

# “You Have Been Set Free From Sin”

## Sermons on Romans # 14

*Texts: Romans 6:15-23; Jeremiah 31:31-34*

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One of the most important themes in Paul’s theology is union with Christ. Through faith, all believers are united to Jesus Christ and thereby receive all of his saving benefits. In Romans 6, Paul makes the point that because we are “in Christ,” we have been crucified with Christ, buried and entombed with him by virtue of our baptism, and raised from the dead with Christ to newness of life. We have been set from sin’s horrible consequence (which is death), from its shameful guilt (which is condemnation) and its desperate tyranny (which is slavery to the flesh). And so to establish a basis for sanctification, Paul reminds us that in Christ we have died and rise to newness of life. This is why Paul’s discussion of sanctification begins with the exhortation for all Christians to reckon ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God (Romans 6:11).

Having established in Romans 5:12-21 that Adam is federal head of the human race under the covenant of works, and that Jesus Christ is the federal head of all those under the covenant of grace, in Romans 6:1-14, Paul addresses the subject of sanctification. To properly understand Paul’s doctrine of sanctification, we must understand that what is said throughout Romans 6, 7, and 8, only makes sense in light of the important distinctions set out in the last half of Romans 5. The havoc Adam’s disobedience brought upon the human race, must be seen in light of Jesus Christ’s obedience through which the many are made or reckoned as righteous. [see handout]

As Paul sets forth his gospel, it becomes clear that all those freely and instantaneously justified through faith also begin the process of sanctification through that same act of faith at the time of their justification. The point is important, so I’ll say it again: Paul cannot conceive of someone who is justified, who is also not undergoing the process of sanctification. Although in evangelical circles we commonly hear people speak of a two-stage Christian life—someone “accepting” Jesus as their Savior, but not yet making him Lord of their lives—such a notion would be inconceivable to Paul. For Paul, we are either in Adam or in Christ. If we remain in Adam, we are subject to sin, condemnation and death. If we are in Christ, we are set from these very things because we have died and risen to newness of life.

To use one writer’s phrase, we have been transferred from the realm (dominion) of Adam to the realm or dominion of Christ through faith, something Paul will later tell us is a gift of God which arises in direct connection with the preaching of the gospel (cf. Romans 10:17). At the time of this transfer from Adam to Christ, something definitive occurred, seen in the way in which Paul speaks of these events as completed acts (the use of the aorist tense). It is because we are now under the dominion of Christ, we must look to the pattern of Jesus Christ’s life, death, burial and resurrection as the pattern for our own sanctification. As Jesus was crucified, died and was buried, so are we. And even as Jesus was raised from the dead, so too are we! This is the lens through which we must think about our sanctification.

Although we might expect Paul to begin his teaching on sanctification with a list of rules for us to keep (or even an exposition of the law), instead, Paul’s first imperative (command) in Romans 6:11 is for justified sinners to reckon themselves dead to sin but alive to God. Sin is no longer our master, Paul says in verse 14. We died to sin, therefore, how can we live in it any longer (v. 2)? While sin characterizes our every act in Adam, in Christ, sin becomes uncharacteristic. While we will struggle with indwelling sin until we die, now we feel its shame and guilt. In Adam we did not.

Therefore, Paul says, we must continually reckon ourselves to be dead to sin and live like the justified sinners we are. We are not to live as people enslaved to our passions, and who exist for nothing more than the pursuit of sinful pleasure and the avoidance of sin's consequences. Paul now commands all justified sinners to cease offering themselves as instruments of sin. We are to offer ourselves to God as instruments of righteousness (v. 13). Thus Paul's discussion of sanctification begins with the recognition of what has happened to us when we were justified. We have been transferred from the realm of sin, law, condemnation and death in Adam, to the realm of freedom, justification, obedience and life in Christ. And now we must act like what we are in Christ.

**A**s we saw last time, verses 12-14, belong with the previous section of Romans (6:1-11). But they also serve as the foundation for what follows in verses 15-23, so we will return to them briefly this morning, as we consider Paul's continuing discussion of what it means to have been set free from sin, so as to become a slave of righteousness.

