

NO DUAL CITIZENSHIP ROMANS 6: 1-14

By Pastor John Carlini, D.Mn

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I can't begin to tell you how important I think it is that we understand this section of Romans. Chapters 1-4 are extremely important because they hammer home this salvation by grace through faith theme. It is critical to understand that theme because that's the only way we can be saved and rescued from eternal damnation.

However, it is imperative that we understand chapters 5-8 because they inform us as to what took place in our lives at salvation and instruct us as to who we are in Christ and how we should approach life after we have been saved.

So far we said that we have two natures as believers. On the one hand, we have the natures we inherited from our ancestor Adam. We have a natural bent towards evil, sin, and death. However, after we received Christ, we received new natures, natures that have a bent towards good and a desire to please God. So we learned in a sense why it appears that we are schizophrenic, why one minute we have these incredible moments of holy thoughts and actions, then the very next moment find ourselves sinning the same old sins over again.

But remember, we said the overriding quality that should characterize us as children of God is an attitude of celebration. Even in the midst of this battle between our natures, we are called to celebrate in good times and in bad times. We are to celebrate God and His love for us.

We can celebrate because as we said last time, our Christ-like nature is much more powerful than our old Adam-like nature. We will win this battle for holiness in our lives because God Himself guarantees that He will finish the good work He started in us.

This morning we are going to continue the discussion of the battle we fight with sin. Many of us are living defeated lives because we have not really understood the concepts of what it means to be born again, with all that it entails.

Now I know that many people, especially my colleagues are dismayed that I don't vote and that I am not political. But let me give you some of my feelings about the state of affairs in our country. Even though I am not politically active, I am still a nationalist. Let me describe this. I live in the United States of America. That is where my earthly loyalties lie. To be sure, I am loyal first of all to my Christian brothers and sisters around the world. But primarily, in my earthly existence, I am American. My loyalties are with other Americans. In other words, when it comes to things such as foreign aid, I am much more interested in finding justice for all Americans and taking care of our poor first.

Now watch this and please try to listen carefully because I know what I am about to say is not politically correct. I think one of the reasons we are having so many problems in the United States is that instead of focusing on our common interest, namely that we are Americans, we consistently focus on what divides us, our ethnic, racial, gender, and economic backgrounds.

I think that these hyphenated ethnicities do much more harm than good. Of what benefit is it to identify myself as an Italian-American, or my wife as a Chinese-American? Does that somehow mean that I still have loyalties to Italy or my wife to China? You see, as long as we have hyphenated designations, then we are no longer focused on what unifies us. We are focused on what divides us. I think it is harmful and one of the main reasons we face so much division in the United States. For all those who want to hear from me politically, no doubt you're probably not happy with what I have just said.

However, I think if we carry that thought process over to our Christian lives, we can see why most of us live defeated Christian lives. There can be no hyphenated Christians. We want to be Worldly-(hyphenated)-Christians. It won't work. Once we receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are to cut our ties and relationship to worldly thoughts, worldly behaviors, and worldly relationships. In other words, we are to renounce our citizenship with sin and the world.

This hyphenated designation leads to all sorts of problems. Let me give you an example. Popular culture tends to identify Italian-Americans with organized crime and political clout. And then when things happen, the stereotype is reinforced.

One day, my friend Luigi asked me to go to the immigration court for his citizenship. Sheepishly he got up before the judge and said with a very heavy Italian accent, "Your honor, I'm a little nervous. You see, I know who the president of the United States is, and the Vice President. I know the senators and governors. But I'm afraid of one thing. I don't speak English very well.

The judge stood up, smiled and said with an even heavier accent, "Pisano, as long as I'm sitting behind this bench, you can have anything you want."

Let's see how Paul describes our citizenship as believers in Jesus Christ.

Look, the deal is very simple. There is no such thing as a hyphenated Christian. Paul clearly said in his letter to the Galatians that there is no distinction in Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female in Christ. When we come to Christ, we become Christians, citizens of heaven. But most of all, Paul tells us in this morning's passage that our relationship with sin is dead. In other words, **BECOMING A CHRISTIAN ACTUALLY MEANS SWITCHING LOYALTIES AND EMBRACING A NEW RELATIONSHIP**

WITH GOD. As I was studying through this passage, it seems as if Paul used the metaphor of citizenship. However, also try to think about marriage in understanding these points as well. In other words, in the marriage ceremony we say, “For this reason a man and woman shall leave their mothers and fathers, they shall bond together with one another, and the two shall become one flesh in sexual union. Now for you husbands, how would you feel if your wife kept up her intimate relationships with her old boy friends while being married to you? Or the same goes for wives. How would you feel if your husband kept up his intimate relationships with his old girlfriends while being married to you? I don’t think the marriage would go too smoothly. You see in marriage, both people have to commit to one another. If you only have one person committing to the marriage, it is not a valid marriage.

