

Special Messages 2014: Being a Dead Slave Leads to a Free Life

From Man in the Mirror President and Co-CEO, David Delk

Romans 6

All right guys! I'm going to start by helping you out this morning. You know it's Valentine's Day. So here's the deal, if you are married, if you have a special somebody in your life, probably not your mom but if so that's okay. Take your phone out, assuming you text or email from your phone. If not, you can leave it in your pocket. If you do though, go ahead and pull up the appropriate app, and I want everybody to think of one thing about that special someone that you love and appreciate. Make a note of it. Go ahead and compose a text right now about it. If you don't have your phone, you can write it down for later, but I want you to mention something you love and appreciate about them. Now, if you're going to wake them up and make them mad, don't send it now! Just leave it in here, and we'll send it after the Bible Study. But go ahead and type it. I heard somebody send one. You got it in there? Save it, or go ahead and send it if it's not too early, and we'll get Valentine's off to a good start together! After your finished, make sure you then silence your phone and put it down.

Well good morning, men. It is a joy to be with you here today, if a little unexpectedly. I was supposed to be here next week, but Pat Morley is ill, so we appreciate your prayers for him. We're going to talk this morning about a passage of scripture, a long passage of scripture, but I think it's going to be very applicable to where many of us as men find ourselves. There's a young man that lived in our neighborhood, I've mentioned him before. For those of you who have been here for a while, you may have heard about him. I'll call him "Mark" today. Mark grew up in a home without a dad, and his mom worked late and a lot, so he was kind of on his own in our neighborhood. As a young boy he started to do what a lot of young boys do in that situation, become a bully, get into trouble and other things. So early on, say 11 or 12 years old, he started coming to our house and joining us for dinner and those kinds of things with our family. He really treated our home as his own. He's now 26 and doing very well, but it's very interesting for him as he made this transition in his early 20's and he started getting real jobs. He would have to work for these people and for some reason these people actually told him what to do! Can you imagine such a thing? The gall! He'd come over and say I was at work today and my boss told me I was doing this wrong and I needed to do it differently! What does he think he's talking about? I cannot believe it! I was so ready to tell him off! And he would just go crazy because this boss was telling him what to do at this job. Now some of you are like what in the world! But the reality is that's where a lot of guys are. If you didn't have a father or authority figure in your life, if you've never been a man who had to respond to anything anyone else wanted or asked you to do, it's a pretty crazy transition to lay that aside. The reality of course for many of us, that desire to maintain control, that desire to keep authority, we haven't really done away with that, we've just learned how to manage it and hide it. In other words, we know that at work if I want to keep my job, I got to do what they say, so that's that. But in terms of our hearts, we often have that same kind of thing going on today. We don't want anybody to tell us what to do, we want to have this illusion of control. We have this idea of self-reliance that's such a huge ideal in America today. The idea of security and safety, that I'm going to take care of myself and I'm going to take care of my loved ones. Gun sales have increased for 11 years in a row! I know there's hunting and all that, but one of the reasons that people will tell you for buying guns is safety, right? Did

you know that violent crime is at the lowest it's ever been since 1973? Now, there could be a correlation, I don't know, but it's interesting, isn't it? That we have this desire for control and for safety. We all have the insurance we think we need to have, we have alarm systems on our homes, all these kinds of things that are going to help us make sure our lives are going to work out the way we want them to. Yet, at the end of the day, it's kind of an illusion, isn't it? Carrying a pistol in your pocket is not going to help you if your car gets slammed into a bridge abutment by a semi. More than likely, all the health insurance in the world isn't going to do you much good at that point. Home alarms sure aren't going to help! So there's this illusion that we want to think that we can be under our own authority, that we can rely on ourselves, that we can pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, that we can take care of things, and all of us have the remnant of that in our lives, and this is really what Paul is getting at here in Romans 6, he's trying to root that out, to show us where real life comes from. So we're going to read this entire passage of Romans 6:

Dead to Sin, Alive in Christ

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have 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.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

Slaves to Righteousness

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those

things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

May God add understanding to the reading of his holy word.

