

New allegiance, new affections

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[0 : 00] Well, let's turn once again then, shall we, to Romans chapter 6, and we're looking at the second half of the chapter, right through to chapter 7, verse 6.

There are many people whose life experience is diminished and destructive, really, in a whole variety of different ways, because their thinking is dysfunctional.

They have distorted and irrational beliefs about themselves, about the world, and about their future. Of course, all of us are like that to some degree at some times, but for some people, their thinking is so skewed and their behavior becomes so deeply affected that their whole lives become crippled by it.

Perhaps manifest in all kinds of obsessions, anxieties, depression, and so on. And what they often need is what is called cognitive therapy, that is, help from a doctor or a therapist to reshape their thinking, to realign their thinking with reality, so that they begin to see what is really true, what is objectively true about themselves and the world.

And so that they begin to live and act in line with that reality, not in line with their distorted view of reality.

[1 : 32] That's an approach that was pioneered by an American psychiatrist called Aaron Beck in the 1960s, and it's used very widely and with great effect today. But in fact, the original cognitive therapy is found right here in the Bible.

In fact, the whole Christian gospel is an exercise in divine cognitive therapy. God, the great therapist, is dealing with the dysfunction of man, which is Romans 1 verse 18 says.

In fact, our problem is, we have in our unrighteousness suppressed the truth. We've become futile in our thinking, says Paul. We've exchanged the truth of God for a lie.

And as a result, the whole of our human experience, our human behavior, has descended into a spiral of destructive and dysfunctional behavior.

Well, of course, because dysfunctional thinking will always, in the end, lead to dysfunctional living. And only the gospel shines the light of reality into this catastrophic mess, in order to show the way back to true health and true humanity, through the redemption, through the liberation, says Paul, that comes in Jesus Christ alone.

[2 : 54] But even when we've come to Christ through faith, and been rescued from the wrath of God, and been reconciled to God, it can still take an awful lot of ongoing therapy, as it were.

The reshaping of our thinking by the gospel of grace can take an awful lot of that to begin to enable us to really start to fully experience the effects of this redemption, this liberation from sin, in our Christian lives.

Because, you see, the implications of the gospel are far, far greater than most of us ever realize.

And we need to know the full reality of what's happened to us, and what's happened for us, through the saving work of Jesus Christ.

And so here in Romans chapter 6, Paul is pressing home his ongoing gospel cognitive therapy, as it were, so that we will begin to truly live the truth of what's really already ours in Jesus Christ.

Three times, you've probably noticed, at the beginning of each of these sections, he begins with a question, Do you not know? Verse 3 and verse 16 of chapter 6 and verse 1 of chapter 7.

[4 : 06] All questions, ultimately, about our Christian experience, or our lack of Christian experience, comes down to a deficit in knowing, in cognition, about the real truth of the gospel and all its implications.

I don't mean just intellectual knowledge, but I mean receiving the truth as real truth that we build our lives on and live upon daily, knowing it to be true.

Now, last time, before we broke for Christmas, we looked at the first 14 verses of chapter 6, where Paul deals with the question in verse 1, Are we to remain in sin?

In other words, he's saying, Is this all there is in our present Christian experience? Grace abounded over sin, says chapter 5, verse 20, so that as sin reigned in death, grace might also reign through righteousness, leading to eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Yes, that is our future hope. We're sure about that. But meantime, is this it? We find ourselves still sinning.

[5 : 14] And we know that we're still mortal. We'll die. So, is it just an assurance of the future that we have? And is there not really that much difference in the present?

Are we to expect little change in our present Christian life? No, says Paul. Absolutely not. We died to sin. How can we possibly go on living as though that were not so, and sin were our master?

The justifying declaration that liberated us from sin's guilt and from the shadow of death also delivered us from sin's power, Paul says.

The shadow of its dominion over us. Then you know that, as Paul says in verse 3 of chapter 6. You need to know that. You need to take cognizance of that. Redemption means that you have been regenerated, reborn, into a wholly new humanity.

You're out of the old humanity in Adam, and now you belong to a new humanity altogether, in Christ. So there's a decisive no longer about the experience of every true Christian believer.

[6 : 26] Verse 6 of chapter 6 tells us plainly, our old self, the person that we once were in Adam, has been crucified with Christ. Once and for all. It's gone. It's dead.

