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## Be A Slave of Christ!

March 24, 2019 - Romans 6:12-23 - Read Passage: [epmkg.com/romans6](http://epmkg.com/romans6)

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### Notes

*(6:11-14) We come now to another aspect of the method whereby the saint obtains victory over sin. In verses 1-10, Paul has presented two main facts; first, the believer stands in the position of a permanent relationship of freedom to the sinful nature, and need not obey it, and second, the divine nature is imparted by which he is given both the desire and the power to do God's will. This is the inner spiritual machinery God has installed whereby the believer lives his Christian life. But, like an automobile engine, this machinery works best when it is serviced regularly. There is always a change for the good in a new convert's life. But if he does not understand this inner change and adjust himself properly to it, he lives a mediocre Christian life. This adjustment Paul speaks of in verses 11-13, namely, that which the believer must do if he expects the best results from this inner change God wrought in him.*

He is to do two things, *one*, reckon himself dead to sin, *two*, reckon himself alive to God. The word "reckon" is *logizomai* ( λ ο γ ι ζ ο μ α ι ), "to reckon, count, compute, to take into account." Here Paul is exhorting the saints that in their endeavor to live a life in accordance with the Word of God, they should take into account the fact that they are dead to sin, that they have been disengaged from the evil nature, that it has no power over them anymore, that they are set free from it and can say a point blank NO to it, also to take into account the fact that they are alive to God, that is, that the divine nature has been imparted with the result that that nature gives them both the desire and the power to regulate their lives in accordance with the Word of God. Now, reckoning one's self dead to sin and alive to God does not make one so. God constituted the saint so when He saved him. But the act of reckoning brings into better operation with beneficial results, the working of this inner spiritual machinery. For instance, there is a game in which a blindfolded person is brought into the room, and made to stand on a table board which rests on some books on the floor. Two young men lift the board about a foot, and warn the young man not to bump his head against the ceiling. Thinking that he is near the ceiling, he loses his balance and falls off. He lost his balance and fell because he reckoned himself where he was not. Just so, a Christian

who fails to count upon the fact that the power of the sinful nature is broken in his life, fails to get consistent victory over it, with the result that he lives a mediocre Christian life. He reckoned himself where he was not.

Another young man is blindfolded and stood on the board. He knows the game. When the board is lifted and he is warned not to bump his head against the ceiling, he remains perfectly straight and maintains his equilibrium, because he reckoned himself where he was. And so it is with a Christian who counts upon the fact that the power of the sinful nature is broken. He knows that he does not have to obey it, and that he has the power to say NO to it, and he turns his back on it and does what is right.

The Christian who does not count upon the fact that the divine nature is implanted in his inner being, goes on living his Christian life as best he can more or less in the energy of his own strength, with the result that he exhibits a mediocre Christian experience. But the believer who counts upon the fact that he is a possessor of the divine nature, ceases from his own struggles at living a Christian life, and avails himself of the life of God supplied in the divine nature. So the first adjustment the Christian should make is that of counting upon the fact that the power of the indwelling sinful nature is broken and the divine nature imparted, and order his life on that principle.

When the saint counts upon the fact that the power of the sinful nature over him is broken, he obeys the exhortation of Paul, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body." "Reign" is *basileuō* (β α σ ι λ ε υ ω), "to exercise kingly power." The verb is present imperative with the negative *mē* (μ η), which construction forbids the continuance of an action already going on. It is, "Stop allowing the sinful nature to reign as king in your mortal body." The sinful nature is a dethroned monarch. The believer has the responsibility of keeping it from mounting into the throne of his heart, the place which the Lord Jesus should occupy. The believer is well able to do this. His will is free. He has the divine nature and the Holy Spirit to urge him on, and give him the desire and the power to refuse the sinful nature and obey the Word. Paul says, "Order your behavior in the sphere of, by means of, the Spirit, and you will positively not fulfil the desires of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

Paul says, "Stop allowing the sinful nature to reign as king in your mortal body with a view to obeying it in the sphere of its passionate cravings." Now, to what does the word "it" refer, to the sinful nature or the body? Logic would lead us to relate the pronoun to the sinful nature, but Greek grammar refers it back to the body, since the pronoun is neuter, the word "sin" is feminine, and the word "body," neuter. The pronoun in Greek agrees with its antecedent in gender. It is true that the sinful desires originate with the evil nature, not with the physical body. But why does Paul in this instance relate them to the body? The answer is found in the fact that the sinful nature is an intangible, invisible entity, and cannot be watched. It is an unseen enemy whose tactics cannot be observed and therefore cannot be guarded against. But the saint is able to keep watch over the members of his

body, what his eyes look at, his ears listen to, his mind thinks about, his hands do, and where his feet carry him.

But not only will the saint who counts upon the fact that the power of the sinful nature is broken, stop allowing it to reign as king over him, but he will obey Paul's exhortation, "neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin." The verb is again present imperative with *mē* (μη), "Stop yielding." The verb is *paristēmi* (παροιστημι), "to place beside or near, to present, to proffer, to put at one's disposal." We are to stop putting the members of our body at the disposal of, at the service of the sinful nature. The word "instruments" is *hopla* (ὅπλα). In classical Greek the word referred to the weapons of the Greek soldier. Paul thinks of the members of the Christian's body as weapons to be used in the Christian warfare against evil. The saint, counting upon the fact that he has been disengaged from the evil nature, does two things, he refuses to allow it to reign as king in his life, and he stops putting his members at its disposal to be used as weapons of unrighteousness.

Now, the saint who counts upon the fact that the divine nature has been implanted, will obey Paul's exhortation, "Yield yourselves to God, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." The word "yield" is again *paristēmi* (παροιστημι), but in the aorist imperative, which commands a once for all action to be done at once. Paul says, "Put yourselves at once, and once for all, at the disposal of God, as those who are actively alive out from among those who are dead, and your members as weapons of righteousness, at the disposal of God." This is a once for all act of the saint dedicating himself to God and His service, an act to be lived by, and upon the basis of its implications, moment by moment. The saint should live his life every day with the consciousness of that fact in his mind.

When the saint obeys the instructions laid down in these verses relative to his adjustment to the evil nature and the divine nature, Paul says, "The sinful nature will not exercise lordship over you," and he gives the reason, "You are not under law but under grace." To be under law refers to an unsaved person who attempts to live in obedience to the law of God. To be under grace is to be a saved person who has been the subject of the surgical operation in which the power of the sinful nature has been broken and the divine nature implanted. The poet says, "Do this and live, the law commands, but gives me neither feet nor hands. A better word the gospel brings. It bids me fly and gives me wings." Wings in Scripture, speak of supernatural power.

Translation. Thus also be constantly counting upon the fact that on the one hand, you are dead ones with respect to the sinful nature, and on the other, that you are living ones with respect to God in Christ Jesus. Stop therefore allowing the sinful nature to reign as king in your mortal body with a view to obeying it (the body) in its passionate cravings. Moreover, stop putting your members at the disposal of the sinful nature as weapons of unrighteousness, but by a once for all act and at once, put yourselves at the disposal of God as those who are actively alive out from among the dead, and your

members as weapons of righteousness at the disposal of God, for (then) the sinful nature will not exercise lordship over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

*(6:15) In verses 2–14, Paul has answered his listener's question regarding the proposed habitual yieldedness of the believer to the evil nature, by showing that that was a mechanical impossibility considering the way the believer's inner mechanical set up was arranged by God, the power of indwelling sin broken and the divine nature implanted. His listener comes back with another question. He says in effect, "Well then, since grace makes it impossible for the believer to sin habitually like he did before he was saved, may we Christians live a life of planned, occasional sin, since we are not under the uncompromising rule of law, but under the lenient sceptre of grace?" The verb in verse one is in the present subjunctive, speaking of habitual, continuous action. The verb in verse fifteen is in the aorist subjunctive, referring to a single act. Arthur S. Way, in his excellent translation and paraphrase of The Pauline Epistles, has read this man's mind aright when he speaks of the uncompromising rule of law and the lenient sceptre of grace. The man simply did not know grace. Law is uncompromising. But grace is never lenient. It is far stricter than law ever could be. It is a far greater deterrent of evil than law ever was. A half dozen motorcycle policemen with their motors tuned up, are a far greater deterrent to speeding, than any number of placards along the road indicating the speed limit. The Holy Spirit, indwelling the believer, takes notice of the slightest sin and convicts him of it, whereas the law could act only generally and then only when the conscience of the individual cooperated with it. Grace not only forgives, but teaches (Titus 3:11–14).*

Just because the believer now is set free from the law, does not mean that he can sin with impunity. There is a new propelling and compelling deterrent to sin, divine love, produced in the believer's being which causes him to hate sin and obey the Word of God (Gal. 5:13, John 14:21–24).

