**We Must Die to Live**

*John 12:23-26*

**Introduction**

1. “The church is a hospital for sinners, not a museum/hotel for saints.”
   1. Usually quoted with an explanation concerning people caught up in various sins needing to go to church anyway.
   2. Or quoted in context of a Calvinistic perspective of an inability to break free from sin and ultimately live righteously – so don’t speak too harshly about sin so as to make sinners uncomfortable being at church, because that’s what church is for.
2. In actuality, the church is:
   1. The body of Christ operating under the headship of Christ; kingdom subject to Christ as King following His law; spiritual house, holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices; pillar and ground of the truth; those called out of darkness/sin into light/righteousness.
   2. I.e. the church is not really a hospital for the sick, but the result of the sick being healed, and possessing the vitality of new life dedicated to the work of the Lord.
   3. So while the church may not be a museum/hotel for saints, IT IS THE BODY OF SAINTS – those set apart from sin for salvation, and the work of the Lord.
3. Problem – many hold the view which would see the above quote as being Biblical. But this view has the undertones of tolerance for sin, and a lacking full separation from the body of sin.
4. Spiritual life comes from the forgiveness of God by virtue of Christ’s perfect sacrifice, but it is not merely a freedom from the consequences of sin as we live a quasi-changed life consisting of going to church on a regular basis (playing church) and reading our Bibles every now and then.
5. Spiritual life is the state of one who is separate from sin altogether. This comes from forgiveness by virtue of Christ’s blood, but also the resurrection power of the gospel to lead us in a life of holiness.
6. Not all who have been added to the church will be blameless at the day of judgment – **EX: Revelation 3:1, 4-5** (Sardis is dead, but has a few who are undefiled)
7. Some who have been added to the church think they currently possess spiritual life. However, as they haven’t ever truly broken free from their past life of sin they do not.
8. As Jesus indicated, we must die to live – **John 12:23-26** – not exact parallel, but as Jesus had to die to be glorified, and save many, we must die to sin so we can possess spiritual life and keep it for eternity – this is what truly following/serving Jesus means.
9. The Spiritual Life Offered
10. **John 12:25** – ***“life in this world”*** – *psychē*; ***“eternal life”*** – *zōē* – the life that will be kept is spiritual in nature, thus, eternal.
    1. ***“lose it”*** vs. ***“keep it”*** – speaks of current possession with an end, vs. current possession without an end.
    2. **John 6:39-40, 47** – Everlasting life at the present, and kept even after death (physical – “raise him up at the last day”).
11. Fellowship with God
    1. **1 John 1:2-3; John 17:3** – eternal life is to know God, be in fellowship with God.
    2. God’s holiness precludes Him from having fellowship with those in sin:
       1. **1 John 1:5** – no darkness at all.
          1. **James 1:13** – entirely separate from sin.
       2. **1 Peter 1:15-16** – called to holiness because He is holy.
    3. The problem that took the relationship with God, thus spiritual life, away from man is sin.
       1. Spiritual life restored/given = reconciliation to God.
          1. Reconciliation because we were separated from God by sin – **Isaiah 59:1-2; Romans 5:10**
       2. Death = separation (**cf. James 2:26**)
          1. Thanatos – (a) the separation of the soul (the spiritual part of man) from the body (the material part), the latter ceasing to function and turning to dust…(b) the separation of man from God. (VINE)
       3. This is why Jesus was sent – **Hebrews 9:28; Matthew 1:21**
       4. God is able to forgive sin by virtue of Christ’s sacrifice for those who have faith in it – **Romans 3:24-26** (propitiation – just and justifier); **Matthew 26:28** (blood for remission of sins)
