

The Day I Died

by Ray C. Stedman

Verses 1-14 of the sixth chapter of Romans are the most important fourteen verses in Scripture, insofar as being delivered from *enduring* the Christian life to *enjoying* it is concerned. There is a difference between possessing *eternal life*, which all Christians have, and possessing that *abundant life* which the Lord came to give.

In Chapter 5 we learned why we behave so selfishly, and frequently so foolishly, in our lives. It is because we have inherited a selfish nature. We are *doing what comes naturally*, as the song says. Why does a peach tree grow peaches? – because it is a peach tree. And, an apple tree grows apples because it is an apple tree. So a son of Adam acts like Adam, simply because he is the son of Adam. This is why problems, difficulties, wrong attitudes, and wrong ideas break out in our lives, and we do not have to plan them, or seek for them. They come naturally. You are an expert at it, as I am, and any successful hypocrite, such as we are, knows this. There continually breaks out some problem of envy, or bitterness, or anger, or impatience, or sarcasm, or lust. It is part of the nature we inherit from Adam.

We have learned that God has proposed a way by which that old life may be brought abruptly and completely to an end, and another Adam put into us – the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. The risen life of Jesus Christ, ministered continually to us through the Holy Spirit, whom we receive without measure when we recognize Jesus as Lord of our lives, makes it possible for us. Acting from that life, we can be good just as easily as we are naturally bad in Adam.

Now, that is a simple truth, but it is a tremendously revolutionary principle. It is actually easier to be good when we are acting from the life of Jesus Christ, because the life of Christ is much stronger than the life we received from Adam – for God is stronger than man. Discover this, and you will learn that you don't have to try to be good.

This struggle to be good is our greatest problem now. But, when we discover this principle, we need no more to try to be good than we try to be bad now. The life of Jesus produces goodness as naturally and easily as the life of Adam produces badness now.

At this point, the inevitable questions come:

- “Why aren't Christians living on this level?”
- “If this is true, and this is what God has provided us in Christ, then why aren't Christians living like this?”
- “Why is there so little evidence of this transforming experience of wholesome, attractive Christian living?”
- “Why is there so much of this barren, baffled, grim, boring, frustrated Christian living so evident around us on every side?”

It is right at this point that Chapter 6 begins.

The first thing Paul shows us is **the attitude that brings defeat** in the Christian life, Verses 1-2:

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? {Rom 6:1-2 RSV}

The question that he asks is really this: “Because our helpless condition in selfishness and sin drew Christ from heaven in order to die for us, should we go on being selfish in order that he might continue to show his forgiving grace to us?” Is that the attitude we should have? The answer is: “By no means!” Certainly not!

You say, “Well, I'd never say *that* to God.” But that is exactly what we all say! Every time a

Christian sins, that is what he is saying to God. Every time a Christian disobeys, and walks in his own way, he is saying to God:

“Look, you have given me the perfect life of Jesus Christ to live within me, a life which cannot do wrong and will never do wrong. If I choose, this life can be my life – but I don’t choose. I choose, rather, to do this wrong thing, because I know when I confess it to you, your grace will abound, and you will forgive me, and then I can go until I choose to sin again.”

Isn’t that the pattern that we see lived out over and over and over again? We go on struggling to be good, but choosing to do wrong and then confessing it. Then we do it again, and confess that. Finally, we are ashamed to go back any more, confessing this thing. So we give up, and decide that the best thing is simply to keep up as good an appearance as possible. As long as we can, outwardly, be as good as the rest of the people around us, we are satisfied – so we become content with defeat.

Now, bless your hearts, God never intended that his people, his children, should live that kind of a wilderness experience. We do not need to live that way. Something is wrong when this is the pattern of life; something is missing.

Let me show you, in one wonderful verse, what God intends the Christian life to be like. It is simply and beautifully stated in Second Corinthians 2:14:

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. {2 Cor 2:14 RSV}

That is what the Christian life ought to be – always led in triumph by Christ. What a contrast to this attitude of expecting to keep on sinning because we know that God will be gracious to forgive us. No wonder we are so weak!

