

New I.D.

To the Romans..., Pt. 13

We are continuing our – thus far – year long series on Paul’s epistle to the church at Rome, a book of the Bible that has had a particular far reaching impact on the church across history. Perhaps nowhere in the Bible is God’s plan of salvation – the gospel “good news” – laid out more directly and systematically than in this letter in which Paul introduces himself and his beliefs to the Christians at Rome that he hopes to soon come and visit.

And today we arrive at a significant shift in Paul’s presentation. All the commentators agree that Romans chapter six marks a transition. Up until now, Paul has been laying out a theology of the gospel. *What* does it mean? But now, in chapters 6-8, he is going to begin to emphasis application. *How* does it work?

And this is especially significant for folks who say, “I believe in the gospel. I have repented of sin and invited Jesus to be the leader of my life – my Lord. I believe that I am right with God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and yet, I find it difficult to change certain aspects of my life – behaviors, attitudes – that are wanting. I *know* the truth, but I have trouble *applying* it to my day-to-day life.

Well, these next few weeks are for you because Paul, here, more fully than in any other place in his writings or even the Bible, lays out how faith in Christ concretely leads to changes, and what the process really consists of. It’s more succinctly put, by the way, in Colossians 3, but it’s most *fully* put in Romans 6–8, and that’s what we’re going to look at for the next few weeks. Let’s start by reading from the text. We’ll look at **Romans 6:1–7** and then drop down to **11–18**,

1 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 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.

5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin...

11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. 13 Do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. 14 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obey the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Now the whole of this new section, chapters 6–8, revolves around the question you heard there twice, both in verse 1 and verse 15. And the question arises from Paul's teaching about the gospel. In Chapters 1–5 of Romans, he lays out the gospel. And as we've said repeatedly, the gospel has a theme in it that's unique to all the world religions and all the philosophies of the world...that salvation is received; it's not achieved. It's received, not on the basis of your merit, or your goodness, or anything in you at all. That's radical. That's the free gift of grace.

And whenever you hear that form of teaching, whenever that gospel teaching is laid out, immediately and inevitably a question arises. “Wait a minute! If that's the case, if salvation is sheerly by grace and it has nothing to do with how you live, why not live any way you want? Why would you *want* to change? Why would this kind of message change you at all?” “It seems to me,” somebody might say, “this message would leave you exactly the way you were.”

Now, I will be honest with you, I *love* when I get asked that question. Because it means I am doing my job properly. Listen to what our old London preacher friend, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones has to say about it. “The true preaching of the gospel of salvation by grace alone always leads to the possibility of this charge being brought against it... There is a sense in which the doctrine of justification by faith alone is a very dangerous doctrine: dangerous, I mean, in the sense that it can be misunderstood. It exposes a man to this particular charge... I would say to all preachers: **if your preaching of salvation has not been misunderstood in that way, then you had better examine your sermons again, and you had better make sure that you really are preaching the salvation that is offered in the New Testament.**”

So Paul answers that question in this text. If you understand the gospel, why would you change? How do you change? Why would you even want to change? Paul answers that, and in the process, he gives us three principles which, in my experience, in my pastoral work with people over the years and in my understanding and studying of the Bible, are absolutely crucial.

Three keys to real, profound life change. And here's what they are. You have to recognize *the shape of your spiritual slavery*, you have to realize *the scope of your cosmic unity with Jesus*, and you have to *live daily out of your new identity*. Recognize the shape of your spiritual slavery, realize the breadth and scope of your cosmic unity with Jesus, and live daily out of your new identity.

Slavery, unity, identity. Let's look at these three things. And by the way, if, when you're done with this sermon, you say, "I really need more detail," well, this is really just the *introduction* to a new section of the same series. Come back! I won't preach this fully, because it's an introduction.

