

## Dead Man Walking

Last Sunday we talked about standing firm in the freedom that Christ has secured for us. This morning and next Sunday as well I want to discuss a bit more about how we are to live in that freedom.

I called this message Dead Man Walking. If you aren't familiar with that term, it refers to a condemned man walking from his prison cell to a place of execution. As I was studying Galatians, it occurred to me that phrase was descriptive of our lives as born again followers of Christ. Paul writes in Galatians 2, **"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."** Galatians 2:20 We are dead men and women, walking.

Jesus died on the cross as our substitute, bearing our sins and the penalty for our sins, the judgment against our sins, in his own body. We repented of our sins and placed our faith in Jesus and in his atoning death for us on the cross. When we did that, our sins were forgiven and it was as if we died – died to sin, died to that old sinful nature that controlled us and separated us from God, died to the past and the sentence of death that was on us. By faith in Christ, by believing in Him, we were spiritually united with him in death and then raised with Him into a new life, a new way of living. We were born again.

Paul writes in Romans, **"[In Christ] we died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."** Romans 6:2-4 Died to sin, buried with him in baptism and resurrected to new life!

This is my status: I'm a dead man walking. My spiritual status is: dead to sin and made alive in Christ. (See Galatians 2:20 again). Paul writes, **"Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ."** Romans 6:11 That's it! Dead men walking. Dead women walking. Dead to sin, but walking around, alive in Christ! More alive than we've ever been before!

Now notice Paul says, **"For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – because anyone who has died has been freed from sin."** Romans 6:6-7. If we have been crucified with Christ as Paul says in Galatians 2:20, if we are in Christ and therefore dead to sin, then we are freed from the control of sin. "Dead men tell no tales" the saying goes. Sin has no

effect on dead men. Dead men don't lie. You know what else dead men don't do? Dead men don't steal. They don't cheat on their spouse, they don't swear, they don't commit murder. We are dead men and women walking. We are dead to sin and made alive in Christ. The life we live now we live by and through our faith in Jesus Christ who loved us and gave himself for us. That's our status.

But then comes our practice! We are to live our lives as though we are dead men walking, i.e. dead to sin. Paul says in Romans, **“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin...”**

**Romans 6:12-13** Paul is talking about a choice now. In Christ my status is dead to sin, but my physical man is still tempted, still drawn to sin, what Paul calls evil desires. I've still got a fleshly nature in me that is tempted to sin. How do we stand firm in that freedom?

Go to Galatians 5. I want to focus our attention on two verses these next two weeks. **“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” Galatians 5:24-25.**

Here Paul speaks of us crucifying the sinful nature with its passions and desires. “I thought we were crucified with Christ. I thought our sinful nature was dead.” Galatians 2:20 is teaching something different than Galatians 5:24. Galatians 2:20 is talking about our position in Christ, our status. By what we could call our faith-union in Christ, our sins are forgiven, we are crucified and risen with him, seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, a new creation in Christ. All of that has been secured for us by his grace and not by our effort or works. Salvation is by grace. However, what Paul is talking about in Galatians 5:24 has to do with my practice, my discipleship, my walk with the Lord, and that requires a choice on my part. To live the life of victory over sin, it requires that we live a crucified life. It means that every day we choose to crucify the sinful nature with its passions and desires and instead, choose to live by the Spirit. That means we choose to walk in line with the Spirit – to keep in step with the Spirit. (John Stott explains the difference like this – Galatians 2:20 refers to a “dying” which we have experienced through union with Christ; Galatians 5:24 refers to a “deliberate putting to death.”)

Paul said we belong to Christ and we are crucified with Christ, but now he says we must crucify the sinful nature. This is something not done to us but by us! Jesus said we were to take up our cross and follow him. What do you do with a cross? You get crucified on it! I'm not talking about actually putting yourself on a cross. I'm not talking about abusing yourself or

subjecting your physical body to some kind of punishment. So what are we crucifying? What does the bible say? “The sinful nature with its passions and desires.” The drives within us that go against God and his word. All those things and desires that you know are not pleasing to God, those choices that are sinful and separate you from fellowship with God, that’s what we are talking about. Paul mentions some of them in Galatians 5:19 – sexual immorality, impurity, sins against others, hatred, envy, selfishness, rage, drunkenness and partying. Those drives and passions, those thoughts and actions that pull us away from Christ and a holy life, the gratification of those things in sinful ways, that’s what we are to crucify.

John Stott writes, “We must not only take up our cross and walk with it, but actually see that the execution takes place. We are actually to take the flesh, our willful and wayward self, and metaphorically speaking nail it to the cross. This is Paul’s graphic description of repentance, of turning our back on the old life of selfishness and sin, repudiating it finally and utterly.” That means we are going to put our sinful nature to the same open shame and treatment that was inflicted on Jesus when he bore our sin on the cross. Think about crucifixion in this context.

