alive to God.

Dead to Sin

Paul asks: "[Should we continue to sin that grace may abound?](#)" Another way to ask the question is: "[Can we tolerate sin if God is forgiving?](#)" Even if you've not strictly posed this question, we all operate as if the answer is yes, yes, we're free to tolerate sin because God is tolerant of us. Unknowingly, we absorb the words of famous 19th C Romantic who said, "Of course God will forgive me; that's His job." But is it? Is it God's *job* to forgive? And our job to keep him busy? Does he exist, not just to forgive, but to tolerate all people, all sins, to accept us just as we are, full stop? What is God's response? Verse 2: "[By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?](#)" The answer: Absolutely not! Why? Because you're dead to sin, he says. What does **dead** mean? Lifeless, deceased, expired. Pick up the arm of a corpse and what does it do? Falls to the ground limp, unresponsive! If you've expired to sin, you are unresponsive to its touch, and you certainly don't reach for the very thing that put you in the grave! But *how* are we dead **to sin**? Verse 6 says we die to sin in order to no longer be enslaved by it. What does slavery connote? Cruelty, yes, but mastery. Verse 7, [the one who has died has been set free from sin.](#)" Free from its mastery. Verse 9, free from its dominion. These statements pile up to tell a pivotal truth—we are dead to the **power of sin**! It no longer has a hold over you. You. Are. Free. You don't have to succumb to the bully. You're not under his thumb. Now, if you're free of something cruel, why would you return? Returning to sin's enslavement is like a hoarder who, living amidst piles of junk, rotting garbage, disease-ridden rats, is rescued and placed in a brand new, state of the art, spick and span home, only to return to the old house *and move back in*. Or the person who, falling off a cliff into a ravine, when offered a rope to escape, insists on staying stranded. Why turn your back on rescue, move back in, when freedom is at your door? When freedom is already yours?! Why continue to thirst for human approval, work to impress, entertain a lusty imagination, let loose that sharp tongue? Or more subtly, why refuse to be fully alive to God? Why not throw everything in with the one who freed you, move fully into the house of the Lord, relish his company, enjoy his grace, live in his ways? After all: **To be dead to sin is to be alive to God! If Christ is your Lord, then sin is licked!** Don't move back in, whither away in the ravine. Should we continue to sin that grace may abound? Should hoarders return to their houses? The trapped to their cages? May it never be! Why, then, do we often act as if sin has power over us?

Union with Christ

Ill mention 2. One, while the power of sin is gone; its presence is not. Two, is in verse 3: “How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” So one reason we may continue in sin is that we don’t know, understand or grasp something fully about ourselves. If you don’t know how to drive a stick shift, you can’t enjoy the thrill of the ride. But once you learn, you are off to the races. What’s keeping us from the thrill of being free from sin? Maybe we don’t know or don’t grasp our **union with Christ**: “For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” Union with Christ: baptism into Christ Jesus, united with him (2x), and all the in and with statements in this passage are telling us **we have been plunged into mystical union with Christ, incorporated into the very life of Jesus**. Very often we focus on the benefits of Jesus—forgiveness, salvation, adoption—but none of these are available apart from union with Jesus. Union with Christ is the very heart of the gospel. What does it mean? **It means things true of Jesus also become true of you**. What things? We’ve looked at death to sin, so let’s look at two more. **First, you have a new humanity**. Embracing union with Christ means you leave one humanity for another. This is the point of verse 6. Crucify the old self (humanity) and put on the new self/humanity. See our sin problem runs as deep as our dna, down into our linkage with Adam. And in order to enjoy the life God wants to give us, we need to get out of Adam. In order to qualify for God’s blessings, we need a man to qualify where Adam failed. We need a new Adam. Enter Jesus, who obeys where we disobey, is faithful where we are unfaithful. It’s not enough to be a great philanthropist, activist, speaker, or academic. To get out of Adam and into true humanity, we need a rep who is fully alive to God. And you run through the rolodex of history and the last man standing is Jesus. Who adores and obeys the will of God, flawlessly. As 2nd Adam, Jesus not only succeeds where we fail but undoes the power of 1st Adam. He overthrows sin and death through his death-resurrection. Which is why Paul says we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his (spiritual and physical). Jesus emerges from the grave as the vanguard of a new, a *true* humanity. A perfect picture of what we’re meant to be. **So union with Christ puts us into the true humanity of Christ**. Which leads to a second aspect of union with Christ: **you have new life coursing through your new humanity**. We get, not just his record but his resurrection, not just his humanity but his vitality. Verse 4: “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” What’s he saying? Just as Jesus was raised to new life by the glory of the Father, we too walk in new life *by the glory of the Father*. How do we walk in new resurrection life? Depends on what the glory of the Father means. This phrase is used by Jesus twice in the Gospels to refer to his second coming, a time when he returns with “the glory of the Father” and with the angels to bring judgment and renewal. Jesus is saying there is a sphere of existence, a realm of unmatched power and unseen beauty, so intense that when it is seen angels materialize. When else does this happen? A time when a power and beauty, an authority so great, that angels appear?—the resurrection. What we’re meant to see that we are in the same sphere of existence, the same realm of glorious power, a realm that has overlapped with our world to raise *you* from the dead, and give *you* a vitality and life that is part of that world. By union with Christ, *you* live in that world, and can walk in this world and not to sin, but to God, in life and power of Adam 2. You are so close to Christ you are imbued with his very life. In the film *Midnight Special*, the central character is a boy with

