

ROMANS 5:12-8:39 | GIVING TESTIMONY TO THE VALIDITY OF THE MYSTERY

*Supplemental Resource, Romans Graphically Presented, pg. 28*

ROMANS 6:1-7:25 | A MESSAGE TO BELIEVING JEWS IN OVERLAP TIMES

*Supplemental Resource, Romans Graphically Presented, pgs. 32-34*

ROMANS 6:15-23 | LIVING UNTO CHRIST

*Supplemental Resource, Romans Graphically Presented, pgs. 34*

VERSE 15 – BLUE

Paul now returns to the first-person plural, returning full circle to the rhetorical question put forth in the first verse of the chapter. The answer is, of course, very clear: **God forbid**.

There have been very few who officially promoted a “sin because we are under grace” doctrine in Christian history, and, at least in my experience, very few who ever adopted such a doctrine privately. Most of Christendom has not had enough grace teaching to even consider this as an issue, for most Christian doctrine leans more strongly to a “Lordship Salvation” concept, which requires works of proof, rather than a free-grace concept. Within grace-based communities, excessive sinning (so **that grace may abound**, v. 1) has not been a noticeable problem, though non-grace-based communities preach of “cheap grace” as if it is a problem.

So, if I analyze Christian culture correctly in stating that a “sin freely” doctrine has not been an issue, why does Paul address it so clearly? One could argue that Paul’s argument was so successful that Christianity simply obeyed, but this would be hard considering the almost wholesale rejection of other Pauline theology. More likely, the church so strongly adopted Petrine doctrine, and thus has been devoid of grace-doctrine, that this issue never became a problem.

VERSE 16 - BLUE

I am of the opinion that this is a general truth rather than a doctrinal statement. All people everywhere and in all dispensations are servants to whatever it is they have chosen to obey. The choice for every individual is to determine what forces and doctrines they will obey.

VERSES 17-18 – GREEN

Paul is speaking to the Roman Jews *about their Judaism*, not about their salvation under grace. I think it would be hard to argue that the **form of doctrine which was delivered you** (v. 17) was the Pauline message (which is only now being delivered by Paul). It was this Jewish/Kingdom doctrine which they had **obeyed from the heart** (v. 17). Having obeyed Jewish Law, they were **made free from sin** (v. 18). But this *sin freedom* is not in the sense of *forgiveness* but in the sense of *overcoming sin* by choice of being **servants of righteousness** (v. 18).

VERSE 19 – GREEN

Verse 19 is complicated...and simple.

It is complicated because Paul asks his audience to **yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness**, but had just finished saying that they had become **the servants of righteousness** (v. 18). So which direction have they gone?

It is simple because Paul introduces the instruction by saying, **I speak after the manner of men**. This tells us that Paul is not giving some deeply spiritual secret, but all along has been speaking of *human tendencies*. It is the **manner of men** to move quickly from serving sin to serving righteousness, and back again. This is a problem **of the infirmity of your flesh**.

In short, Paul says that they were **servants of sin** (v. 17), and **became the servants of righteousness** (v. 18) and now, as they had previously been **servants to uncleanness** (v. 19) he wants them to continue to be **servants to righteousness** (v. 19).

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## VERSES 20-21 – GREEN

Prior to being **servants of righteousness** (v. 18) they were **servants of sin** (v. 18, v. 20). At that time, they **were free from righteousness**. But Paul asks a practical question in verse 21, **what fruit had ye then...**? The things which *they thought were fruitful* not bring *shame*, and had they continued, **the end of those things is death** (v. 21).

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## VERSE 22 – GREEN

The phrase **being made free from sin** should not be taken in a Calvinistic sense. The previous verses tell us that they became **free from sin** by their obedience to the righteousness of Judaism (vv. 17-18). In the same sense in which John 8:22 teachers that **ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free**, so also these Jews **obeyed from the heart** (v. 17) and were **made free from sin** (v. 18).

To put it bluntly, if you want to be **made free from sin**, then quit serving sin!

On the flip side, to **become servants to God** simply *start serving God!*

But how does this bring about **everlasting life** as Paul says? In what way is this *not* works? I think that the only responsible way to deal with this issue is to recognize that Paul was speaking to *Jews* about something that *had already taken place prior to any revelation of the mystery*. The Jews had been faithful, and had attained a **fruit unto holiness** which would eventually bring about **everlasting life**. But such is not the case with us today, for we are not Jews, and the Law and its fruit is not available to us today.

Because Christianity insists on applying this directly to the Christian life, its commentaries and sermons inevitably create a works-based fiasco in interpretation of this verse. For example, [BibleRev.Com](http://BibleRev.Com), a ministry of *GotQuestions* has this commentary on verse 22:

“Paul now writes that, by trusting in Christ for our salvation, we have entered into that same relationship with God. Our identity is so closely connected to Christ that we are being changed to people who are bound to do what is right. This is who we are now. This is good news. Why? Because the “fruit”—the natural consequence—of serving righteousness is sanctification and eternal life.”<sup>1</sup>

Note clearly that this commentary says that “sanctification and eternal life” are the fruit “of serving righteousness. It is no wonder the *man in the pew* gets frustrated with the doublespeak coming from the pulpit, for in one moment it preachers’ *faith alone* and in the next that eternal life comes from righteous service.

How much better to *rightly divide* this passage.

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## VERSE 23 – BLUE

There are two ways of taking this verse.

First, we can take it to be a *continuation* of the previous discussion. In this case Paul is reminding the Roman Jews what happens when a person is a servant of sin (he receives **the wages of sin** which is **death**). In this regard, then, God also has given a **gift of eternal life** is from **God** and **through Jesus Christ**. This gift would correspond to the **everlasting life** of verse 22 and would be Kingdom related.

Second, we could take it to be the *introduction* of a new thought. If we take this interpretation, then Romans 6:23 belongs more with the new thinking of Romans 7:1 and following, in which Paul speaks of the new dispensation and its freedom from the Law. I have chosen this latter view.

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<sup>1</sup> What does Romans 6:22 mean? <https://www.bibleref.com/Romans/6/Romans-6-22.html>, (accessed March 16, 2023).