

The Promise of Spiritual Union With Christ

Romans 6:1-4

Pastor Paul Anthes

Introduction: With a series of courtroom style arguments Paul has proven that men cannot be saved by any efforts of their own. Being religious does not change the fact of our guilt before God. Being Jewish...the descendent of Abraham...likewise does not alter the reality that men sin toward one another, in thought and action and violate the holy standard of God Himself. No human solution can cancel out your sin. Attempts to balance it with good abound, but in the end it is like adding clean water to dirty. The water will never become pure, and purity is God's required standard for salvation. It is not that He is unreasonable. It is that He Himself is undefiled by sin. Heaven is a sinless place and for you to spend eternity there, you must also be sinless. The fact of sin is the uncrossable barrier between God and man.

The final nail in the coffin of this summation is this: When Adam defied God and became a sinner he then fathered a race of sinners....all of whom sin.

Romans 5:12 ¹² Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

Then isn't this why God gave the ten commandments and the rest of the Bible....to make us good enough to go to heaven? Absolutely NOT! Nothing in the Scripture rolls back time so that you never committed any sin. What is done is already done so Scripture says,

Romans 3:20 ²⁰ because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

So you are blocked, along with all mankind, from every human attempt to be right with God and go to heaven. Sin is ruining our lives on earth and keeping us from eternal life in heaven. All human attempts at solving the SIN problem fall short. There are 4,200 religions in the world but none of them can make our sin go away, to just vanish... because this is humanly impossible. When Jesus spoke about salvation He made it clear that it cannot be procured by the works of men...ever. Matthew tells us that....

Matthew 19:25-26 ²⁵ When the disciples *realized this*, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?" ²⁶ And looking at *them* Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

If man cannot save Himself then God must do it for Him. This is the gospel message. If you cannot work for your salvation then God must give it to you undeserved...by Grace.

The preaching of grace has always drawn the charge of "license to sin." In other words....if we do not earn our salvation then we are saying that we can live any way we please. BUT....The law, in God's redemptive plan, was NOT given to save men, but to

reveal their hopelessly sinful hearts and cause them to seek salvation in Grace alone through Christ alone and by faith alone. The Gospel insists that what man cannot do Christ in reality did!

Romans 5:20-21 ²⁰ The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So what is God's answer to this charge? If God just gives salvation for free how are we to expect anyone to ever live righteously in this world. If sin is continually met with grace then sin is a good thing...it gets us more grace. I wonder who we should thank for trying to turn our hearts away from the only possible way to be saved...through GRACE

Romans 6:1-4 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

These four verses explain the impossible spiritual miracle God did to save you. Remember...with man this IS impossible, Jesus said....Now Scripture will tell us about the impossible....or put another way....What God did in Christ. It begins by opposing the lie then exposing the truth.

- License to Sin is a false conclusion of human reason [1-2]
- Conversion is a miracle from God [3]
- Our Life in Christ is a new life [4]

License to Sin is a false conclusion of human reason [1-2]

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? [1]: This accusation is still made today. If Salvation depends on Christ alone then religious rituals and membership are useless for salvation. This means that salvation is free in every sense of the word and organizations, like Rome, who collect well over 170 billion every year are going to object.

Grace preachers in every age have had to contend with it. There are whole websites devoted to trashing the doctrines of Grace and affirming the ability of man to contribute to his own salvation. This is how Spurgeon opened his message on August 19th, 1889

No sooner is this doctrine set forth in a clear light than men begin to *carp* at it. It is the target for all carnal logic to shoot at. Un-renewed minds never did like it, and they never will; it is so humbling to human pride, making so light of the nobility of human nature. That men are to be saved by divine charity, that they must as condemned criminals receive pardon by the exercise of the royal prerogative, or else perish in their sins, is a teaching which they cannot endure. God alone is exalted in the sovereignty of his

mercy; and the sinner can do no better than meekly touch the silver scepter, and accept undeserved favor just because God wills to give it:—this is not pleasant to the great minds of our philosophers, and the broad phylacteries of our moralists, and therefore they turn aside, and fight against the empire of grace. Straightway the un-renewed man seeks out artillery with which to fight against the gospel of the grace of God, and one of the biggest guns he has ever brought to the front is the declaration that the doctrine of the grace of God must lead to licentiousness. If great sinners are freely saved, then men will more readily become great sinners; and if when God's grace regenerates a man it abides with him, then men will infer that they may live as they like, and yet be saved. This is the constantly-repeated objection which I have heard till it wearies me with its vain and false noise. I am almost ashamed to have to refute so rotten an argument. They dare to assert that men will take license to be guilty because God is gracious, and they do not hesitate to say that if men are not to be saved by their works they will come to the conclusion that their conduct is a matter of indifference, and that they may as well sin that grace may abound.