True, he says, there is a not yet in our experience. Verse 5 and verse 8 of chapter 6 showed that. They made it plain. We await a resurrection like his. That is a bodily resurrection.

We believe that one day we shall live with him, says verse 8. That is in bodies raised in sinless glory. That's the future. But there is, nevertheless, there is also a definitive already about our experience now.

We are already raised spiritually with Jesus. That's what verse 11 says. We walk in newness of life now. And we must reckon to be true, says Paul, what we know is true.

That we are dead to sin and we are alive to God in Christ Jesus. We are united to the risen Jesus Christ now by his Holy Spirit who has been poured into our hearts.

[7 : 33] That's what being a Christian believer is. That the eternal life that we are promised, the life of the age to come, has begun now in us by the Holy Spirit.

That's why the last verse we read this morning, verse 6 of chapter 7, says that we live now in the new life of the Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. If anyone is in Christ, Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 5, he is a new creation.

Now, the old has gone, the new has come. It's as decisive as that. As a decisive no longer about the Christian life.

And that is the overwhelming focus of verses 1 to 14. No longer are we slaves to sin. No longer, therefore, can we think and behave as though we were.

Think about that, says Paul. Cogitate on that. Do you not know that? You need to know that. Now, that's therapy session 1, if you like.

[8 : 38] Know what you are liberated from and that you are liberated from it, from sin's dominion and power over you. And then we come to sessions 2 and 3, which is really more of the same, but with a particular focus in the rest of chapter 6 and the beginning of chapter 7 on what we are liberated for and indeed whom we are liberated for.

Do you not know, says Paul, in verses 15 to 23, that you now belong to a new household, the household of life, not death, eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And do you not know, he says, in verses 1 to 6 of chapter 7, that you are now bound to a new husband, the true relationship of life and not death, the new life of the Spirit of Christ.

You need to know this, says Paul, because if you don't, then your whole Christian life, at best, is going to be stunted. And at worst, it's going to be severely dysfunctional, a mere shadow of what it should be and what Christ has liberated you so that it will be and can be.

So let's submit ourselves then to more of this gospel cognitive therapy as we look in detail at these verses. First, look at verses 15 to 23, where the focus is on what we are liberated for.

[10 : 04] In Christ, says Paul, we belong to a new household. We've been liberated for allegiance to a new Lord. We have a new master of the household to serve in our lives.

Paradoxically, Paul is saying this. He says, we're being freed from slavery for slavery, for slavery to God himself. Now the question in verse 15, if you look at it, it arises from the assertion in verse 14 that we're not under law, that is under its dominion, but under grace.

It's a similar question to verse 1, of chapter 6, but slightly different. In verse 1, it was about our status as Christians. The question was, are we to remain in sin?

That is, in the meantime, is this all it is? Do we just remain in this realm of sin, like the old order? But now the question is, well, are we to sin?

If we're then free from that whole world order, Paul, which you say, seems to be the order of sin and of death and of wrath and of law, then does that mean that we're free from all law, from all restraint, to live a totally autonomous, self-pleasing life?

[11 : 25] Well, the answer again, of course, is absolutely not, by no means. Even to ask that kind of question, Paul is saying, is to display an ignorance of the whole nature of what I'm talking about when I talk about sin and salvation, when I tell you about what redemption means.

It means rescue from serving one master, being under his total power and rule, to being under another master and under his total power and rule.

It's rather as that well-known theologian to aging hippies once sang, you've got to serve somebody. Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you're going to have to serve somebody.

Now, what Bob Dylan was singing there is exactly what Paul is saying here in verse 16. Look at it. Everybody serves one master or other, he says. And that master in the ultimate sense is either sin, which leads to death, or it's obedience, that is, obedience to God in Christ, which leads to righteousness and ultimately life.

You see, you absolutely must get this clear. A lot of Christians are confused about this, so listen carefully. Salvation is absolutely not a question of grace over against obedience, or faith over against obedience.

[12 : 51] Because if obedience was somehow the opposite of faith. Paul is absolutely clear, faith is obedience. obedience. He calls it the obedience of faith.

But it's obedience to God and not obedience to sin. It's all a question of whom do you obey? Whom do you worship and serve?

Who controls your whole life? Is it the Lord through obedience and submission to Jesus? or is it another? And any other ultimately simply means lordship to sin and to the devil himself.

