“The Two Lords”

June 3, 2018

Colossians 3:1-10

Find a Bible and please open with me to the 6th chapter of Romans. In a moment we will read the passage.

Everyone here has tried to stop sinning. So, we’re all in the same boat and we all need help. And some sins are far more difficult to stop than others. And wouldn’t it be great if you did indeed stop sinning?

So, let me begin with this scenario. I’ve read that a man who has been freed from prison after having spent a large portion of his life there, has a very difficult time acclimating to his or her new-found liberty. So, many have asked “How does a prisoner stop behaving like a prisoner?”

Well, essentially, two things are necessary. One, and the most obvious; the prisoner has to be set free. And two, the one that’s not so obvious; the prisoner has to consider himself no longer a prisoner.

I haven’t spent any time in prison. But, I’ve been reading recently about Michael Santos. Michael spent exactly 9,500 days, for a total of twenty-six years, behind bars.

Here’s his story. Right out of high school Michael became connected to drug dealers and early on he discovered that he could make a lot of money doing it. He became one of the youngest drug kingpins at the age of twenty-one. But just two years later, at the age of twenty-three, involved in very large drug deal, distributing cocaine he’d purchased in Miami to sell in Seattle, Washington, he got caught.

In this one very large drug deal, Michael purchased co-caine in Florida and had a friend transport it to Seattle. U.S. Drug Enforcement caught up with his friend, and arrested him just as he arrived in Seattle. The U.S. Government then persuaded this friend to testify against Michael in exchange for a reduced prison sentence. He agreed and Michael’s friend then served 27 months. Michael, on the other hand, was convicted of distribution of cocaine and eventually served 26 years behind bars.

But after his release, Michael found that life on the outside was very difficult. He experienced the same things most long-term prisoners go through after they’re released. Having spent more time behind bars than he had in his civilian life, he found the transition back into society the hardest thing he’d ever had to do.

But our challenges often lead us to our successes. Michael found a way to overcome the hostility, the troubles, even the rejection. Since then, he’s written seven books; some telling the story of his time on the inside and some recounting his experiences on the outside. One of them is titled “Triumph! Straight-A Guide to Preparing Offenders for Reentry (2011)” in which he helps ex-cons find a way to re-integrate back into society.

He worked hard. He never gave up. He earned a bachelor’s degree from Mercer University; then a Master’s Degree from Hofstra University. But while he was studying for a doctorate at UCONN, a Bureau of Prisons warden heard about it and officially blocked him from getting his degree.

Yet, Michael has persisted and, by trial and error, he’s now a productive member of society. He writes a blog on prison issues. He mentors prisoners on how to re-integrate into society. He’s also lectured at Stanford Law School in San Francisco, UC Berkeley, and a former professor at San Francisco State University. Today, he leads an organization called “Prison Professors.”

He says that on the first day he sat behind the wheel of a friend’s car, it dawned on him that he’d completely forgotten how to drive. One man puts it like this. *“Even seemingly trivial things can become problematic. Choosing what to eat, at what time to go to sleep, learning how the internet works and how to behave in traffic can prove challenging. …The longer someone has been imprisoned, the harder it gets to find their way back into society. Inside prison they are stripped of every right and, as time goes by, become less and less fit for life outside.”* [http://www.dw.com “Life After Prison” by Caroline Schmitt 10/11/2014].

Today Michael drives, of course; writes, lectures, publish-es articles, and teaches. And, no, I do not agree with a lot of what he teaches. Yet, I want to make a comparison today to you and me. Practically speaking, the journey going from being a prisoner to a free man can be compared to the adjustment a person makes when you’ve lived the life of a sinner for so long and then become a Believer in Christ.

You might even say that once you had a *sin* lord and now you have a *righteous* Lord. So, I’ve titled today’s message “The Two Lords.” Shall we pray?

Please find with me the sixth verse of this sixth chapter of Romans and see if you can find the two lords here.

Romans 6:6 *“Knowing this, that our old man is [was] crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed [annulled], that henceforth we should not serve sin. (7) For he that is dead is freed from sin*. *(8)* *Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:*

*(9) Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. (10) For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*

*(11) Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. (12) Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.*

*(13) Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteous-ness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. (14) For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”*

Now, suppose I said to you, *“A Christian should behave as a Christian. So, stop behaving like a sinner.”* We’d all agree that it’s possible. But, we also all know, by experience, that we don’t always behave as a Saint.