May it never be! [2a]: The answer of Gospel preachers starting with Paul has been a resounding NO WAY! And it is not for the reasons humans suspect! It is not the power of religion, or doctrines of Grace or ritual or birth rights or social standing. It is because of the inconceivable reality that Scripture is about to reveal. Paul introduces it with a question.

How shall we who died to sin still live in it? [2b]: People still respond to this the same way..... What? You should follow me a around for a day. You should walk in my shoes and deal with the things I confront in my life. What do you mean....”died to sin?” Reason with me for a moment: If a person dies, does he still live his everyday life? Of course not! It is the same way with our life in Adam. If we died to that, because we have trusted Christ for salvation....if we died to Adam and his sin are we going to go about our everyday life as if we were still living in Adam. NO!

And so begins the explanation of the great doctrine of Sanctification. Does being saved by faith alone have anything to do with overcoming sin in my life? Adam's sin became our sin. But, by faith Christ's righteousness became our righteousness. Our lost condition in Adam was through no action of our own. We were just born that way. Our saved condition in Christ is likewise....through no action of our own. We were just born from above that way.

So...do Christ's children still live under the tyranny of Adam's sin. NO! NO! NO! We have ceased to be Adam's children and become Christ's. **THIS IS A FACT YOU MUST KNOW AND BELIEVE!** You have died to Sin! Sin has no power over dead men and we died with Christ.

Sin does not reign in Christ's life. In Christ therefore there is a definitive break with the reign of sin in your life. And it is not because you suddenly became sinless and morally perfect. **It is because at the Cross, Christ broke the power of sin to kill you and to conquer you.** You died to sin's power when Christ died. Is sin still present with us? Absolutely! Does it rule us? Absolutely NOT! Will you succumb in weakness to its

constant drumbeat in this fallen world? Absolutely! Will you utterly return to its slavery and tyranny? Absolutely NOT!

Romans 6:14 ¹⁴ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

So God says that the notion that Grace Salvation gives license to sin is false. It is bogus. It is actually a lie that turns men away from the ONLY SALVATION THERE IS! So how does God refute it?

Conversion is a miracle from God [3]

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? [3]: Paul acts like we should know this truth. Men will argue about whether this is water or spirit baptism and it is difficult to be dogmatic about it. Let me suggest a couple of things that we can know with certainty and see where they lead us.

Spirit baptism takes place at the moment of conversion to Christ. It is the means by which God places us into Christ. It is the means of Union with Christ which leads to union with one another. It happens at the beginning moments of your salvation.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 ¹² For even as the body is one and *yet* has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Water baptism in Scripture follows sharply on the heels of our spiritual union with Christ. Because of this, many, myself included, see this verse as an explanation of the spiritual meaning behind the act of immersion baptism. It is outwardly demonstrating our union with Christ in His death [going under] and His Resurrection [coming up].

Is baptism therefore required for salvation? Certainly not! Only faith in Christ. But it is the logical and Biblical declaration of our union with Jesus our Savior and Lord. When the Philippian jailer cried out to Paul and Silas....

Acts 16:30-33 ³⁰ "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." ³² And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. ³³ And he took them that *very* hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his *household*.

The French Bible scholar Franz Leenhardt said this, "God willed that this death should be my own death; when I look at the cross, I see there the victim who represents me objectively, His death includes my own, His death is mine, it is my death which He dies. In the intention of God with regard to myself, I have died."