The very heart of sin is breaking the first commandment, isn't it? You shall have no other gods before me. That's a great challenge all the way through the Old Testament story, wasn't it?

To serve God and him alone. One great classic instance was on Mount Carmel, the showdown between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. If the Lord is God, follow him, says Elijah, but if Baal is God, then follow him.

[14 : 02] Because we're all serving somebody, either God or Baal, either God or sin and the devil himself. And it's easy to tell, Paul says in verse 16, who it is that your master really is.

You're slaves, he says, of the ones that you obey in life. You're enslaved, in other words, to what you give yourselves wholly to in order to find the liberation, the meaning, the identity that you crave in life.

And ultimately, it's either sin, which promises life so often, but in reality only leads to death, or it's obedience to God, which leads to righteousness and real life, life eternal.

sin, of course, is a supremely deceptive power. We'll see that when we come to chapter 7, verse 11. Sin can even seize the opportunity in God's good commandment to deceive us.

And as people can think that they're very, very religious, but as Paul says back in chapter 2, the truth is their heart, in fact, is uncircumcised. They don't obey the truth, they're obeying unrighteousness.

[15 : 13] At heart, they're not God-seekers seeking his glory and honour and immortality, they're self-seekers. And there's multiple forms, aren't there, of this self-desire in the human heart, of deception.

People present themselves as willing slaves to all kinds of things. Maybe it's their career, maybe it's their education, often it's to an ideology or a cause, to all kinds of different ambitions, to relationships, to their children perhaps, to money, so often in our world, and even to religion, perhaps that's the most deceptive of them all.

There are a thousand things in life that promise life, promise fulfillment, but in reality, they're all just deceptive disguises worn by the great deceiver himself, to hold us as obedient slaves slaves to sin, a slavery that only ever ends in death.

But look at verse 17, thanks be to God, says Paul, if you're a true believer by faith, then you have resolutely already changed master. For you, there is a new lordship, a new loyalty, a new life.

So verses 17 to the first half of verse 19 tell us clearly that you live under a new lordship. But you who were once slaves of sin, verse 17, have become, verse 18, slaves of righteousness.

[16:49] He immediately adds a caveat there in verse 19 because it seems rather absurd, doesn't it, to say that you've been saved into slavery. Don't be mistaken, Paul's saying, they're very different slaveries, I'll explain that, but do get my point.

There is absolutely no such thing, he's saying, as a liberation in vacuo. There's no such thing as human autonomy, as though we can break free from any rule over our lives and just be completely alone to ourselves, masters of our own destiny.

Like that poem *Invictus* tells us. Or as Freddie Mercury, the pop singer, used to sing, I want to break free. Well, poor Freddie Mercury broke free, didn't he?

He lived the life that he wanted. took him to an early grave. Christopher Ash very helpfully points this out, that in World War II terms, there is no such thing as spiritual Switzerland.

There's no neutrality. You're under one lordship or another. But liberation from sin is liberation for God, and it's for a new liberating lordship under the Lord Jesus Christ.

[18:07] How has that happened? Well, we've already seen it, haven't we? It's happened through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. It's through having our hearts changed, renewed by the Holy Spirit. It's through our death with Jesus in his death, and our rebirth as a new creation with him in his risen life.

But look at verse 17. Look at how Paul describes that event here. our liberation from the lordship of sin into the lordship of Christ.

He says it's through obedience from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed. That's what real faith is. Remember chapter 2?

It's a real circumcision of heart by the Spirit of God. It's something to which we were committed, handed over, entrusted to by God himself.

the verb's passive. We were committed over to it by God. Because only God can quicken the heart and bring spiritual life. But also notice that it's marked in us always by real heart obedience to the teaching, that is to the truth of the gospel of God.

[19:22] The form, the pattern, the mold of teaching, the word that's translated that way in our ESV or form of teaching in the NIV. It means a pattern, a mold.

It's the shape made by a brand or a pattern pushed into something soft. And you see what Paul is saying is when God's saving truth impresses itself truly on somebody's heart, then their heart, indeed the whole of their life, will be decisively shaped and fashioned into that image, the image of Christ, his likeness.

And it will be that more and more and more genuine faith. Just as a slave would bear the imprint of his own master, or just as a company today when it's taken over by a new company is rebranded so that it takes the shape and the form and the look of the new, so also in our liberation we're marked by the unmistakable brand of new ownership.

