

The Prospect of Spiritual Union With Christ

Romans 6:1-5-10

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Introduction: Salvation by Grace Alone through Faith Alone [The Gospel] has always brought the same charge. “It gives permission to live a sinful life.” If it requires no works on our part then men will not be pressured to live upright and moral lives. The charge was made of Christ when He spoke of salvation by faith alone and of each of the Apostles as they preached the gospel message. These opponents insist that works must be added to faith for salvation.

Having been decisively defeated in the courtroom of Romans 1 through 5, self righteous religionist hurl the accusation of license to sin at the Gospel of Grace. Paul states it for us.

Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?

Romans six is God’s response. How can those who have been brought into a spiritual union with the righteous God through faith continue on in sin as if nothing has changed in their lives? Verses one through four assert that such a union is a reality for those who trust in Christ alone through faith. God’s Word uses the word baptism, meaning an immersion or placing into, to describe our union with Jesus. The Scripture goes on to explain and describe this union and conclude that it has broken the power of sin in our lives.

Tragically there has arisen in our day, a strong opposition to what Paul teaches in Romans six. It is held by many evangelicals. It charges that those advocating for a changed life as proof of a changed heart are in fact adding works to faith alone. These opponents preach and teach passionately that “Grace” does not equate to a changed life and anyone who says it does is preaching salvation by works. Amazingly, the very people that Paul’s critics accuse him of being still exist in our day.

Today’s version of this says, that faith equals mental assent to certain facts about Christ. This assent is spelled out in a doctrinal statement and is put into practice through what has been called the “sinners prayer.” Those looking for some evidence of union with Christ are considered to be adding works to salvation by faith. Listen to the Bible Baptist preacher Dr. Cucuzza as he makes his charges against Paul’s teachings in Romans six.

The Lordship “Salvationist” does not believe that Christ paid the FULL PRICE for our sins, leaving us nothing to pay. He believes that Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection were necessary, but not sufficient. He believes that he must add to Christ’s finished work with his repentance from sin, commitment, or perseverance. In other words, the Lordship “Salvationist” has accepted Jesus as Lord and Helper, not Lord and Savior. So, there is belief that does not save. It is belief in a false gospel of Christ plus works for salvation, more commonly known as Lordship “salvation.”

Let me summarize. Religionists object that Grace means license to sin or...”you can do anything you want because God is gracious.” While others complain that any suggestion that the lives of true believers do change is a false gospel that denies salvation by faith alone. The True Gospel is squeezed on both sides in our day.

Romans sweeps both objections away by revealing the truth of spiritual union with Christ. True believers have died to sin and its power to frighten, kill or rule them. Grace does not allow for any contribution from men for salvation while at the same time insisting that our spiritual union with Christ, given by grace through faith, is **transforming**. Grace.... Scripture asserts, is not license to remain unchanged and unconformed to the image of Christ. It in reality brings men into unbreakable union with the Eternal God who is holy and undefiled. He will and does begin to change His children into the image of His sinless Son. This is the destiny of new born children of the living God.

Romans 8:29-30 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; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

Scripture will argue in Romans Six that....

No change is required for Salvation, but Salvation produces profound change.

Luther who nearly died for insisting on the word “alone” put it this way!

We are saved by Faith Alone, but Faith that saves is never alone!

Romans six teaches these truths, but more importantly teaches you why they are true and how they are to be applied by us “sought and bought” sinners. True believers want to follow Christ. We want to be free of the tyranny of sin in our lives. We want to be like Jesus. **BUT...how will this ever happen?** Are we doomed to be slaves to sin even after Christ has bought us from the slave market of sin. Does God do anything to help His beloved adopted children live as if they were truly sons and daughters of the living God? Scripture says yes. Let me read you the first 10 verses of Romans six.

Romans 6:1-10 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. ⁵ For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. ¹⁰ For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

We have previously looked at verses 1-4. They introduce the promise of Spiritual Union with Christ. Verses 5-10 tell us what any believer can and should expect from their union with Christ. There are three things mentioned in this passage.

- Our natural bond to Adam and His death is broken [5-7]
- Our spiritual bond to Christ and His life is established [8]
- Our spiritual bond to Christ is eternal and free from sin's slavery [9-10]

Our natural bond to Adam and His death is broken [5-7]

For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death [5a]: Paul opens verse five by restating his point in verses 1-4. We have union with Christ! The “if” does not express any doubt. In fact, it assumes the reality of union for the purposes of explaining it more fully.

So we have become united with Him! We were not united but now we are. Being in union with Christ is not the normal human condition. Men are born in union with Adam who passed his sin and death to all men. Paul has set this argument up in Chapter five.