I CHANGING OUR CITIZENSHIP (Vs. 1-4)
SALVATION IS THE PROCESS OF REJECTING OUR OLD CITIZENSHIP IN THE WORLD AND STARTING A NEW LIFE AS CITIZENS OF HEAVEN.

I think that the best picture in this passage is the description of what takes place when a person immigrates and takes on a new citizenship. In fact, verses 1-4 kind of describe what changing our citizenship looks like. It is described like this. **SALVATION IS THE PROCESS OF REJECTING OUR OLD CITIZENSHIP IN THE WORLD AND STARTING A NEW LIFE AS CITIZENS OF HEAVEN.** Now Paul is going to use some very strong language here.

A. LETTING GO OF THE PAST (Vs. 1-2)

In verses 1-2 we are encouraged to let go of the past. Look at verse 1. You remember that from last time, we said that in chapter 5 verse 20 Paul said that where sin abounds, grace super-abounds. He said that to ensure us that the power of God’s liberating grace was much

more powerful than the bondage of sin and death. In other words, we are never to lose heart because God will complete the good work He started in each one of us.

But Paul wants to quickly correct any misconceptions because like us, there may have been people in the Church of Rome who would use this as license. In other words, they would try to get away with as much as they could without losing their salvation. I think that's the way we are. We like to be as worldly as we can, without actually crossing some imaginary line.

Look at his correction. He says, "What shall we say then? Since where sin abounds, grace super-abounds, should we keep on sinning so that grace can continue to super-abound? Heck No!!!," he says.

When I was in college, we used to have a word that described Christians who didn't take their faith seriously and lived worldly lives. We said that they believed in cheap grace. In other words, they didn't take seriously what happened when they were saved.

But in reality, there is no such thing as cheap grace. You see, salvation costs a lot. It cost God the Father the life of His One and only Son, Jesus. Jesus suffered the most humiliating and horrific death. No, there is nothing cheap about grace. My filthy sin and your filthy sin cost Jesus His life. Our freedom, our ransom, our liberation from sin and all its consequences was expensive. It took the precious blood of Jesus to set us free.

That brings us to verse 2. Why should we quit sinning? Because we died to sin. Here is where there is a lot of confusion. If we are dead to sin, then how come we continue to sin? Some Christians believe that we should be sinless after we become Christians. However, that leads either to rigid legalism or hypocrisy. In other words, we design some set of rules and sins. We religiously avoid the sins and keep the rules.

On the other hand, if we know we sin, then we just pretend to be good and holy when we are around other Christians. The problem with both these behaviors is that deep down we never have peace because we are always wondering if we are saved.

On the other hand, there are Christians that don't even try to defeat sin in their lives. They are content to be saved and content to be the way they are, with all their sinful thoughts, sinful behaviors, and sinful mouths. Paul can't imagine any Christian exhibiting these behaviors.

Let me give you some theological words because Paul is going to use them. We already talked about justification. That is a legal term that means, "not guilty." In other words, even though we were sinners, and deserved the eternal death sentence, when we received Jesus as Lord in faith, God the Father looked at us through the blood of Jesus and declared us to be not guilty. Our eternal destinies were changed from death to life.

Sanctification is a word that Paul will use to describe our daily growth in holiness. In other words, each day we should be getting better. We shouldn't be committing the same sins. Our thoughts should be more and more holy. Our actions and our speech should be more like Jesus each day. Sanctification describes the process in which God molds us into the image of Jesus. Each day we should be less and less like the world, and more and more like Jesus.

Glorification will take place when we die and meet Jesus face to face. He will finish whatever wasn't finished in our lifetime on earth. We will be changed and perfected to live in heaven with him. On the resurrection day, our glorified bodies will be joined with our glorified souls. We will no longer experience sin, sadness, pain, disappointment, or decay. We will be perfect, forever.

Now for Paul, the Christian life necessarily includes all of these. God justified us. He forgave us of all our sins and saved us by grace through faith. We must cooperate with the

sanctification process. In other words, we must continue to battle sin, embrace holiness and become more like Jesus each day. And finally, the work will be completed when we finally get to heaven. He will glorify us by joining our resurrection bodies with our glorified souls.

Now what does Paul mean that we died to sin? First of all, we have consistently defined death as separation. When we became Christians through faith, we were separated from sin. The death of Jesus liberates us from the domination of sin. We are no longer married to sin. We are divorced from sin. Sin no longer owns me. I must renounce my citizenship in the kingdom of sin. The bible commentator Cranfield describes four ways the passage portrays us as separated from sin. (1) We are legally separated from sin. God declared us to be “not guilty” when we placed our faith in Jesus. (2) We are ceremonially separated from sin. Baptism ratifies our switch of allegiance. Through baptism, we reject our relationship to sin and embrace our new heavenly citizenship through our new relationship with Christ. (3) We are morally separated from sin. We are now called to embrace a new lifestyle that is consistent with the nature and character of Jesus. And (4) We are eschatologically separated from sin. In other words, in eternity, we will be separated from sin. We will be in heaven with Christ. Sin and its kingdom will be separated from God in hell.

We are to renounce our citizenship in the kingdom of sin and this world. We are to embrace our citizenship in the kingdom of God. There is no dual citizenship allowed. We cut the past and our relationship with sin loose.

B. CELEBRATING THE PRESENT (Vs. 3-4a)

Which brings us to life in our New Kingdom. Verse 3 and the first half of verse 4 describes our celebration of the present. Now commentators spill a lot of ink over these two verses trying to defend their views on baptism. Is baptism a sacrament? Is baptism a symbol?

Should we baptize adults, infants, or both? Should we sprinkle, pour, or immerse? With all due respect to these scholars who are no doubt much smarter than me, I think they miss the point. There is a figure of speech that is used pretty often in the Bible. It is called synecdoche. That is where you use a part to describe the whole. I think that baptism here simply refers to the whole salvation process. The salvation experience includes, hearing the word of God, the conviction of the Holy Spirit, a conscious decision to believe in the person and work of Jesus, confessing our sins, repenting of our sins, inviting Jesus into our lives, receiving the Holy Spirit, being baptized, and living a new life in Christ. Those are all parts of the salvation process. At Pentecost, Peter got up and preached a powerful sermon. The crowd asked what they had to do to be saved. Peter said, "Repent and be baptized. Jesus referred to this salvation process as baptizing. Paul said confess Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead. All these are parts of the experience. The early church could not conceive of such a thing as an unbaptized believer. You came to belief in Jesus, and immediately you were baptized. It was only turned into a religious ceremony and official sacrament much later. Let me give you an example. Philip explained the gospel to the Ethiopian Eunuch. The eunuch believed, they stopped the chariot, got out, and Philip baptized him. I think that all these other questions and arguments pertain to the church as an institution. Theologians, scholars, and pastors try and give all sorts of meaning to baptism. We say it is our initiation into the community of believers. It is our commitment to follow Christ. It is a cleansing ceremony, washing away our sins. Those are all nice. They sound nice. But the fact is there is not much biblical evidence for any of it.

The picture is this for Paul. Baptism is like a marriage partner saying, "I do." Jesus said, "I do when He died on the cross for us." We say, "I do when we respond to Him in faith." Baptism is the outward expression of that. Now please don't get confused. I think Paul is

talking about the whole salvation experience here. When we received Christ, we renounced our citizenship in the world with sin as our master. We are now swearing allegiance to Christ and His kingdom. We are connected to the death of Christ in salvation. We die to sin. Through the death of Christ, we are separated from sin and its lordship over us. What is portrayed in baptism is death, burial, and new life. In other words, through salvation, our relationship with sin is nailed to the cross. In some way, because Jesus is eternal, our sin was nailed together with Jesus. He experienced the penalty for our sin. When He died, we died to sin. Going under the water symbolizes our death and burial with Christ.

Here is the important point to remember. What it means that we are dead to sin is that in salvation we have rejected sin as our friend, our love, or our master. We have renounced our relationship with sin. Sin is now our enemy, not our friend.

C. HOPE IN THE FUTURE (V. 4b)

Coming up out of the water is described in the second half of verse 4 as our hope in the future. Just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory, the power, the presence of God the Father, we too will live new lives by that same glory, power, and presence of God the Father. Salvation is our break up with sin. Sin, Satan, Death, and everything under their dominion is now our enemy. I will leave the arguments of baptism to the theologians, scholars, and clergy, who are much smarter than I to debate. But the fact is, through salvation, I become a citizen of the Kingdom of God. In other words, **SALVATION IS THE PROCESS OF REJECTING OUR OLD CITIZENSHIP IN THE WORLD AND STARTING A NEW LIFE AS CITIZENS OF HEAVEN.**

That is something we all should think about. Where is your identity? Are you a citizen of the Kingdom of sin and this world, or are you a citizen of the Kingdom of God? We can't be both.

II. EMBRACING OUR NEW CITIZENSHIP (Vs. 5-11)
ONCE WE BECOME CITIZENS OF HEAVEN, WE NEED TO LEARN TO LIVE WITH NEW CUSTOMS.

We'll like all citizens, if we want to enjoy living in our New Kingdom, then we need to embrace our new citizenship as described in verses 5-11. I know that when I was stationed in Taiwan, I learned to speak Chinese. The soldiers that didn't learn Chinese didn't enjoy their experience in Taiwan very much. But because I learned Chinese, I was able to travel all around, even to cities where there were no English speakers. I was free to travel and enjoy the experience because I learned the customs, learned the language, and experimented eating all the food. We have a responsibility as new believers. **ONCE WE BECOME CITIZENS OF HEAVEN, WE NEED TO LEARN TO LIVE WITH NEW CUSTOMS.**

A. EMBRACING NEW LOYALTIES (Vs. 5-7)

In verses 5-7 we learn to embrace new loyalties. Now throughout this section, Paul will use an argument that philosophers call a "modus ponens." The argument goes like this. If "A" then "B." "A" therefore "B." Paul is saying this. If we have been united with Jesus in His death, then we will certainly be united with Him in His resurrection. Through salvation we have been united with Him in death. Therefore, we will certainly be united with Him in His resurrection.

We are to embrace our new relationship with Jesus. First of all we are to remind ourselves that we have died to sin. Jesus separated us from sin through His death. We separate ourselves from sin by identifying ourselves as dying with Christ. Now this old self that was

crucified with Christ is not just a part of me. In other words, I am not crucifying the Adamic part of my nature, I am putting to death all of me that existed before my conversion to Christ. That old me was a slave to sin, to Satan, and to death. That John is dead. The John that was motivated by hurts, by fears, by anger, enslaved to sin, is dead.

Well if that's the case, then why does John still sin? I know that all of you believe that I don't sin, but just ask my wife and kids, they'll set you straight.

Here is the key to understanding this. Let's say for instance that my family left Italy because life was so hard. There wasn't enough food to eat and the living conditions were horrible. We packed up everything, left Italy, and came to the United States. We worked hard, and then one day, became U.S. citizens. We had no love for the life we left behind in Italy, but Italian was the primary language we understood. Even though we made an attempt to learn English, we still had Italian word and grammar construction dominating our thought patterns. So we speak broken English. Next, the only models we have for family relations is what we brought with us from the Old Country. So even though our loyalties are firmly entrenched with the United States, we are stuck with Italian custom, language, and thought patterns.

That's the way it is for us. Even though we have divorced ourselves from sin. Even though we have no love for or loyalty to sin, we are stuck with some of the old language, customs, and thought patterns.

Now if we continue to look backwards, it will be hard to break these patterns. That's why I think Paul gives us a view from the end. Look at the beginning of verse 5. We will be united with Him in His resurrection. We will be glorified some day. We will be perfect citizens of heaven. Our thoughts, our language, our culture, will be flawless. We will be just like native speaking citizens of heaven. That's the picture we need to embrace.

B. NEW LOYALTIES EMBRACING US (Vs. 8-10)

And that's really what verses 8-10 are all about, our new loyalties embracing us. We believe that we will live with Christ. Remember death means separation, life means union. In other words, our hope, our belief is that we are united with Christ.

Look at verse 9. Paul says, "We know." What is it that we know? What is it that we are certain of? We know that Jesus was raised from the dead. He cannot die again. He cannot ever be separated from God the Father or us again. Death has no power over Him. He died once for all. We are united with Christ in the fact that because of our being raised with Him and His death was for us, we can never die again either. In other words, we can never be separated from Christ. Sin and death no longer are our masters. Jesus is our Lord. Jesus' death covers us all.

Look at the kind of life Jesus lives. He lives to God the Father. He is united to God the Father. Since we are united to Jesus, we too are united to God the Father forever.

C. LIVING LOYALLY (V. 11)

Verse 11 reminds us who we are and what it means to live loyally. Here is the word reckon or count again. It is "logizesthe." It is the same word used to describe when we believe in Jesus, God reckons righteousness to our accounts. It's a banking term. Here is the idea. Withdraw all your investments from the bank of sin, and deposit it all in the bank of heaven. In other words, we are to cut all ties with sin and anything that has to do with sin. Any happiness we think we get from sin is to be cut off.