And that brand is heart obedience to the truth of God in Jesus Christ. So of course that means that far from being under grace, meaning that we live a life of disobedience to God's commands, it's the very opposite.

Obedience, real heart obedience to the truth is the birthmark of true faith. The apostle Peter puts it very starkly in a similar way in 1 Peter 1 verse 22.

[20:55] Our souls, he says, are purified by obedience to the truth. We've been born again, he says, through the living and abiding word of God.

We're redeemed into a new lordship, says Paul, through obedience from the heart to the pattern, the mold of teaching to which you were committed by God through the preaching of the gospel.

That's important to remember, by the way. It's popular today when talking about truth, to use that catchphrase and say truth is a person. Truth isn't just propositions, meaning truth is Jesus and in Jesus.

You've got to ask the question, haven't you, which Jesus are you talking about? Because the real Jesus, the Jesus who said, indeed I am the truth, is the Jesus Christ of the Bible, of the scriptures. He's the Jesus of the apostolic gospel. He's no other Jesus. Any other Jesus says, Paul is no Jesus at all and no gospel at all. So we must commit people to this Jesus, the Jesus of scripture.

[22 : 02] And we must call them to commit to him also. Not to some other idea of Jesus, not to some emotional sentimental idea of Jesus that we might conjure up for ourselves.

Now Paul's saying here, all this is fact. fact, you have a new master, you have a new Lord. I'm not telling you to find a new master, you have one. You are now not slaves of sin any longer, but you are slaves of righteousness.

And so you must realign your thinking with that because otherwise your experience is going to be living totally at odds with reality. You're never going to grow, you're going to harm yourselves, you're going to be stunted.

So that's why in the second half of verse 19 he says, you need to see that since you're under a new lordship, you must be ruled by new loyalty. No longer a loyalty to sin, to impurity, to lawlessness, leading to a destructive downward path of more lawlessness, but rather to your true master, to righteousness, which is a path of sanctification or holiness as the NIV puts it.

It defies all logic, it defies all sanity, to go on presenting your members, your faculties, your mind, your body, your thoughts, your words, your deeds, to presenting them as though they were still under the old slavery.

[23 : 31] That's madness. It would have been extraordinary, wouldn't it, for the Israelites, having been liberated from the slavery, the bondage of Egypt, to become the wonderfully free people of God.

it would have been madness for them to go back voluntarily and offer themselves daily to make bricks without straw, to be beaten by the taskmasters of the Egyptians.

It would be an absurd thing to do. And yet, while they were under Moses in the wilderness and not yet reached the bounty of the promised land, they did sometimes start to hanker back to Egypt, didn't they?

They seemed to forget all the reality of what life really was like there. And they conjured up an idea in their mind that, well, perhaps it would be easier than this pilgrimage with God to be back in Egypt after all.

Let's go back, they said. They even said that at times. And Christians can do that as well, can't they? And that's what Paul warns us here, just as the book of Hebrew warns us. Don't go back.

[24 : 40] You can't go back. That's the road to absolute ruin and disaster. Don't forget verse 19, that way leads to lawlessness and worse lawlessness.

But your loyalty now is the opposite. It's the road to sanctification, that is to holiness. To wholeness. That's what holiness is, true humanity.

The humanity that God made us for and that God redeemed us for. That's your loyalty now, says Paul. And therefore, what every part of us, mind and body, must fight for is that.

Offer our body as weapons of righteousness, he says. Because this household alone is the way to life. It's the only family of life that there is.

Verses 20 to 23, you see, make that so clear, don't they? We have a new loyalty, he says, to a new lordship. We're slaves of a new master. But there are absolutely no similarities between these two.

[25 : 44] Because the old slavery was overshadowed in its entirety by death. But the new slavery, it's characterized by a holy new life. You have a new life.

He says, in verse 20, that there was indeed a certain freedom in the old way of life. The Israelites in the wilderness looked back to those Halcyon days in Egypt.

What did they remember when they looked back? Well, Numbers chapter 11 will tell you. We had free fish in Egypt, they said. And cucumbers, and garlic, and onions. That's what they remembered about Egypt.

They seem to forget totally about the overwhelming reality of the fact that you read in the early chapters of Exodus. What Egypt was full of was groaning, oppression, utter misery.