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—

But we are united with Christ! This is the first use of the word “united” here and it is a very strong word. It means united by birth...to be kin. It is also used to describe grafting a branch onto a vine so that the two grow together. The branch which was cut off from life now receives everything it needs for life from the life giving union with the living vine.

But here Paul says we were grafted into to Christ “in the likeness of His death.” Admittedly not what we were expecting. But Paul is not just explaining salvation here. He is explaining what God has done to set His children free from the slavery of sin. And so He starts with death...The Death of Christ. THE CROSS! At the cross you died with Christ and your sins were paid for. In Christ, your sins are all paid for as if you yourself did actually die for them.

Certainly we shall also be *in the likeness of His resurrection* [5b]: Now if this is true...and it CERTAINLY is then you will be united to Him in His resurrection. This is the opening argument for overcoming your slavery to sin in your earthly life. You have been grafted into Christ which means that as surely as He died, He also rose to an immortal and eternal human life. Our resurrection in the last day is also in view here, but the purpose of the entire passage is to show God's provision to overcome sin in your daily life.

Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him* [6a]: Here is something you must know. Many people, myself included were taught most of their lives that our old self is our sin nature that we inherited from Adam. This is seen by the use of the word “old self” in almost every English translation. But the Greek says “Old Man.” This is why people are so clearly confused by this chapter. Our inclination to sin and our

weakness in trying to resist it are clearly not dead. Satan will say...."it's just you! Other believers don't struggle with their sin and humanity like you do! You are just a particularly weak and sinful person." Those who believe the notion that there are two natures in us will tell us to feed one and starve the other. Whatever appeals to you don't do it. If you like be happy then be somber. If bright clothes make you joyful where dark clothes. If certain music delights you then do not listen to it. It is appealing to your old self. Some churches appear to be conducting a yearlong funeral and the mere thought of a joyful and happy human life is suppressed in every way conceivable.

But it is not Old Self but Old Man. In Colossians God gives us more insight.

Colossians 3:9-11 ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old [man] self with its *evil* practices, ¹⁰ and have put on the new [man] self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him-- ¹¹ *a renewal* in which there is no *distinction between* Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

Now let me ask you a question. Is it in your nature that Greek and Jews, slaves and freemen are all one? Of course not! That is ridiculous. It is IN CHRIST that this has happened. We are in Him...united to Him....grafted into Him. This is the spiritual body of Christ that Christ created for you to be united to. The new man is not your new nature and the old man is not your old nature. They are Christ and Adam exactly as we have seen them in Romans five.

What was crucified with Christ was not a part of me called my old nature, but the whole of me as I was before I was converted." John Stott

"Behind the contrast between 'old man' and 'new man' is the contrast between Adam and Christ, the 'first man' and the 'last.' "The One man Jesus Christ. Those, then, who are in Adam belong to and exist as the old man; those who are in Christ belong to and exist as the new man."

Romans 5:19 ¹⁹ For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

So what died with Christ at the cross? Not your fallen nature that's for certain! Even Paul said....

1 Timothy 1:15 ¹⁵ It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost *of all*.

What died there was your hopeless and helpless bondage to sin and death that you received from your human father. It was Adam's power to keep you a sinner.

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

In order that our body of sin might be done away with [6b]: You and I have been united with Christ in His death. This means, in the mind of God, we died there with Him for our sins. And as surely as Christ rose to new life so did we. But verse six adds to this reality. Our old hopelessly lost human inheritance in Adam also died there. "Might be

done away with” really means rendered powerless or eliminated. Our natural birth in Adam made us slaves to sin. In Adam our bodies have been taken captive to sin...BUT this is a far cry from the common belief of our day that the human body is sinful. That what the human body desires is sinful. God made us to interface with and enjoy creation. You are supposed to enjoy your life, your wife, your food and drink.

Ecclesiastes 5:18 ¹⁸ Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun *during* the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward.

Ecclesiastes 9:7-10 ⁷ Go *then*, eat your bread in happiness and drink your wine with a cheerful heart; for God has already approved your works. ⁸ Let your clothes be white all the time, and let not oil be lacking on your head. ⁹ Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun. ¹⁰ Whatever your hand finds to do, do *it* with *all* your might;

So that we would no longer be slaves to sin [6c]: Humans are image bearers of God. God considered a human fit to unite Himself to for the rest of eternity. It is NOT humanity that is the problem! It is sin! And sin flowed from Adam. In Christ that bondage ends. Men are still sinners! Men still live in a sin soaked world. Men still sin! BUT...In Christ we begin the blessed transformation into His image. Let me illustrate with two questions: Do you still sin? YES! Do you care that you still sin? YES! Have you overcome any sins in your life since becoming a believer?

