

The Product of Spiritual Union With Christ

Romans 6:15-23

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Introduction: Jesus is the Eternal Son of the Living God who left the Father's side to become a true human being, live a sinless life and die an undeserved sinner's death. Both His life and His death are transferred or credited to any person who will abandon all confidence in their righteousness and religion and trust only in the man Jesus Christ for eternal life. Salvation is only through faith trust in Christ.

Religionists resist and reject The Gospel of Christ because it strips them of their pride [there is nothing they can do to earn salvation] and their power [there is nothing they can use to manipulate and control people]. No book in the Bible establishes, proclaims and then defends the Gospel like the Book of Romans. By the end of chapter five every objection to the Gospel has been shredded. Gospel opponents are left with one gratuitous complaint. "If Salvation is free, then men will continue to live sinfully and lawlessly in the world." Having demolished all logical arguments for salvation by works of morality, religion or even heritage, Paul knows what is left in the arsenal of the self-righteous. It is the last gasp of grace deniers. "If God gives grace to sinners apart from works they will just continue to sin." Paul anticipates their complaint saying

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

In Romans six God dismantles this argument against grace. Verses 1-4 disclose the reality of Spiritual Union with Jesus Christ to all who will come to Him in faith. This is the "Promise of Spiritual Union." In verses 5-10 The Holy Spirit teaches us what we can expect from this miraculous reality. This is the "Prospect of Spiritual Union." Verses 11-14 explain how we are to apply this truth to our everyday life so as not to remain de facto slaves of sin. This is the "Practice of Spiritual Union." Finally, the Bible shows us what to expect from our blessed Union with Jesus Christ. This is the "Product of Spiritual Union." Let's read about this final one now.

Romans 6:15-23 ¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! ¹⁶ Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone *as* slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. ²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. ²² But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It turns out that Grace produces the exact opposite effect as Gospel critics claim. And this is why: The grace of God is not just good will that God extends to those who have the good sense or religious notion to pray a prayer or believe a certain doctrine. OH NO!!! The Grace of God is an entire life transformation, rather a life “resurrection.” God starts with spiritually dead enemies, living as slaves to sin and makes them alive living as men set free.

Ephesians 2:1-5 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)...

This morning we want to tie the ribbon on Spiritual Union with Christ by seeing all the wonderful present blessings God has bestowed on us when He saved us by Grace. These verses give the incentive for embracing and living in verses 11-14 which say....

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.

There are just two points this morning....

- We will always be slaves to something or someone! [15-18]
- By Grace we are free to choose our master [19-23]

We will always be slaves to something or someone! [15-18]

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! [15]: After explaining why grace ABSOLUTELY does not give license to sin, Paul restates the original objection in verse 15. Scripture completely turns the arguments of grace haters on its head. Their assertion is that if salvation is by grace then men will not obey the law of God, but God says...

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

It is Grace alone that liberates you from sin. You did not embrace a religion when you were born again!

- Our spiritual union with Adam that brought us death was broken and in its place we were brought into spiritual union with the Son of the Living God.

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.

- We were brought from spiritual death to life.

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

- We were redeemed, which means “purchased by Christ from the slave market of sin.”

Galatians 4:4-6 ⁴ But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, ⁵ so that He might **redeem** those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. ⁶ Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

Grace...God's life giving mercy... breaks the power of sin to enslave us and raises us from the spiritual dead. Rather than Grace being the reason we go on sinning...it is the thing that makes us daily more like Jesus Christ. God restates and refines the reasons. These are really important for you to grasp....

Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey [16a]: Paul is stating the obvious here and asking us to realize its truthfulness? The word for “know” here is “understand or perceive.” Don't you understand, Paul says, what we are saying about this? When you offer yourself to someone as a slave then you are their slave.

It was a common practice for people in Paul's day to sell themselves as servants or slaves for a period of time in order to pay a debt. They were required to obey their master's wishes. If you go to a job interview tomorrow and say...”oh... and by the way....I will not be obeying your instructions or desires if you hire me”...how do you think that will end?

Either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? [16b]: Now God wants us to make this spiritual connection. Christ has liberated you from slavery to sin. You are not required to obey sin's bidding. If you do so it will not be because you are obligated or enslaved. It will be because you willingly present yourself to sin. This is like Lazarus sweeping aside the dinner his sisters prepared and saying to Christ...I would rather go back into those grave clothes and tomb. Before Christ resurrected him he had no choice in the matter...Now he ABSOLUTELY DOES!

Now let's say a word about sin and obedience here. The temptation here is to abandon everything we have learned so far and make the following bogus conclusion; “if we sin we are going to die even though we have placed our faith in Christ. If we obey we will live and go to heaven.” This is good old fashion “moralism” which says, “be good! Because God is good and it is good to be good... so be good!” But we know that we are not good. Even though we trust only in Christ, we still struggle with sin and often lose. We want to obey, but we do that imperfectly and sporadically.

So let's go back to God's Gospel. The sin resulting in death was Adam's sin. And the obedience resulting in righteousness was Christ's obedience.

Romans 5:18-19 ¹⁸ So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. 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.

