

The Practice of Spiritual Union With Christ

Romans 6:11-14

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Introduction: Would you eat potato salad that had been sitting out all day long at a picnic? Would you drink milk that expired last week? Would you take some pills that someone offered you in the mall? Would you drink out of a ditch or creek? Why? Because you care about your health! AND...you have been taught that such things will definitely make you sick. You learn, throughout life, the things that will keep you healthy. You might even say you have a set of beliefs about such things that you have gathered over the years.

So why is it that so many Christians are unaware of God's provision to make them spiritually healthy? Why have sermons become an endangered species in the 21st century church? Why is church membership anathema to many and church attendance sporadic or even optional? I will hazard a guess. We do not take our spiritual health as seriously as our physical. We go to doctors for the physical, but not to Scripture for the spiritual. We take medicine and read websites for the physical, but we do not study the Scripture to find the remedy for our sin sickness. Well...there is another possibility. Perhaps we don't know that God has made provision for us to escape the slavery of sin and we just don't know about it?

Paul, under inspiration has been laying the foundation for our spiritual, eternal life with God. He has made the case that no external force or behavior can change our sin sickness because we were born dead to God and alive to sin. It is our default state! We are sons and daughters of Adam. Salvation is by grace alone for this very reason. The dead cannot give themselves life. God alone can and does give us salvation.

The critics, and they are legion even in our day....respond by saying that if this is so then men have license to sin. Why live righteously if God is gracious? If you have a free pass into heaven then...."why not go on sinning that grace my abound?"

Chapter Six is God's response to this. This is doctrine! Without it you have no way of knowing God's opinion about the ridiculous things men think and the lies Satan tells. You are adrift in a sea of human wisdom. In Congo they do not believe, for instance, that the water from the ditch will make them sick, but it does anyway. Today in America, men do not believe that staggering debt will eventually collapse the economy, but it will anyway. In the Church many Christians believe that ignoring or shunning true doctrine will not harm their spiritual life, but it does anyway. Satan and the world are ever present to fill the void believers leave in their mind and soul.

You see, believing is only helpful if you believe the truth. This is why all faith is not the same. Being sincere is not sufficient because if you are wrong about the way back to God you will be lost. If you do not know God's provision for overcoming sin in your life you will remain in sins power. God's spiritual prescription for overcoming sin is exactly

like the one for Eternal Life. Christ has done it for you! It is taken hold of by faith...trust in God that what He says is true. But you must know it before you can believe it and put your trust in Him. Shall we go on sinning because we have salvation by grace through faith. God Forbid!

- We have been miraculously, spiritually united to Christ! When Jesus died and paid for our sins, we died there with Him and when He came victoriously out of the tomb, we came to life with Him. This is solely God's doing!

Romans 6:5 ⁵ If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

- Our union with Adam [The Old Man] was broken by Christ's death and our union with Christ [The New Man] was established in its place. This is solely God's doing!

Romans 6:6-8 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- ⁷ because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

Our passage today is the first exhortation in the book of Romans. It follows five and a half chapters of Doctrine. Truth about who God is, who man is, what God has done for us and how we are to respond to Him. Your trust in Christ alone is not mere mental assent as opponents of grace assert. It is a "whole being" transformation. You did not do this! You cannot do this! It has been done for you by Christ and you are in union with Him. If you want to see your life change and experience victory over sin and weakness then you must know these truths and trust Christ that they are true. QUESTION: Would you like to do meaningful good works, increase in your knowledge of God, attain joy and patience.....then let's talk about how to apply the Cross work of Jesus to our everyday lives.

Romans 6:11-14 ¹¹ Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, ¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus [11]: Paul begins the exhortation with the words "even so." Literally, "Thus also you!" If Christ has died to sin's power...if Christ has risen to a new life over which death and sin have no power...if you are in spiritual, eternal union with Christ...then...."thus also you." What is true of Christ is also now true of you. Now this is where we get tripped up. We still have temptations. We are still weak. We still sin. That is because we are not the holy Son of the Living God. We are broken by sin and living in a sin soaked world so we are going to be engaged in a life long struggle with sin and weakness. The difference is this....Christ has broken sin's power to rule you. He has broken death's

power to send you to hell. He has broken Adam's inherited curse on you. You are no longer a slave to sin! You have become a slave to Christ. "EVEN SO YOU!"