In verse 14, Paul makes a very important declaration—sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace—which not only sums up his previous comments about the necessity of not letting sin reign in our mortal bodies (v. 12), but explains why it is that we should not offer our bodies as instruments of sin (v. 13). Sin is no longer our master. It no longer enslaves us. Sin no longer owns us. We are no longer under the domination of what we were in Adam. We are now under the dominion of Christ. And, of course, the great paradox in this is that it is only once we are in Christ (as his bond servant) that we are set free from sin and its horrible consequences.

The best way to make sense of Paul's comments that we are not under law, but under grace is through the lens of the two realms (Adam and Christ). As Charles Cranfield points out, this verse "is widely taken to mean that the authority of the law has been abolished for believers and superseded by a different authority. And this, it must be admitted, would be a plausible interpretation, *if this sentence stood by itself.*"<sup>1</sup> But this statement does not stand alone. In Romans 3:31 Paul writes, "*Do we nullify the law by faith? Not at all.*" In Romans 7:12, Paul will tell us that "*the law is holy, and the commandment is holy righteous and good.*" In the first part of Romans 7:14a, "*the law is spiritual.*" In Romans 8:4, Paul speaks of the "*the righteous requirement of the law.*" Then, in Romans 13:8-10, Paul speaks of the law in the following terms: "*he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law.*" Given Paul's repeated references in Romans to the law as authoritative for a Christian who is justified by faith alone and not by works, the idea that Paul means by this that the Christian is no longer obligated to obey the commandments of God is highly unlikely.<sup>2</sup> Whatever Paul means when he says, "*we are not under law,*" he does not mean that we are no longer obligated to obey the ten commandments. But the question remains. When Paul says we are not "under law" does he mean "law" as a general principle in which justification is grounded in human merit in contrast to grace, or is Paul specifically referring to the Mosaic law and that Christians are no longer obligated to obey the commandments?

Dispensationalists argue for the latter and use this text to argue that the Mosaic law is not binding on Christians in any sense under the New Covenant. According to William R. Newell's work on Romans (kept in print for years by dispensational publishers such as Moody Press), "God does not say we are under *the Law*,— the Mosaic Law: (Gentiles never were!) But, God says we are not under *law*,—under

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<sup>1</sup> Cranfield, Commentary on Romans, I.319-320.

<sup>2</sup> Cranfield, Commentary on Romans, I.320

the legal principle.”<sup>3</sup> This would be correct if all that Newell meant by this is that God never intended the Law of Moses to be a means of justification. But Newell goes on to admit: “I am...inclined to the belief that in order to a consistent interpretation of the New Testament, we must scrupulously regard Israel only as having been placed under The Law, though doubtless all men have moral responsibility.”<sup>4</sup> This means that the law was limited to Israel under that dispensation and has no place or role under the New Covenant. Christians are not obligated to obey the Ten Commandments.

J. Dwight Pentecost concurs: “The Scripture clearly teaches that the Mosaic covenant of the law was made with the nation Israel only,” citing this passage as a proof text.<sup>5</sup> Again, it is self-evident that God gave the Law to Israel. That is not the point of contention. According to dispensationalists this means that the commandments are not binding upon a Christian. As Newell puts it, “men have moral responsibility,” but that does not mean obedience to the commandments of God! This explains why man-made “blue laws” and “house rules” dominate dispensational churches. In the vacuum created by the absence of the Ten Commandments, “house rules” or “blue laws” are necessary to show us what that our moral responsibility entails! For dispensationalists, the law-gospel distinction is a contrast between the law—given to Israel for a time—and the gospel, which is the way God saves under the New Covenant. This is why dispensationalists see no role at all for the Ten Commandment in the church age (the dispensation of grace), and no place for gospel under the dispensation of law.