We have in this passage Paul bringing this theme of death, of slavery to bear, and it really goes against this myth that we were talking about that somehow we are going to make it on our own, do things in our own strength. Paul is really hammering home this idea that we have to die, that we have to live as slaves. When we look at the contrast there and where we stand in America, the reality is that we have to admit that for many men, it's just not working for them. Men in our culture don't understand what true manhood looks like. I deal with guys in all kinds of situations, maybe vendors, parents of friends, whatever, and I've got this phrase that I remember when I get irritated with things. I say that's just the consequences of being an undisciplined man. You have some guy that makes some stupid decision or says something to you that makes no sense, or really acts in an irrational way, is completely selfish, whatever; you can get mad at them, you can get irritated, or you can step back and say you know what? That's the consequence of living in a world with a whole bunch of undisciplined men. This guy has no idea how to be a man! That's what we're dealing with in our culture, but not only that, even in the church! There are so many of us that are not living with any real spiritual power! We're bogged down in the same kinds of trivial, besetting sins, distractions that keep us away from really abandoning ourselves to Christ. We hold onto things really tightly and refuse to step out in faith and do the things Christ has called us to do. Why? I think a lot of it has to do with this idea that we still want to be in control. We still want to be autonomous, we still want to rely on ourselves. Paul in this passage tells us about one of the symptoms of that. I want to begin with this as a little bit of a diagnostic in verse 13 and then he comes back to it again later in the passage. In verse 13 he says do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness. What is he talking about? He's talking about your parts, and he uses this terminology frequently in referencing the body. So let me ask you this, how are you contributing your body to sin? When are you investing yourselves and thinking on things you shouldn't be dwelling on? When are you considering things that are more self-oriented than they should be? What are you fixated on? Do you feel you deserve certain things from people or need them to respect you? How are you committing your mind to sin? How are you offering your eyes to sin? Are you making a habit of looking at some things you shouldn't have looked at? Reading things that really don't help you very much, watch things that are kind of useless or provocative, or inappropriate. How are you offering your hands to sin? Are you spending time with things that don't need to be done? Are you focused so much on yourself with your hobbies and pursuits to the exclusion of other opportunities or responsibilities that God's given you? Are you not working as well as you should at your job? You've gotten into some habits where you're cutting corners and not doing things as well as you should. Are you giving the full effort that you should give? For some of you here I need to ask the question how are you offering your private parts to sin? Some of you guys are already in a relationship that you shouldn't be in. You're wondering how far it's going to go, and if you can get out. You need to get out today! Some of you guys have started down that, maybe just beginning. A couple of little interactions, a spark here and there, but you need to be thinking about where this is going to be six months or six years from now. When we see these kinds of things springing up in our hearts, it tells us that we are not really living dead, that we are not really living as slaves. We have retained this autonomy, this self-control, and what Paul says here is that we need to kill that spirit so that we can enjoy the real life that God has for us, and he gives us a couple of principles.

