



Indicative and Imperative. What in the world does English grammar have to do with a vital walk with Christ? I know it's crazy, but it might make all the difference in the world. Indicatives are truth statements. They point us toward the new realities we find in Christ. Imperatives are directives or commands. They tell us how to appropriate and live out the new realities we find in Christ.

Some of us will jump right to the imperatives. Just tell us what to do and we'll do it. If it doesn't work the first time, we'll pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off and try even harder.

Admirable but misguided. We can't come close to keeping the commands of Scripture apart from digging deep and building our lives on the foundational truths of the gospel.

Some of us will simply bask in the warmth of the indicatives. We rightly revel in our new position and identity in Christ. We realized a long time ago that the heart of the gospel is not what we do for God, but what God has done for us in Christ through the Holy Spirit. And yet the imperatives are still there.

When we approach the commands of Scripture in light of the deep truths of the gospel, we find that they lead us not to a new legalism but to a deeper walk with Christ and a fuller appreciation of every good thing we have received in Him.

Romans 6:1-14 is a wonderful study in the delicate dance between the indicative and the imperative. Paul reminds us that we have been united with Christ in his death and resurrection so the power of sin and death has been broken (indicative), and then challenges us to live in light of our union with Christ by offering ourselves fully to God (imperative).

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION AND ANSWER (vv. 1-2)

1. Why might some Christians be tempted to take a casual attitude toward sin?
2. Why is this attitude deadly to our walk with Christ?
3. Why does Paul tell us that we should not continue in sin?

THE INDICATIVE: OUR UNION WITH CHRIST (vv. 3-10)

Paul does not simply tell us that we experience the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection, he tells us that we were actual participants in Christ's death and resurrection through our union with Christ. The gift we receive is not merely forgiveness of sin and new life, but Christ himself, in whom all the riches of God's grace freely flow to us through His Spirit.

1. Why is baptism a perfect portrait of our union with Christ?
2. What are the implications of being united with Christ in His death?
3. What are the benefits of being united with Christ in His resurrection?
4. While Paul does not touch on it in this passage we are also united with Christ in His perfect obedience and ascension to the right hand of the Father. There are several dimensions to our union with Christ.

He lived the life that we could never live, and through our union with Christ, His perfect obedience becomes our obedience.

He died the death we should have died and through our union with Christ, His death becomes our death.

He rose on the third day, and through our union with Christ, the power of His resurrection becomes the power through which we are increasingly transformed into His image.

He ascended to glory and was received by the Father, and through our union with Him we will be welcomed into the Father's presence and bask in His glory throughout eternity.

- a. How does it change your view of the Christian life when you realize that you not only receive the benefits of what Christ has done, but that you receive Christ himself and through him the fullness of God's grace through the Holy Spirit?
- b. Take the time to enumerate some of the many blessings that are ours in Christ and pause to offer thanks to the Father for his glorious provision in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

THE IMPERATIVE: OFFER YOURSELF FULLY TO GOD (vv. 11-14)

1. Now it's time for the imperatives. Take the time to list the commands or the directives that Paul gives us that will enable us to appropriate and live in light of our union with Christ.
2. Especially important among these directives is Paul's instruction, "count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." Belief is always the first step in applying the gospel. We need to increasingly believe the truth of Scripture in order to live in light of its truth.
 - a. Why is it difficult to believe we are "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus?"
 - b. How do we cultivate faith in truths we find difficult to believe?
3. What can we expect when we offer ourselves to sin?
4. What happens when we attempt to stop "offering ourselves to sin" without first "offering ourselves to God?"
5. What can we expect when we offer ourselves fully to God?
6. What are some steps you can take in the coming week to more fully live in light of the truths we've discovered in this passage?