The reality was that in Egypt they were free of all righteousness, all rightness. Nothing was right about their life. Everything was wrong. But we can look back, can't we, in just the same way, to our life before Christ.

[26 : 54] Or we can look out perhaps at other people's lives without Christ and seem to hanker for the freedom to live those pleasures.

Be real, says Paul. Open your eyes, realign with reality. That is absolute nonsense. What is the real fact of that way of life, verse 21? As I said, it's best to take the question mark there after that line. Well, what fruit were you getting at that time? Answer. Things of which you are now ashamed. For the end of those things is death. That's the real truth and you know that now when you're being honest with yourself.

You know that. Don't suppress what you know to be true. You know that doing it your own way and not God's way always led to disaster. You know now that God's commands are the way of life. That's what Jesus himself said, isn't it? His command, God's commandment is eternal life. You know that. And we know that as Christians.

[28 : 01] To ignore God's commandments and rule over our life is never the path to freedom. It's never the path to happiness. It's always in the end the path to ruin and brokenness.

You ask the Christian woman who married an unbelieving man trying to convince herself that it will all be alright for me.

You ask the man who ruined his own marriage through an adulterous affair or through drink or through drugs or whatever it was. Was that the road to rightness in life?

It's the road to ruin. It's the way of shame, says Paul. You know that as a Christian. There's so many things aren't there as Christians that we're ashamed about from our former life.

We weren't ashamed then, but we are ashamed now. Because feeling shame is a mark of God's spirit within us, making us see the truth. But by total contrast, Paul says, the fact of your old slavery was shame and the bitter end of death.

[29 : 13] Now, verse 22, now as slaves of a new Lord, the fruit that you get is totally different. It's sanctification, holiness, and its glorious end, eternal life.

Slavery to sin, you see, he says, is a pathway to ruin and brokenness in life. Lawlessness, leading to more lawlessness. And in the end, it's a pathway to disintegration and death of the body, ultimately.

But slavery to God, he says, is the path to renewal and beauty in life. Righteousness, leading to wholeness, holiness. But leads ultimately to reintegration and resurrection of the body in eternal life. What a total contrast. Why could you possibly think of strolling down that road again?

And there is another total contrast in verse 23, where he sums it up. Sin is a slave master, deals out its deadly fruit exactly in proportion to what is owed and deserved.

[30 : 23] It's a wage. We truly do reap what we sow. The wages of sin is death. But God is a slave master. God gives us a free gift exceedingly and abundantly beyond all our deserving, beyond all our imagining.

Eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord. God is a slave. And so Paul says, when this is a reality, when you've been rescued from a slavery to sin, quite literally, to the household of death and hell, under a master bent on exploiting you to ruin and destruction of your personality and your whole way of life now, and ultimately, to destroy you forever.

And you've been saved into the joy of the life of a master who's devoted to the renewal and the reintegration of your humanity.

And a never-ending path to eternal life. Since that's the case, how could you do any other, he says, than verse 19? Present your members. Yield joyfully every part of your life, mind and body, as a bond slave of Jesus Christ, like Paul.

Set apart for the gospel of God. And for a life of true human holiness. That's the path to true freedom.

[31 : 44] That's the path to real liberty in life. To be a slave to him. The old colloquy says, whose service is perfect freedom.

Maybe some of you Christian young folk, or maybe some of you new Christians, you wonder why your Christian life isn't as it ought to be. It doesn't seem as fulsome and experience, perhaps as it once was.

Maybe your progress seems to have tailed off. Very tempting, isn't it, to think, well, there must be something that I'm missing. Something that I still need.

Some blessing, perhaps. Some experience. Maybe there's some place I can go to receive that and change everything. Let me suggest it's very likely to be something much more simple than that.

You just need some gospel CBT. You need to be reminded of who you are and who you serve. And you need to go on serving with zeal, yielding your members, everything you have day by day to this Lord of life.

[32 : 50] It's not a one-off. It's every day, on and on and on. That's the only road to real holiness, to real wholeness, to real happiness. Make me a captive, Lord, and then I will be free, says the hymn.

And that's the daily prayer of all true Christians and must be, according to Paul's gospel therapy. He hasn't finished his therapy session.

There's more that we need to know. There's more that we need to actively reckon on in life. Not only, says Paul, are we brought forever to belong to a new household through the justifying grace of God.