Previously the right did not suit us, now sin does not.” Brunner

For he who has died is freed from sin [7]: One thing is for certain. Anyone who dies is free from sin. Sin enslaves our bodies to do its bidding. This is Adam’s legacy and power in us. But that relationship is dead. It died with Jesus on the Cross. In Christ we are no longer slaves to do sin’s bidding. After 5 verses of explanation Paul is coming back to his opening statement where he asked....

Romans 6:2 How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Our spiritual bond to Christ and His life is established [8]

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him [8]: Again...Christ’s death was a real death, but so was His resurrection. If we die with Him and we did, we will live with Him and we do.

God wants us to think of Christ as the hope we have in this life also. The Christian life is not a series of joyless activities centered around death. Christ came out of the tomb. He lived and still lives. We are alive with Him on the other side of death. We have eternal life

Now let’s remind ourselves again what the purpose of these arguments are. The charge has been made that Salvation by faith alone gives men permission to live in sin. That men will only be good if they are threatened with hell. And in Adam this is clearly the

case. Only the threat of punishment will keep men from stealing and murdering all day long. So....Gospel critiques reason, "A free salvation based on faith alone will not cause anyone to stop sinning and try to live a good life."

But saving faith does not just embrace sound doctrine or pray a certain prayer. It trusts its entire being into the hands of Jesus Christ. It trusts in His righteousness and not their own. It trust in His death on the cross for their sins and it trust Him to save them and keep them by His power. Such believers are converted [transformed]. There is a fundamental change of being. We were hopelessly enslaved in Adam, but now are set free to follow Christ. All this through spiritual union with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Our spiritual bond to Christ is eternal and free from sin's slavery [9-10]

Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. [9]: Death has reigned like a sovereign king over all humanity until the Christ broke its power at the cross. Now here is the application of this entire passage for you and me.

You are in union with Christ. This makes you a true child of God...as much as Christ Jesus is. It means that your life no longer comes from Adam but from Christ. It is not a finite life that ends with your death. It is an eternal life exactly like the one that Christ has. This is why the power of death is broken.

When Christ rose from the dead he will never die again because death has no control over the life giver. Life came from Christ...

John 1:3-4 ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

If death has no power over Christ then it has no power over you. If Christ will not die then neither will you. And....if death is no longer his master it is not yours either.

For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God [10]: When Christ died he died to sin. Did sin have power over Christ? YES! It tempted Him in a way we have never been tempted. It was sin that put Him on the Cross. He let it kill Him. Adam's sin in particular. But His death and resurrection ends the power of sin.

His resurrection left sin in the dust. There is no more sin bearing to be done....EVER!

CONCLUSION: This truth is missing for many believers. Satan is quick to tell you that the Old Man is not dead. He is still living in you and the best you can hope for is to hide him from as many people as possible. To do this you must live a lie that pretends not to struggle with sin. Do not fall for this. It is how Satan keeps us living as if we are still sons and daughters of Adam. Scripture lights the way for us to live for Christ.

We are sinners living in a sinful world. What has died is our hopelessly lost standing and dead condition in Adam. Christ undid what Adam did. The death sentence of sin that passes on all men is reversed at the Cross. All who come to Christ in faith bringing no righteous works or standing of their own will be saved. We were born in Adam but by Faith become born again into Christ.

Through a spiritual miracle God places every believer into spiritual union with Christ who has broken Adams hold over humanity. What does this mean for you?

You will not die for your sins and face eternal hell because in union with Christ you already died with Him for your sins. They are paid in full because of union with Christ!

You are not a slave to sin, because you are in union with Christ and He is not a slave to sin. You are still a sinner however in a sin stained world. But Christ has conquered sin and you are in union with Him.

In Christ you can live a new life because you are in union with Christ and He is living a new resurrection life.

God is calling you this morning to believe Him when He says...He has placed you into life giving and sin conquering union with Christ. If you do not believe this then you will live as a slave to the sin Christ saved you from. You are freed from the power of sin to enslave you! If you believe what God says about this you are ready to apply this truth to your daily life and experience victory over the slavery of sin. Will you fail and sin again? Yes, but it will be because you are a fallen sinner and weak. It will not be because you are a hopeless slave of Adam's fallen race.

Decide today to believe God. To know that you are free to live for God. If you do not, that is your free choice. If you do not learn His Word and take seriously the many means that God has provided to strengthen you over sin then it will not be because you are a slave to sin, but because you are unwilling to live free. Scripture is about to teach us how to live as free men and women. Not sinless....but we can and should sin less.

“Believers face a new contest with sin every day; as long as we are on this earth we are never free from it. But Christ's death was unique, a once for all dealing with sin. God made Him sin for us [2 Cor. 5:21], and His death dealt decisively with sin, took it out of the way, paid its penalty, re-moved its sting, won the victory over it. Look at sin how you will, Christ has effectively dealt with it.” *Leon Morris*

Galatians 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 5:13-14 ¹³ You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.