Translation. What then? Shall we sin occasionally, because we are not under law but under grace? Away with the thought.

*(6:16) Paul answers the question of the man by showing that the believer has changed masters. The argument is based upon the meaning of the Greek word translated "servants." Adolph Deissmann, in his Light From the Ancient East, says that the English word totally obscures Paul's argument here. The word is doulos ( δ ο υ λ ο ς ), the most abject, servile term for a slave in the Greek language. The believer was a slave of Satan before salvation, but since he has been saved, he is a slave of the Lord Jesus. He has changed masters because he has a new nature, the divine, and the evil nature which compelled him to serve the Devil has had its power over him broken. In the various meanings of this word doulos ( δ ο υ λ ο ς ) we will trace Paul's argument to the effect that it is an impossibility for the believer to live a life of planned occasional sin. The believer does sin at times, but he does not provide in his life's plan for occasional acts of sin. He hates sin and endeavors to keep it out of his life, and in the event*

*that he does commit an act of sin, he deals with it in confession to the Lord Jesus, putting it out of his life and receiving the cleansing the blood of our Lord offers.*

The word refers to one who is born into a condition of slavery. As we were born by natural generation, we inherited a totally depraved nature through our parents from Adam, a nature which made us love sin and compelled us to serve it habitually. Now, being born again by the act of regeneration through the agency of the Holy Spirit, we are given a new nature, the divine, which gives us both the desire and the power to do God's will. With our liberation from the compelling power of the evil nature and our acquisition of the divine nature, we have changed masters, from Satan to our Lord. Paul argues that the believer does not want to live even a life of planned, occasional sin because, in the first place he does not have to, since the power of the evil nature over him is broken, and in the second place, he does not desire to do so, since his new nature causes him to hate sin and love righteousness, and when a person does not have to do what he does not want to do, he simply does not do it. The believer has changed masters.

Again, *doulos* (δ ο υ λ ο ς) means, "one whose will is swallowed up in the will of another." Paul argues that before salvation, the person's will was swallowed up in the will of Satan, but since he has been saved, his will is swallowed up in the sweet will of God. And since that is so, he does not desire to live a life of planned occasional sin.

Again, *doulos* (δ ο υ λ ο ς) refers to one who is bound to another in bands so strong that only death can break them. The believer's identification with the Lord Jesus in His death, broke the bands which bound him to Satan. Now, he is bound to the Lord Jesus as His bondsman in bands so strong that only death can break them. Since Christ is the believer's life and He will never die again, the believer is bound to Him forever. The only way he could live a life of planned occasional sin is to become the slave of the evil nature and Satan. But his bands binding him to the Lord Jesus are unbreakable, and therefore a return to Satan and his slavery is an impossibility.

*Doulos* (Δ ο υ λ ο ς) also means, "one who serves another to the disregard of his own interests." The sinner serves Satan to the disregard of his own best interests. He does so because he is compelled to do so. He gets sin and death, sorrow and suffering. The believer, with his own will and accord, serves the Lord Jesus with an abandon that says; "Nothing matters about me, just so long as the Lord Jesus is glorified." Now, Paul argues, a person who does that, who disregards himself for the sake of the Lord Jesus, does not want to live a life of planned occasional sin.

Translation. Do you not know that to whom you put yourselves at the disposal of as slaves resulting in obedience, slaves you are to whom you render habitual obedience, whether slaves of the evil nature, resulting in death, or obedient slaves (of Christ) resulting in righteousness?

(6:17) *It is true that according to the a.v., the doctrines of salvation were delivered to us, and we by the grace of God believed them. However, that is not what Paul said in his Greek. The verb "delivered" is second person plural. The Greek text reads, "the form of doctrine into which you were delivered." That is, in salvation, God constituted the believer according to this chapter (vv. 1–14) inwardly so that he would react to the doctrines of grace by nature (the divine nature) in such a way as to receive and obey them. We were delivered into the teaching (doctrine, didachē (δ ι δ α χ η)) in that we were constituted in salvation so that we would obey it. Paul thanks God that whereas before salvation we were slaves of the evil nature, we were in salvation delivered (handed over paradidōmi (π α ρ α δ ι δ ω μ ι)) to the teachings of grace so that we become slaves of righteousness.*

Translation. But God be thanked, that you were slaves of the evil nature, but you obeyed out from the heart as a source, a type of teaching into which you were handed over.

(6:18) *"Being made free" is eleutheroō (ἐ λ ε υ θ ε ρ ο ω), "to liberate, set free from bondage, to set at liberty," Having been set free from the evil nature, the believer was constituted a slave of righteousness.*

Translation. Having been set free once for all from the evil nature, you were constituted bondslaves to righteousness.

(6:19, 20) *Paul apologizes for using the illustration drawn from human relations, that of a slave, but says that he was forced to do so because of the frailties of humanity.*

Translation. I am using an illustration drawn from human affairs because of the frailties of your humanity. For just as you placed your members as bondslaves at the disposal of uncleanness and lawlessness resulting in lawlessness, thus now place your members as bondslaves at the disposal of righteousness resulting in holiness. For when you were slaves of the evil nature, you were those who were free with respect to righteousness.

(6:21–23) *"Wages" is opsōnion (ὀ ψ ω ν ι ο ν), "whatever is bought to be eaten with bread, as fish, flesh. Corn, meat, fruits, salt, were given the soldiers instead of pay. That part of a soldier's support given him in place of pay (i.e., rations) and the money in which he is paid" (Thayer). Paul used a military term hopla (ὅ π λ α), the weapons of a Greek foot soldier, translated "instruments" (6:13). Now, he uses the illustration of a soldier's wages. The battle is between Satan's hosts of wickedness and the people of God. The wage that Satan doles out is death.*

Translation. Therefore, what fruit were you having then, upon the basis of which things now you are ashamed? For the consummation of those things is death. But now, having been set free from the evil nature and having been made bondslaves of God, you are having your fruit resulting in holiness, and the consummation, life eternal. For

the subsistence pay which the evil nature doles out is death. But the free gift of God is life eternal in Christ Jesus our Lord.<sup>1</sup>

## Romans 6:12–23

### Analysis

Paul having shown, in the preceding section, that union with Christ secures not only the pardon, but the destruction of sin, exhorts his brethren to live agreeably to the nature and design of the gospel, vs. 12, 13. As an encouragement in their efforts to resist their corruptions, he assures them that sin shall not have dominion over them, because they are not under the law, but under grace, ver. 14. This is another fundamental principle in the doctrine of sanctification. Holiness is not attained, and cannot be attained by those who, being under the law, are still unreconciled to God. It is necessary that we should enjoy his favor, in order to exercise towards him right affections. This doctrine is not justly liable to the objection, that we may sin with impunity if not under the law, ver. 15. The true situation of the Christian is illustrated by a reference to the relation between a servant and his master. Believers, before conversion, were the servants of sin; after it, they are the servants of righteousness. Formerly they were under an influence which secured their obedience to evil; now they are under an influence which secures their obedience to good. The consequence of the former service was death; of the present, life. The knowledge of these consequences tends to secure the continued fidelity of the Christian to his new Master, vs. 16–23.

### Commentary

Verse 12. *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body*, &c. This is a practical inference (ο ὅτι) from what precedes. Since the believer is in fact united to Christ in his death and life, he should live accordingly. The exhortation contained in this and the following verse has a negative and positive form—yield not to sin, but give yourselves up to God—corresponding to the clauses, *dead to sin*, and *alive unto God*, in ver. 11. *To reign* signifies to exercise uncontrolled authority. Sin, although mortified in the believer, is not destroyed. Its power to injure remains after its dominion is overthrown. The exhortation is, that we should not yield to this dethroned adversary of Christ and the soul, but strenuously strive against its efforts to gain ascendancy over us, and to bring us again into bondage. Let not sin reign *in your mortal body*. This is a difficult clause. 1. *Mortal body* may be a periphrase for *you*: 'Let not sin reign within you;' as in the next verse, *your members* may stand for *yourselves*. 2. Others say that *θνητὸς* (*mortal*) is to be taken in the figurative sense in which *νεκρὸς*, *dead*, i.e. *corrupt*, is often used. 3. Others take *σώμα* in the