In the next section, Verses 3-14, we discover **the appropriation of faith** that brings victory:

Do you not know that all of us have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as

Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

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. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body [the life that we have been living in the past] might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. {Rom 6:3-14 RSV}

Does that sound complicated: There are really three simple steps here. But the most important thing about them is the *order* in which they come. I want you to see that.

I saw a sign the other day a sign the other day that read, “When all else fails, follow directions.” That is a good sign to hang over the sixth chapter of Romans. It is strange the way we read the Scripture – we try to frost the cake before we bake it! We are continually reversing the order of the Word of God.

You remember the Lord Jesus said, “First remove the log that is in your own eye and they you will see clearly how to remove the sliver that is in your brother’s eye,” {cf, Matt 7:3-5, Luke 6:41-42}. We read that, and we say, “Oh, yes, I know what that means. That means if he will apologize first, then I will apologize.” No, it doesn’t mean that! It means: *First* remove the log that is in your own eye; start there. *Then* you will see clearly how to remove the little sliver that is in your brother’s eye.

So the order here is important.

1. First, you must know what God declares to be a *fact*, Verse 3:

Do you not know that all of us have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? {Rom 6:3 RSV}

This is what God declares to be a fact. The next step is the exercise of faith, but faith always rests on a fact. Have you discovered that? God never asks us to believe something without giving us a fact to believe. This is the great, solid foundation of our Christian faith: It rests upon facts. And, this is a fact:

- Not only that Christ died for our sins,
- But that, when he died, this old life that we got from Adam died with him;
- It not only died, but it was buried.

This is a fact and our faith must rest upon it.

Suppose you are having trouble with your swimming and I come along, and say, “Don’t panic now – just hang on.” You say, “Hang on to what?” “Well,” I say, “just hang on. That’s all. Just hang on.” But, unless I give something to hang on to, my words are valueless.

Well, here is something God gives us to hang on to – a fact that he declares is true, and God never asks us to believe something that is not true. That is the fact:

- Our old nature, that we have been living in, and having all this trouble with, died when Jesus Christ died.
- It became true for us when we believed in him.
- It not only died, but it was buried as well, totally put away.

Now, let me put a parenthesis in here: The baptism that is mentioned here is not water baptism. It is the baptism of the Spirit, by which we were made part of the body of Christ.

Water baptism is a sign of that, but the essential thing here is the baptism of the Spirit.

The way some people read their Bibles, I am reminded of the fellows that go around with witching wands, looking for water. Have you heard of these? They take willow sticks and go around looking for water – and wherever water is, the stick turns down. {Some} people read their Bibles that way. They go through it, and, wherever it mentions baptism, down goes the stick – indicating water. Wherever it reads “baptism,” they find water.

But, this isn’t water baptism. This is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, of which water baptism is a symbol. This baptism united me to Christ, and, the day that I believed in Jesus Christ, God cut off this old life, and crucified it with Christ, and buried it with him, and declared that it no longer had any right to live in his sight.

Now get that! This is tremendously important. *That* was the day I died:

- The day that I believed in Jesus Christ, God made this real to me, and
- The reason that he put it to death was because it had absolutely no power in it to do good.

The other day, a friend and I were pushing an old car because we couldn’t get it started. The battery was dead. We pushed it to a station where the service man hooked on another battery to the terminals of the old one; then he said, “Now try it.” We switched on the starter button, and immediately there came a surge of power into the engine – utilizing the energy of the new battery. Where once there was no power, now there was plenty.

Now, the trouble in our lives is that we have this old battery that we got from Adam, but it is without power. God declares it to be dead, but we simply refuse to believe that it is dead. We have a certain fondness for it because we have had it so long. After all, it is the original battery that we got when we were born. As a matter of fact, it is a family battery – it has been passed along from generation to generation, and we hate to part with these old antiques. We refuse to believe that it is no

good. Of course, we are encouraged to use it by the flood of sales literature we see, suggesting ways to discover hidden power in our batteries. Or, we are told that the trouble is, we are not pushing the starter button hard enough; if we will learn how to push the starter button harder, we can get it to work – there is nothing really wrong with the battery, it is the starter button, the motivating source. Or, we are told that if we can hook enough cars with dead batteries together, we can get enough juice to run one of them – so we organize committees to get things done.