One of the best refutations of the dispensationalism is to simply point out that all ten of the commandments given to Moses are reaffirmed in the New Testament as binding upon the Christian. This is because the commandments given to Moses reflect and codify (put into writing) what was originally required of Adam under the covenant of works. Take for example the first commandment, “*You shall have no other gods before me.*” In Luke 4:8 we read, “*Jesus answered, `It is written: Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.*” In John 17:3, find this: “*now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*” Likewise, the second commandment, “*You shall not make for yourself a graven image*” is reaffirmed by Jesus in John 4:24: “*God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.*”

Well, by now you get the point. We could do these with all ten of the commandments, since all are reaffirmed in the New Testament as binding upon the Christian. This should make it abundantly clear that whatever Paul means when he says, we are not “*under law*,” he does not mean that the ten commandments are no longer binding upon a Christian. But if the law does indeed remain binding in some sense, what then does Paul mean when he says “*we are not under law*”? The answer is to be found in the analogy of Adam and Christ in Romans 5, and the two dominions they represent.

Paul is not speaking of law in general, but the specific function of the law as condemning sinners, the so-called second use of the law.<sup>6</sup> Since the contrast is between grace (God’s unmerited favor) and the law,

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<sup>3</sup> William R. Newell, Romans (Chicago: Moody Press, 1938), p. 231.

<sup>4</sup> Newell, Romans, pp. 233-34.

<sup>5</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), p. 119.

<sup>6</sup> According to Leon Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 259: “Paul saw clearly that law and grace do not go together. If one is ‘under’ the one, he is not under the other. In view of the place Paul’s Jewish

the law must be seen in its role in condemning all who violate it. This understanding is confirmed by Paul in Romans 8:1: “*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*” Furthermore, as we saw in our Old Testament lesson last week (Ezekiel 11:16-21), as well as in our Old Testament lesson this time, Jeremiah’s prophecy of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34), Israel’s prophets foretell of the messianic age as a time when the law no longer condemns God’s people, since it will be written upon the human heart. Therefore, when Paul says we are not under law but under grace, he is referring to the fact that we are in Christ and not in Adam, and we have been delivered from the condemnation of the law and are now objects of God’s favor (grace).<sup>7</sup>

In Christ, we have been set free from sin and death, and are now free to obey those very same commandments which formerly brought condemnation. Therefore, Paul contrasts the principle of law—merit, and the principle of grace—undeserved favor. We can only be saved by the latter, never by the former. Thus we are not under the principle of law as a means of salvation, but under the principle of grace. The anti-thesis between law/gospel, faith/works, and grace/merit are fully Pauline. We cannot make sense of Paul’s letters without these categories.

Because we are under grace (the dominion of Christ) and not the condemnation of the law (in Adam), certain consequences will follow. Earlier in Romans 6, (verse 1) Paul dealt with the question which some in the church were asking, “*shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?*” In verse 15, Paul now deals with the next question “*what then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?*” While similar to the earlier question, where the questioner erroneously supposed that the more sin there was, the more grace there is, this time the question is framed in light of the false assumption that because grace has abounded we are now free to sin. Once again, Paul’s answer is the emphatic, μή γένοιτο, “by no means!” That someone would even think to ask this raises Paul’s ire. Because the Christian has been set free from the condemnation of the law, does not in any sense mean that they are free to sin. Rather, we are now free to obey. As Paul will go on to say in Romans 8:2, “*Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.*” Because the Christian has been liberated from the law of sin and death (the very essence of being under grace), Christians are not free to sin, we are now free to obey, something we could never do while slaves of sin and death.

**I**n verse 16, Paul now reminds his readers of something they should already know. “*Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to*

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contemporaries ascribed to the law we must be clear that the apostle saw it as in opposition to the way of grace and thus an impossible way of salvation for the Christian. Paul held that the law was given, not as a way of deliverance, but in order that every mouth might be stopped and all people held accountable to God (3:19); it gives knowledge of sin (3:20); it makes the offence abound (5:20); it works wrath (4:14); no one will be justified by law (3:20); sin brought about all kinds of lust through the commandment, indeed sin is dead apart from the law (7:8); it was ‘through the commandment’ that sin deceived and slew Paul (7:11); people’s sinful passions work through the law (7:5); the law is weak through the flesh (8:3). Outside this epistle Paul carries on much the same teaching. The law never justifies people (Galatians 2:16; 3:11); the law is sin’s strength (1 Corinthians 15:56); it is there only to lead people to Christ (Galatians 3:24); those under the law were in need of redemption, and Christ came to be under law in order to redeem those under the law (Galatians 4:5).”