<sup>1</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Vol. 2, pp. 104–112). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

sense of  $\sigma \acute{\alpha} \rho \zeta$ , *corrupt nature*, including everything in man as fallen, which is not due to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Thus Calvin says, “Nuper admonui vocem Corporis non pro carne et cute et ossibus accipi, sed pro tota hominis massa, ut ita loquar. Id certius colligere licet ex præsenti loco: quia alterum membrum, quod mox subjiciet de corporis partibus, ad animum quoque extenditur. Sic autem crasse Paulus terrenum hominem significat.” He says the word *mortal* is used, “per contemptum, ut doceat totam hominis naturam ad mortem et exitium inclinare.” So also Philippi, among the modern commentators, says that here, as in Rom. 8:10, 13, (where  $\theta \alpha \nu \alpha \tau \omicron \upsilon \nu \tau \grave{\alpha} \varsigma \pi \rho \acute{\alpha} \xi \epsilon \iota \varsigma \tau \omicron \upsilon \sigma \acute{\omega} \mu \alpha \tau \omicron \varsigma$  is opposed to  $\kappa \alpha \tau \grave{\alpha} \sigma \acute{\alpha} \rho \kappa \alpha \zeta \eta \nu$ ,)  $\sigma \acute{\omega} \mu \alpha$  is the antithesis of  $\pi \nu \epsilon \upsilon \mu \alpha$ , the latter being the soul as pervaded by the Spirit of God, and the former our nature considered as corrupt. This, however, is so contrary to the general usage of Scripture, that the ordinary sense of the words is to be preferred. Paul does not teach that the body is the source of sin, nor its exclusive or principal seat; but it is the organ of its manifestation. It is that through which the dominion of sin is outwardly revealed. The body is under the power of sin, and that power the apostle would have us resist; and on the other hand, the sensual appetites of the body tend to enslave the soul. Body and soul are so united in a common life, that to say, ‘Let not sin reign in your mortal body,’ and to say, ‘Let not sin reign in you,’ amount to the same thing. When we speak of sin as dwelling in the soul, we do not deny its relation to the body; so neither does the apostle, when he speaks of sin dwelling in the body, mean to deny its relation to the soul.

*That ye should obey it* ( $\alpha \upsilon \tau \eta \nu$ , i.e. *sin*,) *in the lusts thereof*, ( $\alpha \upsilon \tau \omicron \upsilon$ , viz. of the body.) We should not obey sin by yielding to carnal appetites. The common text has here,  $\epsilon \iota \varsigma \tau \omicron \upsilon \pi \alpha \kappa \omicron \upsilon \epsilon \iota \nu \alpha \upsilon \tau \eta \nu \tau \alpha \iota \varsigma \epsilon \pi \iota \theta \upsilon \mu \acute{\iota} \alpha \iota \varsigma \alpha \upsilon \tau \omicron \upsilon$ . Knapp, Lachmann, and other editors, adopt the simpler and better authenticated reading,  $\epsilon \iota \varsigma \tau \omicron \upsilon \pi \alpha \kappa \omicron \upsilon \epsilon \iota \nu \tau \alpha \iota \varsigma \epsilon \pi \iota \theta \upsilon \mu \acute{\iota} \alpha \iota \varsigma \alpha \upsilon \tau \omicron \upsilon$ , *to obey its lusts*, i.e. the lusts of the body. “A man,” says Olshausen, “must always serve. There is no middle ground between the service of sin and the service of God. We have justification completely, or we have it not at all. Sanctification, as springing from a living faith, and as the fruit of God’s love to us, admits of degrees, and may be more or less earnestly cultivated; but this determines, not our salvation, but only the measure of future blessedness. No wisdom or caution,” he adds, “can guard this doctrine from misunderstanding, whether such misunderstanding arise unintentionally from the understanding, or designedly from insincerity of heart. It nevertheless is the only way which leads to God, in which the sincere and humble cannot err.” “The key to the mystery,” he goes on to say, “that the doctrine of redemption, although not demanding good works, produces them, is to be found in the fact that love excites love and the desire for holiness. Hence obedience is no longer slavish. We strive to obey, not in order to be saved or to please God, but because God saves us without works or merit of our own, whom, because he is reconciled in the Beloved, we delight to serve.”

Verse 13. *Neither yield ye your members, &c.* Do not permit sin to reign in you, nor yield your powers as its instruments. *Neither yield*,  $\mu \eta \delta \grave{\epsilon} \pi \alpha \rho \iota \sigma \tau \acute{\alpha} \nu \epsilon \tau \epsilon$ . The word

means *to place by, to present*, (as an offering,) Luke 2:22; Rom. 12:1; *to give up to the power or service of*, vs. 16, 19, &c. *Your members*, either literally, members of the body, the eye, ear, hand, &c., or figuratively, your powers, whether of mind or body. The choice between the literal and figurative interpretation depends on the view taken of the preceding verse. If there  $\sigma \omega \mu \alpha$  (*body*) be understood literally, then *your members* can only mean the members of the body; but if *mortal body* is there a periphrase for *you*, then *your members* must mean *your faculties*. The  $\mu \acute{\epsilon} \lambda \eta$  (*members*) are the parts of which the  $\sigma \omega \mu \alpha$  consists; and therefore if the  $\sigma \omega \mu \alpha$  stands for the whole person, *the members* must include all our powers, mental as well as corporeal. In 7:5, Paul says that sin “did work in our members;” and in ver. 23, he speaks of “a law in his members.” In neither of those cases is the reference exclusively to the body. *As instruments of unrighteousness*. That is, instruments which unrighteousness uses, or which are employed to effect unrighteousness. The word  $\omicron \pi \lambda \alpha$  is generic; it is used in the general sense of instruments, for the tackle of a ship, the tools of an artisan, though most frequently for *weapons*. On account of this general usage, and of Paul’s own use of the word in 13:12, “armour of light,” (2 Cor. 6:7, “armour of righteousness,” and 2 Cor. 10:4, “the weapons of our warfare,”) many prefer the restricted sense in this place. Our members are regarded as weapons which sin uses to regain its dominion, or the predominance of unrighteousness. The context, however, does not favour the assumption of this allusion to a strife; and therefore the general sense of *instruments*, or *implements*, is more in keeping with the rest of the passage. *But yield yourselves unto God*;  $\alpha \lambda \lambda \alpha \pi \alpha \rho \alpha \sigma \tau \eta \sigma \alpha \tau \epsilon$ , *but, on the contrary*, present yourselves, i.e. give yourselves up to God, not only your several powers, but your very selves, a dedication which of necessity involves that of each separate faculty. In the first clause of the verse the present tense,  $\pi \epsilon \rho \iota \sigma \tau \acute{\alpha} \nu \epsilon \tau \epsilon$ , is used; here it is the first aorist, *present yourselves once for all*. *As alive from the dead*, i.e. as those who having been dead, are now alive. Having been quickened by the power of God, raised from the death of sin and all its dreadful consequences, they were bound to live unto God. Who, having been restored to life, would desire to return to the loathsomeness of the grave? *And*, i.e. and especially, your members (i.e.  $\pi \epsilon \rho \iota \sigma \tau \acute{\alpha} \nu \epsilon \tau \epsilon$ , *present your members*) as instruments of righteousness to God. Present all your powers to God, to be employed by him as implements of righteousness; that is, instruments by which righteousness may be effected.

Verse 14. *For sin shall not have dominion over you*, &c. The future here is not to be understood as expressing either a command or an exhortation, not only because the third, and not the second person is used, but also because of the connection, as indicated by *for*. We should yield ourselves to God, *for sin shall not have dominion*, &c. It is not a hopeless struggle in which the believer is engaged, but one in which victory is certain. It is a joyful confidence which the apostle here expresses, that the power of sin has been effectually broken, and the triumph of holiness effectually secured by the work of Christ. The ground of the confidence that sin shall not have dominion, is to be found in the next clause: *For ye are not under the law, but under grace*. By *law* here, is not to be understood the Mosaic law.