"Consider yourselves" is a favorite word of Paul. It means to calculate, to reason and to consider it true. Now you cannot consider yourselves dead to sin if you don't know that even happened. This is why Paul taught for 5 chapters before he even began to call for a response. Now God's Word is calling us! It is commanding us to believe it and make it the basis for our Christian Life in Union with Jesus. So this is what you are to thoughtfully, logically, knowledgably and trustingly consider to be true. You are dead to sin and its power to rule you and you are alive to God and His power to rule you. Your Christian life is going nowhere if you cannot trust God on this. Our faith in Christ to have actually done this energizes the command that follows. If Christ had not broken sin's power at the cross we would scoff at what he says next.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts [12]: "Therefore" means that this exhortation is based on verse 11 and the 10 verses that lead up to it. It is for believers and not the world. The proclamation of Salvation in the first five chapters of Romans is for the lost as well as the instruction of believers, but this is for believers.

God is not capricious. He does not command what cannot be done, so when He says, "do not let sin reign," He has already shown that its power to do so is broken. You are commanded not to let sin act as if its power over you were still intact. Don't be what you are not....a slave to sin! Do be what you are.....a freed slave!

Sin reigns in our bodies. We noted before that this does not mean that humanity or your body are evil. This is not a Christian doctrine. If the human body was evil then the Holy Son of the Living God would not have eternally taken a human body. The point here is that our bodies is where sin reigns, rules us. It uses our tongues to gossip, lie and inflict pain. It uses our hands to steal and our sexuality to commit adultery. Even those thoughts are in the brain that is in yourbody! This is where the battle is joined.

In Adam we live to serve sin and we do that through our bodies. In Christ, sin's power to rule us is broken. You do not have to obey your bodies desires....its lusts.

John Murray points out that to say to a slave, "Do not behave like a slave" is to mock him, but it is a meaningful thing to say to someone who has been set free. He must now give up thinking and living like a slave and start behaving like a free person."

Do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness [13a]: Here are the practical and logical steps. "Presenting" is a word often used of a sacrifice in Scripture. The picture is someone bring a sacrifice to an altar and offering it there. The members of our body are just that. Our brains, our mouths our hands and feet and all that we are physically. Remember....sin rules us through our physical bodies. But its power over you is broken. Here is the point: Any power sin has over you as a redeemed sinner is what you chose to give it. So don't offer the members [parts] of your body to sin. You don't have to. SIN WILL NOT BE YOUR MASTER!

But present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God [13b]: So...you have to stop the bad before you can start the good. If you want to love someone, you have to stop hating them first. The first step here is to willfully refuse commit a sin with your mouth, hands or heart. The phrase “do not go on presenting” implies that we are continually doing this. We all know we are when we repeat the same sin again and again. The second step is to consciously and willfully offer yourself to God for His purposes. You are dead to sin and alive to God. Is this how you see yourself? You should!

The point to notice here is this: It is never enough to resist sin. You cannot win any battle with defense. Imagine an army attacking a walled city. They have big shields and they just crouch down under those while the enemy continually rains down rocks and arrows on them. They have a great defense, but they can never win.

Have you ever said to God. Here I am Lord. I give myself to you for your purposes? Most Christians are scared to death to do something like this. We do not want to become servants of God. Who knows what He might ask us to do! He might want us to live somewhere or do something I don't want to do! He might want me to forgive someone I don't want to forgive or to love someone I don't want to love! I would lose my autonomy...control over the direction of my life if I just offered myself to God. If I just decided to once and for all acknowledge [this is the tense of the verb here] that I am in vital spiritual union with Jesus Christ and my entire life here and in eternity is 100% dependent on Him who knows what might happen? Indeed! Only God knows what would happen to you if you did something like that.

But Scripture anticipates this objection. In chapter eight God tells you your destiny. Not all the details, but He says...

Romans 8:28 ²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

Have you ever willingly turned yourself over to God's purpose? When you do you can rest in verse 28. AND...His purpose is to change you. In the hands of God you are destined to be transformed into the image of Christ.

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.

You have absolutely nothing to fear by doing this because God has already demonstrated His Infinite Love for you at the Cross.

Romans 8:31-32 ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

We were born slaves to sin. Christ bought you out of the slave market of sin. Your name was on His lips on the Cross. He has already chosen an eternal name for you and only you will have it. If we are bought by Christ shall we live as if we are still chained naked in the slave market of sin? Shouldn't we be living free from the enslaving power of sin. God says yes. Most Christians say no! How did we get here? Because we have tried to perfect ourselves. We have come to the Cross for free salvation, but have then set about to conquer sin in our sinful flesh using the power of the flesh. Will power, religion, do's and don'ts and we have failed. All the while Satan is whispering. You are not free. You are still a slave to sin. You will never overcome your temper or your tongue or your habits or addictions.