The point here is that you are free to choose sin which [apart from God's grace] is the root cause of all death and misery or obedience which leads to righteousness. God is trying to help you decide what to choose now that He has set you free to follow Him.

“Either one is a slave to sin or a slave of obedience.” Paul makes it clear in this “either or” that there is no possibility of neutrality. One is never “free” from a master, and those non-Christians who think that they are “free” are under an illusion created and sustained by Satan. The choice with which people are faced is not “Should I retain my freedom or give it up and submit to God?” but rather “Should I serve sin or should I serve God?” *Moo*

But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin [17a]: Notice...”you were slaves of sin” “you used to be slaves to sin.” Now look at the beginning of verse 17. Here is what it does not say. “But thanks be to you, who quit sinning and started living righteously.” No! No! No! It says that God is to be thanked, praised, worshiped, exalted, and yes loved. We are to love the Lord because He has so graciously loved us.

1 John 4:10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

This freedom from sin’s bondage and the liberty to obey are Christ’s doing and never ever ours. We are exhorted and even commanded to embrace obedience, but for love of Christ not self-righteousness.

1 John 4:19 We love because he first loved us.

You became obedient from the heart [17b]: This is what “obedient from the heart” means. We are not trading obedience for Salvation. We are giving it from a heart overflowing with love for Christ. He is worthy to be loved by you and obeyed by you. You will not and cannot obey Him perfectly because....although you have been made alive to God you are still in your broken human body and living in a sin soaked society and world. When we see Christ...either at His imminent return or when we die this present struggle with sin will end. Our perishable bodies will be clothed with immortality. Paul describes it to the Corinthians...

1 Corinthians 15:54-57 ⁵⁴ When this perishable will have **put on** the imperishable, and this mortal will have **put on immortality**, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. ⁵⁵ "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; ⁵⁷ but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

To that form of teaching [17c]: “Or pattern of teaching.” What is this anyway? In this context it is the teaching that commitment to Christ as Savior is linked to obedience to Him as Lord. The entire construction of this verse demands this understanding. Paul does not thank the Romans, but God. If they were doing something to deliver themselves from slavery to sin and become obedient to God then they should have been the objects of his gratitude. BUT...they are not.

To which you were committed [17d]: “Committed here has nothing to do with their commitment. It is a passive which means that you believers have been handed over to the teaching. It is a word used to describe being “delivered” or even “arrested.” The NIV says:

Romans 6:17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.

We would expect Paul to say....”the form of teaching that was committed to or handed over to you.” BUT...the Scripture says that you “have been handed over” to obedience FROM THE HEART! God is on the march in your Christian life. He saves you and He takes personal initiative to deliver you from sins curse and its power to enslave you. Then He hands you over to the truth. Leon Morris says...

“The Rabbis might view themselves as the masters of their tradition, but the Christians are in subjection to the teaching God has given them. *We* do not have godliness, but godliness has *us*” **Morris**

Our part is to know His Word and trust Him....have faith in Him and all that He says.

Taken together verse seventeen says this: “We give thanks to God because although you were slaves, your hearts became obedient to the very teachings that God handed you over to.” God changed you! God made you love Him! God made you want to obey Him! God delivered you from sin and handed you over to righteousness! How can YOU not, within the limits of your own brokenness, give praise and joyful obedience to Christ?

And having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness [18]: This is the conclusion to verse 17. It is what happens when God...who is praised by us for it...works the spiritual miracle of union with Christ in His Children’s life. This is what most Christians DO NOT KNOW! It is the missing jewel in the crown!

“Having been freed from sin” means that you have been...in the past....once and for all....freed from sin. This is your condition...your state of being. “You became slaves of righteousness,” means that at that moment in the past, when you were once and for all freed from sin, you were also delivered as a slave to righteousness.” This is exactly why Paul could say this to the Ephesians....

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

By Grace we are free to choose our master [19-23]

I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. [19a]: Paul means that he is going to illustrate his spiritual teachings with human ones that they can understand. Slavery was part of the human condition that they will understand. Our humanity does not easily grasp the things of God. “Flesh” here equals our humanity. And we are weak when it comes to understanding God and the things of God. In fact, apart from the Holy Spirit you would understand almost nothing about God and the Gospel of Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:3-5 ³ I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, ⁴ and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

1 Corinthians 2:11-12 ¹¹ For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,

1 Corinthians 2:14 ¹⁴ But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness [19b]: Paul has already explained that sin rules us through our bodies. We sin with our bodies...and yes even our minds are part of our fallen bodies. This is why we are weak and even though we want to obey Christ we still give our mouths to gossip and lies and our hands to do sin's bidding.

Romans 6:12-13 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.

Resulting in further lawlessness [19c]: The more we sin the more we want to sin. Sin promises to satisfy us, but it never does. Vengeance promises to put an end to our anger and hatred but it only inflames it and provokes a response that makes us angrier and more hateful. Once you start lying you have to lie to hide the lie. And on and on it goes.

The point here is this....Because of union with Christ you have the ability to refuse to lie, gossip, curse, dishonor your spouse or children or parents, cheat or steal. Before we were saved we had no struggles with sin. We just offered ourselves to be its slaves.