unusual powers. Light beams from his eyes. He can tell you things about yourself he shouldn't know. The boy says he has to be in a particular place at a particular time. It's critical. The problem is that a religious cult and secular authorities are both after him. The rest of the film is about how the boy's father and a friend do whatever it takes to get the boy to the destination. The identity of the boy is shrouded in mystery, but parts when he says to his Dad, "There is another world on top of ours and that's where I belong." Suddenly, you realize the boy is from another realm, which explains his power, his glory, his life. This is what Jesus is saying to you, **There is another world on top of ours and its where you belong.** That world is coming into this world, and as it does it gives you power over sin, to live like the one true Human. Like *Midnight Special*, it will require sacrifice. Things will be turned upside-down, but when the worlds overlap fully everything will be better and all things will be new. And the proof that you belong to that world is that you walk in its power, in the glory of the Father. If we're dead to sin, why do we still respond to it? Perhaps, because we haven't grasped our union with Christ, that things true of him have become true of us. That his power has become your power, his life has become your life, his humanity your humanity! Now you know why mystical. Because words cannot describe the splendor of union with Christ.

Alive to God

Dead to sin, United with Christ, now Alive to God. If this is all true, then why don't we *feel* like its true? But have you felt the truth of it in the room, hanging over your chest like a warm light? Yes, but that feeling will go. As feelings do. We are still creatures of this world, living in the space between. Verse 10-11: "*For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.* How do we live *alive to God* and not to our feelings. 2 ways. First, we have to *consider* ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. It's an accounting term. You line up the numbers, tally the total, and voila you have the balance. You don't feel it; you do it. The numbers don't lie, but our feelings do. Paul is saying trust the numbers. Do the the math. You are dead to sin and alive to God, *in Christ Jesus!* You have his humanity so don't go back. You have his life, so enjoy it. You have the glory of the Father glowing in your chest, so you don't have to sin. Consider. Do it every day. Remind yourself of your union with Christ. Mediate on the Bible. Help one another dive into union with Christ. Consider it and #2 Walk it. Walk in newness of life. We have to walk out our beliefs, and the more we do, the more they fit. Take a good look at this text. *Alive. To. God.* Now ambulate, move in the glory of the Father. Live into your beliefs. This can be hard. It can be awkward and sometimes people wont approve. But its worth it. The first year we were married my wife told me it was awkward having a new last name. When people referred to Robie Dodson, not Robie Oxford, she was like who? She moved from Dallas to join me in Minneapolis, which was hard on a lot of fronts, not least the weather! But you know what? She did it. She embraced the awkwardness, the difficulty, and lived into her new name, and we built a new life *together.* It may not be easy at times but its worth it. Jesus is saying, let's do it *together.* In the glory of the Father, with resurrection flowing through our veins, let's show the world a man, a woman, a child, a church fully alive to God. The glory of God is man fully alive—why—because man is fully alive when suffused by the glory of God!