

## Dead to Sin and Alive to God

Romans 6:1-14

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Christians must \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ on the fact that they are \_\_\_\_\_ to sin.

### The Main Point (6:1-2)

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### What We Must Know (6:3-10)

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### What We Must Believe (6:11)

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### What We Must Do (6:12-14)

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## The Flesh Goes Fishing

James must have been, like most of his Brother's other followers, an old angler. When he wrote that we are tempted when we are "dragged away and *enticed*" (James 1:14), he used fishing lingo. On the shores of the Sea of Galilee the word translated "enticed" meant "caught by bait." It's a suggestive image of the way the flesh hooks our affections.

Even if you aren't a veteran angler, you know that if you simply drop a naked hook in the water you aren't likely to catch anything. The hook has to be covered, disguised, made to look attractive to the kind of fish you want to catch. It has to be decorated by a worm or a fly or a spinner or a plug. It has to be desirable, attractive, *alluring*. The bait doesn't just invite—it *seduces*.

James says that the flesh is a "fisher of men." It deceives and seduces us with temptation. It dangles the pleasures of sin in front of us (Hebrews 11:25), decorating those supposed delights until they look like something to sell your soul for—until you can hardly see the hook they hide. The sparkling bubbles of wine advertise taste, sophistication, social acceptance, forgetting your troubles—but they hide a bitter self-destruction (see Proverbs 23:29-35). The adulteress promises secret pleasures without fear of discovery—but her rose-strewn bed is your lily-covered grave (Proverbs 7).

The design of these trappings is to entangle the affections by catching your imagination. The imagination is the mind's eye. With imagination we paint and contemplate pictures of how things might be. You can imagine yourself doing things that aren't (yet) real: getting a call from Ed McMahon that your \$10,000,000 check is in the mail, catching a pass in the corner of the end-zone at the gun to win the Super Bowl, putting one boyfriend on hold because another boy is calling on the other line. The flesh wants to fix your imagination on something that will lead you into the clutches of sin. It wants you to dwell on and savor those tantalizing possibilities, until you can't stop thinking about them, until you start plotting and scheming ways to make the fantasy a reality.

This is why Paul warns us not even to "think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh" (Romans 13:14). Once the affections are enticed, the will soon follows with its happy consent.

An amazing thing about this seduction is that the flesh can never completely hide the hook from the sinner. We always know deep inside that the "wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), even when we plunge into evil (Romans 1:32). But the flesh succeeds when it makes you forget or ignore or not care about the hook whose dim outline you see beneath the feathers and flash of the lure. The flesh makes you careless of the hook by promising that you'll be pardoned later. It ambushes you with sudden overpowering temptation so that you have no time to think about consequences. It pleads extenuating circumstances: "This is *true* love, not some trashy infatuation—a loving God would *never* condemn something so beautiful—and we plan to get married when the time is right." Or it tempts you to think that your generous gifts to the church in the last year have more than balanced this little oversight on your income tax return.

Disguising the danger of sin under delicious decorations—this is how the flesh hooks your affections.