**LIVING THE EASTER LIFE**

**(Romans 6:1-14)**

Have you ever looked for or wanted something only to discover that you already had it? I remember my grandfather was looking for his cowboy hat, and at some point, he realized that it was already on his head. More than once I have looked for my keys and then found them in my pocket. Once I was holding my keys in my hand while I went through the house searching for them.

For some weeks I have been wanting to get a certain book. During some recent study I, the name of this book keeps coming up. More than once, I thought, “I need to order that book.” I’m glad I never got around to it because last Sunday morning, while I was in my office, I spied a stack of books on the bottom shelf a book case that have been sitting behind my desk chair for months. I picked up the top book. It has no book jacket. The title of the book is not emblazoned on the front. I turned the book in my hand to look at the spine, and there on the spine was the title of the book which I have been wanting to get.

A good part of what I will be sharing this morning comes from that very book. The book is a compilation of messages and addresses made by a Chinese Christian on a trip he made to Europe in 1938 and 1939. His name was Watchman Nee. The work was edited and printed by an Englishman in 1958, twenty years after the messages have first been preached. The title is *The Normal Christian Life.*

Don’t get confused by the title. Don’t mistake *normal* as meaning *average.* An average Christian life is marked by little victory, an almost non-existent prayer life, and a complete abandonment of the work of evangelism. That is average Christian living because scores of Christians can be found living such lives.

According to Nee, however, the normal Christian life is defined by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 2:20 where Paul states, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” That kind of life is normal as far as the teaching of the NT is concerned, but it is not average in our experience.

Easter Sunday is not an average Sunday. Some folks who never come to a church service otherwise, come on Easter. On Easter we come and sing songs about the resurrection of Jesus. We come and celebrate that new life is found in Him. Easter is not an average Sunday, but it should be normal. We should normally long to come together with other believers to praise our risen Savior because He is the only hope for this sad, sick, and sinful world.

What I want you to catch this morning is that Easter is so much more than a holiday to be celebrated; it is a life to be lived. In Philippians 3, Paul revealed the driving ambition of his life. He wrote, “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and may share in His sufferings becoming like Him in His death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead” (3:10-11).

Paul wanted to live in the power of Christ’s resurrection now and to experience the reality of Christ’s resurrection when Jesus returns

You and I are called to live the Easter life. We are going to look at what that involves. Our text is found in Romans 6. Time will not allow us to examine each verse, but we will get the gist of what Paul is saying by looking at four prepositions.

1. **LIVING THE EASTER LIFE MEANS KNOWING WE ARE IN CHRIST.**

Look at vv. 1-3. Paul draws a contrast between living in sin, which we don’t want to do, with living in Christ, which is what we are called to do. He uses the word *baptized* twice in v. 3. Paul is not talking about water baptism. He is talking about the reality to which baptism points.

The Greek word for *baptism* means “to immerse.” If you are taking a bath, and there is a rubber ducky in your tub, you will see that rubber ducky floating on the water because that is what it was made to do. But if you hold it under the water, you will succeed in baptizing your rubber ducky. If I am playing golf at Meadowlake Golf Course and hit a slice off the #16 tee box, more than likely, I am going to baptize my golf ball.

Through the years, I have baptized new believers in swimming pools, baptistries, and Grand Lake. In each case, I immersed them under the water. Now, that water didn’t do them any harm but nor did it do them any good. What that water did do was illustrate what had already happened in their lives. Whereas they once had been in sin, now they were in Jesus and because they were in Jesus, they had joined Him in His death and in His resurrection.

In v. 3, Paul asked, “Do you not know?” In v. 6, he declares, “We know.” You may not feel that you are in Christ, that you died with Him, and rose with Him. You may not understand what all that means, but you can know it because God has said that it is so.

You may wonder, “How did I get to be in Jesus?” We are told in 1 Corinthians 1:30, “And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus . . .” The *Him* refers to God the Father. God is the One who put you in Jesus. That means, you don’t have to find a map. You don’t have to go in search of the way in. Just trust Jesus. Place your faith in Him, and God will put you in the Lord Jesus.

Watchman Nee pointed out that if you were to put a piece of paper in a book, wherever the book went, the piece of paper would necessarily go because it was in the book. If you mailed the book to a friend, the paper would go where the book was. If you sold the book in a garage sale, the piece of paper would go along, too. Nee wrote, “Whatever experience the book goes through the paper goes through with it, for it is in the book.” (p. 40).

He then pressed his point that since God has put us in Christ, our destiny is bound up with Him. What He has gone through, we have gone through. That means, when Jesus was crucified, we were crucified, and when He rose, we rose.

You and I can live an Easter life because we are in Him.

1. **LIVING THE EASTER LIFE MEANS TRUSTING WE ARE WITH CHRIST.**

Look at v. 5. Because we were in Him, we were with Him in His death and resurrection. Now, look at vv. 10-11. The ESV uses the word *consider.* The KJV uses the word *reckon.* That is a word that we Oklahomans use. If someone says something that you have never thought about before, and the possibility is high that what he has said is true, you might respond by saying, “Well, I reckon so.” In this instance, it means: *likely, probable, the chances are that this is true.*

That is not the way the NT uses that word. The word that is translated as *reckon* or *consider* was an accounting term.

What you need to keep in mind is that accountants don’t deal with estimations. When you have an accountant prepare your tax return, he doesn’t say at the end: “Well, you owe the IRS in the neighborhood of such and such.” He or she tells you exactly what you owe. You need to write a check for this amount of dollars and cents. That accountant took the information you gave him or her and then reckoned what your tax liability would be to the penny.

On Friday, I took a check to the bank to deposit. I was in a long line of cars in the parking lot waiting my turn. After about 40 minutes, I was able to put my check in the container and send it up and over to the person behind the glass. She sent back a deposit receipt. That receipt didn’t estimate what I had deposited and give me a range of what is in my checking account. It told me exactly what those figures were.

We are called upon to reckon something very specific. We don’t conclude that we need to be good people. Based on the available data, we don’t decide that we need to keep our nose clean and follow the Lord. No, we are to reckon something extremely specific—namely, we were crucified with Christ, and we have been raised so that Jesus will live His life through us. That is what we are to bank on, Paul tells us.

Have you ever gotten a pink slip? Have you ever been let go from a job? Have you ever been the victim of a down-sizing in a company? Have you ever been fired?

That is the idea Paul gets at in v. 6 as it pertains to our old sin nature and the body. Since the old nature has been crucified, the members of our body are now unemployed. Nee says specifically that the gambler’s hand is unemployed, and the swearer’s tongue is unemployed. The members of your body have equally been put out of job because their employer has gone out of business.

Since I have been raised, the members of my body have been employed by Jesus. Jesus can use my hand to serve, my tongue to encourage, and the members of my body to live righteously, in a God-honoring way.

That brings us to the third truth.

1. **LIVING THE EASTER LIFE MEANS GIVING OURSELVES TO GOD.**

Look at v. 13. This verse gives us a negative command, what not to do along with a positive command, what to do. The word *present* shows up five times in vv. 13, 16, and 19.

When you present something to someone else, you are giving it to them. We are not to give ourselves to committing unrighteous acts, to the doing of sinful things. Rather, we are to give ourselves and all of our constituent parts over to God.

For instance, how are you using your eyes? Your eyes are a gateway to your mind. Whatever you look at has your attention; so, let me ask you:

* During this shutdown, this shelter in place, what has your attention?
* Have you been binge-watching TV shows or the most popular Netflix series?
* Are you glued to the network or cable news?
* What has the attention of your eyes, and does it move you towards God or away from Him?
* What would it mean to give your eyes to God?
* If we are truly the Body of Christ in the world, what do you suppose Jesus wants to see through our eyes?

I think He wants us to see people, to see opportunities to serve God, to see needs that we can help meet. He wants us to take time every day to look into His word, to see truth, and to read His wise counsel.

How are using your ears? The ears are also a gateway to the mind. Again, is what you are listening to aiding you in your walk with Christ or is it hindering you?

How are you using your speech, your words? Are you building people up or tearing them down? Are you using your words to encourage people or discourage them? Are you helping people with what you say or hurting them?

And your hands. Hand are wonderful things. With our hands we can comfort, and guide, and fix, and build, and create, and work.

But we can also use our hands to take, to hurt, to push away, and to fight.

Are you letting God use your hands?

Pastor David Dykes told of a friend of his who is also a pastor. His pastor friend has two daughters. One day, he came home from the office, and when he walked in the front door his two daughters came running down the hall to greet him. The older of the two daughters reached him first. She cried, “Daddy!” and jumped up into his arms. She hugged his neck, and he hugged his older daughter. Moments later, the younger one arrives. She is looking up at the scene, feeling a bit left out. The older one looks down from her daddy’s arms and says in a rather catty way, “I’ve got all of daddy there is to get!” The father didn’t agree with that assessment. Without saying a word, he shifted the older daughter over into one arm, bent down, and picked up his younger daughter in his other arm. She instantly hugged his neck, too. Then the younger one looked at her big sister and said, “Well, you may have all of daddy there is to get, but Daddy’s got all of me there is to have!”

I want you to know that when you received Jesus, you got all of God there is to get. The question we must answer is, “Does God have all of us there is to have?” Or are you holding out on Him, reserving for yourself what you want to keep to yourself?

So far, we have looked at three prepositions that teach us about living an Easter life. We are **in** Christ. And because we are in Him, we were **with** Him both in His crucifixion and His resurrection. Thirdly, we are to give **to** Him everything, all that we are. There is a fourth preposition that is crucial to living the Easter life, but it is found a couple of chapters later. We find it in Romans 8.

1. **LIVING THE EASTER LIFE MEANS WALKING BY THE SPIRIT.**

In our own strength, we are more hesitant to give God our eyes, and ears, and hands, and feet, and every other part of ourselves. If, however, we are truly waking by the Spirit, He will enable us to do what we cannot do will not if we are walking by the flesh.

Paul draws a contrast between the flesh and the Spirit in Romans 8:1-13. Listen to the first two verses of Romans 8 from the KJV: “There is, therefore, no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Going back to the ESV, we are told read in v. 4 that we are to “walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

Then, we read in v. 14, “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons [or children] of God.” To walk by the Spirit means to be led by the Spirit. We are not to live self-led lives. We are to live Spirit-led lives.

What does that mean to live a Spirit-led life? It means that when you wake up in the morning, we don’t ask, “What do I want to do today?” Instead we, ask, “God, what do you want me to do today?”

We don’t ask, “What do I want to do with my money?” We ask, “God what do you want me to do with your money?”

It means that we quit serving self and start serving God. We let Him make the decisions and call the shots.

When a person trusts Jesus as Savior and Lord, his or her life changes. They are not the same. They don’t think they way they used to think. They do not value what they used to value. They do not live as the used to life. If they do not change, you have to wonder about the validity of their supposed conversion.

While all of that is true, I have would have to say, what we need most is not a changed life. What we really need is an exchanged life. When you make an exchange, you give something and you get something in return. We need to exchange our lives. We are to give God our life, and in return He will give us the life of His Son. That is what we need, and that is what living the Easter life is all about—It is about Jesus living His life through ours.

Are you ready to make that exchange?