Crucifixion was a brutal form of execution. There was no pity or mercy to be found in it. And Paul chooses the illustration of crucifixion and the cross to talk about how we are to treat the sinful desires that he says are still warring against us. This is how we deal with and respond to the sin that tries to raise its ugly head and defeat us. We crucify that sinful nature. We reject it and its control over our lives, “repudiating it finally and utterly.”

In his commentary on Galatians, Stott points out three aspects of crucifixion in dealing with our sin nature. **Crucifixion of the sinful nature is to be pitiless.** Crucifixion wasn’t administered to nice people. It was reserved for the worst criminals. That’s why it was so shameful for Christ to be crucified and this is how we approach our sinful nature. Without pity.

Understand there is a conflict, a battle going on. Paul says, **“For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.” Galatians 5:17.** That sinful nature wants to defeat you, entice you and ensnare you, lure you, deceive you and drag you away from Christ. The devil and temptation won’t play fair. So Paul says we have to crucify this sinful nature. G. Walter Hanson in his commentary on Galatians writes, **“The goal of this war against the sinful nature is not a negotiated peace but final execution.” G. Walter Hanson** Don’t negotiate with sin. Crucify it. Reject it. Refuse it. Turn away from it!

**Crucifixion of the sinful nature will be painful.** It's not easy, saying no to sinful desires. The writer of Hebrews speaks of Moses choosing to endure ill treatment with God's people rather than enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season. Sin is pleasurable, at least in the short term and saying no to sin sometimes is painful. Discipline is painful. But we also know the consequences of sin are painful, both here and for eternity. Crucifying that sinful nature, saying no to the allure of sin and saying no to temptation may be painful, but it results in a lasting freedom and in fruit that blesses and prospers you and everyone around you. Crucifying the fleshly nature isn't painless, but it is part of how you live in freedom instead of slavery!

**Crucifixion of the sinful nature is to be decisive.** Crucifixion was decisive. It was not a quick death, but it was a certain death. Once you're up there, you're there to stay. No one survived crucifixion! Our dealing with that sinful nature is to be that decisive. We've made up our mind we are going to say no to sin and live for Jesus. That decision is a once and for all decision and it is an everyday decision! While we are here on this planet and in these bodies of flesh, we will still be battling with sin and that sinful nature, but we declare with Paul that we have crucified that sinful nature and we are determined to keep it there on the cross.

Paul says in Romans 12 **"I urge you in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God...Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world..." Romans 12:1-2** We have crucified the sinful nature. We offer ourselves to God as living sacrifices. Someone said the problem with living sacrifices is they keep crawling off the altar. We keep trying to take our flesh, our sinful nature off of the cross and indulge it once again, but that's not who we are. We are crucified with Christ and alive now in him. We are new creations in Christ and we aren't going to conform to the old pattern of this world any more.

Stott writes. "When we came to Jesus Christ, we repented. We 'crucified' everything we knew to be wrong. We took our old self-centered nature, with all its sinful passions and desires, and nailed it to the cross. And this repentance of ours was decisive, as decisive as a crucifixion. So, Paul says, if we crucified the flesh, we must leave it there to die. We must renew every day this attitude towards sin of ruthless and uncompromising rejection. In the language of Jesus, as Luke records it, every Christian must 'take up his cross daily.' (Lk.9:23)."

Every day we choose to stand in the freedom Christ has secured for us. Every day we continue to engage in that battle against the "deeds of the flesh," saying no to sin and yes to Jesus and yes to walking in step with his Holy Spirit. Every day we repudiate the illegal claim of our

sinful nature to rule over us. Sin has no legal claim on me, on you. We are in Christ! We are free from sin. We are dead to sin, so sin no longer has a claim over us. When the devil tries to tell you that you belong to him, when he shows you his claim on your life, tear it up, throw it in his face and tell him, "Here is the claim Jesus has over my life, signed in His cleansing blood. I belong to Jesus." When temptation begins to pull at you, just say, "I'm a dead man walking. I've been crucified with Christ and the life I live, I live in Him, by Him, through him." Here it is again. **"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires."** You can declare it: "I belong to Jesus and that sinful nature is nailed to the cross!"

Stand firm then in the freedom wherewith Christ has made you free and don't let yourself be entangled again in a yoke of bondage or slavery. Let me quote one final time from John Stott. "It is as if, having nailed our old nature to the cross, we keep wistfully returning to the scene of its execution. We begin to fondle it, to caress it, to long for its release, even to try to take it down again from the cross. We need to learn to leave it there. When some jealous or proud or malicious or impure thought invades our mind we must kick it out at once." **"It is fatal to begin to examine it and consider whether we are going to give in to it or not. We have declared war on it; we are not going to resume negotiations. We have settled the issue for good; we are not going to re-open it. We have crucified the flesh; we are never going to draw the nails."** ...John R. W. Stott

Are you ready to mean business about the sin that is troubling you? We are in a war. There is a conflict between the sinful nature and its desires and the desires of the Spirit. How about repenting and surrendering it all to Jesus today? How about settling the issue today and determining in your heart that you are going to remain decisive about sin and about living for Jesus from here on. I Have Decided To Follow Jesus, No Turning Back!