The Galatians returned entirely back to self effort to conquer sin. They used the law as their rule.

Galatians 3:1-3 You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed *as* crucified? ² This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

Millions of believers in our day are doing the same thing. They are living by rules and rituals that they hope will give them freedom from sin, but they never do. Because you must be sanctified [transformed] in exactly the same way as you were saved.

Colossians 2:6 ⁶ Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

How did you receive Christ Jesus the Lord? By faith alone. Not by your righteousness or human effort....It is a work of God through Christ. Godliness does not then become your project...our godliness becomes His project!

Ephesians 2:10 ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace [14]: This is only true because we are not under the law. Does this mean that we can do whatever we want as the critics are so quick to suggest? NO! The Law cannot justify a sinner. It can only reveal his sin!

Galatians 2:16 ¹⁶ nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

So what happens when we come to Christ for salvation by faith and then begin to live according to the law to transform us. We remain slaves to sin! If the Law cannot save you it certainly cannot transform you. Scripture says that sin shall not be your master because we are no longer under the law. As Paul put it to the Galatians....

Galatians 3:3 ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

CONCLUSION: Let's try to boil it down. By grace through faith in Christ, we have been placed into eternal union with Jesus. This is why we would never sin so that grace might abound. It is not that Christians won't continue in unabated sin...it is that they can't! We are bound to Christ and our bond to Adam is broken. When Christ died at the Cross we died with Him there. Our sins are paid in full. When He arose from that death, so did we. We will never be slaves to sin because we are in union with Christ and He is NOT a slave to sin.

The questions before you are these:

- Now that you know this...do you believe what God says about it?
- Will you offer your body to serve God rather than sin? You cannot be free from both sin and God. You must chose one or the other. All humans live in their bodies and their members are going to be instruments of sin or of righteousness. There is no third choice.
- Will you reject the notion that you can do this through human effort. The life of Christ is not imparted to men through human effort. Not for salvation and not for sanctification either. This is gospel truth. Christ does everything for us and we trust Him with our physical bodies and our eternal souls.

Answer this Questions: Does this mean we should just sit still and let God change us? What about all the commands in the New Testament? How do they square with what Scripture is teaching here. This is how:

They are the tools God uses to transform us. Some people call them the means of grace. Let me explain. If a man sets about to build a house he will bring a truck load of tools designed to build that house. When it is finished no one will say that the hammers, saws and squares built that house. No one will say that the house built itself. They will say that the man...the carpenter...built that house!

So it is with Christ. He said...

Matthew 16:18 I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Ephesians 2:20-22 ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, ²¹ in whom the whole building being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

1 Peter 2:5 ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

There are many tools but let me mention a few:

The Holy Spirit gives us new birth and life and then begins our transformation by actually giving us the new character of Christ.

Galatians 5:22-25 ²² But the 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.

The Word of God....Breathed out by God and like Him, perfect in every way. It is the source of our knowledge about God as well as the instructions God uses to transform us.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

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Your Elders and Teachers....They are given to you by Christ Himself to help you live for and serve Christ and one another. The goal is to be like Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-13 ¹¹ It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Your Church....It is the visible place of service that God has given to you. If you neglect it you will have nowhere to serve Christ. Christ is served in the world by serving His other children.

1 Corinthians 12:25-26 ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Romans 12:4-6 ⁴ Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.

Here is a challenge: Pick one sin that has annoyed and beset you [take a moment for them to think] and apply this truth to it. Remember...Sin will not be your Master. Christ

is and He has given you the freedom and the means to overcome sin. Will you do it perfectly. Not unless you are the Holy Son of God. Will you weaken its hold and liberate yourself from its mastery? Yes!

The means of Grace are at your finger tips. The Scripture is in your hand. The Holy Spirit is in your heart. He will fight for you against sin. There are your Elders who pray for you and work that you might come to maturity in Christ. There is your church which God gave to strengthen you and give you the one place where you can offer your members as instruments of righteousness. **SIN WILL NOT BE YOUR MASTER!** I challenge you to take one sin and fight. I will do the same...and I will pray for you like Paul prayed for the Colossians after hearing about their conversion to Christ. Paul said....

Colossians 1:7-22 he also informed us of your love in the Spirit. ⁹ For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. ¹³ For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. ¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, ²⁰ and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven. ²¹ And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds, ²² yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach--