

Death and Life

Commentary for July 1, 2014 — Contrast in the Book of Romans

No epistle of the New Testament, and perhaps no book in all the Holy Scriptures, refers to dying, death, and the dead more than Paul's epistle to the Romans. Death, dying, or the dead occurs some 69 times in Romans. Even when death is not mentioned, death is in the subtext of the rest of Paul's message to the Romans. Note what the apostle Paul wrote about being conciliated to God, both by the death of God's Son, and after His resurrection to life:

"For if, being enemies,

we were conciliated¹ [in the past] **to God through the death of His Son, much rather,**

being conciliated [now, at this moment], **we shall be saved** [in the future] **in His life.**

Yet not only so, but we are glorying also in God, through our Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom we now obtained the conciliation.

• Romans 5:10–11, Concordant Literal Version

The conciliation is God's relationship to us.² It is the same relationship as He has with His Son, Jesus Christ. Christ's life and resurrection guarantee our personal salvation (yours and mine), but our glory will not be realized until our resurrections occur at Christ's return.

This is the subject of this month's article, "The Exact Time of Christ's Return." Enjoy the article after you read the "[July 2014 Newsletter](#)." The article describes when Christ's resurrection will occur for you. I hope this article will comfort many who are ill, infirm, or aging. It discusses not only your own time of death and resurrection, but also the death and resurrection of your loved ones who have died before you. Continuing on:

"Therefore, even as through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and through sin death, and thus death passed through into all mankind, on which all sinned.

... For if, by the offense of the one, the many died, much rather the grace of God and the gratuity [gift] in grace, which is of the One Man, Jesus Christ, to the many superabounds.

¹ The Greek word is better translated "**conciliated**" rather than "reconciled" (as per the King James Version). Conciliation is God's gracious gift from Him to you, with no response necessary by you. "Reconciliation" is a 2-way relationship involving conciliation by each party. This is a subtle but an important distinction. Paul in Romans does not teach reconciliation. It is taught later in Ephesians 2:16 and Colossians 1:20–21.

² Read 2 Corinthians 5:18–20, Concordant Literal Version:

"Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us [Paul and his associates] the dispensation of the conciliation, how that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them, and placing in us the word of the conciliation. ... We are beseeching for Christ's sake, 'Be conciliated to God!'"

... those obtaining the superabundance of grace and the gratuity [gift] of righteousness shall be reigning in life through the One, Jesus Christ."

• *Romans 5:12, 15, 17, Concordant Literal Version*

Yes, the grace of God and the gift in grace by the act of Jesus Christ "superabounds" to "the many." Jesus Christ was dead (not alive in a disembodied state), was resurrected, and He will die no more:

"Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he lives, he lives unto God."

• *Romans 6:8-10, KJV*

Note what verse 8 says. Although "dead with Christ" now as believers, in the future "we shall also live with him." We will not live with Him in death, we shall "live with Him" when we are alive. For us who are believers now, this will only occur when Christ returns.

The dead are not alive; any more than the living are not dead. Interestingly, no one says that those who are physically alive are dead. Paul does state that the living are dead in their sins (Ephesians 2:1, 5; Colossians 2:13). "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:2). Now, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, we need to live righteously: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25, see also 1 Peter 4:6).

"Now if Christ is in you, the body, indeed, is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is life because of righteousness. Now if the spirit of Him [God the Father] Who rouses Jesus from among the dead is making its home in you, He Who rouses Christ Jesus from among the dead will also be vivifying your mortal bodies [why?] because of His spirit making its home in you."

• *Romans 8:10-11, Concordant Literal Version*

Not only is death an important theme in Romans, but as you have read above, life after death is important to Paul. As believers, our judgment after death is already decided in our favor through Christ's righteous acts. Our life "in Christ" is assured, as is that of every human being, which will eventually occur to glory "in Christ." How then should we live now?

"For none of us lives to himself, and no man dies to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living."

• *Romans 14:7-9, KJV*

Note how Paul expresses himself at the end: "that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." Life and death are opposites. One cannot be alive while dead. One cannot be dead while alive, with two exceptions which are figures of speech: [1] figurative death (such as "dead to sin" or "dead in your sins," and [2] figurative living but tending toward death (Genesis 2:17, 3:3-4).