

Romans 6:1-11

Matthew 10:24-39

The ultimate price of sin is death, but through our belief in Jesus Christ we will be resurrected as He was resurrected.

The apostle Paul proclaims the Good News of the Gospel which is that death is not the end but only an intermediate step to resurrection. Through Christ we can now live to God. So Paul tells the Romans to consider themselves dead to all the things from their past; to treat every desire, every temptation, every old habit as if they were no longer having a grip on their lives.

It means being aware of a pre-existing condition for sinful behaviour. But, which can be very difficult sometimes to overcome.

A man went on a ski trip and was knocked unconscious by the chairlift. He called his insurance company from the hospital but they refused to cover his injury. "Why is the injury not covered?" he asked. "You got hit on the head by a chair lift," the insurance rep said. "That makes you an idiot, and we consider that a pre-existing condition!"

Although we can say that the desire for sinful behaviour is something like a pre-existing condition for which we all have to watch out for, it is our attitude that makes a difference. And that's not always the most easiest thing to do.

A man called Frederick Buechner once wrote: "of all the seven deadly sins, anger is possibly the most fun." Sometimes I really enjoy chewing over old injuries and imagining what I'd like to do to the people who inflicted them.

We can either choose to live with an attitude of giving ourselves over to a behaviour which is pleasing to God or to live for ourselves and for what we own. Once Bono from U2 was asked about his celebrity status he said: 'celebrity is ridiculous, but it is currency and I want to spend mine wisely.'

It is the difference in attitude which is at play here and which also determines whether we are giving ourselves over to sinful behaviour or not. It is daily up to you and me to make a choice.

Paul had set up an interesting contrast in his letter to the Romans. He bids his Roman readers to "consider themselves dead to sin and

alive to God in Christ Jesus." On one side we have sin; on the other side we have God. Sin is the principle of death and selfishness, but God is Life and Love.

In Matthew 10 Jesus said to His disciples; a disciple is not above his teacher. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher and the servant like his master.

Jesus has paid the ultimate price to set us free and He did not give in to any desire to walk away from what God wanted Him to do. He'd prayed in agony; Father let this cup of death pass away from Me, but if not Your will be done.

If we only want to be a little like Jesus, how much are we willing to fight against our attitudes which so often lead us into sinful behaviour.

We have to learn to set limitations in a world of possibilities. We can choose to walk the path of Life and rejoicing in the blessings of God, or to walk the path of selfishness, which in the end leads to death.

It is as George MacDonald wrote; 'the one principle of hell is 'I am my own'. But, the principle of heaven is 'I am with God'.

Let me end with what John Stott wrote in his commentary on Romans 6: We are not to pretend that our old nature has died, when we know perfectly well it has not. Instead we are to realize and remember that our former self did die with Christ, thus putting an end to its career. We are to consider what in fact we are, namely dead to sin and alive to God like Christ. Once we grasp this, that our old life has ended, we shall want to have nothing more to do with it.

Hans

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