Principle 1: Death Leads to Life

The first one is found in verse 4, and that is that death leads to life. 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. Paul in chapter 5 has just talked about the role of Adam and Christ as representatives. This is a little bit weird for us, because we don't do this exactly this way. We do, however, have a representative form of government. In theory, from a governmental perspective, I vote on every single bill that comes up in congress. How do I vote on them? I elect a representative that votes on my behalf. But that counts as my vote, that's how we have a republic/democratic form of government. In that sense, but in a much broader sense, the scriptures say that Adam and Christ represent us but not just about voting. They represent us in every aspect of our lives so that when we are in Adam, what Adam did is counted on our behalf. That means that Adam's sin becomes our sin, and we are looked at through the lens of Adam. But in chapter 5 he says that there's a second Adam that's come, and that's Jesus, and those who make the choice to ask him to forgive them of their sins, to give them a new heart, a new life, a new mind, they move from being in Adam, the kingdom of darkness, their eyes are opened, their hearts are made new, and they are moved over into the kingdom of light in Christ. Being in Christ means that Christ then becomes our representative, so that what he did is credited to me. Just like when my representative votes in Washington, I vote, what Christ did, his righteous behavior, his perfection, his obeying the law is credited to me. His death to pay for sin is credited to me. His power that raised him from the dead is credited to me because I have been moved into the orbit, I am not under his representation. There is a technical term for this called federal headship. I am now under the federal headship of Jesus Christ. Paul is building on that here by saying that we are baptized into his death. We are literally in a spiritual sense, participating in his death and we are raised into the new life that he has when he was raised from the dead. In Adam, we have to sin. You understand this, right? In Adam, you can't not sin. So when we see guys around us making bad choices or being self-oriented, that's their nature. You're going to live out of your nature. But when we are transferred into Christ, Paul says, we now have this new life, this new nature where we are no longer slaves to sin. We now have the opportunity to obey. And we have the freedom to obey, so Paul says that when we understand that and we are willing to experientially live out of being dead to ourselves, participating in the death of Christ, giving him our life and recognizing that he is the only one who is our life, then we have this freedom, this real life that our hearts have always longed for. So the first principle Paul gives us is death leads to life.

Principle 2: Slavery Leads to Freedom

The second principle, and this is another paradox, is that slavery leads to freedom. This is in verses 17-18. But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. So what he says is that when we were slaves to sin, we were free in regards to righteousness. That's a strange way of saying it. If you are free of something, it has no hold on you, it cannot touch you. So he's saying we were unable to be righteous, we were free from righteousness because we were slaves to sin. But when we become slaves to Christ, then we have the freedom to experience real life, to live a righteous life, to live the life we were meant to live, to be the kind of men who can forgive others. To be the kind of men who can tell the truth when it hurts. To be the kind of men who can love in the face of anger and bitterness, frustration and all things that we deal with. How do you be that kind of man? By submitting yourself as the slave of Christ.

A guy was telling me a story about a situation that he had with some partners in a financial investment. Things had gone South, a long term deal, very complicated, with a whole bunch of people involved.

Because of the way that each of them had tried to kind of get out of it, at the end of the day these other guys really lost more money than he did. What he was saying was I can prove on paper legally that this is all I should lose. These other guys were saying we were partners, it was even Steven! It's being resolve, this is how much we lost, and everyone ought to own up to their percentage of that. He's like no because we did this and then you did this and I did this, etc. He had all the little pieces of his argument there, but he went to some Christian guys and said what do you think about this? Because they were talking about going to arbitrators and the relationship was getting all sour and they were going to sue. By the time he laid out this whole plan, their heads were spinning, but they basically said I don't know about all this stuff you just laid out, but when you went into the partnership, did you all think you were going to share equally in the profits and losses? He said yeah. You may have a legal leg to stand on then, but it probably makes sense that these folks would feel you should share equally in the losses. This guy, because of his willingness to submit, spent \$25,000 that technically he didn't have to spend because he was willing to submit to what he believed to be the will of Christ. That's what it means to be a slave. That's what it means to submit yourself and realize that you can't do it in your own strength. It's sort of like Jesus is our snow plow. Some of the guys watching the video of this up North are probably quite sick of snow by now, but what does a snow plow do? It clears the way. Jesus has cleared the way through his death because he was a slave to righteousness, he was perfectly obedient and he has cleared the way for us to follow behind. That's really what Paul talks about here.

Principle 3: Christ's Work, Not Ours

The third principle is that this is Christ's work, not ours. This is found throughout the passage. Verse 3, for example, it talks about his death. In verse 4 it talks about him being raised from the dead. Verse 5, it's a death like his, a resurrection like his. Verse 6, we're crucified with him. Verse 8, we died with and Christ and we live with him. Verse 9, he was raised from the dead. Verse 10, the death he died, the life he lives. Verse 23, the gift of God in Christ Jesus. The one thing that Paul wants to make absolutely sure that we understand is that we don't make ourselves die and we don't make ourselves be good slaves. That we are actually participating, the strength and the power comes when we abandon our self-effort, our self-reliance, and our own strength, and recognize that we need to participate in the death of Christ, that we need to live as the slaves of righteousness that he has already allowed us to become. It's his work that we depend on, not our own strength. That means that when we wake up in the morning and we're saying to ourselves I know I don't have enough power to love my wife today the way that I should. She's going to say some things that are going to tick me off, even though it's Valentine's, especially because it's Valentine's! My kids aren't going to respond the way I need when I text them, or they're watching TV or playing a game instead of doing their homework and it's getting later and later. How am I going to do that? I don't have the strength to make all the decisions at work, to interact with all my coworkers and respond to everyone the way I should. Lord Jesus, today I need you! I'm willing to say what you would want me to say, go where you want me to go, do what you want me to do, I don't want to be my own man today, I want to live as a man who has died to himself. To become a man who is a slave to righteousness, to obedience; I want to follow you. Because we recognize that it's his power and his strength, not ours.

One of the problems that we face when we come to it is that we often think that this plowed road that Jesus has made for us is something like this. You look at this road here and it's bad, but if I had a big enough truck with good four wheel drive, some chains, whatever, I could probably turn off there, maybe go behind those trees to the right, you know? Wouldn't be that big a deal. So a lot of us think it's not that big of a deal to go our own way a little bit. I could handle this thing, I could take care of that. My marriage is doing well, I can sort of put that on the back burner. My kids are doing great, I don't need to

worry about that. Or my job is okay right now, I can handle that. I'm doing good, I'm doing well. The problem is that inevitably leads to that failure that comes from self-reliance, and we find ourselves wondering how in the world we got here. You've heard the phrase how is that working for you? That's what Paul says right here in ancient Greek, verse 21. Paul says but what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. Basically, how is that working for you? If you look around at the celebrities, the politicians and the business men and some of your neighbors and coworkers and you see what happens when you pursue your own way long enough; how's that working for you? For most of us, it doesn't work well, and the thing we need to remember is it looks like this doable road to us, but it's really not. It's really like this! The only reasonable path is to follow the one that Jesus has plowed. When we start going off the track we are doing the stupidest thing you could ever imagine, because Jesus is the only safe one to follow.

The snow plows, what do they do? They plow the interstates and major roads. They plow all the nice roads that are easy to drive down. There's a huge difference with Jesus, because sometimes Jesus plows the hard road. Some of you guys are on that hard road right now. Some of you guys are dealing with relationship challenges, you're dealing with health crisis, you're dealing with finances and you're saying I didn't sign up for this! I didn't sign up for having this kind of marriage where we can't get on the same page and there's all this bitterness and frustration day after day. I didn't sign up for having kids that rebel and have marijuana in their dresser and getting in trouble at school. That wasn't where I wanted to be! I didn't sign up for a cancer diagnosis! I didn't sign up for dementia!

My wife got an email recently from a woman. I want to read this to you. It's after about 25 years of marriage, 20 of which was spent slowly discovering her husband was using pornography and different things. Eventually it lead to a couple of online dalliances, and then finally visiting a prostitute. Then finally, five years of figuring out if they could work it out, and a few more years of realizing it wasn't going to work out. So this is what she wrote as the divorce was finalized:

Today my heart hurts more than ever before, it consumes the inside of my chest. It makes my stomach heave with pain. I feel nauseous and weak, it's hard to breathe. I think it hurts because I now feel the total rejection of Tray. I feel utterly, completely unwanted and irrelevant. I feel like the incredible hurt he has caused me doesn't matter to him in the slightest. It's so hard to think I spent all those years with someone who so completely disregards me, as if I am a shoe to be kicked out of the middle of the floor because I am in the way. Then she talks about some other things related to abuse from her father and things like that. Now I am kicked over in the corner and the kickers are gone, but I feel like I'm an old, worn out smelly shoe that nobody wants anymore. I'm glad I'm not being used and thrown around anymore, but I am so deeply lonely, feeling ugly, and unwanted, even repulsive. You can't bring an old shoe back and make it beautiful. I feel like I can't be brought back and made beautiful. I feel like my soul has been ripped out. I feel like everyone expects me to act like I'm a new shiny shoe, even though they and I can obviously see that I am not. I feel like I'm pretending all of the time, and I'm weary from it.

How do you walk that road if that's the road that Jesus has plowed for you? The only way I know to do it is to walk by faith, trusting in the one who overcame. The scriptures tell us that Jesus was a man of sorrows. He was acquainted with grief, he suffered as we have. But not only did he endure the physical suffering of the cross, he also endured the spiritual anguish of taking the wrath of his father against our sin on himself. And the father literally turned his eyes away in that moment that Jesus says my God! Why have you forsaken me? He knew an anguish that we will never know! And he came through on the other side in victory as he rose from the dead. So the only way I know for us to make it down these hard roads that Jesus plowed for us is to walk with him by faith. And to realize that we really don't have

another choice! We're like Peter when Jesus said hey guys are you going to leave, too? When everyone was abandoning him in John 5 where he's talking about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, and everybody's leaving. Peter says where else are we going to go? You're the only one that can give us eternal life! This is the only deal, there is no plan B, and we've got to walk it as men who are surrendered, who recognize that we are dead and slaves to Christ. The Big Idea here today is this: **When I live dead, I truly come alive.** It's the paradox of the Gospel, we find our lives when we lose them for Christ's sake. We need to be dead to self-reliance, we need to be dead to the desires of the flesh, we need to be dead to our own agenda, dead to our definitions of success, dead to our desire to have other people respect us, dead to the things that we think are absolutely necessary to make us happy, dead to the idea that other people have to treat us a certain way. And we need to be alive to Christ and to righteousness.

I was reading a book recently that had horses in it and one of things they were talking about were saddles. Anybody ride horses in here? A few people. Everyone may be aware of this but if you were to just casually put this huge leather object on a horse and strapping it on there, you might think to be nice to the horse that you would snug it up just a little bit. That you don't want to squish the ribs or back, but be nice to the horse. Of course, what happens when you do that is you could fall, the saddle could rub the horse the wrong way and hurt it. So you have to cinch it up tight. Guys, I'm afraid that too many of us are wearing Jesus too loosely. We've added Jesus on, I want to be a nice guy, I want to be a good worker, a nice husband. So we add Jesus to this life and we think that's going to help us. Too many times we end up thinking Jesus asking us to come and die is Jesus asking us to come and get fixed. You can have a better marriage, job, and kids, just come and add Jesus. Jesus says come and die, come be a slave. We need to cinch the saddle up tight. We need to be willing to abandon hope of any other salvation than Jesus, and go all in. Here's what I want you to do, if you have a belt on today, go ahead and stand up and cinch it up tight! Feel what the feels like for a second and remember that's where we need to be with Christ! We need to be willing to cinch the saddle on tight. No other choice or option, abandon ourselves and commit to Jesus. I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other Gods before me. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself. If you want to be fully alive, learn to live dead in Jesus. Let's pray!

Closing Prayer

Father we thank you so much for this day and time. Thank you for your word, for the apostle who by all accounts was a self-willed, powerful man who learned what it was like live dead, to know what it was like to become your slave, and to live out of a life that only you can give. So Father, today, we pray you would bring to our hearts and minds all the ways we are distracted, that we are worshipping things other than you, and that you would call us out of those things and back to you. Help us realize the only way to truly have life is to live dead, as men abandoned to you who are in Christ and who so identify ourselves with you that our every word and action would submit to you for your glory. We pray you would make us men who have power through weakness, life through death, freedom through slavery, so we can love well and help transform the world for your glory. This we pray in your name, amen!