The sense is not, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you, because the Mosaic law is abrogated.' The word is to be taken in its widest sense. It is the rule of duty, that which binds the conscience as an expression of the will of God. This is plain: 1. From the use of the word through this epistle and other parts of the New Testament. 2. From the whole doctrine of redemption, which teaches that the law from which we are delivered by the death of Christ, is not simply the Mosaic law; we are not merely delivered from Judaism, but from the obligation of fulfilling the law of God as the condition of salvation. 3. Deliverance from the Mosaic law does not secure holiness. A man may cease to be a Jew, and yet not be a new creature in Christ Jesus. 4. The antithesis between law and grace shows that more than the law of Moses is here intended. If free from the Mosaic law, they may still be under some other law, and as little under grace as the Pharisees. To be under the law is to be under the obligation to fulfil the law of God as a rule of duty, as the condition of salvation. Whosoever is under the law in this sense, is under the curse; for the law says, "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." As no man is free from sin, as no man can perfectly keep the commandments of God, every man who rests upon his personal conformity to the law, as the ground of his acceptance with God, must be condemned. We are not under the law in this sense, but under grace; that is, under a system of gratuitous justification. We are justified by grace, without works. We are not under a legal dispensation, requiring personal conformity to the law, and entire freedom from sin, past and present, as the condition of our acceptance; but we are under a gracious dispensation, according to which God dispenses pardon freely, and accepts the sinner as a sinner, for Christ's sake, without works or merit of his own. Whoever is under the law in the sense just explained, is not only under condemnation, but he is of necessity under a legal or slavish spirit. What he does, he does as a slave, to escape punishment. But he who is under grace, who is gratuitously accepted of God, and restored to his favour, is under a filial spirit. The principle of obedience in him is love, and not fear. Here, as everywhere else in the Bible, it is assumed that the favour of God is our life. We must be reconciled to him before we can be holy; we must feel that he loves us before we can love him. Paul says it was the love of Christ to him, that constrained him to live for Him who thus loved him and gave Himself for him. The only hope therefore of sinners, is in freedom from the law, freedom from its condemnation, freedom from the obligation to fulfil it as the condition of acceptance, and freedom from its spirit. Those who are thus free, who renounce all dependence on their own merit or strength, who accept the offer of justification as a free gift of God, and who are assured that God for Christ's sake is reconciled to them, are so united to Christ that they partake of his life, and their holiness here and salvation hereafter are rendered perfectly certain.

Verse 15. *What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.* Because works are not the ground of our justification; because we are justified freely by his grace, are we at liberty to sin without fear and without restraint? Does the doctrine of gratuitous salvation give a license to the unrestrained indulgence of all evil? Such has been the objection to the doctrines of grace in all ages. And the fact that this objection was

made to Paul's teachings, proves that his doctrine is the same with that against which the same objection is still urged. As the further consideration of this difficulty is resumed in the following chapter, the apostle here contents himself with a simple negation, and a reference to the constraining influence under which the freely pardoned sinner is brought, which renders it as impossible for him to serve sin, as it is for the slave of one man to be obedient to another man. The slave *must* serve his own master.

Verse 16. *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, &c.* 'Know ye not that those who obey sin are its slaves hurried on from one degrading service to another, until it works their ruin; but those who serve holiness are constrained, though sweetly, to constancy and fidelity, until the glorious consummation of their course?' As a servant or slave is under an influence which secures obedience to his master, so also, in spiritual or moral relations, a man who serves sin is under an influence which secures the continuance of his obedience, and he who serves holiness is under an influence which effectually secures the constancy of his service. This being the case, it is not possible for the Christian or servant of holiness to be found engaged in the service of sin. The language and the construction are here nearly the same as in ver. 13. Here, as there, we have  $\pi \epsilon \rho \iota \sigma \tau \acute{\alpha} \nu \epsilon \tau \epsilon$  in the sense of giving up to the power and disposal of. Paul says, that those who give themselves up to another as  $\delta \omicron \upsilon \lambda \omicron \upsilon \varsigma \epsilon \iota \varsigma \acute{\upsilon} \pi \alpha \kappa \omicron \eta \nu$ , *slaves to obedience*, are the  $\delta \omicron \tilde{\upsilon} \lambda \omicron \iota$  of him whom they thus obey. It enters into the idea of slavery, that the subjection is absolute and continued. The slave does not obey his own will, but his master's. He is subject not for a time, but for life. He is under an influence which secures obedience. This is as true in spiritual as in external relations. He who serves sin is the slave of sin. He is under its power. He cannot free himself from its dominion. He may hate his bondage; his reason and conscience may protest against it; his will may resist it; but he is still constrained to obedience. This is the doctrine of our Lord, as taught in John 8:34: "He that committeth sin is the slave of sin." This remains true, although this service is *unto death*: "The wages of sin is death." The death intended is spiritual and eternal. It is the absolute loss of the life of the soul, which consists in the favour and fellowship of God, and conformity to his image. What is true of sin is true of holiness. He who by virtue of union with Christ is made obedient to God, becomes, as Paul says, a  $\delta \omicron \tilde{\upsilon} \lambda \omicron \varsigma \acute{\upsilon} \pi \alpha \kappa \omicron \eta \varsigma$ , *a slave of obedience*. Obedience (personified) is the master to which he is now subject. He is not only bound to obey, but he is made to obey in despite of the resistance of his still imperfectly sanctified nature. He cannot but obey. The point of analogy to which reference is here made, is the certainty of the effect, and the constraining influence by which that effect is secured. In the case both of sin and of holiness, obedience is certain; and it is rendered certain by a power superior to the will of man. The great difference is, that in the one case this subjection is abnormal and destructive, in the other it is normal and beneficent. A wise man is free in being subject to his reason. The more absolute and constant the authority of reason, the more exalted and free is the soul. In like manner, the more completely God reigns in us, the more completely we are subject to his will, so much the more are we free; that is, so much the more do we act in accordance with

the laws of our nature and the end of our being. *Servants of obedience unto righteousness; δ ι κ α ι ο σ ύ ν η* must here be taken in its subjective sense. It is inward righteousness, or holiness. And in this sense it is eternal life, and therefore antithetical to θ ά ν α τ ο ς, which is spiritual and eternal death. The service of sin results in death, the service of God results in righteousness; that is, in our being right, completely conformed to the image of God, in which the life of the soul consists.

Verse 17. *But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart, &c.* As it is the apostle's object to show that believers cannot live in sin, inasmuch as they have become the servants of another master, he applies the general truth stated in the preceding verses more directly to his immediate readers, and gives thanks that they, being emancipated from their former bondage, are now bound to a master whose service is perfect liberty. The expression in the first member of this verse is somewhat unusual, although the sense is plain: "God be thanked, that ye *were* the servants of sin;" that is, that this slavery is past; or, 'God be thanked, that ye, being the servants of sin, have obeyed,' &c.

*Ye have obeyed from the heart;* this obedience is voluntary and sincere. They had not been passively transferred from one master to another; but the power of sin being broken, they gladly renounced their bondage, and gave themselves unto God. *Ye obeyed,* says the apostle, *the form of doctrine which was delivered to you.* The τ ύ π ο ς δ ι δ α χ η ς, *the form of doctrine,* may mean the doctrine which is a τ ύ π ο ς, a model or standard to which we should conform—*sentiendi agendique norma et regula*. Calvin says it means "expressam justitiæ imaginem, quam cordibus nostris Christus insculpsit." Another explanation assumes τ ύ π ο ς to be equivalent to *form, contents,* or substance of the doctrine. Compare μό ρ φ ω σ ι ς τ η ς γ ν ω σ ε ω ς, 2:20. The former explanation is sustained by a reference to 2 Tim. 1:13, where Paul speaks of a ύ π ο τ ύ π ω σ ι ς ύ γ ι α ι ν ό ν τ ω ν λ ό γ ω ν, *a form of sound words;* that is, sound words which are a pattern or standard of faith. Compare Acts 23:25: 'Having written an epistle containing this type,' i.e. form of words. By form of doctrine is to be understood the Gospel, either in its limited sense of the doctrine of gratuitous justification through Christ, of which the apostle had been speaking; or in its wider sense of the whole doctrine of Christ as a rule both of faith and practice. The former includes the latter. He who receives Christ as priest, receives him as a Lord. He who comes to him for justification, comes also for sanctification; and therefore obedience to the call to put our trust in Christ as our righteousness, implies obedience to his whole revealed will. The words ύ π η κ ο ύ σ α τ ε ε ι ς δ ν π α ρ ε δ ό θ η τ ε τ ύ π ο ν δ ι δ α χ η ς, may be resolved thus, ύ π η κ ο ύ σ α τ ε τ υ π ω δ ι δ α χ η ς, ε ι ς δ ν π α ρ ε δ ό θ η τ ε, *ye have obeyed the type of doctrine to which ye have been delivered.* That is, the mould into which, as it were, ye have been cast; as Beza says, the gospel is regarded "quasi instar typi cujusdam, cui veluti inimitamur, ut ejus figuræ conformemur." This last idea is unnatural: ε ι ς δ ν π α ρ ε δ ό θ η τ ε is either equivalent to δ ς π α ρ ε δ ό θ η ύ μ ι ν, *which was delivered unto you,* (see Winer, § 24. 2,) or, *to which ye were delivered,* "cui divinitus traditi

estis.” That is, to which ye were subjected. The intimation is, that faith in the gospel is the gift of God, and obedience is our consequent act. “The passive ( π α ρ ε δ ό θ η τ ε , )” says Philippi, “indicates the passive relation of men to the work of regeneration, of which his activity ( ὁ π η κ ο ὕ σ α τ ε ) is the consequence, according to the familiar dictum: Ita a Spiritu Dei agimur ut ipsi quoque agamus.”