Well, how *does* a Christian learn to “not sin”? How, for example, does a Christian stop a bad habit? And how do you transition from having sin as your lord to having Jesus as your Lord? Fortunately, the LORD has given us the answers. That’s what Romans six is all about.

Now, here’s why I brought Michael to your attention today. Just like Michael had to transition from the control the federal prison system had over him, a Christian has to trans-ition from the lordship of sin to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

To tell someone to stop acting like a sinner or to expect yourself to stop a sinful behavior without understanding *how* just won’t work. I know it never worked for me. But, at some point in your Christian life, you have to come face to face with your own tendency to sin. Then, when you are willing, God’s grace you deliver you.

I want to show you both how and why from this passage. Here’s how Paul explains it here. My first question is this.

First, are you dead or alive?

How do you think Michael Santos saw himself once he was set free? Did he see himself as a prisoner or as a free man? That’s the question a Christian eventually comes to ask himself or herself.

And the answer the Holy Spirit gives us through Paul is found in these two words; “dead” and “alive.” Paul uses them to describe the Christian’s life; verse six. Romans 6:6 *“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed [annulled], that henceforth we should not serve sin. (7) For* ***he that is dead*** *is freed from sin*. *(8)* *Now* ***if we be dead*** *with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: …”*

Death will never be a pleasant topic for any of us. But here in these few verses, Paul uses the word seven times.

Verse two – *“How shall* ***we that are dead to sin****, live any longer therein?”*

Verse three – we were *“baptized [immersed] into* ***His death****.”*

Verse four – we were *“buried with Him by baptism [immersion]* ***into death****.”*

Verse five – *“we have been planted together in the likeness of* ***His death****.”*

Verse six – *“our old man was* ***crucified with Him****…”*

And verse seven *– “****he that is dead*** *is freed from sin.”*

Try to imagine with me Michael Santos saying to himself *“I’ve been set free. I’m free. I’m no longer a prisoner. So, why do I still feel and act like I did when I was in prison?”*

You and I are Believers. But Believers can just as easily say these same words with just one change. *“I’ve been set free. I am no longer alive to sin. I’m now dead to sin. So, why do I still feel and act like I did when I was alive to it?”*

Folks, no one can imagine being dead. That’s rather impossible, isn’t it? And that’s not what the LORD asks us to do. Rather He calls us to live by faith; which means we live by the power of the truth. We live by faith in the power of the Scriptures.

So, no, I can’t imagine what it would be like to be dead. But God doesn’t ask me to. All I can ask you is this. *“Are you dead or alive?”* And the Holy Spirit’s message through these words is as follows: it’s a matter of *knowing* the truth and when you know the truth, it sets you free; verse six.

Romans 6:6 *“****Knowing this****, that our old man is [was] crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed [annulled], that henceforth we should not serve sin. (7) For he that is dead is freed from sin*.”

These aren’t complicated words. They are two *simple* words. When dealing with such a large topic, Paul chooses simplicity over complexity. He uses simple words to describe how to overcome your sins and your bad habits; *“knowing this.”*

So, my question is this. Do you *know* that you are dead? Folks, the only way you can know something is true is if it really is true; and you then believe it. This may be a simple illustration; but you do this all the time.

Do you know that you were born on your birthday? Do you ever doubt that you were born on the day you celebrate your birthday? Well, how do you know you were born on that date? Someone told you. You read it on your Social Security card. And, after all, you’ve been celebrating that day as your birthday for your entire life. You see; you know your birthdate because you believe what someone else told you.

Folks, something wonderful happened on the day you trusted in Christ. Many wonderful things happened that day. But, it’s not until you are farther along on the road of the Christian life that you come to realize that the LORD did a whole lot more for you than saved and forgive you.

So, do you know that you are dead? Yes, I know it. How? God said it. I believe it.

On July 11, 2011 Rachel Pritchett wrote the following article for the Herald Net in Everett Washington.

“Her mouth dropped when the person at the local Social Security office saw Bonnie Ballew of Bremerton, Washington standing there, alive as could be. *“Am I supposed to be dead or something?”* Ballew, 83, asked the employee. *“As a matter of fact, that's what it is,”* the employee responded looking at Ballew's paperwork. That was 2011, and Bonnie Ballew was in the Social Security office on a routine visit when the two discovered she'd been dead since 1997.