In verses 1 to 6 of chapter 7, he says we've been bound forever to a new husband by the grace of God in Christ. See, the motivation for our life isn't just that we owe allegiance to a new Lord in whose service is perfect freedom, but that we know the affection of a new lover.

That's the deepest truth about the gospel of Christ. It's not just what we're saved for, far less just what we're saved from. It's whom we are saved for.

[34 : 04] We're saved for Christ, says Paul. For the true husband, the true lover of our souls, who loved us and gave himself for us, so that we might become all that he designed us to be, and purpose us to be, and indeed redeemed us to be.

Now, these verses at the beginning of chapter 7, yes, they lead on to a long discussion of the place of the law in God's scheme of salvation. Several times Paul has alluded to that and raised it, and he's going to have to deal with it very thoroughly, as are we next time.

But first, it is important that we see these verses belong to chapter 6. They're the third aspect of Paul's exposition of our union with Christ and what it really means.

There again, verse 1, do you not know, brothers? What is it we don't know? Well, the key verse, look, is verse 4. Don't you know that being a Christian, says Paul, means not only that your life is marked by a new lordship and a new loyalty and a new life, but also most deeply and most wonderfully by a new love, by a new lover.

To be united with the Lord Jesus by faith, to be dead to sin and alive to God in Christ now, already and forever.

[35 : 24] Paul says that's to have entered into a new marriage. It's as dramatic as that. It's as dramatic, says Paul, as a poor woman who lived all her married life with a tyrant and then had been released through death and find herself in a whole new world where no longer that tyrant existed.

And to find that in that new world she is joined to the most wonderful new husband. And in his cherishing care she is renewed and repaired so that all that damaged her, all that defaced her before is being undone.

And all the brokenness of the past is being transformed into a beauty and a confidence and a strength and a fruitfulness that would have in the past seemed absolutely impossible, beyond all imagining.

So subjugated and destroyed was she by that domineering personality? Friends, that is what happens when you come to Christ.

We're joined, says Paul, to a new lover, a new life giver of our souls. The one who gave his own life for us, that is Paul says to the Ephesians, that we might be washed, sanctified, made brand new, washed in him, so that we would be presented holy and without blemish and beautiful forever.

[36 : 57] However damaged we were, however dirty we were, however dehumanized we were in the past. The wonderful call of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the call to marriage.

Will you go with this man? It's as wonderful as that. Just briefly, verses 1 to 3, you'll see it states the principle.

Everyone knows that the law binds you as long as you live, whether it's the Jewish law he's talking about or any law. And so in verses 2 and 3, he illustrates it for marriage. Death annuls a marriage, so that a widow who remarries isn't an adulteress.

And then he applies it to what he's talking about in verse 4. So also you, he says, have died to the law through the body of Christ, that you may belong, may be joined, married to another, to him who has been raised from the dead.

Now don't get confused here. Paul isn't saying that the law was our first husband. He is saying that Christ is our new husband. So we died, he says.

[38 : 07] But we now belong to another. Who is the we that died? And who is the one that we were once bound to? Well, if you look back to chapter 6, verse 6, you'll see how closely this verse parallels that one.

There Paul said that our old self, our old man, the person we once were in Adam, was crucified with Christ. So that in verse 8, he says, we died with Christ, but we, that is the new we, live with him. And here Paul's just saying the same thing, but he's speaking in terms of that union with Christ as a marriage union. Once, he says, we were trapped, trapped, trapped in a one flesh union, unbreakably, with that tyrant sin who subjugated us and domineered us and dominated us and near destroyed us.

As alas, some husbands do to a wife. But now, he says, that union is dead. We died.

And we were liberated out of that world. And there's a wholly new one flesh relationship. We live, he says, in a marriage union with him who loved us and who nurtures us and who is enabling us to become all that we were destined to be and could never be under the old life, under sin.

[39 : 31] There's a new dominant partner in our life, he says, a new leader in our life, but no longer the dark power of sin. No, verse 6, we live the new life in the Spirit of Jesus.

And just as that old union, that life we once had in the flesh, in Adam, bore fruit, he says in verse 5, for death, so also this new union in Christ also bears fruit, verse 4, for God.

That's the purpose of our union with Christ, that we should have a fruitful marriage union with him forever. Not just towards our great blessing, it certainly is our great blessing, as verse 23, chapter 6 says, the fruit that you get is sanctification and eternal life, a marvelous, marvelous blessing for all God's people.

