

Alive to God **Romans 6:5-11**

Easter is the biggest celebration for us because it marks the completion of Christ's sacrifice for sin and reminds us that our Savior is very much alive and well today! When Jesus rose from the dead, he triumphed over sin, over death, and over hell, and he proved that the sacrifice for sin was fully paid. Everyone who turns to him is completely forgiven – as far as the east is from the west – that's how far our sins have been removed from us. So, we have peace with God. We have a restored relationship with him. We are adopted as his sons and daughters and given an eternal inheritance kept in heaven for us. The resurrection of Christ assures us of all these things and gives us many reasons to rejoice!

This morning I want to take a few minutes to focus on one of those reasons that's life changing for all who follow Jesus. It's something that was demonstrated in the story of the Prince's Poison Cup. You may have noticed that the people in the story had hard hearts – hearts that were cold and closed to the King of Life. They wanted nothing to do with him and were terrified of him. Without knowing it, their lives were bleak and miserable, they were functioning, but they weren't really alive.

But something changed when the Prince rose from the dead. When the King of Life touched him and he came back to life, something began happening to the people. Their cold, hard hearts started to become soft and warm again. Instead of being terrified of the King, they were drawn to him. They wanted to know him. And when they drank the pure water from the Prince's golden cup, they were filled with love and gratitude and they praised the King and Prince for healing them from their disobedience. They came alive.

One of the awesome blessings of the resurrection of Christ is that it opens the way for us to come alive and today I want to talk a little bit about how that happens, what it means, and how we can experience it in our own lives. The apostle Paul wrote about it in Romans 6.

Read Romans 6:5-7.

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. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin.

Paul talks about a spiritual union in these verses that God brings about when a person puts their faith in Jesus Christ. When we turn to Jesus, God unites us together with Christ. He binds us together with him so that he no longer sees us as separate from Jesus, but as one with him. Marriage is a picture of that union today. As a husband and wife become one in marriage, Christ and the believer become one in salvation. It's a spiritual union that God creates and gives as a gift to every believer.

Paul writes about two parts of that union that are extremely important. The first is that the believer is united with Christ in his death. He explains that a little bit in these verses. Ever since the first man sinned in the Garden of Eden, something changed in us and hardened us toward God. Since that time, humans have turned away from God in sin. Rather than seeking him and delighting in him, which is what he created us to do, we turn to our own way. We do what pleases us without regard to him. Our hearts became hard, cold, dead in our desire, and we didn't want to have anything to do with God. We didn't want him; we didn't love him; we didn't see him for who he is. That's our old self. That's the self displayed by the people in the story with their cold, hard hearts. And that's the self Jesus came to set us free from, and he did that when he died on the cross.

Paul says that because we are united with Christ, God considers our old self to have been crucified with him when he died on the cross. When we put our faith in him, he counts our sinful self as being dead and gone. Just as Jesus died on the cross and was buried, our body of sin is dead and buried. It has been brought to nothing. It has no more power over us to keep us in bondage to death and condemnation. Because we have died with Christ, we are no longer enslaved to sin. Paul says in Galatians 2:20 *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live..."*

Our sins have been totally forgiven through the death of Jesus. He paid the penalty, so as we stand before God, we no longer carry any guilt. 2 Corinthians 5:20 says, *"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."* There is no longer any barrier between us and God. All the destructive curses of our old self that would keep us from God are done away with.

That's the incredible blessing of being united with Christ in his death. But we are also united with him in his resurrection, and Paul explains what that means for us in the next few verses...

Read Romans 6:8-11.

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

So not only has our old self died with Christ, but in its place, we have been given a new life in him – “if we died with him, we also live with him.” Paul points out in these verses that Christ fully accomplished everything needed to conquer sin for every believer for all time, therefore, he will never die again. And with the resurrection life he now lives, it says in verse 10, he lives to God.

Paul doesn't give any details here, but in other passages we read that when Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, he was exalted to the highest place of privilege and honor – seated at the right hand of God on high. He enjoys perfect union and fellowship with the Father – perfect love, perfect harmony, perfect relationship. “The life he lives, he lives to God.” That's Christ's resurrection life right now.

But it's not only Christ that enjoys the privileges of living that resurrection life. What Paul is pointing out in these verses is that because we have been united with Christ in both his death and his resurrection, and because we now live with him, we too have become partakers in his resurrection life. So Paul says in verse 11: “*So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*” I don't know if we can understand the significance of that statement – we have been made “alive to God” in Christ Jesus...

The story we heard just before the sermon helps us begin to see what that means. When the Prince drank the poison cup and died, the people in the City of Man were set free from their cold, hard hearts. But that's not all that happened. When the King of Life brought the Prince back to life again, something amazing started to happen in the people. Their hearts became soft and warm again. Instead of being terrified of the King, they were curious. They were drawn to him. They wanted to know him. And when they drank the pure water from the Prince's

golden cup, they were filled with praise and gratitude – they praised the Prince and King with joy in their hearts. They had become alive!

When God raised Jesus from the dead, he gave him life that was to be shared with everyone who puts their faith in him. It is through faith that we are united with Christ, and because of that, not only have we died to sin, but we have been made alive to God. Romans 6:4 says: *“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.”* Christ gives us this “newness of life” through the Holy Spirit he has given to live in us – like the pure water from the golden cup. Romans 8:10-11 says: *“But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”*

So if you picture the resurrected Christ, exalted to the highest place of honor and glory, seated at the right hand of God. He is honored, glorified, loved, delighted in. He is alive to God to the uttermost. Now picture yourself, united with Christ in his resurrection and he is pouring his resurrection life in you. He is the vine, you are the branches. You’ve been given his Spirit inside you and you are alive to God. Your heart has been awakened. You are drawn to God to love him and adore him. You are able to commune with him in prayer, to experience his delight, to be his beloved son or daughter. That’s the wonder of being alive to God and that’s the awesome blessing that’s ours because of the resurrection of Christ.

So as we celebrate Easter, we also celebrate our new life in Christ, and I invite you to drink deep; to come to Jesus for life; to enjoy intimacy with him; to experience God’s favor and love. And if you’ve never come to Jesus for life, but kept him at arm’s length in hardness and fear, I encourage you to embrace him today. Receive all that he has for you. Receive forgiveness for sin. Receive a new life. Receive his love. And receive his life. He wants to give you life! And fullness of life comes only from him! So go to him for life today. Drink deep of the fountain of life that comes from knowing him and abiding in him.