Across this country this morning, in one form or another, there are preachers (who should know better) who are preaching this devilish gospel of “try harder.” Nothing could be worse! This business of telling Christians to “try harder and you can make a success of your Christian life” was born right in the pit of hell. I don’t know who originally phrased it this way but I have heard many times someone say, “Well, I believe that if I do my best, God does the rest.” That is the most damnable lie ever spoken! If you live on that basis, you’ll never get beyond doing your best; and, your best isn’t good enough, and it never will be! As preachers proclaim the gospel of “try harder,” Christians are responding with new resolves to consecrate their old selves to do their best for God, yet, all the time, they are totally ignorant of God’s provision of a new battery, available in Jesus Christ, with sufficient power to meet *all* the demands of life.

All this begins with the knowledge of an unshakable, unchangeable fact: Paul says, “I am crucified with Christ” {Gal 2:20a KJV}. I, all my old self, all that I am in Adam, was crucified and buried with Christ. God finds no good in it, reckons no good in it, and expects nothing but failure from my old self. We must do the same.

2. The second step is *consider* – an attitude of faith resting upon the fact that we have previously seen. Notice Verses 11-12:

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. {Rom 6:11-12 RSV}

The King James Version has, “reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive to God” {Rom 6:11a KJV}. This is a word which indicates a continuing attitude. Keep on counting yourselves to be what God says you are! This means we must learn to recognize the sign of the old life within us, and refuse to let live what God has declared has no right to live. We must not presume to find good in that which God says is totally evil. In other words,

- Stop protecting the old battery!
- Stop protecting the self life!
- Stop excusing it, and justifying it!

This is the key point.

Stop pampering yourself in these matters and making excuses for what God says is wrong, and, thus, letting live what God says is dead. There are many excuses: “Oh, I’ve got a hot temper, but it is just because I am Irish, you know. My whole family has this trouble, so there is nothing I can do about it.” Or, “I am troubled with lust, but that is because I am a Latin.” Or, “I am young.” Or, “I am hot blooded.” Or, “I am cold blooded.” Or, “I am red blooded.” Or, “I am strongly sexed.” Or, we are loveless and we say it is our circumstances that make us this way. Or, it is the other people with whom we work. Thus, we are continually excusing ourselves, and giving the flesh reason to live.

Every time you, as a Christian, let enter your thought life any of these things that God has said are the old Adam in you, you are presuming to let live what God declares has no right to live. The only life that God recognizes as having the right to live in you is the risen life of Jesus Christ. But you cannot appropriate that life until you give up trying to make the old life suitable. That is when the death of Christ becomes fully effective to you.

“Well,” you say, “does this happen in one great crisis?” Sometimes, yes. But I rather think that it is a result of a series of smaller crises, if I may put it that way. The Spirit of

God knows that this thing within us, the flesh, this self-centered life, is what is destroying us. He takes the manifestations of it, one at a time, and makes us face up to them. Any failure to face up to one of these things, as the Lord brings it to our attention, means no further progress until we stop clinging to the specific thing that he is talking about.

3. Whenever we put into action, even in little ways, what God declares to be a fact, nothing can stop us from the third and greatest step, which is *yielding* to, or appropriating, the life of Christ. Look at Verses 13-14:

Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life... {Rom 6:13a RSV}

Notice that order. What comes first? Death: "...as men who have been brought from death to life." You can't have life till you have experienced death. You can't have Pentecost till you have been at Calvary. That is what he is saying.

... as men who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. {Rom 6:13b-14 RSV}

Here is the great word *yield*. I know it often means to us "to give in" or "to give up," as though we were to sit down, and wait for the Lord to stick a pin into us and make us go. I find so many Christians miss the point here because they think that resting in the life of Christ is an inactive sitting down and a passive waiting for directions. It isn't that. *Yield* means "to give over" – to give over your body, your mind, your will, your emotions, your physical members – give them over to the indwelling secret of the life of Jesus Christ. You begin counting on him continually to operate and energize you to do whatever is in front of you to do, whatever it may be, whether it is tying your shoe, preaching a message, witnessing to someone, washing the dishes, anything, every-

thing! You need the life of Jesus Christ to do everything!