First of all, this passage tells us you have to **Recognize your spiritual slavery**. And I'm looking primarily at **verses 15 and 16**. Paul, after saying, "We're not under law, but under grace." asks, *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?*

Now the first half of verse 16 isn't as shocking to the original readers as it seems to us. The reason why it seems somewhat shocking to us when he says "offer yourselves as slaves" is because when we read what the Bible says about slavery, we read it through the filter of our own experience of New World slavery and we think of slavery as race-based and for life. Part of the problem with defending antebellum American slavery based on Bible passages about slavery, are you're comparing apples to kumquats – just totally different institutions.

In the first century, if you were facing an enormous debt, and you didn't want to be saddled with it the rest of your life, it wasn't uncommon for a person to actually sell themselves to a particular person for a period of time - for five years, for ten years - in order to work off the debt as fast as possible.

And therefore, you offer yourself into “indentured service”. You offer yourself into slavery. But Paul says the problem is there’s a trade off for getting rid of the debt. That person is now your *master*. That person has complete control over your life. Now that part wasn’t that surprising to the original readers, but the second half - after the dash – *was!* Because Paul proceeds then to bring this into the spiritual realm.

He says, “Don’t you realize there are only two categories of people in the world? People who are obeying God and are in absolute, unconditional service to God, and people who are spiritually slaves to something else. There’s no other category. There’s no third category. There’s nothing in the middle. There’s no alternative to those two.”

What is the very first of the Ten Commandments? **Exodus 20:3**, “*You shall have no other gods before me.*” Don’t make anything else your god. You either make God God, or you make *something else* your god – small g - but there is no third possibility. Bob Dylan said it, “You’ve got to serve somebody. It may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you’re gonna have to serve somebody.”

This is Paul’s case. Everybody lives for *something*. What do I mean by that? Well, to live for something means everybody has something that is their *main* way of significance and their main way of security, their main way to feel valuable, or like their lives are worth anything. There’s always something that is the main way you face the difficulties and dangers of life.

Regardless of what your doctrinal beliefs are about religion and so on, something is the main way that you get significance and the main way that you get security. And that could be a career, family, or achievement. It could be personal independence or the need to have people *dependent* on you. It could be power and influence or human approval. It could be a political cause. It could be money. It could be romance. It could be physical attractiveness.

It could be any number of things, but here’s what Paul is saying. “You’re going to live for something. There’s going to be something that basically makes your life feel like it’s meaningful and makes you feel like you’re worthwhile.” But he says, “Here’s what you don’t seem to know. Whatever that is, it’s a spiritual master. It’s controlling you. *You* think it’s doing something for you - and it *is* doing something for you - but you have *offered* yourself to it. You’ve offered your soul, as it were. You’ve given yourself. You’re under its control. You’re being controlled by it. It’s a spiritual master.”

“How so?” you ask. And Paul’s answer goes back again to a Greek word – very important – that we looked at way back in chapter one, but it’s worth a quick review. He reintroduces the word here in **v. 12**. He says, “... *do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its **evil desires**.*” Don’t let sin “reign” which is the language of a spiritual master.

But what does that master want you to do? Obey what? “*Evil desires*” Now that’s one word in Greek and let’s be really sympathetic to the translators because it’s a very hard to translate. In the old King James Bible, it was usually translated “lust of the flesh.” And that’s actually not a bad literal translation, but the trouble is, for you and me today, “lust of the flesh” means sex, and this isn’t talking about sexuality.

It’s the word *epithymia*, which actually means an “epi-desire”, like an epicenter. Inordinate desires. Over-the-top desires. But this is not talking about desire for *bad* things. It’s talking about inordinate desire for *good* things, and *that* is how you lose control. There are *good* things in your life you’ve made into *ultimate* things, and they *control* your life, because if they really are your means of significance, or they really are your means of security...you *have* to have them. You’ve *got* to have them, and therefore, they control you through inordinate desires.