<sup>7</sup> Cranfield, Commentary on Romans, I.320.

*righteousness?*” Not only was slavery commonplace in the Greco-Roman world, and therefore a useful metaphor to illustrate the fact that no one can serve two masters—you are either a slave to sin, or you are not—but the metaphor of slavery makes perfect sense against the backdrop of Paul’s earlier analogy between Adam and Christ. In Adam we were slaves to sin which leads to death. And we offered ourselves to the service of our master—sin. But now we are in Christ—slaves to a master who redeemed us, turned aside God’s wrath from us, and who by his own obedience, liberated us from the sin and death which formerly held us in bondage. Since we are in Christ, we now offer ourselves to him, and not to our old tyrannical master, who cruelly held us in bondage.

Paul’s point is simply that the master we obey shows whose slave we really are. Unbelievers are slaves to sin and they act like it.<sup>8</sup> But Christians, on the other hand, are now slaves to obedience. This simply means that when we were “in Adam,” sin which characterized our lives. Sin *was* our master. Now that we are “in Christ,” it is sin which now becomes the anomaly, since slavery to sin no longer characterizes us. Our new master is Jesus Christ. Again, it is important to remember that Paul’s answer is framed in the context of the antinomian objection. The Christian will indeed bear the fruit of justification *sola fide*, namely, good works. This does not mean that Christians will cease to sin (or even cease to struggle with sin), but it does mean that the Christian’s life is not characterized by sin but by fruit bearing, since they are now a slave to obedience because they have died in Christ and risen to newness of life with him.

In verse 17, Paul pours forth a burst of thanksgiving, having considered the greatness of what God has done. “*But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.*” Paul excitedly gives thanks to God for what has happened to the Roman Christians, i.e., their deliverance from slavery. He does not praise the Romans for their progress in holiness! The Roman Christians *had been* slaves to sin, but now, from the heart, these same Christians now obeyed the teaching, which had been given them.

There are several interesting things here. First, the phrase “out of the heart,” perhaps indicates that obedience to Paul’s teaching—i.e., which is believing the gospel that Paul has taught them—arises from within in the sense of a whole-hearted commitment to Paul’s teaching and not mere external conformity.<sup>9</sup> Obedience, in this sense, is believing certain things about the gospel! Second, the “form of teaching,” here is the gospel, as taught them by Paul. Third, this form of teaching was “entrusted” to them, and has nothing to do with the passing on of tradition. Instead, this refers to the transfer of the slave from one master to the other, a point Paul makes in the next verse. Freeman have a new set of responsibilities.<sup>10</sup> Now free, he has been entrusted with Paul’s teaching about the gospel, and is now to act like a freeman.

In verse 18, Paul now describes the nature of the change resulting from their transference from Adam to Christ. This is the Pauline indicative (what we are)—“*You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness*”—and serves as the basis for what follow in verses 19-23.<sup>11</sup> Believers have been set free from sin’s guilt and condemnation. But we have not been set free so as to act like slaves to sin.

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<sup>8</sup> Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 261.

<sup>9</sup> Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 262-263.

<sup>10</sup> Cranfield, *Commentary on Romans* I.324.

<sup>11</sup> Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 402.

We have been set free from sin and death so as to become a slave to righteousness, because we have been united to Jesus Christ in his cross, his death, his tomb, and his resurrection.

According to Leon Morris, “freedom is an important category for Paul, one that he uses more than any other New Testament writer. He can speak of Christians as being free from ‘the law of sin and death’ (8:2), or from sin (v. 22), and of creation as being freed from its ‘bondage to decay’ (8:21), but he often simply speaks of freedom, as when he says, ‘it is for freedom that Christ has set us free’ (Gal. 5:1). People were in the grip of tyrants like sin and death and decay. It mattered immensely to Paul that Christ brought real freedom.”<sup>12</sup> This is a very important point, given that all other religions in the world are religion of law and human merit! Christianity, by utter contrast, is the religion of freedom. As Calvin reminds us, “he who proposes to summarize gospel teaching ought by no means to omit an explanation of this topic. For it is a thing of prime necessity, and apart from a knowledge of it consciences dare undertake almost anything without doubting; they hesitate and recoil from many things; they constantly waver and are afraid.”<sup>13</sup> Thus it is the knowledge that the guilt of our sins has been removed, the knowledge that we are free from the yoke of the law, and the knowledge that our consciences are not bound to the rules of men or “things indifferent,” which is the basis for Christian liberty. Without this knowledge, we will never have assurance and joyful obedience, but will always remain in doubt and fear.

Let us not fall prey then to the argument that Paul’s doctrine of freedom in some way leads to licence. The argument that if you give former slaves freedom, they will not know how to act and abuse their freedom is a dangerous subterfuge. The freeman is no longer the property of sin (his former owner) but is now the property of Jesus Christ and a slave to righteousness. They are free from the ownership of sin, and are Christ’s possession. Unlike the yoke of the law, Christ’s yoke is easy! According to Moo, “we must remember that Paul’s concept of freedom is not that of autonomous self-direction but of deliverance from those enslaving powers that would prevent the human being from becoming what God intended.”<sup>14</sup> This is important, because the emphasis here is on freedom from the condition and tyrannical bondage of sin, not the perfectionistic notion that we are supposedly able to stop committing all acts of sin. As we will see when we get to Romans 7:14 ff, while the power of sin is certainly broken, nevertheless all-out warfare with sin begins at conversion and will continue until the believer dies.

Given the fact that many Gentiles in Rome would not have Old Testament categories to make sense of righteousness language, Paul now asserts: “*I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves.*” Paul will discuss this in terms enabling him to make his point. Slavery was regarded as a “degrading state and it was so firmly repudiated in the contemporary world that it would not normally be regarded as an acceptable metaphor.”<sup>15</sup> While people may not have wanted to talk about slavery, it was a perfect illustration of what sin does to all the children of Adam. Since people don’t easily grasp spiritual things, Paul, risks using a rather graphic, if unpopular, metaphor to make his point.

Paul gives his readers an imperative in the second clause of verse 19, “*Just as you used to offer the parts*

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<sup>12</sup> Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 263.

<sup>13</sup> Calvin, Institutes, III.xix.1

<sup>14</sup> Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 402.

<sup>15</sup> Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 264.

*of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.”* Paul’s point is that “the Roman Christians are to be just as wholehearted in walking in the ways of God now as they used to be in their bondage to sin. His aorist tenses point to wholehearted commitment. They had given themselves wholeheartedly to sin; let them now give themselves equally, wholeheartedly to righteousness.”<sup>16</sup>

When Paul here speaks of offering ourselves to righteousness which leads to holiness, we have the first mention of sanctification (holiness) in this section, even though this whole section deals with the subject. Earlier in Romans, Paul deals with definitive sanctification and the language of eschatological transfer. As one writer notes, “Romans 6 presents a definitive view of sanctification through the death of Christ. What flows from this is holiness or sanctification as a state or condition that needs to be expressed in everyday life. It is possible that sanctification as a process of moral renewal could be understood in this context, though this is less likely in view of Paul’s use of this term elsewhere. ‘Holiness’ or ‘sanctification’ is the alternative to the condition of uncleanness and lawlessness from which we were rescued. As noted elsewhere, the moral aspect of sanctification is secondary to its ‘soteriological’ reference (cf. 1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Thes. 4:3, 4, 7; 2 Thes. 2:13; Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:2). Sanctification in the New Testament ‘consists not in a particular moral quality which has been attained, but in a particular relationship to God which has been given.’”<sup>17</sup>

This means that Paul’s doctrine of sanctification includes two important aspects—the definitive element, in which the eschatological transference from Adam to Christ marks the beginning of the Christian life, and the progressive element, which is related to the on-going struggle with sin which begins at the time of conversion (transference). While the believer has been definitively transferred from Adam to Christ, the struggle with sin will not cease or abate until our own death or the return of our Lord, which ever comes first. The age to come will not be fully realized until the resurrection.