Ballew, who then lived at the Martha and Mary nursing home in Poulsbo, WA is now deceased. She died on February 21, 2014 at the age of 87. And she was one of the lucky ones able to clear up the Social Security Office confusion in months, not years.

But, when she first found out about it, she held off telling her son who was serving abroad in the military that she was dead until he returned home. *“Oh, by the way, do you know that I was dead?”* she laughed. *“Keep a sense of humor,”* she advised.

Now, Lydia Mary Claesson (pronounced Kly-son), 83, of Bainbridge Island (phone number (206) 842-4361), Washing-ton, couldn't agree more. The government deemed her “dead” twice after her husband had passed away in 1994. On one occasion, it removed deposits from her bank account. So, Claesson packed up her passport, driver's license and birth certificate and made the trip to the Social Security office. There, she and the surprised workers discovered she'd been declared dead instead of her husband.

On another occasion, she tried to pick up a prescription, only to discover her insurance coverage wasn't active.

*“I asked them to find out why. Well, they said that 'you're dead,'”* Claesson said. *Again*, she gathered her paperwork and drove back to the Social Security office where she told the Social Security folks, *“I'm not my ghost. It's really me, she laughed.”* Oh, by the way, Mrs. Lydia Claesson is a board member of the Cemetery Association in her town of Port Blakely in Washington State. And also, by the way Mrs. Claesson passed away just 104 days ago, this past February 19, 2018 at the age of eight-nine.

[Found on [www.illustrationexchange.com](http://www.illustrationexchange.com) “Alive From The Dead” by Charles Schuyler (07/11/2014)].

And according to one Social Security spokesman, Mr. Mark Hinkle, one in every two hundred entries in the Social Security Death Master File is false because of quote *“inadvertent keying errors”* [See preceding article].

And what’s even more amazing it this. A lot of us Christians have never come to accept and believe the words of Romans chapter six. And what does it say? What does the Holy Spirit? He says that we were crucified along with Christ, buried with Him, and raised with Him.

First, are you dead or alive?

Second, are you joined to Jesus Christ?

Folks, if you are *saved*, you not only belong to Christ, you are joined to Him. Each one here who is a Christian is joined to the same Jesus Christ Who once walked this earth. And since you are joined to Him, you now have the power to finally get rid of your sinful habits. This is at the top of the list of the most important things that you know and believe as a Christian. You are “in Christ” and He is “in you.”

Here’s how Paul puts it.

Romans 6:5 *“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also [planted ] in the likeness of his resurrect-tion: (6) Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed [annulled], that henceforth we should not serve sin.”*

Do you see this phrase “planted together”? Here’s the original σύμφυτοι [pronounced “soom-futoy”]. It means “united with; grown together with, and bound up with” [See Strong’s # 4854 and Theological Dictionary of the New Testament Vol. VII page 786]. It’s an agricultural term. Whenever two plants grow together, in days gone by you would have been referred to them as σύμφυτοι.

Folks, this is the reality of the Christian life. When it comes to *how* to live with Jesus as LORD and how to no longer live with sin as lord over your life, the truth is this. You are united to the living Son of God. And just like I could never imagine being dead with Christ, the LORD doesn’t call me to imagine being joined together with Christ. It’s simply a fact. You, Christian, your life, is bound up with *His* life. And, so much so, that what happened to Jesus at the Cross, in the tomb, and in His resurrection is exactly what happened to you.

[Slides of our union with Christ].

Here’s how Jesus puts it.

John 14:20 *“At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.”*

I’m guessing today that you find it difficult to understand how the Holy Spirit conceived a child inside Mary’s womb? Yes, it’s difficult. Yet, you believe it. And you believe it wholeheartedly. Well, the same holds true for your being in Christ and His living in you. On the day you were saved, Christ came to live in your spirit. And on that same day, you came to live in Him. John 14:20 “… *ye in me, and I in you.”*

Here’s what God’s Word says about this wonderful topic.