       5. Thus, POSITIVELY, spiritual life is fellowship with God – reconciliation to God.
       6. Yet, NEGATIVELY, spiritual life is death TO sin – or separation from sin.
12. Separation from Sin
    1. **Romans 8:1-2** – no condemnation, for gospel freed from sin, thus death.
    2. **Romans 6:22** – set free from sin, relationship with God.
    3. **John 8:31-32** – truly in a relationship with Christ (disciples), by being set free from sin through the truth.
    4. Mistake – viewing the spiritual life offered by God as merely an escape from the death to which sin leads.
       1. **Romans 6:23** – wages of sin is death.
       2. Implies that death is the resulting problem/consequence of SIN AS THE CAUSE.
       3. **Romans 5:12** – sin spoken of as a major problem (negative) because of the consequence of death (separation from God).
       4. **Romans 5:20-21** – grace does more than enough to address the problem of sin.
          1. In the gospel plan – “grace might reign through righteousness”
       5. **Romans 6:1-2** – Idea of continuing in sin misses the point of grace in the gospel – to break free from sin. (died – separated from)
    5. Eternal life is not a life continued with sin but free from its consequences. ETERNAL LIFE, SPIRITUAL LIFE, IS THE RESULT OF BREAKING FREE FROM SIN.
    6. Examples:
       1. Paul – **Galatians 1:22-24; 2:20**
       2. Thessalonians – **1 Thessalonians 1:9**
       3. Cretans (Paul’s instruction to Titus for teaching them) – **Titus 3:1-8**
    7. Opposite – i.e. those who thought they possessed life, but had not broken free from sin:
       1. Concerning widows – **1 Timothy 5:5-6**
       2. False Teachers – **2 Timothy 3:5**
       3. Church in Sardis – **Revelation 3:1, 3** (“repent” implies sin)
          1. Think on an individual level.
          2. Member – has a name that he is alive (member of the church) but is dead (hasn’t departed from sin).
       4. IF ONE THINKS HE HAS SPIRITUAL LIFE, BUT IS CONTINUING IN SIN, AND NOT DEDICATED TO RIGHTEOUSNESS HE DOES NOT ACTUALLY HAVE SPIRITUAL LIFE.
13. Thus, Jesus’ teaching – **John 12:25-26** – if we are to possess spiritual life, and keep it for eternity, we must hate, thus depart from, our earthly/sinful life.
    1. ***“whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it” (Mark 8:35)***.
    2. **Galatians 6:14** – world crucified to Paul.
14. The Possession of Spiritual Life (**Romans 6**)
15. The Beginning of Spiritual Life **(vv. 1-4)**
    1. **(v. 1)** – stemming from **5:20-21**.
       1. Misunderstanding of grace – grace is God saving us in spite of continuing sin.
    2. **(v. 2)** – How does grace abound much more? Frees us from sin – died = separation.
       1. Continuing in sin is to seek to undo the work of grace.
    3. **(v. 3)** – Baptism brought one into the benefits of Christ’s death.
       1. There was a death of our own – **(v. 2)**
    4. **(v. 4)** – Not only death, but resurrection – New life – explained.
       1. Context – life of sin before grace.
       2. New life – separate from sin.
16. The Implications of Being United in Christ’s Death and Resurrection **(vv. 5-14)**
    1. **(vv. 5-7)** – the significance of the death, and the implication of the resurrection.
       1. Resurrection life – newness of life **(v. 2)** – NOT LIKE THE OLD.
       2. Old? – ***“old man”*** = ***“body of sin”*** – **“done away with”**
          1. “done away with”
             1. ***“the body of sin might be brought to nothing” (ESV)***
             2. Center column reference – “rendered inoperative”
             3. *katargeō* – “to cause something to come to an end or to be no longer in existence” (BDAG)
          2. WHY? NO LONGER BE SLAVES OF SIN.
          3. Did not die to be raised to the same life – **(v. 7)** – freed.
    2. **(vv. 8-10)** – live with Christ in the same way He raised to live.
       1. **(vv. 9-10)** – dies no more. Once for all. Lives for God – not to return to death.
    3. **(v. 11)** – likewise – i.e. in the same way.
