

Believer: You're Dead to Sin

Tim Conway (*The Christian's Self-Cleansing: Part 3*)

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Brethren, I don't want to waste any time this morning. Let's go right to the matter at hand. Turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 6. We are not moving away from our present series, but we are diving even deeper into it - The Christian's Self-Cleansing. That terminology comes directly from 1 Corinthians 7 verse 1. But I want us to leave 1 Corinthians 7 today. Last week, we basically did an overview of that text. Last week, we looked at the fact that there is no holiness unless there is first true conversion; true faith and repentance. This week, I want to dive into Romans 6 where the apostle Paul likewise is dealing with the same subject, and he brings forth a principle in this quest for holiness that I want us to focus our attention on.

So, Romans chapter 6. Paul's focus here; God's focus; what is God's goal in giving us Romans 6? Well, we could look right at the beginning of Romans chapter 6 and say this: When you say to somebody, "You know what? You can be justified by faith in Jesus Christ. No works, no law-keeping, no effort on your own, not by your goodness. Unjust, unrighteous, wicked sinners can come to Christ in faith and be counted righteous. They can be justified." You know what that produces? Somebody is going to say, "Well then, what is to keep us from just sinning all the more?" What do we say? Do we continue in sin? You know what the goal of this chapter is? It's to say to us, "You can't," and to help explain why we can't. I mean, answer the question: What's God's goal here? Look at Romans 6:6, "We know that our old self (or old man) was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing." You know what the body of sin is? When we get down to verse 12, we'll see it's where sin desires to rule, to reign, by causing you to obey the passions of your body. That is how sin seeks to reign in your mortal bodies.

Jesus Christ was crucified. In Him we are crucified to bring this body to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. That has got everything to do with this quest for holiness. That we're no longer enslaved to sin. That we are, in fact just the opposite, enslaved to righteousness. Or, Romans 6:12 which I just mentioned. Look at it, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions." You get an idea about what it is that God's goal is in giving us this? How about verse 13, "Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness." Or how about verse 19, "I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification."

Now look, I recognize that there are some other things going on in Romans chapter 6. But would you not agree, one of God's primary purposes in giving us this chapter is that we might be free from sin and devoted to righteousness. That seems like what's happening here. And, brethren, is that not the same message of 1 Corinthians chapter 7? In 1 Corinthians chapter 7, what are we supposed to do? We are supposed to cleanse ourselves from all the defilements of body and spirit, so that we might bring holiness to completion. That's it here; put sin to death. What's the defilement? You have no defilement in your life other than sin. This is the same thing. It's about our

sanctification. That's what's happening here. Self-cleansing. Same message. Self-cleansing, brethren, not just in the church, not just in the little religious corner of your life. Notice what it says in Romans 6:6, "...the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin." Do you get the two words there? No longer. No longer. No longer.

This is not simply about a little church going idea, "Yeah I got to get my life together when I go to church and I'm in front of the brethren on Sunday morning." That's not what this is about. It's about all of your life. No longer! From this point forward, no longer! This is about all of life. This is about when you get up in the morning; this is about when you put your clothes on; this is about when you brush your teeth; this is about when you're thinking in your mind about what you'll do throughout the day; this is how you open your day. Do you start it in the Word, do you start it in prayer? This is about driving to work; this is about when you are at school, when you're at work; this is about how you interact with your spouse, your children, your friends, your co-workers. This is about all of life. This is 'no longer'. This is all of it. All of it. How you interrelate with authority, how you interrelate with the government, what we do with a building, brethren, how we walk. This is about day and night. This is about whether you're at home or you're abroad. This is about whether you're doing yard work or mission work. This is how you conduct yourself. No longer, brethren, enslaved to sin. That's what this is about. It's about eradicating sin in all of your life from now on. No more. No longer. That's it. You see it.

Now, look with me in Romans 6:12, "Let not sin" the 'therefore' connects us backwards and we're going to move backwards, but here is a command. We have an imperative mood. You might just want to take note that God doesn't give any commandments at all to believers in the book of Romans, prior to Romans 6. Romans 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, you know what it is? Mainly indicative. Paul is saying how it is. He is saying how bad man is and he is saying what God has done. When he gets to 6, he gives us a command. That's what you have here in verse 12, "Let not sin reign." God commands us to resist and kill sin, as it tries to get us to obey the passions of our body. But remember, there's a 'therefore' there, which means it's based on what was just said. Go back one verse. Romans 6:11, "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." Brethren, that is an imperative. That is a commandment of God. That is the very first commandment of God given to us believers in the book of Romans.

You need to recognize something very important to this quest for holiness. The very first commandment given in the epistle, you have to think about this. The first commandments given in the epistle of Romans has to do with our battle against sin. After all the glorious truths that God gives to us in those first five chapters, when it comes to taking those truths and applying them to the Christian life, the very first thing God wants you to do is He wants you to go to battle against sin. But I'll tell you this: Before you resist its reign in your mortal body, He wants you to think. He wants you to consider yourself to be something. You have to think. And it's so important that God commands you to think right, before He commands you to kill sin. Because if you don't think right, you won't kill sin. Remember the 'therefore' at the beginning of verse 12. You have to think right, and once you think right, then therefore, now, thinking right, put that sin to death.

This is huge. I don't even think I can express to you how important this reality is. I am going to try. But I think it's more important than what you're going to get from the words that I say to you today just how important verse 11 is. Brethren, God does not tell us to resist sin until He tells us how to think. Do you all see that? You will never fight the battle for holiness until you think right in your head. Now notice verse 11, the term 'consider';

maybe some of your Bibles say 'reckon'. Logizomai - It basically has the starting of the word 'logic' because this word has to do with logic. What does it mean to consider? Logizomai - what is that word? Well, basically it's this: To think according to logical rules, to reckon, to evaluate, to keep in mind, to reason, to ponder, to conclude by reasoning. Brethren, you've got to think right. Paul does not endorse stupid, mindless Christianity. The world may think that's what Christians are. But if we are the kind of Christians God wants us to be, we are not mindless. We are people who think. We are people who are rational. If anybody in this world is rational, the Christian ought to be. We take truth, and we live our lives based on that truth.

The Christianity of Scripture is truth-driven. The Christianity of Scripture is a Christianity that we are given massive amounts of doctrine. You got people out there that say doctrine doesn't matter. That, brethren, leads people to hell. Doctrine is nothing other than the teaching. The early Church gave itself to the apostles' doctrine. Why? Because in that doctrine is life. In that doctrine is what we believe unto life. Brethren, you got to believe right. You've got to think right. You've got to fill your mind with right thoughts before you're ever going to be successful in this battle with sin. If you're going to be holy, you've got to use your heads. One of the reasons that you may be failing, it may be the reason we gave last week, you may not know the Lord. You may not have truly repented and believed. You may not be trusting the Christ - the miraculous Christ of Scripture who has the power to free you from the bondage of your sin, like we are seeing here. Maybe you are saved and you're floundering, you're backslidden.

Brethren, I'll tell you, what does Scripture do? Any time you find that the apostles, in writing the epistles of Scripture, find some Christians that are sliding, slipping away, drifting, are not healthy, have sin in their midst, what do they do? They don't just tell them to get their act together. You know what they do? They hit them with truth. You ever notice that? Lots of truth. Why? Because truth is the way you set people right. When you get people thinking right, people's reaction will flow out of that thinking. You got to use your heads. The path to holiness is not just feeling. A lot of people have this idea, "Oh! holiness; if I am going to be holy, I need another infusion of the Spirit." Listen, I am not opposed to the falling of the Spirit upon God's people, or baptisms of the Spirit. Brethren, I want it. I want more of it. I want it to happen in our church. But I believe this: That if the Spirit of God falls on this church, it will not be just to give you some exciting feeling whereby you're going to feel this infusion of power and go out and find that you have more power to kick sin.

Brethren, what happens when the Spirit of God falls is: The Spirit of God came into this world to glorify Christ. And when the Spirit falls, you know what happens? Something happens in the mind. Suddenly, your mind just breaks forth with glory of the truth. That's what happens. The Spirit of God empowers that truth, brings conviction, brings glory. It's like Jonathan Edwards said, He's all about having people emotional, and having people experience things, as long as truth drives those experiences. Brethren, that's how we have to be. That's not just Jonathan Edwards, that's the apostle Paul as we plainly see here. It's not just about some infusion of power, some ecstatic feeling. Our minds must be gripped by truth. And the question of the hour is this: What truth is it that Paul wants us to be gripped by? Look at verse 11. What is it? He wants us to be gripped by this truth. You can see it. What is it that we are to consider? Remember this is an imperative. God requires you to think this way. God requires you to ponder. God requires you to know this truth. Isn't that amazing? God comes along and says, "I command you to know this." Wow! God really is commanding us how to think? Yes. We need our minds renewed, brethren. What

is it that we need to be convinced of? That we are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.

You need to be convinced you are dead to sin. Are you convinced? Now that's what's happening here. If God says that Christians are to consider themselves dead to sin, then what is the truth? We are dead to sin. I mean, you ever notice God doesn't want us to believe things that aren't true? Brethren, If God says to us, through the apostle Paul, "Reckon yourselves to be dead to sin," it's not because it's a fantasy. It's not because it's folklore or myth. It's because it is true. God wants you gripped by this truth: You are dead to sin. And that reality firmly fixed in the mind is the essential preparation for holiness. If you've been joined to Christ, if you're a true believer in this room right now, you are dead to sin. Brethren, you need to say that to yourself, you need to convince yourself of that. That is what He wants you to do. Perhaps, some of you are just sitting there and you're like, "I am not convinced I am dead to sin." Well, that's your problem. That is your problem. And that is why you have not had the victory that you otherwise could have, because your thinking is not right. And I'll guarantee you, there are a lot of Christians that run around that struggle with having the proper mindset here. And I won't say there isn't some very prevalent error in the reformed circles that tend to lead people to go wrong even in this mindset. I'll get to that in a moment.

So obviously the question comes, "Okay. okay. You tell me I am dead to sin. Scripture says I am dead to sin. God wants me to believe it. Okay, I am dead to sin. But what does that mean? Because if you're telling me that I'm not going to sin anymore, I don't believe it." Well, that's good you wouldn't believe that. Listen, brethren we are not left in the dark as to what the meaning of this concept is (dead to sin). Does it mean no more sin? No, it doesn't mean that. But it means something. What does it mean? Well, brethren, here's a thing about death: when you die, it severs relationships. That's the truth Paul is hitting on in these verses. Death severs relationships. Look at Romans 7:1, "Or do you not know, brothers— for I am speaking to those who know the law— that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives." You see, as long as there is life, there is relationship. "But if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress." Death severs relationships. That's the idea.

Look at Romans 6:17, "But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin." Now did you get that? You were once slaves of sin. Sin used to be your master. No longer. Why? You died. You're dead to sin. You see the relationship is severed. It is a past tense reality. You were once slaves of sin. What's happened now? "You have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching - that's the apostolic teaching, the apostles' doctrine, that's Scripture, God's Word, Christ's Word - to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin," Do you see that? There's freedom from that relationship. It's been broken. You're no longer slaves to it. Once upon a time, sin was your slavemaster. But the once existing relationship between us and sin, (by the way, which we held very dear and precious to our hearts, you remember that? We liked it. We liked sin as a master. It was desirable to us,) but that has ended. You've died to sin. Therefore, your relationship with sin is forever severed from what it was before. You can never go back to the way it was before because you can never go back to it being master. Ever.

Just like a married woman is bound to her husband until death, you were bound at one time in an unholy matrimony to sin, but no more. You have died to it. It's broken. It's severed. You were delivered and freed by what?

By union with Christ. You're in Him. You're with Him. He died, you died. He died to sin - Romans 6:10, what does that mean? Not that He was a sinner and He died to it the same way we die to it. He died to conquer it. He died to pay for it. He died to free us from it. We die to what? Romans 6:14, what does it say? Sin shall no longer have dominion - that's mastery. That's how you died to it. Dominion. Not the presence of it altogether, but if you are joined to Christ, if you are in union with Christ, you have died to sin. Which means it's no longer master. It means you can say to it, "No. No." It plays on the same bodily passions it did before, but you know what? Because you are joined with Christ, His fullness flows into you; there is a power there. There is a power and a hunger for righteousness, and you can say No. And in fact, you're commanded to resist its reign. You're commanded to say No. Don't let it reign in your mortal bodies. When you get over to Romans 8:13, "If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." But brethren, if you're not doing that, if you're living according to the flesh, you're going to die. Because if you're joined to Christ, you have the Holy Spirit.

If you have that power within you, that Spirit of God, He will give you power to overcome. Not perfection in this lifetime, but you are dead to sin and its dominion is broken. And that is what He is teaching here. Notice Romans 6:7, "The one who has died has been set free from sin." Romans 6:14, "For sin will have no dominion over you." The absence of dominion, not presence. But dominion, what does that mean? Remember when you were lost? You were a slave. Carlos and I were talking yesterday. He was talking to me about his lost days, and about how he just got in trouble for something, and he went right back to it. I am not boasting this, but brethren, I was a social drug user. And repeatedly I would make this commitment, "OK when I get out of high school, I am going to stop." Did I? "OK when I get out of college, I am going to stop." Did I? No. I never stopped until Christ came and rescued me. And you know what? Some people do stop, but all they do is trade one idol for another. They are lifted up in pride that they were capable of doing it.