But look at verse 4, here he says, we're joined to the risen Lord in order that we would bear fruit for God. In other words, when we're bound to Jesus, the Lord of our life, the lover of our souls, we begin at last to be what we were created to be and destined to be forever.

The fruitful, faithful image of God, as Adam was first created to be, but failed to be. Remember at the beginning, God said, let us make man in our own image, to have dominion, to reign over the world.

[40 : 56] Be fruitful, he said to them. Fill the earth and subdue it. Bring all the world under the willing submission of God. But man rebelled, humans rebelled, and the end of that was death.

But now, through God's grace, says Paul, we shall reign in life through Christ Jesus, our Lord. He said that in chapter 5, verse 17. Now at last, he says here, we shall bear fruit for God.

We shall bring God the glory that is the chief purpose of our creation. And in doing so, in serving him most fully and wholly in this new life of the Spirit, we'll discover, in fact, that that is the greatest blessing that we could ever know and experience in our life.

To turn John Piper's rather famous catchphrase around a little, we'll find that we are most satisfied in God and most satisfied in the whole of our life when he is most glorified in us.

As we become bound by the affection of our loving Lord Jesus, as we become bountiful and fruitful in his hands as he made us to be. That's what we were made for.

[42 : 15] To serve him fruitfully is perfect freedom. Ask anyone of the older saints in the church here what their life has taught them and they will tell that to you.

That to serve Christ most fully and wholeheartedly is the path of greatest joy. Is this fruitfulness that Paul speaks of here something particular?

Probably it is all the fruit of the Spirit in our lives but given Paul's great emphasis on evangelism and world mission all through this letter and given his earnest desire that the church in Rome should unite themselves with him in that great task I think it probably is worth noting but right at the beginning at the end of this letter in the envelope as we called it Paul uses that same word fruit twice very importantly in chapter 1 verse 13 he speaks about reaping a harvest of evangelistic fruit in Rome and among the whole Gentile world and likewise in chapter 15 verse 28 he speaks about the tangible fruit the money that he has gathered from the Gentiles to take to the Jews in Palestine the fruit of real worldwide fellowship in the gospel and again it's interesting isn't it that his very language that he uses about the church's call to bring the obedience of faith among all the nations of the world that also echoes the command of Genesis doesn't it to fill the earth be fruitful subdue it bring all under the submission of the lordship of God the king we need motivation to heed Paul's command in verse 19 of chapter 6 to go on yielding ourselves as slaves of righteousness so hard isn't it the daily struggle to do that but think what that call really is it's a call to your destiny to

call to the very goal of your creation that at last we know in Jesus as new men and women what God meant for human beings to be and to do to bear fruit daily for God's glory to live that new life in the spirit to show the world what true humanity is in Christ in our lives and in our community life as the church to show the world what God meant it to be and to share with the world the way to that restoring and renewing and life-giving love of our Lord Jesus Christ through the gospel that he has given us to proclaim isn't that something worth living for

I suppose that nowadays for Kate Middleton every day must be a daunting one full of responsibility tasks struggles so much to endure in the public gaze the media and all these things I wouldn't be surprised if she wakes up quite a lot of days and thinks is it all worth it so much I have to live up to all the time oh I just wish I could be normal again I think she thinks that but then perhaps she looks down at the ring on her finger and she says to herself but I'm going to be joined to the one who's going to be king and he loves me and he's chosen me of all the people on earth to be his queen to share everything that's his to belong to his royal household to be the object of his royal love so how can I not be the princess and live as the princess that he wants me to be for all to see how much greater friends is our calling to the one to whom we now belong to glorify him to live out everything that he has made us and is making us for all eternity

[46 : 42] Jesus said by this is my father glorified that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples we belong says Paul to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we might bear fruit for God so he says let's go on presenting our members every part of us as slaves of righteousness leading to holiness that's true freedom that's true life let's pray Lord the life you have lavished upon us through our Lord Jesus Christ and the love that you have poured out into our hearts by his Holy Spirit overwhelms us help us we pray to understand in our minds and our hearts the very core of our being all that we are and all that we have through Jesus

Christ our Lord and may we live out all that you have put within we might indeed bear fruit for your glory and bring praise to your name God