II Corinthians 13:5 *“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that* ***Jesus Christ is in you****, except ye be reprobates?”*

Romans 8:10 *“And* ***if Christ be in you****, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.”*

Galatians 2:20 *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but* ***Christ liveth in me****: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*

Colossians 1:27 *“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is* ***Christ in you****, the hope of glory: …”*

Folks, because you find something hard to believe or even because you can’t imagine it, it cannot follow that it’s not true. The truth is sometimes hard to believe, though. So, here’s what the LORD tells you to do.

First, are you dead or alive?

Second, are you joined to Jesus Christ?

Third, have you *reckoned* that you are indeed dead to sin and alive to God? Romans 6:11.

Romans 6:11 *“Likewise* ***reckon*** *ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

The very first command given in the Book of Romans is here in Romans 6:11 “reckon.” Your life, your life as a Christian is to be a life of faith. For whatsoever is not of faith is sin. So God says “reckon.” And what does that mean?

Here’s what it means. I’ll use an illustration of something you did just a month and a half ago. One day you decided to do your own taxes. And in doing them you realized that you needed to add up all the receipts you had for money you spent in your business or for your home. So, you collected them all together and you added them all up. And your conclusion was this. You spent $16,359.00. Those are your expenses.

Now, when was it true that you had spent $16,359.00 in expenses? Was it true before you added them up? Was it as true after you added them up? The answer is yes. That’s what this word “reckon” says. You accept as certain and true something that is true.

“To reckon” means “to consider and count as true,” “to account something true that is already true,” “to come to a logical conclusion based upon the facts.”

So, have you reckoned that you are indeed dead to sin and alive to God?

Romans 6:11 *“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

The foundation for your Christian life is Christ, Who He is, and what He has done; nothing more, nothing less. So Who is He? He’s the LORD of life. And what has He done. He died for your sins and He rose from the dead. And, according to God, the Holy Spirit, when Christ died, you died. When *He* was buried, you were buried. And when *He* rose from the grave, you rose.

And what is God’s command to your spirit? *“Reckon, count true what is true.”*

There’s been way too much “trying to live the Christian life” and not enough “trusting the One Who lives within you to live the Christian life.”

Colossians 3:1 *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. (2) Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. (3) For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”*

Well, folks, here’s the awesome and wonderful truth. Because you are joined to Jesus Christ, because you were crucified with Him, because you were buried with Him, and because you were raised with Him, you can reckon as true for you what is already true for.

Today you are united to Him because it’s a simple fact. It’s absolutely true. There’s no mistake here. You were united with Him in His death, His burial, and His resurrection. And all you can do it to count true what’s already true.

Now why? This is the key to “the two lords” idea.

Jesus tells us that you can’t have two lords. Matthew 6:24 *“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”*

Now Jesus is speaking here about the things in this world we think will satisfy us versus that LORD Himself. But the point is exactly the same.

Christian, you can’t have two lords over your life. If so, you are double-minded and you can’t succeed in your Christian life. Either Jesus is LORD or sin is lord. And to ensure that Jesus is LORD, apply Romans 6:11 personally. Say this verse like this. Romans 6:11 *“I reckon myself to be dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ my LORD.”*

So, can anything be more wonderful than this?

First, I am dead to sin and I am alive to God.

Second, I am joined to Jesus Christ.

Third, I have reckoned that I am indeed dead to sin and alive to God?

Only you can answer these three questions and make Romans six personal and practical. And, if you’ve answered yes to these three questions, then you are living by faith. You see, it’s not complicated. It’s really quite simple.

The LORD’s death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ is not so much for Him as it was for you.

Two weeks ago I asked you to memorize Romans six as follows: Romans 6:1 *“What shall I say then?? Shall I continue in sin that grace may abound? (2) God forbid. How shall I who am dead to sin, live any longer therein? (3) Don’t I know that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?*

*(4) Therefore I was buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father; even so I can walk in newness of life. (5) For, if I have been planted together in the likeness of His death, then I am also planted in the likeness of His resurrection.*

*(6) Knowing this, that my old man was crucified with Him that the body of sin might be destroyed [annulled] that henceforth I should not serve sin. (7) For I who am dead am freed from sin.”*

Today I am asking you to add Romans 6:11 the very same way. Romans 6:11 *“I reckon myself to be dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ my LORD.”*

It’s your choice. He’s come to live in you. So, what will you do today in light of this first command in the Book of Romans? Will you receive it? Will you apply it?

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 504 “Without Him”