Brethren, we were slaves, and it led us about on a leash. But you're dead to that. You can look sin in the eyeballs, and say, "You have nothing on me. You do not own me anymore. I am a free man in Christ." And you can say no, and you can walk away. Better than that, you can pull out the spiritual dagger and slide it between the ribs of sin and put it to death. This is mortification. This isn't just walking away. This is killing. And that's what Romans 8:13 is all about. It is battle unto death. Notice Romans 6:22, "You've been set free from sin." That's the reality here. Now why is this so relevant to all of us? Why is it so critical? Well, for this reason: Because if you are united to Christ by faith, you have died to sin. If you've died to sin, it no longer has dominion over you. You have been set free from sin. If that's true, there is a kind of life that results from that. And that kind of life that results from being dead to sin is the only life that leads to eternal life. You say, "How do you know that?" Because that's exactly the truth that Paul comes to in Romans 6:22. That's what is at stake here in Romans 6.

You have been set free from sin. You're dead to it. But that's the negative. You're alive to God. Or as it says here in verse 22, "You've become slaves of God." And what happens when you are a slave of God and freed from sin? There is fruit. Not bad fruit, it's good fruit. That's your life. That's all those aspects of life that I was talking about before. That you do righteousness in them. There is fruit. And notice verse 22, "The fruit leads to sanctification, and what's the end? It's eternal life." Anybody ever comes along and tells you, "I can live the old life where sin has power over me, because I am saved by grace through faith, and I am going to heaven." You can tell them that is not what Scripture teaches. Brethren, this series on holiness pertains to all of us. You may be sitting there, saying,

“Well, I am not a Christian, it doesn’t pertain to me.” O, you should think about that. If you don’t want to perish, and you want eternal life, it does regard you. Because this is the life that goes there. And you’re never going to have this life unless you’re in union with Christ. And that happens by the repentance and faith we looked at last week.

The flow of thought throughout Romans chapter 6 is that if you are united to Christ, you’re dead to sin. If you’re dead to sin, you’re free from the dominion of sin. If you’re free from the dominion of sin, you’re alive to God. You’re servant to God. If you’re alive to God, you produce fruit, and that fruit goes somewhere. This sanctification, that’s holiness. Remember, you’re bringing holiness to completion. That’s what this sanctification is all about. And the end of that, remember the author of Hebrews, “Without holiness, no one will see the Lord.” So, what? Strive for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. We’re striving, we’re fighting. How do we do it? By the Spirit you put to death the deeds. It’s not in your own strength, remember, it’s union with Christ. You got to be drawing on his fullness or you can never do this. But brethren, if you’re not capable of doing this, the reason is that you are not drawing on the resources of Christ. And if you’re not drawing on the resources of Christ, there’s good reason to believe that you’re not abiding in Him, and you’re not joined with Him, and you’re not with Him and in Him. There’s not union with Him, and if there’s not union with Him, you’re dead. Christ is the only Savior. There is no other way.

Now, brethren, do you get it? You got to be thinking this way. You got to consider. God commands you to consider yourselves dead to sin. Now look, nowhere in Scripture does it say because you’re dead to sin, that this thing is easy. Don’t get that idea, “Oh I am dead to sin. Therefore I can just kick back, God’s going to do it.” No no. Scripture doesn’t teach that. No. You reckon yourself dead to sin in Rom. 6:11, and then you do not let sin reign (Rom. 6:12). Now that’s all out battle. It’s a vicious battle. Vicious. Paul is not trying to convince anyone that this battle is easy, BUT, as we heard in the first hour, he wants to convince you that in Christ, the battle is won. Brethren, that makes all the difference. When you go on into a battle, and you know this is not going to be easy but I am going to win. When you are convinced of that - you see, that’s the idea - you’ve got to be convinced, you’ve got to reckon, you’ve got to consider. When you go into the battle with a victorious mindset, it matters in how you fight.