Verse 18. *Being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.* This verse may be regarded as the conclusion from what precedes, δ έ being used for ο ὕ ν : ‘Being freed *then* from sin,’ &c.; or it may be connected immediately with ver. 17. a comma instead of a period intervening: ‘Ye have obeyed the form of doctrine, having been freed,’ &c. The latter is better. Freed by the grace of God from sin as a despotic master, *ye became the servants*, ε δ ο υ λ ώ θ η τ ε , ye were made slaves to righteousness. It was not license, but a change of masters, that they had experienced. This being the case, it is impossible they should serve sin; they have now another master. A manumitted slave does not continue subject to his former master. “Absurdum est, ut post manumissionem quis in servitutis conditione maneat. Observandum, quomodo nemo possit justitiæ servire nisi Dei potentia et beneficio prius a peccati tyrannide liberatus.” *Calvin*. To the same effect our Lord says: “If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” John 8:36. This subjection to righteousness is perfect liberty. It is the subjection of the soul to God, reason, and conscience, wherein true liberty consists. This being the case, the apostle in the following verse explains the reason why he used a figure apparently so incongruous, in speaking of the relation of the believer to righteousness.

Verse 19. *I speak after the manner of men, ἄ ν θ ρ ῶ π ι ν ο ν λ έ γ ω ; I say what is human, i.e. common among men.* The only difference between this expression and the more common phrase, κ α τ ’ ἄ ν θ ρ ῶ π ο ν λ έ γ ω , is, that the former characterizes as human the thing said, and the other the manner of saying it. The idea in this case is the same. The apostle means to say, that he uses an illustration drawn from the common relations of men, to set forth the relation of the believer to God. The slave is bound to serve his master; the obedience of the believer to God is no less certain. The one is slavery, because the obedience is independent of the will, and coerced; the other is perfect freedom, because rendered from the heart, and with full consent of the will. Yet both are a δ ο υ λ ε ί α , so far as certainty of obedience is concerned. This is the common and natural interpretation of this clause. Others, however, take ἄ ν θ ρ ῶ π ι ν ο ν in the sense in which it is used in 1 Cor. 9:22. There it is opposed to what is superhuman, beyond the strength of man to bear: ‘I demand only what is human. The obedience required is, on account of the weakness of your flesh, only such as you are able to render. *For* as ye served sin, so you can serve righteousness. The one is as easy as the other. The one is the measure of the other.’ But this does violence to the connection. The ὁ σ π ε ρ — ο ὕ τ ω do not refer to the measure of the obedience, but to the change of masters: ‘As ye served sin, so now serve God.’ Besides, the principle that the measure of obedience is determined by our ability, is utterly at variance with the word of God and the dictates of conscience. The

simple design of the apostle in this passing or parenthetical remark is, to state the reason why he designated our new relation to God a slavery. He used this illustration, he says, *on account of the weakness of their flesh*; not intellectual weakness, but such as arose from the  $\sigma \acute{\alpha} \rho \xi$ , their nature as corrupt. It was their lack of spirituality which rendered such illustrations necessary. The  $\gamma \acute{\alpha} \rho$  (*for*) of the next clause refers to ver. 18: 'Being freed from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness; *for* as ye yielded your members,' &c. *Your members*, yourselves, your various faculties, with special reference to their bodily organs as the outward, visible instruments of evil. Ye yielded your members,  $\delta \omicron \upsilon \lambda \alpha$ , *bound*. This is the only passage in the New Testament in which  $\delta \omicron \upsilon \lambda \omicron \varsigma$  is used as an adjective. They yielded their members *to uncleanness and to iniquity*,  $\tau \tilde{\eta} \acute{\alpha} \kappa \alpha \theta \alpha \rho \sigma \acute{\iota} \alpha \kappa \alpha \iota \tau \tilde{\eta} \acute{\alpha} \nu \omicron \mu \acute{\iota} \alpha$ . These two words express the same thing under different aspects. Sin subjectively considered is pollution, a defilement of the soul; relatively to the law of God, it is  $\acute{\alpha} \nu \omicron \mu \acute{\iota} \alpha$ , what is unlawful, what fails of conformity to the law. In the next clause, *unto iniquity*, the word is used in a wider sense. They gave themselves up to iniquity, that is, to do evil;  $\epsilon \iota \varsigma \tau \eta \nu \acute{\alpha} \nu \omicron \mu \acute{\iota} \alpha \nu$  being equivalent to  $\epsilon \iota \varsigma \tau \omicron \pi \omicron \iota \epsilon \tilde{\iota} \nu \acute{\alpha} \nu \omicron \mu \acute{\iota} \alpha \nu$ . Men give themselves up to sin as a master, to do what the law forbids. The same idea is expressed, if  $\epsilon \iota \varsigma \tau \eta \nu \acute{\alpha} \nu \omicron \mu \acute{\iota} \alpha \nu$  means, *for the manifestation of iniquity*. So now yield your members as servants to righteousness. Having been delivered from bondage to the tyrant sin, ye should act as becomes your new relation, and be obedient to your new master, even to him who hath bought you with his blood. To righteousness, *unto holiness*,  $\epsilon \iota \varsigma \acute{\alpha} \gamma \iota \alpha \sigma \mu \acute{o} \nu$ , so as to be pure in heart and life. The proximate result of obedience to God is inward conformity to the Divine image. Compare 1 Thess. 3:3, 4, 7.

Verse 20. *For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness*. This verse introduces a confirmation of what precedes. The foregoing exhortation is enforced by the consideration developed in vs. 21, 22, that the service of sin is death. The particle  $\gamma \acute{\alpha} \rho$ , therefore, is used in its common sense, *for*, and not *namely*. Formerly, when the slaves of sin, ye were  $\epsilon \lambda \epsilon \acute{\upsilon} \theta \epsilon \rho \omicron \iota \tau \tilde{\eta} \delta \iota \kappa \alpha \iota \omicron \sigma \acute{\upsilon} \nu \eta$ , that is, either 'free in the estimation of righteousness,' ('An ille *mihi* liber, cui mulier imperat?' *Cicero*;) or, what is more natural, *as to righteousness*; so far as righteousness is concerned, ye were free. Righteousness had no power over you; your service was rendered to another master. This is not to be understood ironically, as though the apostle designed to refer to their former state as one of freedom in their estimation. It is the simple statement of a fact of experience. While the servants of sin, they did not and could not serve righteousness. Here are two services, which is to be preferred? This is the question which the apostle presents for their consideration.

Verse 21. The sense of this verse depends mainly on the pointing. It may be read thus: 'What fruit had ye then of those things of which ye are now ashamed? (Answer, *None*.) for the end of those things is death.' Or, 'What fruit had ye then? (Answer, *Such*.) of which ye are now ashamed, for,' &c. The choice between these interpretations is not very easy, and accordingly commentators are about equally divided between them. The Vulgate, the

English version, Calvin, Beza, Bengel, Meyer, Fritzsche, &c., adopt the former. Luther, Melancthon, Koppe, Tholuck, De Wette, Olshausen, &c., the latter. The decision seems to depend principally on the meaning given to the phrase, *to have fruit*. If this means, *to derive benefit*, then the sense is, 'What benefit did you derive from the things of which you are now ashamed?' The natural answer is, 'None; a course of conduct which ends in death can yield no benefit.' This gives a pertinent sense: it is suited to ver. 22, where fruit may also mean *advantage*; and especially it agrees best with the words ἐφ' ὃ ἴς, which otherwise must refer to καρπὸν, (fruit of which,) which is not natural. In favour of the second interpretation, however, it is urged that *fruit* is never in the New Testament used of reward or emolument, but always of acts. The familiar illustration is that of a tree whose fruit is good or bad according to its nature. According to this view, Paul means to ask, 'What fruit did you then produce? Such,' he answers, 'of which you are now ashamed.' Besides this general use of the word (fruit,) it is urged that in ver. 22, this is the natural sense of the word: "Ye have your fruit unto holiness;" that is, 'Ye produce fruit which tends to holiness.' "This figure," says Olshausen, "is the more significant, because it is so directly opposed to that Pelagianism which is so congenial with our fallen nature. The natural man, destitute of the knowledge of God, of himself, and of sin, dreams that by his own strength and efforts he can produce a form of virtue which can stand before the bar of God. He does not know that of necessity, and by a law of his nature, he can only produce evil fruit, just as a wild tree can produce only bitter fruit. Ever should he succeed in calling into exercise all the good he has in the most perfect form, it is so destitute of love, and so corrupted by conceit, that it merits condemnation, as fully as though the life were openly immoral. The beginning of truth, of which holiness, (which is true liberty,) by a like organic necessity and law of nature, is the fruit, is for man the acknowledgment that death reigns in him, and that he must be imbued with life." All this is true, and all this is really involved in the familiar figure which our Lord uses to illustrate the relation between the state of the heart and of the outward life. But this does not seem to be the idea which the apostle here intends to present. The phrase, καρπὸν ποιεῖν, does indeed always mean to produce fruit, and figuratively, to do good or evil; but καρπὸν ἔχειν, *to have fruit*, means to have the advantage, or profit. Thus, in 1:13, Paul says: "That I might have some fruit among you;" i.e. that he might gain something, win some souls for Christ. If this be the true meaning of the phrase here, then the former of the two interpretations is to be preferred. What advantage had you of the service of sin? None; for the end of those things, the τέλος, the final result of the service of sin, is *death*; not physical death, but the death of the soul, final and hopeless perdition. Such was their former condition; to this the contrast is given in the next verse.