In verse 20, Paul now reminds the Roman Christians of their condition before they were in Christ through faith and then buried with him in baptism. Says Paul “*When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.*” In other words, the non-Christian is outside the control (“free”) of righteousness because they were enslaved to sin. Such people do not know the struggle with sin described in the next chapter. They know nothing but slavery to sin! People who are free from righteousness are, in Paul’s mind, slaves to sin and willing commit all of the horrible acts that characterized the behavior of the Gentiles as recorded in Romans 1:18-32. To be free from righteousness, is the same as being given over to sin. But to free from sin is to be a slave to righteousness. This is the ultimate paradox of the Christian life.

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<sup>16</sup> Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 265. According to Moo, context here is vital. Verse 19 is part of a chiasm—it is the main point of an argument that runs from verse 17-23. Says Moo, “the imperative, ‘present yourselves as slaves to righteousness’ in v. 19b is the center of the paragraph. But this command does not, and cannot stand in isolation. We can, and must, serve righteousness because God has freed us from sin and made us slaves to righteousness. The ‘imperative’ grows out of and reflects, the ‘indicative.’ In order to maintain this careful balance, Paul ‘frames’ the command in verse 19b with reminders of our new status in Christ (vv. 17-18, 20-23). Therefore the ‘for’ in this verse introduces vv. 20-23 as the ground of the command in v. 19b” (The Epistle to the Romans, p. 405).

<sup>17</sup> David Peterson, Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), p. 103.

Paul now offers a rhetorical question in verse 21 to further his point. “*What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!*” As many commentators point out, the term “benefit” [NIV] here, should be translated as “fruit,” picking up on Paul’s typical usage of the term elsewhere. “‘Fruit’ is mostly used by Paul in a good sense, [but here] `the pre-Christian man is under the power of sin and brings forth the corresponding fruits.’”<sup>18</sup> In other words, as slaves to sin, what kind of fruit did they produce? They produced behavior (“things”) they were ashamed of! Can a bad tree bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance? No, at least not until the fruit tree is changed from a bad tree into a good one! When looking back at their former lives from the perspective of faith, the Christians in Rome would obviously be ashamed of their previous behavior. Hence, Paul simply asks them to consider if that kind of fruit should now characterize their behavior.

In verse 22, Paul reminds his hearers that a radical change has occurred in their lives which renders things quite different from what it had been like before their conversion. “*But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.*” The phrase “*but now,*” clearly means that Paul is still using eschatological categories [see 2 Cor. 5:17-6:2, where Paul uses virtually identical terminology]. Having been free from righteousness and paradoxically slaves to sin, Paul once again speaks Christians being set free through a decisive act (another aorist tense) to become slaves to God. Paul now speaks to the consequence of all this. “‘You have your fruit,’ he says `unto sanctification.’ He does not say what the fruit is, but only what it leads to, the process of becoming holy . . . The present possession of `fruit,’ gives assurance that the fulness involved in `eternal life’ will in due course be attained.”<sup>19</sup> Here, as in verse 19, Paul is speaking of the “progressive” aspects of sanctification. Because we are “in Christ,” we will manifest holiness of life, because we will one day actually attain that eternal life we have already been given in Christ.

**A**nd so as Paul wraps up this portion of his treatment of sanctification, he reminds his readers once again that sin is a cruel master, but Jesus Christ, the Christian’s new master is not. “*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” Paul now moves from the imagery of sin as a slave owner to that of a general paying his soldiers. The wage sin pays is death.<sup>20</sup> This stands in stark contrast to what is won for us by the second Adam, the gift of eternal life. Whereas those in Adam earn their wages—death, those in Christ are given the free gift of eternal life, which has earned for them by Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection. As Charles Cranfield reminds us “God does not pay wages, since no man can put him in his debt; but the free gift which he gives is nothing less than eternal life.”<sup>21</sup>

Thus the contrast is clear—we earn death. Because of our sin, we get what we deserve. But eternal life is something that can only come through faith in Jesus Christ. It is a gracious gift from God to ungodly sinners who renounce their own righteousness, and who have been set free from sin and all its wages!

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<sup>18</sup> Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 266.

<sup>19</sup> Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 266.

<sup>20</sup> Cranfield, Commentary on Romans, I.329-330.

<sup>21</sup> Cranfield, Commentary on Romans, I.330.