You get knocked down, you don’t pathetically say, “Oh, here I am, knocked down. I guess I am just defeated.” No, you’re like, “Well, what’s this? Scripture talks about the righteous man falling seven times, but the righteous man gets back up. And I am joined to Christ, and I am going to win this battle.” So we get up, and we go back in. Now, I want to shoot straight with you here. Some of you aren’t going to like this, but this is critical. This is absolutely critical. We often hear Jeremiah 17:9 quoted. Often. Don’t turn there, but you know the text: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick.” A lot of people like to apply that to Christians. But when you go further in Jeremiah, guess what? It says you get a new heart. Lot of people like to go over to Romans 7, and say, “You know what? As Christians, we are wretched men; we are people who cannot do the good we want to do, we are miserably stuck in this rot of always doing the evil that we do not want to do.” Beloved, I simply want to say to you this: Beware. Beware.

If you view Jeremiah 17:9, Romans chapter 7, or any other part of Scripture, in any way whatsoever that leads you to have a mindset that falls short of Romans 6:11, run from it like the plague. You need to take this dead seriously. Because when you basically walk around in life - I knew a brother who said, “I am a wretched man, my marriage is miserable, and that’s just how it is” - brethren, when you walk through life with that mindset, you will

be defeated. You want to take this dead serious. The very first commandment by God in the epistle of Romans to you is you need to think right, not just about anything, you need to think right about your position in being joined to Christ, and what it means with regards to your relationship with sin. And you need to think right, and God's commanding you to think right. And people who think they are nothing but miserable men with these desperately wicked, sick and deceitful hearts, I'll tell you this, that is exactly the mindset that God is commanding you not to have.

Listen brethren, I'll just tell you. Yeah; I am, by and large, a product of John MacArthur's mentoring. Got saved back in 1990, influenced tremendously by him, came across Romans 7, bought into that view. Who hasn't, as a Christian, felt, "O, wretched man that I am"? But I'll tell you, when Charles Leiter really challenged me, and I preached through Romans the first time, it wasn't when I got to Romans 7 I recognized I got a problem. It was when I got to Romans 6 I recognized I had a problem. Brethren, if Romans 7 sounds to you to be opposite to Romans 6, you might just want to ask yourself the question, Why is that? You see, nothing about Romans 7 is in Christ. Nothing about Romans 7 is with the Spirit. But guess what happens in Romans 8:1 when you find 'in Christ' again. What happens? No condemnation. Verse 2, what happens? We are set free from the law of sin and death. You see Romans 8:3, God has done what the law couldn't. You see, that's the real issue with Romans 7. The guy in Romans 7 has got the law, but he doesn't have the Spirit.

When you have the law, and you run to the law, and you delight in the law, but you don't have the Spirit, guess what you do: all it does is arouse sinful passions, and you spiral down, and you're weak, and you're impotent, and you can't do anything. But guess what happens when God does by sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, guess what happens then? Look at Rom. 8:4, You who walk in the Spirit, now what are you doing? You are fulfilling the righteous requirement of the law. Let me tell you, this is not dealing with forensic realities; this is not dealing with legal realities; this is not dealing with justification. This is dealing with your walk. This is what this whole section is about. Why do Christians not continue in sin? Why? Because joined with Christ, you walk in newness of life. That's the reality. That's what's being taught here.

Brethren, I just want to challenge you. This is no small matter. Dead to sin. Not alive to sin and living in it, and totally and perpetually and miserably failing, like Romans 7:19. You're dead to sin, which means what? Romans 6:14 - no dominion. Romans 6:17 - obedient from the heart. Romans 6:22 - in this line of progression, dead to sin, servant to God, fruit leading to holiness, and its end, eternal life. Brethren, fight to have the right mindset with regards to sin. Fight for it, brethren, fight for it! You may not agree with me on Romans 7, but whatever you do with it, you better not let it cause you to disobey God in Romans 6:11. You better not. Because if you do, you will fail at Rom. 6:12. And be careful, if you fail too much, you go down to Rom. 6:22 and you recognize there's no eternal life at the end. You say, "What are you talking about? Losing salvation?" No, I'm talking about genuine salvation. And I'm talking about what God does in the minds of His people that gives them the right mindset to go after sin in the way it needs to be gone after.

Brethren, I want a holy church, but I recognize from this chapter of Scripture that if our mindset is not right, we are not going to fight this battle right. This is battle. In Christ, you are dead to sin. Say that to yourselves. Meditate on that. Take that forth for the rest of your life. We need to know this. We need to be certain. God commands us to know and believe and consider it to be so. This is where the battle begins. You, Christian, need to know

with all certainty what you are in Christ. And you are dead to sin. You know what? When you know that, walk like you know that. My brothers and sisters, you are dead to sin and alive to Christ. You need to know that you are. You need to be convinced that you are. Christian, in Christ, you died to sin. You have died.