Verse 22. *But now, being made free from sin, ἐλευθερωθέντες ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας; having been emancipated from one master, δουλωθέντες δευτέρῳ Θεῷ, and become slaves to God, i.e. being subject to his controlling influence by the power of his Spirit, ye have your fruit unto holiness; that is, the benefit or effect derived from the service of God is holiness. Sanctification is the proximate result of this new service. And the end eternal life. The final issue of this service is complete salvation; the restoration of the*

soul to the favour and enjoyment of God for ever. “Quemadmodum duplicem peccati finem ante proposuit, ita nunc justitiæ. Peccatum in hac vita malæ conscientiaë tormenta affert, deinde aeternam mortem. Justitiæ præsentem fructum colligimus, sanctificationem: in futurum, speramus vitam aeternam.”

Verse 23. *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.* The reason why death is the result of sin is, that sin deserves death. Death is due to it in justice. There is the same obligation in justice, that sin should be followed by death, as that the labourer should receive his wages. As it would be unjust, and therefore wrong, to defraud the labourer of his stipulated reward, so it would be unjust to allow sin to go unpunished. Those, therefore, who hope for pardon without an atonement, hope that God will in the end prove unjust. The word  $\acute{\omicron}\phi\acute{\omega}\nu\iota\alpha$  is, strictly, the rations of soldiers; in a wider sense, the same as  $\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota\mu\sigma\theta\acute{\iota}\alpha$ , or  $\mu\iota\sigma\theta\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ , anything which is due as a matter of debt. *But the gift of God, τὸ δὲ χάρισμα τοῦ Θεοῦ*, the free, unmerited gift of God, is eternal life. The connection between holiness and life is no less certain than that between sin and death, but on different grounds. Sin deserves death; holiness is itself the gift of God, and is freely crowned with eternal life. The idea of merit is everywhere and in every way excluded from the gospel method of salvation. It is a system of grace, from the beginning to the consummation. *Through* (rather *in*) *Jesus Christ our Lord.* It is in Christ, as united to him, that we are made partakers of eternal life. Jesus Christ and his gospel, then, instead of being the ministers of sin—as the Jews, and since them, the opponents of the doctrines of grace, confidently asserted—effectually secure what the law never could accomplish, an obedience resulting in holiness here, and in eternal life hereafter.

## Doctrine

1. The leading doctrine of this section, and of the whole gospel, in reference to sanctification, is, that grace, instead of leading to the indulgence of sin, is essential to the exercise of holiness. So long as we are under the influence of a self-righteous or legal spirit, the motive and aim of all good works are wrong or defective. The motive is fear, or some merely natural affection, and the aim, to merit the bestowment of good. But when we accept of the gracious offers of the gospel, and feel that our sins are gratuitously pardoned, a sense of the divine love, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, awakens all holy affections. The motive to obedience is now love, and its aim the glory of God, ver. 14, &c.

2. Paul teaches that it is not only obligatory on Christians to renounce the service of sin, but that, in point of fact, the authority and power of their former master are destroyed, and those of their new master experienced, whenever they embrace the gospel. This is the very nature of the change. The charge, therefore, that the gospel leads to the service of sin, is an absurdity, vs. 15–18.

3. Religion is essentially active. It is the yielding up of ourselves, with all our powers, to God, and the actual employment of them as instruments in doing good. Nothing can be at a greater remove from this, than making religion a mere matter of indolent profession, (a saying, Lord, Lord,) ver. 12, &c.

4. Both from the nature of things, and the appointment of God, the wages of sin is death. It renders intercourse with God, who is the fountain of life, impossible. It consists in the exercise of feelings, in their own nature, inconsistent with happiness; it constantly increases in malignity, and in power to destroy the peace of the soul. Apart from these essential tendencies, its relation to conscience and the justice of God, renders the connection between sin and misery indissoluble. Salvation in sin is as much a contradiction, as happiness in misery, vs. 21, 23.

5. Eternal life is the gift of God. It does not, like eternal death, flow, as a natural consequence, from anything in us. With the holy angels, who have never lost the favour of God, this may be the case. But the tendency of all that belongs to us, is to death; this must be counteracted; those excellences, in which life consists, and from which it flows, must be produced, sustained, and strengthened by the constant, condescending, and long-suffering grace of the Holy Spirit. The life thus graciously produced, and graciously sustained, is at last graciously crowned with eternal glory, vs. 22, 23.

## Remarks

1. We should cultivate a sense of the Divine favour as a means to holiness. We must cease to be slaves, before we can be children. We must be free from the dominion of fear, before we can be under the government of love. A self-righteous spirit, therefore, is not more inconsistent with reliance on the righteousness of Christ, in order to justification, than it is with the existence and progress of sanctification. Whatever tends to destroy a sense of the Divine favour, must be inimical to holiness. Hence the necessity of keeping a conscience void of offence, and of maintaining uninterrupted our union with Christ as our sacrifice and advocate, ver. 14, &c.

2. Those Christians are under a great mistake, who suppose that despondency is favourable to piety. Happiness is one of the elements of life. Hope and joy are twin daughters of piety, and cannot, without violence and injury, be separated from their parent. To rejoice is as much a duty as it is a privilege, ver. 14, &c.

3. Sinners are slaves. Sin reigns over them; and all their powers are delivered to this master as instruments of unrighteousness. He secures obedience with infallible certainty; his bonds become stronger every day, and his wages are death. From his tyranny and recompense there is no deliverance by the law; our only hope is in Jesus Christ our Lord, vs. 12, 13, 16, &c.

4. Christians are the servants of God. He reigns over them, and all their powers are consecrated to him. He, too, secures fidelity, and his bonds of love and duty become stronger every day. His reward is eternal life, vs. 12, 13, 16, &c.

5. It is of God, that those who were once the servants of sin, become the servants of righteousness. To him, therefore, all the praise and gratitude belong, ver. 17.

6. When a man is the slave of sin, he commonly thinks himself free; and when most degraded, is often the most proud. When truly free, he feels himself most strongly bound to God; and when most elevated, is most humble, vs. 20–22.

7. Self-abasement, or shame in view of his past life, is the necessary result of those views of his duty and destiny, which every Christian obtains when he becomes the servant of God, ver. 21.<sup>2</sup>

## B. The imperatives for the sanctified

(6:12–23)

### 12–14

**12** At verse 12 we have again the language of exhortation, introduced in the form of inference to be drawn from what precedes: “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to the end that ye should obey its lusts”. It is not to be supposed that sin is conceived of as reigning in the believer and that now he is exhorted to terminate that reign of sin. This would run counter to all that has been set forth in the preceding verses regarding the status of the believer as dead to sin and alive to God. And, furthermore, we have in this passage the assurance that sin will not have dominion because the believer is not under law but under grace (vs. 14). The force of the imperative can be understood only in the light of the relation of the indicative to the imperative. Sin does not have the dominion—this is the indicative. This indicative is not only expressly asserted in verse 14, it is implicit in all that the apostle has argued in the verses that precede verse 12. Let not sin reign—this is the imperative. And it flows from the indicative. It is only because sin does not reign that it can be said, “Therefore let not sin reign”. In other words, the presupposition of the exhortation is not that sin reigns but the opposite, that it does not reign, and it is for that reason that the exhortation can have validity and appeal. To say to the slave who has not been emancipated, “Do not behave as a slave” is to mock his enslavement. But to say the same to the slave who has been set free is the necessary appeal to put into effect the privileges and

<sup>2</sup> Hodge, C. (1882). [A commentary on the Epistle to the Romans](#) (New Edition, pp. 318–334). Grand Rapids, MI: Louis Kregel.

rights of his liberation. So in this case the sequence is: sin does not have the dominion; therefore do not allow it to reign. Deliverance from the dominion of sin is both the basis of and the incentive to the fulfilment of the exhortation, "Let not sin reign".