How simple this really is! In the same way that you received his death as sufficient payment for the penalty of sins, and rested on that fact, so you simply believe that, now, his life is in you to be to you all that you need in any circumstance:

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: {Col 2:6 KJV}

But when you listen to Christians pray, you can see how little they understand this. We say, "Oh, Lord, give me strength. Oh, I need strength, Lord." "Give me patience," or, "Give me purity." "Give me power," or, "Lord, give me victory." And all the time the Lord Jesus is saying, "I don't give anything, I *am* your strength." "I *am* your patience." "I *am* your power." "*Take it; just take it!*"

We don't have to sing the song, "I need Thee, Oh, I need Thee. Every hour I need Thee." No, instead, we should sing, "I have Thee, Oh, I have Thee. Every hour I have Thee."

It is right at this point that the Christian life becomes an exciting, wonderful, wholesome, attractive experience because impossible things begin to happen. You cannot do, he can do. He is the God of the impossible. The Christian life never becomes attractive till you start doing impossible things. That is why it is so boring and frustrating to us otherwise. But when we *yield* to his indwelling life, we begin to discover the bigness, the greatness, and the glory of God. Life becomes wholesome and healthy and happy because you are no longer in charge – Christ is! And you never know what is going to happen next! But, whatever it is, you are perfectly ready for it because you are trusting in the One who indwells you, who is perfectly adequate, and perfectly competent, to meet every situation – no matter what it is.

It is not you doing your best for God. It is Christ doing his best through you. What a difference that is!

Here is the whole Christian life in a nutshell. Right here, in these first fourteen verses of Ro-

mans 6, you have all the truth for victory in the Christian life. In the following chapters, Paul goes over this again, taking up the problems that develop in learning how to apply these things. When we get to Chapter 12, we will discover we are no further along than we are right here in Romans 6:14.

Chapter 12 begins, “present your bodies as a living sacrifice to God,” and Verse 13 of Romans 6 says, “yield your members” (that is, your body) “as instruments of righteousness unto God.” That is saying the same thing.

What a difference this truth makes. When Christians begin to discover the glory of the indwelling life of Jesus Christ, there is a transformation that is immediately visible on their faces. It is a life of rest. It is the life we sing about:

Not a surge of worry, not a shade of care,
Not a blast of hurry, touch the spirit there.
Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest,
Finding as he promised, perfect peace and rest.

Perhaps you don't understand it all yet, but Paul will go on, in the rest of Chapter 6 and in Chapters 7 & 8, to explain more in detail these great principles. However, it is all summarized right here.

This is the secret of the so-called ‘great saints’ of God. They are common, ordinary people, like you and me, who have learned this secret. This indwelling, risen life of Jesus Christ is available to every single Christian, without exception. We can all be ‘great saints’ because of this indwelling secret.

One of the common people who became a ‘great saint’ was dear Annie Johnson Flint. This is what she wrote in a poem entitled, *Let Us Go On*:

Some of us stay at the cross,
Some of us wait at the tomb,
Quickened and raised together with Christ,
Yet lingering still in its gloom;
Some of us bide at Passover feast
With Pentecost all unknown –
The triumphs of grace in the heavenly places
That our Lord has made our own.

If the Christ who died had stopped at the cross
His work had been incomplete,
If the Christ who was buried had stayed in the
tomb
He had only known defeat;
But the way of the cross never stops at the
cross,
And the way of the tomb leads on
The victorious grace in the heavenly place
Where the risen Lord has gone.

So let us go on with our Lord
To the fullness of God He has brought,
Unsearchable riches of glory and good
Exceeding our uttermost thought;
Let us grow up into Christ,
Claiming His life and its powers,
The triumphs of grace in the heavenly place
That our conquering Lord has made ours.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, we long for this. We sense its possibilities. We realize there is more to the Christian life than this constant cycle of boredom, defeat, heartache, misery, and failure. Lord Jesus, we ask that we may grasp this secret. May it break upon us in all its simplicity, and yet in all its beauty, the perfect provision which you have made for us to live in victory over every trial because it is your life lived in us. Amen.

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