“It is the death of Christ that makes anyone a Christian, and apart from that death baptism is meaningless. This is a strong affirmation of the centrality of the Cross....Christ’s death alone is the ground of our justification, and when we make that our own by faith we are united with Christ---united with him in his death, united with him in his burial, united with him in his rising again, united with him in life. Paul is affirming strongly that the justified are those united by faith to all that Christ means, and therefore antinomianism [continuing in sin] is impossible for them. Being united in living out the life is not an option but a necessary part of being saved in Christ.” *Leon Morris*

You have been placed into union with the sinless Son of God... Jesus Christ. You are NO LONGER “in Adam...the sinner.” You are not in union with both of these...just one. If you have never trusted in Christ alone to take away your sins then you are still in Adam and....

1 Corinthians 15:22 ²² in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

So is this Spirit baptism or water baptism? It is Spirit, but this does not mean for a moment that believers in Christ should decline baptism. Baptism is our first testimony of the miracle of salvation in our lives. It is a blessed beginning to NEW LIFE IN CHRIST!

Our Life in Christ is a new life [4]

Romans 6:4 ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death [4a]: Scripture continues the metaphor. Not only did Christ die....as proof of His death He was buried. “With him” actually says “together with Him.” You have been spiritually personally buried with Him. When He died to the power of sin so did you. When He rested in the grave on that Saturday....perfectly keeping and fulfilling the law of the Sabbath....so did you. When Christ conquered death and sin in the tomb...SO DID YOU!

So that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father [4b]: “Glory” points to the wonder and power of God. It is anything that puts God on display in creation. There are few things that do this more spectacularly than the resurrection.

When He rose victorious over sin and death...so did you. Again the verb emphasizes finality and completeness. It is not a hope and not an ongoing uncertainty. It is union with Christ. It is by faith, apart from your works and it is how God transforms you and conforms you to Christ’s image. It is your destiny.

Romans 8:29 ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

So we too might walk in newness of life [4c]: The idea here is that we along with others...all of us....might walk in newness of life. “Newness” means new in character

not just recent. It is a different life than we had in Adam. It is NEW! And you are not alone to try to live the Christian life. You are IN CHRIST. You are IN HIS BODY! We are supposed to help one another with this. Christ gave the church for this. If you walk alone you will stumble.

Ecclesiastes 4:12 And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him- a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

CONCLUSION: The grace of God that conquers Adam's death bringing sin conquers yours as well. Satan tells the lie so often that even many believers have embraced it. Salvation by faith is a miracle of God. He makes you alive to Him and takes you from your hopeless standing in Adam to a righteous one in Christ.

If you must work to save yourself then you must also work to change yourself. But Christ has worked for you. And God has joined you to Him with an inseparable bond that stretches into Eternity. In death He conquered death and in resurrection He sows eternal life like seed on the good ground of our hearts. He is The Eternal and Sinless Life Giver.

It is impossible for us to continue on in sin as if nothing had happened to us. If you join a religion, practice a ritual, give mental assent to doctrines you may well keep on as if nothing happened, but we have been joined to the Holy, Sinless, Son of the Living God. It is unthinkable that we should now live in licentiousness as if we were still in Adam.

Charles Hodge summarized this way: "There can be no participation in Christ's life without a participation in his death, and we cannot enjoy the benefits of his death unless we are partakers of the power of his life. We must be reconciled to God in order to be holy, and we cannot be reconciled without thereby becoming holy."

You need to know and believe these truths! In the next few verses of Romans six, God is going to give you understanding of how sinners become more Christlike, but you must know that God says you can do so. That God has made that possible through our union with Christ and that He is gracious toward us in our struggles.

He has given us the church for us to thrive in.

Hebrews 10:23-25 ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²⁴ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

He has given us teachers and preachers in that church to strengthen us:

Ephesians 4:11-13 ¹¹ And He gave some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

And He has sent the Holy Spirit into our lives giving us the fruit that is the very character of Christ.

Galatians 5:22-25 ²²The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

You are therefore dead to Adam and alive with Christ. The only question left is do you believe it? And are you willing to hope and live for Christ in newness of life. Paul was overcome by this surpassing love of Christ toward him. He wrote to the Corinthians saying....

2 Corinthians 5:14-21 ¹⁴the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. ¹⁷ Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. ¹⁸ Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.