The mortal body is without question the physical organism as subject to dissolution (*cf.* vs. 6; 8:10, 11), and the lusts are those particularly associated with the body. The concrete and practical interest of the apostle is evinced in the prominence given here, as in verse 6, to the lust associated with and registered through the body. The lusts of the body are conceived of as demanding obedience. It is a spurious spirituality that can be indifferent to the claims of holiness as they bear upon the sanctification of our physical being. Death to sin and life to God, deliverance from the dominion of sin, will demonstrate their reality in the tangible and visible by denying to the lusts of the body the gratification they demand. And the mortality of the body underlines the folly of yielding to its lust; the life of the believer is incorruptible and immortal.

**13** The interpretation of verse 13 must be governed by the interpretation given above of verse 12. If "mortal body" means the physical organism, then the "members" referred to in this verse must mean the members of the body, such as eye, hand, and foot. Sin is conceived of as a master at whose disposal we place these members in order that they may be instruments to promote unrighteousness. The exhortation is to the effect that we are not to go on placing our physical organs at the disposal of sin for the furtherance of such an end. The positive counterpart is that we are to present ourselves to God as those alive from the dead and our members as instruments of righteousness to God. This fuller statement shows that although the thought had been concentrated upon the bodily (vss. 12, 13a), yet the apostle does not regard the physical as comprehending the sum-total of devotion. Believers are to present *themselves* to God as those alive from the dead. Here the whole personality is in view. In the last clause the members of the body are mentioned again. The tense that is used in this instance indicates the once-for-allness of the dedication involved in the presentation of ourselves and of our members. We are regarded as presenting ourselves and our members once for all to God for his service and the promotion of righteousness.

**14** The first clause in verse 14, "For sin will not have dominion over you" is a statement of assured fact and should not be interpreted as imperative nor as pointing to a blessing reserved for the future. As in instances noted already, the future tense here also expresses the certainty of that which is affirmed. As indicative rather than imperative the assurance affirmed makes valid and relevant the exhortations in verses 12 and 13 and provides the encouragement and incentive to the fulfilment of these imperatives. Obedience to the latter is supported by the assurance that God's grace insures the realization of what is contemplated in the exhortations.

The second clause in verse 14, "For ye are not under law but under grace" gives the reason why sin will not exercise the dominion. "Law" in this case must be understood in the general sense of law as law. That it is not to be understood in the sense of the Mosaic law as

an economy appears plainly from the fact that many who were under the Mosaic economy were the recipients of grace and in that regard were under grace, and also from the fact that relief from the Mosaic law as an economy does not of itself place persons in the category of being under grace. Law must be understood, therefore, in much more general terms of law as commandment. In order to understand the force of the clause in question it is necessary to state what law *can* do and what it *cannot* do, and it is in the light of what it cannot do that the meaning of “under grace” will become apparent. (1) Law commands and demands. (2) Law pronounces approval and blessing upon conformity to its demands (*cf.* 7:10; Gal. 3:12). (3) Law pronounces condemnation upon every infraction of its demand (*cf.* Gal. 3:10). (4) Law exposes and convicts of sin (*cf.* 7:7, 14; Heb. 4:12). (5) Law excites and incites sin to more aggravated transgression (*cf.* 7:8, 9, 11, 13). What law *cannot* do is implicit in these limits of its potency. (1) Law can do nothing to justify the person who has violated it. (2) Law can do nothing to relieve the bondage of sin; it accentuates and confirms that bondage.

It is this last feature of the impotency of the law that is particularly in view in the clause in question. The person who is “under law”, upon whom only law has been brought to bear, whose life is being determined by the resources of law, is the bondservant of sin. Hence to be “under law” is to be the bondservant of sin. It is in this light that “under grace” becomes significant; the word “grace” sums up everything that by way of contrast with law is embraced in the provisions of redemption. Believers have come *under* all the resources of redeeming and renewing grace which find their epitome in the death and resurrection of Christ. The virtue which ever continues to emanate from the death and resurrection of Christ is operative in them through union with him. All of this the expression “under grace” implies. And, in terms of this passage and of the subject with which it is concerned, there is an absolute antithesis between the potency and provisions of law and the potency and provisions of grace. Grace is the sovereign will and power of God coming to expression for the deliverance of men from the servitude of sin. Because this is so, to be “under grace” is the guarantee that sin will not exercise the dominion—“sin will not lord it over you, for ye are not under law but under grace”.

## 15-23

**15** At verse 15 the apostle takes up again essentially the same question as that with which the chapter opened. The question, however, assumes a new form because the precise consideration which provokes the question is different. At verse 1 the question is oriented to the consideration that where sin abounded grace did much more abound and to the fallacy of inferring from this fact that we may continue in sin so that grace may abound all the more. At verse 15 the question is oriented to the consideration that we are not under law and to the fallacy of the inference that we may, for that reason, transgress the law, that the law ceases to have relevance to us and that therefore we may sin. “What then? are we to sin, because we are not under law, but under grace?” The answer is the usual formula of

emphatic denial which again is properly rendered by “God forbid”. This indicates that not being “under law”, in the sense of the preceding verse, in no way releases us from the obligation to conformity with the law and gives no license to sin as the transgression of the law. In one sense the believer is not “under law”, in another sense he is (*cf.* 1 Cor. 9:21). In the verses which follow verse 15 Paul proceeds to show how intolerable is the inference that we may sin because we are not under law but under grace.

**16** Here we have the same appeal to what his readers know, or at least should know, as we found at verse 3. The principle established by the question is that we are the bondslaves of that to which we present ourselves for obedience. It is that expressed by the Lord himself: “Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin” (John 8:34); “No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Luke 16:13). In like manner the apostle shows in this verse that there are only two alignments in the ethico-religious realm and that the criterion of our alignment is that to which we render obedience, whether it be “sin unto death” or “obedience unto righteousness”.

What is meant by “death” in this instance is difficult to determine. Most probably it is used inclusively to refer to death in all its aspects, culminating in that eternal death of “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power” (2 Thess. 1:9). Sin is deathly and death in every respect follows in its wake. Similarly the righteousness which obedience promotes should also be interpreted inclusively to refer to righteousness in all its aspects, culminating, indeed, in the consummated righteousness of the new heavens and the new earth.

The emphasis upon obedience shows that obedience to God is the criterion of our devotion to him and that the principle of righteousness is to present ourselves to God as servants unto obedience.

**17** In the thanksgiving that the believers at Rome “were servants of sin”, the emphasis rests upon the past tense and in order to express the thought in English we have to use some such conjunction as “whereas” or “although”—“whereas ye were servants of sin”. The emphasis rests upon the change that took place when they came to obey the form of teaching unto which they were delivered. There are three questions to be considered in connection with the latter part of this text. (1) What is the “form of teaching”? There can be no reasonable question but it means the pattern or standard of teaching and there is no warrant for supposing that it was a specifically Pauline pattern as distinguished from other forms of apostolic teaching. It is “the form of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13; *cf.* 1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3; Tit. 1:9; 2:1), and in this instance there is stress upon the ethical implications of gospel teaching. (2) This pattern of gospel teaching is represented as that to which obedience was rendered, and the change from the service of sin is registered in and characterized by obedience to a well-defined and articulated doctrinal pattern. The supposition that Christianity has no fixed pattern of teaching regulative of thought and

practice is entirely alien to the apostle's conception of the Christian ethic. The pattern prescribed in the gospel in no way interferes with the true liberty and spontaneity of the believer—he obeys “from the heart”. Objective prescription, presupposed in obedience, is not incompatible with the voluntariness indispensable to obedience. (3) We might have expected the apostle to say that this form of teaching had been delivered to the believers, but, instead, he says that *they* were delivered to it—they were handed over to the gospel pattern. This indicates that their devotion to the gospel was one of total commitment and that this commitment is not one of their option but is that to which they are subjected. This again underlines the objectivity of the pattern as well as our passivity in being committed to it, an objectivity and passivity which in no way militate against the wholehearted voluntariness of the result, namely, the commitment of obedience from the heart.

**18** These observations regarding verse 17 are confirmed by verse 18, which must be taken in close connection with verse 17. The first clause of verse 18, “and being made free from sin”, corresponds to “ye *were* servants of sin” in verse 17, and the last clause corresponds to “ye obeyed from the heart the form of teaching unto which ye were delivered”. However, the passivity of this change in both its negative and positive aspects is now expressed. They were the subjects of deliverance from sin and they were made the bondservants of righteousness. The force of the passive in both cases must not be overlooked. This brings to the forefront the implications of the passive in verse 17, namely, that they were delivered up to the gospel pattern of teaching. And the commitment involved is to the same effect. Commitment to the gospel pattern is equivalent to bondservice to righteousness.