All our value, all our happiness, all our being is to be invested in the bank of our new citizenship. We are to invest absolutely our entire being in heaven. Why? Because Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there is where your heart will be." If I am occupied with learning how

to live in the Kingdom of God, and invest all my time, energy, and resources in pursuing this goal, then I will not get entangled in sin and confusion.

The point is this. **ONCE WE BECOME CITIZENS OF HEAVEN, WE NEED TO LEARN TO LIVE WITH NEW CUSTOMS.**

III. DEFENDING OUR NEW CITIZENSHIP (Vs. 12-14) **AS CITIZENS OF HEAVEN, WE ARE CALLED TO DEFEND OUR FREEDOM.**

Now the language picks up some steam. It is a series of imperative commands. Verses 12-14 talk about defending our new citizenship. In other words, **AS CITIZENS OF HEAVEN, WE ARE CALLED TO DEFEND OUR FREEDOM.** This is all military language that follows.

A. COMMAND YOUR EMOTIONS (V. 12)

In verse 12 we are to command our emotions. There will be times where those same old emotions will well up and we may become afraid or intimidated. For example, young men and women may fear they will never get married. This fear grips them and they start to think, “I better settle.”

I had the privilege of giving a seminar to some women the other week and I was thrilled to hear them say, “Having no man is better than having the wrong man.” They were taking control of their emotions.

There will be temptations to lie, to cheat, to steal, and to have illicit sex. Our emotions will jump up and intimidate us. But here the command of Paul here, “Get a grip man! Get a grip woman! Do not let sin intimidate you and rule you! Stand up and fight. Don’t give in! Hold your ground! Take control of your fears and lusts!”

B. COMMAND YOUR BODY (V. 13)

Verse 13 goes on to tell us to command our bodies. Look at the word instrument or tool, whichever translation you're using in verse 13. The word can mean weapon. Do not use your bodies as weapons for wickedness. We don't belong to that kingdom any more. Don't use your bodies for sexual immorality. Don't use your tongues for gossip or hurtful language. Don't use your hands to hit or harm. Don't use your eyes to look at pornography. That stuff all belongs to the kingdom of darkness. If we have chosen to follow Jesus, we no longer belong to that kingdom.

We belong to the kingdom of light and life. We belong to the kingdom of God. We are to use our bodies as weapons of righteousness. We are soldiers and the picture is that we present ourselves before God, as fit for active duty. We are to use our bodies to evangelize the lost, set the captives free, heal the sick, and lift up the spirits of the fainthearted. We are to be weapons of love and righteousness.

C. COMMANDED BY OUR NEW COMMANDER (V. 14)

Why? Because we have a new commander. Verse 14 reminds us that we are commanded by our new commander. Remember, sin is no longer our lord, Jesus us. His kingdom is one of grace. Keep in mind that Jesus is our Lord. We were freely given citizenship in the Kingdom of God through His death. We must remember who we are, Who our King is, where we are headed, and Who we are called to fight for.

We are citizens of heaven. We are children of God. We are headed for an eternity in heaven. We are soldiers of righteousness called to finish the work of redemption and healing in the Name of Jesus. **AS CITIZENS OF HEAVEN, WE ARE CALLED TO DEFEND OUR FREEDOM.**

Today, we are going to celebrate our new citizenship in two ways. We are celebrating communion. When we take communion, we proclaim the death of Christ until He returns. In other words, we proclaim three things. 1. Christ died for us. 2. As His community, we have died with Him. 3. We live knowing that He will come back for us and finish the good work He started in us by glorifying us.

Secondly, Samella has decided to rededicate herself to the Lord. She has already been baptized but this is a rededication ceremony. She will renew her baptismal vows and symbolize that through an immersion in water.

These are all signs that we are citizens of heaven. It is our duty to embrace our new citizenship and defend our freedom in Christ as Christian soldiers.

**BECOMING A CHRISTIAN ACTUALLY MEANS SWITCHING LOYALTIES
AND EMBRACING A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.**

George Mueller was a very famous Christian who exercised a wide influence of God. Someone came to him and asked, "George, what has been the secret of your life?" Mueller hung his head and answered, "There was a day when I died." Then he bent lower and continued, "Died to George Mueller, his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will; died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame even of friends, brothers or sisters in Christ."