Perhaps you're saying, "If I am dead to sin, why is there any battle at all?" I'll tell you this: Because the Christian life is a life of progression. "Well, why is that?" Because God designed it that way. "Why did He do that?" I don't know the mind of God, but I can tell you this: God does what He does to glorify Himself. And I just have to believe that He takes great delight in taking weak pathetic instruments like us, and squaring us off against the mighty power of sin, the passions that seek to wreck our souls, the world, and the devil himself; and throw us in there to do battle, and we actually win. But not because of our own strength, because He gets the victory working through us and in us. He takes delight in that. But I guarantee He is going to see that it comes to pass, and that it happens.

Brethren, you're dead to sin, but that doesn't mean it's easy. It doesn't mean we go to sleep, or sit back and relax. God does make us dead to sin, that's true. But He means to demonstrate that reality by exerting His own power upon us, and in us, to create within us - what? - a militancy to fight sin and mortify sin and put it to death. He means for us to have this determination of will, but it's a determination of will that's based on what we know. It's based on what we believe. It's grabbing hold of truths about my being united to Christ, I am dead to sin. And in the light of that reality, with a militancy of determination in my will to say, "Yes! I believe I am dead to sin, I am going to fight this. That pride that keeps holding on and lingering, I am going to fight that. That sexual lust, I am going to fight that, controlling my eyes. I am going to make a covenant with my eyes, and I believe by the power of Jesus Christ that I can keep control. And I may fall. But I am going to get back up and confess that sin, and I am going to go on in the power of the Spirit of God, clinging to Christ."

Brethren, we've got to have that mindset. That is what this is all about. This is war! This is war, brethren. Those passions of the flesh seek to destroy your soul. That's what Peter tells us. You better take this dead serious. As Owen said, what did he say? "You better be killing sin, or it will kill you." And it will. It's one or the other. There is no in between. There's no neutrality here. You're either killing sin, or it's taking your life. This is serious. The Lord sends all His children, brethren, -- I don't know if you've ever noticed this, but there are definitely spiritual parallels between Joshua and Israel going into the land of Canaan. What did God tell them? "You kill everybody. Go in there and wipe them out. Young and old, man and woman, children, wipe them out." That is a spiritual parallel to our Christian life. No longer, brethren, no longer. You are dead to sin. No quarter. It will plead mercifully. Those little children and women will plead mercifully, "Don't kill me." No, you kill them all. You know what I am talking about. I am not talking about actual women and children. I am talking about every sin. And they will plead mercifully, "Just spare me, just spare me. I'm just a little one." No quarter.

You got to have the mindset to know that you're dead to sin. You can do this. You must do this. And God commands you to think right. Brethren, this is huge. This is huge. But I have to say this. I mean, I have been made aware of something, all the more just recently. Many of you know, I think I have had this viral meningitis for a month. Just coming out of it these last few days where I am actually starting to feel better. It causes swelling of the brain. That hurt my head. You guys know I suffer migraines, but this hurt my head in a way that no migraine ever has. There were three straight days where I probably should have gone to the emergency room. I got to the place

where I thought, “Ruby, I think you’re going to have to take me.” James came and prayed for me, and actually that night it did take a turn. He wanted me to be here the next day, God didn’t answer that. But it did take a turn at that point.

But after I came out of it, I told Ruby, “I don’t know if I am going to die well.” I mean, those three days I did not feel very patient. And I recognize something. I am one of you. You say, “What’s that?” I don’t mean just Christian. I mean a 21st century American. You say, “What does that mean?” That means we are used to softness. Our towels are soft. And our cars are air-conditioned. You say, “Mine’s not.” Yeah, but you have a car. People in other places are walking. And probably if it’s not working, you’ve had thoughts about getting it fixed. Our homes are air-conditioned. Our food, we can pop it right in the microwave and it’s cooked instantly at the right temperature. We have instant clean water. Now, it’s like these cell phones and computers, instant Facebook, instant chat, instant e-mail. Instant. Everything is instant. We want it now. We are a very entertained people. We are a very soft people. Let’s just call it what it is.

Brethren, when you compare us -- John was just telling us in the elders meeting about these guys over in Iraq. He said we can learn some things from them. He said they don’t know the doctrine we know, but we can learn. What can we learn? We can learn about suffering persecution. Oh yeah, when the thing starts happening that Jeff was mentioning in the Sunday School, it’s going to test us. The thing is, there is some spiritual conditioning that we really need. If we are going to fight sin, we tend to be spiritual lightweights. When things get difficult, you know, we try these little things, new program, “Oh, I got this book,” you know, we try this little deal over here, “Oh, we just discovered this new preacher.” See, we want results immediately. We want things to happen right now. Now! Now! Now! Now! And we don’t want to think too long about anything. You know, “Give me that! Give me that! Look, Facebook! Oh, they’re doing this and that, We’re going to do this and that.”

Brethren, I don’t know about the discipline of our generation to really be able to sit down and just meditate on the fact that we’re dead to sin, long enough for it to do us any good. Why? Because we put so much stuff in our brain to cause us to forget what’s essential so quickly. Brethren, you know what? We’re not 21st century Americans first. We are Christians first. And what God commands us to do is, you need to do whatever is necessary in your life to be able to fill your head with this reality, and have your mind renewed, and get the garbage out. Get disciplined. You know what? It’s not a sin not to have a cell phone or a computer. If you can’t govern that thing, if you can’t rule over it, if you can’t master it, if you can’t obey God because of it, get rid of it. Some of you can’t turn your ringer off. It’s amazing to me.

I must offend lots of people these days because of this text thing. Sometimes, I won’t get back for a day or two or five on a text. Why? Because I don’t carry my phone everywhere, and even when I have it, I do not count it the highest priority to respond to a text. Why? Because your mind might be involved in thinking about the fact that I am one with Christ, and in Him I can beat this sin. [The phone rings!] Oh, what’s that? And some of you don’t have any self-control. And what happens? You’re a shallow Christian. You do not have the militancy and the discipline to fight for holiness the way it needs to be fought for. Brethren, this is serious. This is dead serious and dead real about fighting this battle. I’ll tell you, when that persecution comes that was described to us, you know who the first ones that are going to be falling away? Those of you that had absolutely no control over these things. Your minds weren’t renewed, you didn’t think right, you didn’t believe right; and now all of a sudden you are full of

terror and you're going to deny Christ. Because you're not gripped by the truth. Because you haven't taken a long enough time in your life to let it sink down and permeate your being.

God commands you to consider yourself to be what you are and what He has made you. Brethren, part of the reason this is such a fight is because we've got to fight to think right. That alone is the fight. That means we've got to be disciplined enough with our brains, with our heads, with our minds, with our meditating, with our pondering, that we're actually taking enough time undisturbed, undistracted. Brethren, I'll tell you, the people who are going to excel in this battle and excel in holiness are the people that have self-control here. They can set aside big amounts of time, and say, "I am going to dwell on the glories of what it means to be one with Christ. United to Christ. In Him."

We have an American softness. Many of you may have heard Andy Hamilton when he said, "He spoke to Elizabeth Elliot - they had dinner with her before she died - and she said back in the 50s, (of course her and her husband went down south America.) But before she got married, my understanding is she inquired of Amy Carmichael (back in the early 50s, Amy Carmichael was still alive) -- she inquired as to the possibility of working with Amy Carmichael's ministry in India. She told the Hamiltons, "Sight unseen. Americans were being turned down by Amy Carmichael's ministry because they were considered, back then, being too soft." Somebody like Elizabeth Elliot not even given a chance. Why? Because Americans, as a whole, were counted too soft in the 50s. Oh yeah, come forward 60 years with all our devices and gadgets and softness. You know, they are figuring out how to make towels and blankets softer, and sheets softer, and pillows softer, and clothes softer. And you know what? We buy them. And you know what that does? It very subtly makes us into something that I don't think we want to become. And it's often been talked about. Before Hudson Taylor went to China, Andy talks about him sleeping on boards; eating certain kinds of food, not the kind of food everybody else eats; living in conditions not everybody else is living in. Look, there is a place for beating our bodies into submission. Why? Because that makes us warriors. That gives you a disposition to be warlike.

We got to beat our bodies into submission. American softness. Brethren, Romans 6:11 is work. It's mental work. God commands us to ponder, consider, reckon, calculate, take into account, think, evaluate, reflect upon this reality that we are dead to sin by our union to Christ, and alive to God. Christian, you do not have to give in to sin. You're no longer some pathetic slave to it. I think, God sent us this dog, we took in a stray dog, and he's afraid of everything. Whimpering. That's not us anymore. That's what He is saying to us. You don't have to cower when the old master comes because he's not master anymore. You have another Master. You have a good Master, and a Master who is determined to give you strength to overthrow the old one.

Oh, brethren, before we're going to get to Romans 6:12, we must first come to grips with verse 11. If you're going to be prepared for battle, you got to have your mind rightly prepared. And, like I said, that alone is a battle in this day of electronic devices. They vie for all our attention.

Brethren, I want to end with this. The real matter in all of this is how we get to the place that we are dead to sin. And the thing that Paul emphasizes over and over and over, (notice Rom. 6:3 - baptized into Christ Jesus; Rom. 6:4 - buried therefore with Him; Rom. 6:5 - united with Him in a death like His; Rom. 6:5 again - united with Him in a resurrection like His; Rom. 6:6 - our old man was crucified with Him; Rom. 6:8 - died with Christ; Rom. 6:8 again - we will also live with Him; Rom. 6:11 - alive to God in Christ Jesus; you drop down to Rom. 6:23 - the

free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord,) you know what Paul's real emphasis here is? Our union with Christ. This is what he is saying. You're one with Him. You're so much one with Him, Scripture speaks about you're seated already in the heavenly places with Him. Jesus said to His disciples, "If I live, you live." Why? One. You see, He died, and we die. He lives, and we live. We are one with Him. That's the issue. Scripture says, "He who is joined to the Lord becomes one Spirit with Him" [1 Corinthians 6:17]. Scripture talks about us being one with Him.

Brethren, I'll just end with this. As you're seeking to rightly prepare your minds, do you want to have this sanctifying power of Christ in your life helping you to win this battle, and break and overcome the power of sin in your life? Do you want to pursue holiness, that holiness without which no man will see the Lord? If so, you know what the real issue is? Paul clearly would have us to be thinking on, and cherishing the reality of our union with Christ. That's where the mind really needs to be. I am one with Him! I am with Him. I am in Him. I am so much one with Him that, in some mystical way, He's seated up there in glory, at His Father's right hand, and I am presently seated with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Do you know that little prepositional phrase 'in Christ' or 'in Christ Jesus'? It is everywhere. But I want you to know this: the apostles didn't just throw that terminology around because they were for a lack of other terms to use, or just as some filler. It carries one of the most profound realities of your Christianity. You see it so much because it is just affirming again and again and again, "You are one with Him. He is in you."

There is a union with Christ. We need to be convinced of being united to Him. Brethren, think on that. Love it! Love being united to Christ. Dwell on that. Make that a focal point. Grow in your grasp of that reality. I am one with Christ. I am one with Him. And it's real. This has real consequences about this battle. Live in the knowledge of this. Carry it through your day. When you wake up in the morning, "I am one with Christ, that is why I am dead to sin. Because He died, I am one with Him. And if He died, I died. And if He's risen to newness of life, I have risen to newness of life." Don't take any of that as being about our future resurrection. That's all about NOW. He's talking about, Why do Christians not continue in sin NOW? It's because you are alive with Him NOW. You are alive to God. You are alive to righteousness. Make that your meditation. "I am one. I am in Him." Think about these texts I've read. In Christ. In Christ. And He can say, "Because I live, you will live also." Wow! If it's true about Him, it's true about me. I am one with Him. Where He goes, I go. Isn't this what we are told? This mystery; oh, it's not just a man and a woman, a man marrying a bride. It's Christ and the Church. We are one. We bear His name. Just like a wife bears the name of the husband, the wife goes where the husband goes, they are one, their lives are joined together; so Christ has joined His life with ours.

We are in Him. We are one with Him. What happens to Him happens to us. His name is at stake. His death is at stake. His shed blood is at stake. The promises of God are at stake - "Believe Me, it's so real that they are seated in the heavenly places." Scripture speaks about you already being there. Yeah, it's mystical. I know, physically, you're not there. But you know what it means? It means you're there. Not in a physical sense, but you're there. I mean, it is a reality. We need to soak these things up, not just read about them and say, "That's too weird, I can't understand that," and move on. No, you dwell there. You think on that, "Wow! I am one with Him. I am one with Him so much that Scripture can talk about my glorification as being past tense. Glorified. It's already done! It's already certain. Scripture can speak about me already being seated with Him in heavenly places. Dead to sin. Alive to God. Wow!"

These are some of the greatest realities. We actually have a connection and a union with Christ. You're never going to fight this battle for holiness unless you're really dwelling on these things and taking time. Brethren, that's where I wanted to go today. The battle starts in the mind. So much of Christianity is fought up here. What do you believe? What do you really believe? Because I'll tell you, what you really believe is going to impact how you live. I hope you get this. If your thinking goes wrong, your fight will go wrong. God commands you. It's an imperative. Consider yourselves dead to sin, and alive to God, as you are in union with Him. May God help us. Amen.