So now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. [19d]: So just like you willingly gave your bodies to break God's law, hurt yourself and others with sin and defy and ignore God....NOW you should give your bodies to do the exact opposite. This is how this works. When you want to speak evil of someone say something good instead. All men are image bearers of God. God says He has freed you from sins power and that means hatred and rage and even annoyance. You have the ability to....

Titus 3:2speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. [20]: This does not mean that unsaved people never do anything good. They do, and we should thank them and be grateful when they do. What it means is that they are compelled to sin, but righteousness does not have that same power over them. Let me illustrate! Do you want to tell the truth? Do you want to overcome your anger and be loving and respectful to all men? Do you wish you would not have certain thoughts or behave or speak impulsively? If Yes then you are not free in regard to righteousness. You have been delivered over to it. You belong to Christ and the light. Hence this question....

Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. [21]: To help you in this quest, God's Word is going to reason with us. When you lived in sin did you get a lot of benefit from that? If you abused alcohol was your day after a huge blessing to you? When you disrespected your husband or did not love your wife was your evening or ensuing days joyful and loving? When you stole were you happy and prosperous? When you trusted in yourself did you have hope in times of trouble?

These are the questions we should constantly ask ourselves. Before you sin, God says, ask yourself what benefit it was to you. It may give a momentary satisfaction, but it leads to darkness and separation

from God and it was leading you to death and hell. Think about it and ask yourself why you would ever willingly commit this sin when you are free not to!

But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God [22a]: The Bible returns to these pesky tenses again. This is a restatement of verse 18. You did not free yourself but you were freed! And you are in that state this morning! It was done once and for all when The Holy Spirit regenerated you. When He made you alive to Christ and put you into spiritual union with Him.

At the same time God freed you from sin He also enslaved to Himself. You cannot make this text mean something else. The freeing from sin and the enslaving to God are both passive. They were done to you. And they have eternally transformed you.

You derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. [22b]: God tells us to think about the benefits of sin when we are tempted to obey its bogus power over us. Where does it lead...to destruction of all that is good in life and ultimately it sweeps all its captives into a Christless, and eternal hell. Think about that when you think it does not matter how you live and speak and think.

Now God tells us to do the same with regard to obeying and following after Christ. What will that get you? The exact opposite of death and misery in every way! It will result in your sanctification. This means in this case, “your transformation into the image of Christ.” The more we obey God the more we will be like Him. The more we obey Him the more we will take hold of creation’s greatest treasure. Do you want to be rich in wisdom, goodness and knowledge? Then set your affection on Christ. He has made it possible for you to obey Him by setting you free from sin bondage and making you His slaves instead. If you find that idea repugnant or distasteful then you need to consider the state of your soul.

This is the heart of The Lordship Controversy! At the moment of New Birth, God’s children are placed into life giving union with the Life Giver! Adam’s reign of sin and death are broken and Christ’s reign of righteousness and life begins. Christ’s children are made his slaves at the moment we are delivered from sin.

CONCLUSION

For the wages of sin is death [23a]: This is the summary conclusion of today’s text. The metaphor shifts from a slave owner to a captain paying his men their wages. Sin promises life but it gives death. And unlike salvation or eternal life which is given by grace alone through faith alone...death is deserved. It is what we get for sinning. And since we are slaves to sin we will surely receive the wage of eternal death.

But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. [23]: Over against this earned wage is a free gift. Slaves to sin can expect only death, but Christ has given the free gift of Eternal Life. It cannot be earned by sinners and until we trust Christ we are slaves to sin. You will never free yourself from this slavery. Your only hope is to give yourself to Christ and trust only in His righteousness and death on the cross for your sin.

Christian! Are you content to live in the grave clothes of sin? To have to jump when sin says “jump?” I thought not! The first step toward a life of loving obedience...NOT required obedience or salvation obedience, but loving obedience! The first step is to know and believe that you have been set free to become the slave of Christ. Jesus is Lord! Is He Lord to you? Is He worthy of your obedience? If you

say yes then begin today to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit for obedience to Him. Begin to take advantage of all that God has provided to conform you to Christ. The Scripture! You do not know it enough! The Holy Spirit! He is responsible to form Christ in you and to give you understanding of the Bible. You need to learn how He does that. The Church of the living God! It is the pillar and support of the truth. One hour of Bible is not enough out of 168 hours of life a week.

Finally let me leave you with this: Do you consider Jesus worthy of your love? I know you do if you are His redeemed child. I want to be very clear here. Obeying Christ does not mean that you love Him. But deep abiding love for Christ desires with every fiber to obey Him. Paul brings up obedience after six chapters of Gospel preaching. It is the fruit of the gospel not the seed of it. Paul exhorts the Philippians by holding up our dear Lord and Savior for our view. Let the eyes of your inner man behold Him in His beauty. Dear Holy Spirit make Christ's love for us vivid. Let His worthiness to be loved by us explode in our minds but even more so in our wills this morning. Cause our attitude to.....

Philippians 2:5-15 ⁵ be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. ¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed-- not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence-- continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. ¹⁴ Do everything without complaining or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe