

Roman 6:19-23

19 *I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.*

20 *For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.*

21 *What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.*

22 *But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*

23 *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Romans 6:13, 19

13 *Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

19 *I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.*

We have the exhortation to *yield* in verse 13, and verse 19 serves as a post-doctrinal exhortation following verses 16 through 18 in which they are again instructed to *yield*. Doctrine is often given in this manner. We are given a pre-doctrinal exhortation which acts as a primer, then we are given theological truths, or doctrinal teaching, and afterwards an exhortation is given again to reaffirm it. This is what we see here in Romans 6.

Verse 19 is restating what was said back in verse 13, only in verse 13 it says *members as instruments of righteousness unto God*, and in verse 19 it says *yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness*. When we compare these, we see that our members as instruments are analogous to our members as servants; the holiness of verse 19 then has to do with the *yielding ourselves unto God* of verse 13, that is, yielding to who He has said we are and yielding to His purpose. In this we see *holiness* has to do with God and His purpose, which *only begins* with you being made free from sin. As we will see, yielding our members as instruments of righteousness *unto God*, or *unto holiness*, will continue beyond the issue of sin itself.

And so in verse 13 he gives an exhortation, in verse 14 a point of doctrine, in verse 15 an exhortation, and from verses 16 to 18 doctrine again, employing the idea of the servant/master relationship “because of the infirmity of their flesh,” and then in verse 19 he gives the exhortation again that mirrors what’s found in verse 13.

Romans 6:13-19

13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

Exhortation is defined as the process of exciting or encouraging one to action by words, arguments or advice, often with the aim of stimulating one to good or deeds or conduct. Within the body of doctrine we find in our epistles, we find pre doctrinal and post doctrinal exhortations that are meant to prepare our minds and hearts to first receive the truths that are to follow (pre doctrinal exhortation), and to then encourage us to take those truths and live them out (post doctrinal exhortation).

The word *doctrine* comes from the Greek word *didaskalia*, which meant *teaching*, and which was used in ancient Greece as a term for the study, production and stage direction of various performance arts, such as dramas, comedies, and choruses. Thus, properly, doctrine is more than just a body of information, but is also the “stage directions” for that information. In this we see how the exhortation is needed for the doctrine to “come alive.”

Bible doctrine is more than just facts. It has its foundation in facts, but is supposed to translate into the heart and our daily living. In this way we can distinguish it from mere teaching. This is what we see here in Romans 6—the Holy Ghost *exhorting* us on the basis of the truths He’s revealed, to allow our hearts and conduct to reflect those truths. Again, we must reckon these truths to be so and yield to them.

Romans 6:20-21

20 *For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.*

21 *What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.*

In verse 20 we see that those who are servants of sin are free from righteousness. When we were servants of sin, we were free from the moral obligation not only of conscience in many instances, but were free from conscience towards God, and that is really the issue. To the degree a man holds a conscience towards the true God, he upholds the morality which reflects the values of God. This should take our minds back to Romans 1:

Romans 1:21-24

21 *Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

22 *Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,*

23 *And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.*

24 *Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves...*

We see that when man refuses to glorify and be thankful to God, they become vain in their thinking, and thus their hearts become darkened, that is, they lose faith altogether (v21). They then are allowed to prop themselves up upon a false wisdom which rejects God, thus they are fools (v22), for *the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God* (Ps. 14:1). But as man inherently knows there is a God, and is made to worship, he inevitably seeks something to glorify, and thus you have the idols of the world, where man takes something of creation and deifies it, making it into a god (v23). But these idols are destitute of the moral perfectness of character of the true God, and so the inevitable result is that man takes on the values of these idols, and anything less than the standard of God's righteousness will inevitably lead to some form of immorality (v24).

What fruit had we in those things whereof we are now ashamed? There was fruit, but it was not fruit unto holiness—it was not fruit unto God's righteousness and God's plan and purpose. We see the fruit in Romans chapter one described for us so that there is no question: uncleanness, lust, dishonor (v24), unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful (verses 29-31).

The end of these things is death. Death is always the result of sin, from the beginning of creation to the end. There is no other outcome. Sin deviates from God's design, and God's design is perfect.

And is Paul saying here that the Romans are *ashamed* of those things they were engaged in before they believed the gospel? He is. Shame for the evil we've committed is a healthy gauge of what's going on in the heart. We should feel ashamed. Now of course there is a healthy balance to this. We must allow God's grace to also minister to us, knowing we are fully accepted and loved by God now that we are in Christ; He does not see us as we *were*, but as He's made us to be. I mention this only because I sometimes hear in modern Christian music the move away from the word and concept of *sin*, and a move toward God dealing with us on the basis of our *shame*. Without getting too dogmatic about this, I will just say, the issue to God was *not* your shame—He didn't care if you *felt* guilty. The issue to God was your sins. And the shame of knowing who we were and the things we did is healthy when put into the larger perspective of who we are now in Christ. It should cause us to glorify God. We shouldn't lose sight of what we were before Christ.

Having made it to this point in the chapter, there is not much that is left to be said about the remaining verses. But there are a few nuances here that we will need to iron out.

What we have been discussing largely in this chapter is the issue of sanctification and practical righteousness in our daily lives, but we have to understand that all of this flows out of *identity*. When we trusted the gospel, God gave us a new identity in Christ and *did* sanctify us, that is, He set us apart. This is a positional truth. The practical reality of our functional walk is *not* disconnected from that positional reality, it is in fact grounded in it.

If you have trusted the gospel *you have been freed from sin*, as we've discussed; what is needed to see that manifest in our walk is the renewing of the mind—but the work was already done. You see then how the positional truth and reality is the basis for the practical. They are, in reality, not separate at all. What stands in the way of practical freedom is *us*.

When God looks at you He does not see a servant of sin, He sees a servant of righteousness, because He has already made you the righteousness of God *in Christ*.

Remember Romans 3:22, that the righteousness of God Himself has been given to us by our belief in the faithful performance of Jesus Christ:

Romans 3:21-22

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference...

The spiritual operation He performed in you when believed was an *entirely sufficient* work—it provided all the things necessary to make you spiritually fit and functionally alive unto God. He did not simply forgive our sins and leave us to our own devices. This is important to understand because Romans 6:22, if not understood correctly, can and has been used to teach “works salvation.”

Romans 6:22

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

The way this is sometimes read is that, *since* you've been made free from sin and become servants of God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the "holiness" leads to the end of everlasting life. What they really mean is that since "you've overcome sin" you're saved. But it does not say *since you've overcome sin*—it says *but now being made free from sin*. Being *made free* implies the outside action of another party. Something, or someone, *made us* free; it was in some way independent of our own will and volition. We believed, but *God* then did the work we ourselves were incapable of performing.

Romans 6:22

A	B
But now being made free from sin , and become servants to God ,	
C	D
ye have your fruit unto holiness , and the end everlasting life .	

So, in this grammatical construct, because we have been made A and B, we thus *have* C and D, where A and B are being made free from sin and servants to God, and C and D are the fruit unto holiness and everlasting life. The D is not dependent on the C. Both C and D are dependent on A and B, and A and B were given to us freely when we believed the gospel.

Thus, "ye have," present tense, both C and D, because of A and B. C of course is not *holiness* itself, it is *the fruit* which is *unto* holiness.

We have already discussed that *holiness* is sometimes to be distinguished from *righteousness*, and that “holiness” in the sense it is being used in Romans 6 is not automatic. If you confuse your righteous standing in Christ with holiness, you could make the mistake of thinking your righteous standing is also something that is not automatic, that it is something to yet be attained.

In the above mentioned alternative interpretation, the end of the “fruit unto holiness” is everlasting life, with the implication being that everlasting life is dependent upon the “fruit unto holiness,” and that this is dependent on “overcoming sin.” This word *unto* denotes a process, it denotes action, after all. To this I agree. The fruits of our righteous standing in Christ can and will lead us *unto* holiness. But the *holiness* is not what provides or secures everlasting life—that was something received by grace, through faith, as a free gift. And yet to make the everlasting life dependent on the “holiness” would imply that everlasting life is something received by works.

But again, that is not what this verse says. Because the Romans here have been made free from sin and become servants to God by the work that God performed in them when they believed, they have the fruit which is *unto* holiness; these resources (the fruit), are what *lead to* and *allow for* holiness—they are “unto” holiness. And because they have been made free from sin and become servants to God they also have the end of those things, which is everlasting life. The end, the everlasting life, is not the result of the holiness, it is the result of being made free from sin and being made servants to God—it is the result of what God did for them already. We could not make ourselves free from sin, nor servants of God, on our own.

Remember, when you believed, God set you free. This is not saying that “overcoming sin” in the way many religionists think of it is what leads to everlasting life—that is in *direct opposition to everything we’ve learned about justification in the book of Romans thus far*. That is how we can *know* that this interpretation is simply incorrect.

God set us free and set us apart and made us something new in Christ the moment we believed. Now this must be worked out practically in our daily life by faith, but the position is already

there. And our *status* as free, our *status* as God's servants, our *status* as justified and sanctified sons of God—the end of those things *is* everlasting life.

As we just discussed, they were made free from sin and servants to God immediately upon faith in the gospel. Whether they live out of that identity and out of those spiritual blessings—the *fruit* of being made free from sin and servants to God—is another issue. God did the work in us, and called us to serve Him, and made for us all the provisions we would need so that we could live a sanctified life and serve Him in the spirit. Whether we are “unprofitable servants” is again a separate issue.

Should it be a surprise that Paul takes us back to a *positional* truth? He in fact never left it. Not once does he give a command based upon anything we inherently could perform, but calls to mind who we've been made to be.

He *does* give the imperative, *let not sin reign therefore in your mortal body*, but the basis of this is who you've been made to be, your *identity*. It is something positional in nature that has its basis in an act of God. This is the basis for our functional, sanctified life.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We see here that what men *earn* from sin is death. And that is in fact what a *wage* is—it is *compensation* for work performed. When we consider what men earn by their works, we see that it is in fact personal, eternal condemnation. Remember what we learned from Romans 1 and 2, in the principles of judgment, that God's judgment is according to men's *deeds*, that is, what they do, and that there is no respect of persons. In this hypothetical discourse, if a man, in *patient continuance in well doing*, sought for glory and honor (Rom. 2:7), they would receive eternal life.

This “patient continuance” however is never attained to. All at some point falter from this, no matter how good or how hard they try. This means that no matter how good you have been, if you have sinned, if you have committed a *single deed* that is contrary to God’s perfect standard of righteousness, you are worthy of judgment. Thus Romans chapter 3 naturally concludes that all have sinned, thereby condemning all of mankind. And so with this knowledge that all are inherently worthy of death by virtue of their deeds, that *none* have patiently continued in well doing, what recourse does God have in terms of sparing men from judgment?

Of course it is by faith in the perfect work that Jesus Christ faithfully performed. And we understand all of this by now. But this is how salvation is termed a *gift* in Romans 6:23. Salvation is termed a gift 6 times in Romans chapter 5, between verses 15 and 18, and three of those times it is explicitly stated to be a *free* gift. It is not a wage. It is a gift. A free gift. You did not earn it, you did not deserve it.



If men want to receive what they *earn*, God is not going to stop them. They are entirely free to do so. But the result is not eternal life. Consider the following passages:

2 Corinthians 11:2-4, 13-15

2 *For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

3 *But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*

4 *For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him...*

13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Revelation 20:11-15

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

We see here the wages of mens works here in Revelation 20 at the last judgment is the second death, or the lake of fire. For the wages of sin is death. Men are not being judged for the multitude of good things they have done—they are being judged for their transgressions, no matter how minor. This is the fate of all who trust in themselves and not God.

And so, soteriologically, the wages of sin is death in the lake of fire. But the wages of sin for us here and now is still death in the practical sense. God created natural laws that govern our existence, and the principle of reaping and sowing is one of those laws. We are all bound by the natural laws, believers and unbelievers alike. And so as a mere natural man, the consequence of sin, of violating God's design, is dysfunction, and this can and does manifest in the realm of physiology, that is, our physical health, and in the realm of sociology, that is, in the family unit and in society at large.

As a believer, there is another element added, and that is the issue of our spiritual health and walk. Sin also results in *functional death* for the believer. And this naturally leads us to Romans chapter 7. Chapter 7 is going to be dealing with our relationship to the Law, the Laws relationship to sin itself, and the implications this has for our functional life in Christ, that is, our practical every day walk of sanctification.