**19** When the apostle says, “I speak after the manner of men” he is referring to the *form* of his teaching in the preceding and succeeding verses. He describes the condition of unbelievers as slavery to sin and he also describes the state of believers as bondservice to righteousness. The institution of slavery, well known to his readers, is the medium through which he expresses the truth. In using this analogy drawn from the sphere of human relations he speaks after the manner of men. After all, the new life in Christ is not “slavery” as it exists among men; it is the highest and only freedom. But the institution of slavery does service to set forth the totality of our commitment to God in that emancipation from the bondage of sin which union with Christ involves. It is on account of the infirmity of their flesh that he speaks thus to his readers. The dulness of our understanding makes it necessary that we be taught the truth in figures drawn from the sphere of our human relations.

The thought of the latter part of verse 19 is similar to that of verse 13. Here, however, the past state in which our members were presented in the bondservice of sin enforces, by way of parallel and contrast, the necessity of presenting our members *now* in the bondservice of righteousness. And the terms in which the past state is described are peculiarly adapted to set forth the intensity of dedication to the service of sin—“ye

presented your members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity". "Uncleanness" reflects upon the corruption and defilement to which we were dedicated, "iniquity" upon sin as violation of law (*cf.* 1 John 3:4). The end to which the service of iniquity (lawlessness) was directed is nothing less than the aggravation and confirmation of that iniquity—it was "unto iniquity".

The exhortation is in the terms of both *parallel* and *contrast* to the definition of the sinful state. The *parallel* appears in the construction of the sentence; there is protasis and apodosis—as one thing was true so let something else now be true. It also appears in the repetition of the language of dedication, "present your members as servants"—there is to be no relaxation in respect of the *bondservice* involved. On the other hand, the *contrast* appears in the kind of bondservice rendered and the end to which it is directed. In the former state it was bondservice to "uncleanness and iniquity"; now it is bondservice to "righteousness". Formerly the bondservice was directed to "iniquity"; now it is to be directed unto "sanctification". The bondservice of righteousness, which defines the dedication of the believer, and the end to which this dedication is directed have in view the holiness of heart and of life without which no man shall see the Lord (*cf.* Heb. 12:14; 1 Cor. 1:20; 1 Thess. 4:3, 4, 7). The concrete and practical interest is evinced again, as in verse 13, by focusing attention upon our physical organs. This concentration of thought upon our bodily members does not detract from the dedication that must characterize the whole person, as becomes apparent in the next verse. It only underlines the concreteness of the demands of holiness and of the ways in which it is exemplified.

**20** It is not easy to determine the precise relation that verse 20 sustains to the preceding verse. But the most tenable view, it would appear, is that it must be taken in close conjunction with the question which follows in verse 21 and, when thus interpreted, both verses (20, 21) are intended to enforce the necessity of compliance with the exhortation in the latter part of verse 19. In paraphrase the thought would be as follows: "Present your members servants to righteousness unto holiness (*vs.* 19). For consider that in your former state of service to sin you had no concern at all for righteousness and no good fruit whatsoever accrued from abandonment to the service of sin, nothing indeed but that of which you are now ashamed and the end of which is death. How urgent, therefore, is the claim of righteousness and the necessity of commitment to its bondservice."

"For when ye were servants of sin, ye were free in regard of righteousness"—this is simply to say that they were not the bondservants of righteousness and righteousness, therefore, did not exercise its authority and mastery over them. They were carefree in respect of the demands of righteousness; with undivided heart and a single eye they were the bondservants of sin, and that was the only mastery they knew.

**21** The question of verse 21, as rendered in the version, implies a decisive negative as the answer. "What fruit then had ye at that time in the things whereof ye are now ashamed?" The implied answer is "none". "Fruit", on this construction, would have the

meaning which it has uniformly in Paul's letters, namely, good fruit (*cf.* 1:13; 15:28; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 5:9; Phil. 1:11, 22; 4:17). It is possible, however, to punctuate verse 21 so that the question is: "What fruit then had ye at that time?" And the answer would be: "In the things whereof ye are now ashamed". The only fruit accruing from the service of sin was the things which now fill with shame. Both constructions are possible and yield a good sense. While there is no decisive reason for rejecting the second construction, there is more to be said in favour of the former. (1) The second view would require departure from the usual meaning of "fruit" as that which is good unless qualified as evil. (2) The first view accords more suitably with the last clause of verse 21; if the answer to the question is that no fruit (in the sense of good fruit) has accrued from the life of sin, then the clause, "for the end of those things is death", supplies the reason for or adds confirmation to the negative answer which the question implies—there is no good fruit, for the end of these things is death. (3) On the second construction the concluding clause would give the reason why the fruits of the sinful way of life cause shame. It would scarcely be proper to restrict the reason for shame to the fact that the end of these things is death. The thought is not merely that the things of the life of sin will put to shame and disappoint but that believers are ashamed of them. (4) The sharp contrast between "at that time" and "now" does not require, as has been alleged,<sup>25</sup> the second construction. The contrast retains its full force on the other view, the implication being that even *at that time*, before they came to realize the shame, there was no fruit in the service of sin.

On either construction, however, the following observations are necessary. (1) Believers are ashamed of their past life—"so far are they from endeavouring to excuse it, that, on the contrary, they feel ashamed of themselves. Yea, further, they call to mind the remembrance of their own disgrace, that being thus ashamed, they may more truly and more readily be humbled before God". (2) Death, which is the end of these things, can be nothing less than death in its most ultimate expression and, though not restricted to everlasting perdition, must nevertheless include it. Emancipation from the service of sin interrupts this sequence only because there is deliverance from sin itself (*cf.* vs. 22), and this interruption does not disestablish the fact that death is the inevitable issue of sin. The sequence is obviated and deliverance from it obtains only where there is the removal of sin itself.

**22** Verses 21, 22 stand in conspicuous contrast with each other. Verse 21 shows the fruitlessness, the shame, and the death which follow in the wake of sin. Verse 22 shows the fruit and the issue of deliverance from sin. The same passivity in respect of the subjects of this deliverance appears here as in verse 18; they have been delivered and they have been made bondservants. The only significant difference from verse 18 in the first part of verse 22 is that instead of saying bondservants "to righteousness" (vs. 18) the apostle now speaks of being made bondservants "to God". This shows that the one presupposes the other. Bondservice to righteousness is not to an abstract quality; it is to the righteousness which God's perfection demands, and the personal relationship to God is never suppressed. Bondservice to God, on the other hand, must exemplify itself in obedience to the concrete

and practical demands of righteousness. The leading feature of the contrast in verse 22, however, is the emphasis upon the fruit enjoyed and the issue resulting—"ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end eternal life". In the service of sin there was no fruit; now they bear fruit that is unto holiness. And this fruit-bearing has its final issue in eternal life. Just as death, the issue of sin (vs. 21), should be taken inclusively, so should eternal life. While not restricted to the consummated life of the world to come this must, nevertheless, be included. The final issue of deliverance from sin, of bondservice to God, and of the fruit-bearing that is unto holiness is the *possession* of life incorruptible in the age to come.

**23** This is the triumphant conclusion to chapter 6 and should be compared in this respect to 5:21 as the triumphant conclusion to chapter 5. The contrast between sin and grace is maintained and there is summation of what had been set forth in more detail in the preceding verses. But there are also new elements of thought, at least of emphasis. These concern principally the contrast between "wages" and "free gift". Remuneration is the principle by which we become heirs of death; unmerited favour is that by which we receive eternal life. Death is earned, eternal life is purely gratuitous. In the clause, "the wages of sin is death", there are two thoughts: (1) that the death with which we are inflicted is no more and no less than what we have earned; (2) that death is the inevitable consequence of sin. Rectitude governs the payment of wages and we therefore receive exactly and inevitably what we owe. In the clause, "but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" the governing idea is that of God's free grace in contrast with the notion of remuneration, and the magnitude of this free grace is emphasized by the nature of the gift bestowed. The thought is not that the free grace of God issues in eternal life for us, though this is in itself true. But the precise thought is that the free gift *consists* in eternal life. When wages are in operation our lot is death, inescapably and in its ultimate expression. When the free gift of God is in operation our lot is life, eternal and indestructible. How totally alien to such contrasts is the importation of merit in any form or degree into the method of salvation.

In 5:21 the apostle had said that grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life *through* Jesus Christ our Lord. Here in 6:23 he speaks of eternal life *in* Christ Jesus our Lord. The distinction is to be noted. In this instance the accent falls upon the truth that it is in Christ Jesus eternal life exists for believers. They are never conceived of, even in the highest reaches of the Father's free gift to them, as severed from Christ. And none of the blessings bestowed by the Father, however much the gratuitousness appears, are apart from Christ nor are they enjoyed except in union with him.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Murray, J. (1968). [\*The Epistle to the Romans\*](#) (Vol. 1, pp. 226-238). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.