       1. Dead to sin – NOT GOING TO RETURN AGAIN. (once for all)
       2. Alive to God – i.e. to live for God, not sin.
       3. Reckon – i.e. consider yourself – behave accordingly.
    4. **(vv. 12-14)** – denotes free-will choice – presentation of members (bodies) to sin or righteousness.
       1. If you died to sin **(v. 11)** then don’t present yourself to sin any longer.
       2. **(v. 14)** – ***“shall not”*** – i.e. it shouldn’t be that you are still under sin’s dominion since God extended His grace.
          1. Implication – if you present yourself to sin you will be under its dominion.
17. The Consequences of Turning Back to Sin **(vv. 15-23)**
    1. **(v. 15)** – stemming from **(v. 14)**
       1. “not MERELY under law but ESPECIALLY under grace”
       2. Still under law and must obey.
       3. **(vv. 12, 14)** – together show that sin could still have dominion over you.
          1. If you refuse the power of God’s grace by presenting yourself to sin.
    2. **(v. 16a)** – present self to sin – slave of sin – leading to death.
    3. **(v. 17a)** – were slaves of sin.
       1. ***“God be thanked”*** – i.e. because you aren’t any longer.
       2. **(v. 11)** – reckon self as such and act like it.
          1. Will be again if you don’t live free from it.
    4. **(v. 18a)** – set free from sin.
    5. **(v. 19b)** – presented self as slaves of sin – compounded to more sin (sin’s dominion).
    6. **(v. 20)** – condition – free from righteousness.
       1. Do you think you are righteous because you do things that Christians are to do? (Church, pray, worship, etc.)
       2. You are not if you are presenting self to sin.
    7. **(vv. 21, 23)** – end is death – not good – you don’t live.
18. The Reward of Slavery to Righteousness **(vv. 15-23)**
    1. **(v. 16)** – slaves of obedience.
       1. This would mean constant submission to God, not continuing in sin.
       2. Reward – righteousness.
       3. Implied – righteousness is not rewarded in spite of sin, but separate from sin.
    2. **(v. 17)** – released from slavery to sin in obedience to the gospel.
       1. Form – mold – doctrine (gospel) **(vv. 1-4** – obeyed in baptism)
       2. Delivered – i.e. taken to it as a slave in change of ownership.
          1. Sin owned you.
          2. Freed from sin.
          3. Form of doctrine – gospel – owns you now.
             1. Seen in obedience to it.
             2. Only alternative is that sin still owns you.
    3. **(v. 18b)** – slave of righteousness – only do the bidding of righteousness.
    4. **(v. 19c)** – present to righteousness – compounds upon itself.
       1. Further and further away from sin.
       2. Holiness – separation – (**cf. 2 Corinthians 7:1** – perfecting holiness)
    5. **(v. 20)** – implication – if not slaves of sin, then you are righteous – as you conform to the gospel **(v. 17).**
    6. **(vv. 22-23)** – slaves of God – doing only His will – holiness, and everlasting life.
       1. Everlasting life is not gifted in spite of sin, but in the absence of sin.
       2. To continue in sin is to refuse the gift.
19. Application – we must die to live – if we think we are alive with Christ spiritually because of our baptism, but we do not understand the implications of our choice and dedication in such, and we haven’t made the decision to break free from sin, then we are actually dead in sin again.

**Conclusion**

1. **John 12:23-26** – Jesus made very clear, here and in other places, that in order to live with Him spiritually we must break free from our lives of sin – die to sin.
2. If we think we are right with God, but our bodies are still alive to sinful practice, then we are fooling ourselves.
3. The grace of God does not allow us to get off scot free concerning the practice of sin.
4. The grace of God grants the power to break entirely free from sin and live for righteousness.
5. As spiritual life is the result and existence of separation from sin, then we must die to our lives of sin to live spiritually.