Let me give you three tests. Let me give you three kinds of epi-desires, three kinds of inordinate desires, that will show you where your spiritual masters are. The first one would be **Anger**. If something blocks your getting a “good” thing, you get angry, but if something blocks you getting an “ultimate” thing, something you’ve based your life on, you get epi-angry. You lose it. You say things, then afterwards...“I don’t know why I said that.” You blow up, or you get incredibly bitter. Are you having trouble forgiving somebody? At the root of it is a spiritual master that’s controlling you through an overdesire for something.

Let me give you a second test, **Fear**. If something good in your life is threatened, you’re worried, but if something *ultimate* in your life is threatened, you’re paralyzed with fear. You absolutely fall apart. You can’t control your anxiety. Are you *so* anxious you can’t think straight? Is there something that makes you *so* afraid that you know you’re being driven by it? It’s because some spiritual master, something, is enslaving you and it’s controlling you. It’s directing you.

Or a third test would be Sadness. If you lose something good, you grieve. You weep. It's terrible. It takes months to get over it. If you lose something that's *ultimate*, you want to throw yourself off a bridge. There's no meaning in life.

The great Reformer, Martin Luther, argued that every sin flows from breaking the First Commandment – no other gods. He says you never do anything else wrong in your life unless you're first committing this sin. You've set up another god, another idol, in your life, and that's the reason for *everything* that happens in your life. It's the underlying factor in everything. It's the theological underpinning to much of our neurosis. If you have an eating disorder, you've offered yourself to the god of thinness. At some deep level, your heart has said, "If I have thinness, if I look like that, then I'll be okay."

If you're a workaholic, you've made a Faustian bargain, you've *offered* the essence of yourself to the god of money or status or achievement. There are so very many different ways to do that. If you're in a relationship and you know, and everybody knows, it's a bad relationship but you can't give it up, you've made an idol out of male or female affection. You just can't imagine not being with somebody.

These things *have* you. And here's what Paul is saying. Everybody in the world has spiritual masters. *No one* in the world is free. You *think* you're in control.

You *think* you're your own person, and you're *not*. And until you get rid of that illusion, you'll never make the changes you need to make in your life.

So do you see his first answer to the question? When a person says, "If it's all by grace, then why do God's will? Why not do my own will?" he says, "If you say, 'Why not live any way I want,' you are comically, and destructively naïve about how the human heart works. If you're not doing God's will, if you're not given wholly to Him, you're absolutely out of control." And everyone's shape is different. Everyone's spiritual masters are different. So the first step in any kind of major change is to understand yourself, and you have to recognize the shape of your particular spiritual savior. That's number one.

Secondly, Realize the breadth and scope of your cosmic unity with Jesus. If you're going to get the resources Christ gives you to change, you have to realize the scope and the breadth of the cosmic unity you have with him. The heart of this passage, this chapter, and the whole three chapters are in v. 3–5 "*Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 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. 5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.*"

Now first of all, who is he talking about? He's talking about the "baptized". What does that mean? It's just his way of saying the converted. Who are the baptized? These are the people who have given their lives to Christ. Baptism is sort of like the wedding ring. It's one thing to fall in love with somebody. It's another thing to *give* your life to the person. It's one thing to be in love; it's another thing to commit yourself. That's the ring. That's baptism.

And so when he talks about baptism, he's not talking about super-Christians. He's talking about *everybody* who has really given their life to Jesus. What is true of these people? Verse 5. They're *united*. We are united to him. And that word, "united" in Greek can have a couple of meanings. It's used in a horticultural sense to talk about being grafted into a root. And then there's a biological usage that means like the fusing of two ends of a broken bone.

But either way, the metaphor is trying to say our lives have been *tightly connected* to the very life of Jesus. In fact by specially mentioning his death *and* his resurrection, Paul is saying, We have been united to the **past** and the **future** of Jesus Christ. Jesus' past is now our past. Jesus' future is now our future. That's what it's saying. Now I will unpack this over the next several weeks, but just give me a couple of minutes right now.

First of all, it says we *died* in him. Our past is his past. What does that mean? Do you remember I mentioned Colossians 3 is another place where Paul goes into this even more succinctly? In **Colossians 3:1-3**, he says, "*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. **For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.***"

You died in him. You're raised in him. You're seated at the right hand of God *in him*. What does that mean? Here's what it means. Do you know who the richest man in the world is? Jeff Bezos. How did he get his money? He founded Amazon. Do you know who the richest *woman* in the world? MacKinzie Scott. How did she get her money? By *divorcing* Jeff Bezos!

Now, I know there's a lot of joke material there, but she deserved every penny. Why? Legal union. That's how the law works. Unless you specifically set it aside – which is what a pre-nup agreement is – when a husband and wife make a legal marital union, what's his becomes her and vice versa. This is why I could never divorce Deanna. She would get half my library!

Well, a recurring metaphor of our relationship with Jesus is “the bride of Christ”. This is a picture of cosmic legal union with Christ. And so this is all telling you that when your life is “in Christ”, what he has, you have. Well, what does he have? Why does it say that Jesus is “*seated at the right hand of God*”? That’s a place of honor. That’s where you put the prime minister. That’s where you put the returning conquering general.

Do you know why he’s at the right hand of the Father? Look at what he has accomplished. Look at his life. Look at the nobility and the goodness and the greatness and the courage of what he has done. The Father looks at the Son and His heart literally bursts with delight. And this text is saying that everything Jesus Christ has done is now legally true of you.

The determining factor in your relationship with God is no longer *your* past, but *Christ’s* past. And the Father accepts you and delights in you and sees you as having all the beauty, greatness, and glory of His Son. He sees you as being as free from condemnation for the guilt of your sins as if *you* had died yourself and already paid the penalty for all your sins.

So that’s the first thing. We’re united to Christ’s past. But notice in **v. 5** it also says, “...*we will certainly be united in his resurrection.*” Do you see that “certainly”? It doesn’t say conditionally. “Now if you really live a good life and you come to church and take notes on Anthony’s sermons, you certainly will be...” It doesn’t say anything like that. It says, “You certainly” – period! That means there’s an enduring connection - the moment you believe - with the future of Jesus Christ. You are already connected to him.

What does this mean? Well, there’s a fascinating Greek word that shows up twice in the Bible. It’s a philosophical term, and the name of the term is *paliggenesîa* - do you hear the word “genesis” in there? It actually means “the rebirth of the cosmos”. It came from Greek Stoic philosophy that believed history was an endless cycle, and the world would get worse and worse and worse, and there would be decay and brokenness.

But every so often, the Stoics believed, there would be a *purging*, and a great fire would come and cleanse and purify everything and take away the old and make everything new and fresh again, and history would start all over. That was the view of the Stoics. Endless cycles of *paliggenesîa*. Birth and rebirth and rebirth and rebirth.

Well, how does that compare with what we believe as Christians? Here's what we believe. In **Matthew 19:28-29**, Jesus Christ takes that word and deliberately uses it in the most startling and astonishing way. "*Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at **the renewal of all things**,"*" - that's that word *paliggenesia* - "...when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life."

Jesus says there *will* be a *paliggenesia*, but just one. At "*the renewal*". Not the Stoic, renewal and decay, renewal and decay, but one final and everlasting renewal. There is a single point toward which all of history is flowing, at which everything sad will become untrue. Everything will be purged. Everything will become new, and everything will dance and sing, and everything will be whole and flourishing. And it will happen – in the future – when Jesus at last sits on his throne. At the return of the king. Isn't that amazing?

What's more amazing? That word shows up one more time in the Bible, in an even more surprising place. In **Titus 3:5**, Paul is talking about our personal salvation, and he says Jesus "... *saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of **rebirth***

and renewal by the Holy Spirit." Would you like to guess what that word "rebirth" is? It's our old friend *paliggenesia*, and it's totally inappropriate, at least at first glance, because *paliggenesia* is talking about *cosmic* rebirth, not personal renewal.

But do you know what Paul is saying? Paul is saying the minute you become a Christian and the Holy Spirit comes into your life...with it comes a *power*, that will someday regenerate the entire cosmos, but begins to work in your own life *now*. And therefore, when we say, "If it's all by grace, why live a good life?" Paul says, "You haven't the slightest idea what's happened to you, have you? You didn't just get a get out of jail free card! You didn't just get a pardon! You were united to everything in Christ's past and everything in Christ's future."

You have no idea what you have. You think God just wants to make you a nicer person. Maybe clean up your habits a little bit. Maybe a little inner peace, a little inspiration for tough times. Not even in the same ballpark. There's a passage out of *Mere Christianity*, by C.S. Lewis, that really nails it.

“Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to?”

“The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of—throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.”

“If we let him—for we can prevent him, if we choose—he will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a...dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright, stainless mirror which reflects back to God perfectly (though, of course, on a smaller scale) His own boundless power and delight and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful, but that is what we are in for. Nothing less.”

Do you understand what it means to be “in Christ”? To have a legal union with Christ, by which everything that he has, you have? Of course you don’t! We’re like the spouse of a billionaire who says, “If it’s not asking too much, do you think I could get a late model Honda Accord?” That’s insulting to the billionaire! Get rid of your low expectations of what God wants to do in you *through Christ*. Begin to ask the Holy Spirit to show you who you really are and what power you already have access to through your union with him.

So first of all you have to recognize the shape of your spiritual slavery. Secondly, you have to begin to grasp the scope and the breadth of your cosmic unity with Jesus. But **lastly**, you must – and here’s the secret - **Live daily out of your new identity**. I am officiating a wedding later this afternoon. The bride grew up here in the church as a girl, but now she lives in Houston. And she will be taking her husband’s last name which means after I say my “I now pronounce you” words tonight she’ll have to go the DMV at some point and fill out some paperwork. Why? She needs a new I.D. Because she has a new identity.

In the same way, when we are united to Jesus – the bride of Christ - we take his name. His name is part of my name, I'm a *Christian*. And a new name means a new identity. So we read in **v.6**, "*For we know that our old self was crucified with him...*" Our "old self" - that's your former self, your old identity, crucified! It's a past tense. It's perfect. It's done. Your old self, your former self is gone. When you become a Christian, you're not the same person. Your old identity is gone. You have a new identity.

Read the rest, "*...so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.*" Now that doesn't mean your physical body is sinful. What he's trying to say is your body under the reign of your spiritual masters. Do you see the rest of this sentence? It means your life, your actions. Paul is using your body as a way of talking about the way you actually live in the world; your actions, your decisions. Through your new identity, you have the ability to break the reign of your old spiritual masters in how you actually live. That's what verse 6 is saying.

But we have to pair that with **v.11-12**, "*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.*" Now, we've said the work has been done and that it was Jesus that did it, totally and completely. He has won our victory and freedom from slavery through his death on the cross and Resurrection from the grave.

And yet this is saying there is something *we* still have to do – not to earn our freedom – but to apply it. And it's one of Paul's favorite words in the Book of Romans. When he says "*count yourselves*" – that is the word *logizesthe* – do you hear the word "logic" in there? That's what it means - to "reckon, to judge or consider." This is not just mind over matter or the power of positive thinking. I can think positively that I have \$1 million dollars in my bank account. And I would be *positively* wrong!

But *logizesthe* is an accounting term. If I do an audit of my bank account and it reveals that I do in fact have \$1 million dollars credited, then I can logically begin to act on that fact. I can spend on it. I can put it into circulation. Because the accounting works. I've reckoned things. I've counted.

I said this was a favorite word of Paul's. Back in Chapter Four he used it eleven times to talk about righteousness - being in right standing with God. For example, **Romans 4:3**, "*What does Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited' - elogizesthe - 'to him as righteousness.'*" Now, that's in the past tense – God already did the reckoning when it came to Abraham. God audited his account and called it good. In fact, every time *logizesthe* is used in chapter 4, it's God doing the reckoning.

But now, in chapter 6, it says “count *yourselves*”. Now *we* are called upon to do some reckoning. Be logical. Think about what God has already done for you. In fact, let me go Greek geek on you for a moment. Not that you have to know what this means – even in English, it’s been a while for most of us. But I just want to show you my work - while we’re speaking of logically working out solutions. This word *logizesthe* in v.11, is a present indicative imperative case.

What’s that mean? It means it’s a command that must be applied continuously. “Keep on counting.” One of my commentaries says this, “The object of the imperative is that we should take this death into account, take it seriously, and thus make the gift become a gift in which we participate.” (Moo, 380). Jesus has done the work. He has put the money in your account. But you have to access it. He has given you a new name – his name – but you’ve got to go down and fill out the paperwork.

See, if you’re a Christian but you’re not changing in the ways that you need to change. It’s not that your salvation didn’t really take – you know, you’re the one soul in the universe that’s too far gone for God’s grace, please! – it’s not that you didn’t get enough of the Holy Spirit. Maybe I said the wrong words at your baptism. No. You don’t lack any resources if you’re a Christian. You got’em all. You have everything you need.

But they need to be deployed. They don’t happen automatically. If you ever fail to live as you should, if you ever fail to change, you’re not remembering who you really are. You’re not conscious of who you really are. You’ve forgotten who you are in Jesus. You’re like the bride that keeps writing her maiden name on her checks – which I know is an *incredibly* old fashioned sentence! But you’re not reckoning. You’re not being logical. You’re not present indicative imperative “counting yourself”.

One of my favorite examples of what this looks like is from the life of Augustine. Before he was a Christian, Saint Augustine - to put it mildly - had a problem with sexual self-control. You read his story and it’s very obvious he was enslaved to sexual sin – in the 4th Century by the way, the past is not *so* different! But after he became a Christian, he was walking along one day, and one of his old mistresses showed up. Hadn’t seen him in years and she decided to go after him. Some of you have experienced this on Facebook!

She starts to try to invite him up to her place and yada, yada – “You can’t yada, yada the best part!” At any rate, Augustine says, very kindly and very courteously, “Thank you very much. That’s very generous of you to offer. Glad to see you, but no. No, thank you.” And he starts to walk away. And suddenly it occurs to her, “Maybe he didn’t really recognize me.” And she turned to him and said, “Augustine, it is I!” Augustine turned around and smiled and said, “Yes, I know. But it is not I.”

What does that mean? Augustine was reckoning. He was saying, “I used to be a person who *had* to have female affection. That’s the reason I was in relationships, no matter how destructive they were to you or to me. They were never about love. They were about *me* and about using you to fill the black hole, which never was filled. I used to be the kind of person who *had* to have sexual conquest...I was driven. It was a spiritual master, and I was a slave. But I have a new master. And to the degree I think of who I am in him, and what he thinks of me, I don’t need this. I am free to love. I don’t *need*, anymore, the same things I used to need.” That’s what he’s saying.

And that’s what it sounds like when *you* “count yourself dead to sin.” Now, we’ll talk about this in more detail in the coming weeks. And it will take you the rest of your life to work it out fully. But this is what it looks like. You can fill in the blank. But this is how you change. You could say, “I used to be the kind of person who crumbled under criticism because I *had* to have always perfect approval. I used to be a kind of person who couldn’t break up, but now I’m free to do what’s really best for me and that other person. I used to be the kind of person who could never say “no” to anyone, because I was a slave to pleasing people.”

But the key word is “used to be”. That’s not who I am anymore. It is not I. I have a new name. I have a new identity. I’m someone else in Jesus. Because of what he did for me, my life belongs to him. I am hidden in him. And one day, he is going to make every new. And I will have a front-row seat. But I already have the ticket. And it says I am free.

Let’s pray...