

## “The Freedom of Slavery” (Romans 6:15–23)

One of the most famous chimpanzees of all time is one by the name of Washoe. Some soldiers picked up Washoe in West Africa. In 1966 she was adopted by two doctors who raised her almost like a child. In 1970, however, she was turned over to another pair of doctors and taken to the University of Oklahoma. Here she went through rigorous training to become the first non-human to learn American Sign Language. She learned over 140 signs! It was discovered, however, that she was just mimicking all that she had been taught. After several years the staff decided that she was able to try to conceptualize. “She is going to say what is on her heart!” the staff declared. In her safe and secure cage, well taken care of, Washoe said the first three words of her own initiative: “LET ME OUT!!!” She signed these words several times.

Even in animals, there is a desire for freedom. Given the chance most animals would leave safety for the chance for freedom. Humans long for freedom as well. We yearn to enjoy life, free from guilt and despair. We want to live significant lives. Moreover, God has created us for freedom—it is our intended destiny. Yet the great Christian paradox is that we are freed from the slavery of sin to become slaves to God.<sup>1</sup> We could put it like this: *True freedom is slavery to Christ*. In Romans 6:15–23 Paul shares two critical facts about slavery.<sup>2</sup>

**1. Slavery is Inevitable (6:15–18).** In the 1970s Bob Dylan sang a song entitled, “You Gotta’ Serve Somebody!”<sup>3</sup> Dylan took this song straight out of Scripture. The apostle Paul states that every person serves somebody or something. He writes, “**What then?<sup>4</sup> Shall we sin<sup>5</sup> because we are not under law<sup>6</sup> but under grace? May it never be!**” (6:15) Paul returns to his original question in 6:1: Does grace encourage sin? Once again his response is, “May it never be!” or “What in the world are you thinking?!” (My translation)<sup>7</sup> Perhaps you’re thinking, “This sounds just like 6:1. Is this a case of déjà vu?” No, not exactly. In 6:1–14 Paul explained that Christ has broken the bonds of sin that enslave us; in 6:15–23 he warns that even though we are free we can become enslaved to sin by yielding to temptation.<sup>8</sup> It is not enough to be a new person and have a new position. We must cooperate daily with the Holy Spirit and give ourselves away as “slaves” to who we are. *True freedom is slavery to Christ*.

In 6:16 Paul issues a general statement that every person is a slave. He puts it like this: “**Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death,<sup>9</sup> or of obedience resulting in righteousness?**”<sup>10</sup> The rhetorical question, “Do you not know?” assumes that Paul’s readers understand the principle that everyone is a slave to someone or something—whether it is a person, possession, or activity. We become slaves of whomever or whatever we “present” ourselves to. Neutrality is impossible. To choose neutrality is to choose sin because it constitutes a refusal to serve God.<sup>11</sup> Hence, we are either slaves of obedience or slaves of sin.

In the hit movie, *Remember the Titans*,<sup>12</sup> Denzel Washington plays football coach Herman Boone. Set in 1971, the tale follows the forced integration of previously all-white T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, VA. My favorite scene is when the bus of football players is about to leave for summer training camp. All of a sudden, arrogant, white, All-American Gerry Bertier starts giving Boone guff. Boone finally comes unglued and asks Bertier, “Who’s your daddy?” He then continues to ask the question, louder and louder, until Bertier quietly whispers, “You are.” Boone was making the point that Bertier was about to experience slavery in his final year of high school football. I must ask you: “Who’s your daddy?” Let me tell you, it matters who your daddy is because 6:16 says there are only two daddies: sin and obedience. This means that there are also only two types of slaves: Slaves of sin, resulting in death, or slaves of obedience, resulting in righteousness. There is no third option.

Paul is saying, “I have some good news and some bad news for you. The bad news is that we are all slaves. None of us is free. We are in bondage to whatever controls our lives.” The person who can’t say

no to sugar is a slave to sugar. The Christian who cannot turn off the television to read the Bible or spend time with his or her children is a slave to the tube. The person who cannot break an addiction to pornography is a slave to immorality. The person who checks his or her stock portfolio on CNBC every hour is a slave to money. We are slaves to whatever controls our lives.<sup>13</sup> That's the bad news. Here's the good news: As believers, we get to choose our master! An unbeliever has no choice of masters.<sup>14</sup> He is a slave to his old self, and therefore, a slave to Satan. As hard as he may try to break free, the chains of sin keep yanking him back. He can never break free. He is Satan's indentured servant. But a Christian has been liberated to serve a new Master. We can opt for "obedience resulting in righteousness."

In 6:17–18 Paul reminds his readers that they have been emancipated from slavery to sin. He even breaks out into praise. **"But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."**<sup>15</sup> The Roman Christians *were* "slaves of sin," but they had been "freed from sin" and made "slaves of righteousness." This is an accomplished fact. At the point of conversion Paul says "[you] became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching<sup>16</sup> to which you were committed."<sup>17</sup> Notice Paul does not refer to the "form of teaching to which was committed to you." Rather he says "that form of teaching to which you were committed." When you placed your faith in Christ, God instantaneously set you free from sin's power and "committed" you to a new slavery. The Greek term translated "committed" (*paradidomi*) literally means "handed over," and links back to Rom 1 where unbelievers are "given over" to sin's slavery (1:24, 26, 28). Paul is exclaiming: As Christians we are handed over by God to a new realm of power to serve as slaves of righteousness.<sup>18</sup>

I love how Paul breaks forth in praise to God in 6:17. He tells his readers that they "*were* slaves of sin." But now they have "became obedient" to the message of eternal life in Jesus Christ. In other words, they listened to the gospel and obeyed! Consequently, Paul gets excited and expresses thanks! If you are reading this sermon, it is likely that Paul would rejoice over you. You are seeking to grow in God's Word and in obedience to Christ. I, too, honor you for any step of obedience you take. Most importantly, God is pleased with you. Please sense His pleasure. Let grace catapult you to the next level of obedience. *True freedom is slavery to Christ.*

[Not only is slavery inevitable, Paul also inform us that . . .]

**2. Slavery is Intentional (6:19–23).** No one becomes a slave who functions for Christ through osmosis. To be Christ's slave requires intentional effort. In 6:19 Paul uses an analogy to help us understand slavery to righteousness.<sup>19</sup> He writes, **"I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification."**<sup>20</sup> Paul contrasts our former way of life with our present. Before Christ we presented our "members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness." This means you can tell a lie, but you can't tell just one. You tell a lie and then you tell another. Then you tell another one to cover up the second one. You tell another one to cover up the third one. One sin leads to another. Envy leads to envy leads to envy. Lust leads to lust leads to lust. Bitterness leads to bitterness leads to bitterness. Sin is like that—it is "ever-increasing wickedness" (NIV). Do you remember the *Lay's* potato chip commercial that challenged, "Bet you can't eat just one?"<sup>21</sup> This expression is also true for sin. "Bet you can't do just one." You say, "Oh yes I can. I can sin and I can quit sinning any time." Of course, we know better, don't we? Sin is the *Lay's* potato chip of life. When it is done willfully, it is not sampled, it is indulged in. The principle is: Freedom to sin means slavery to sin. Fortunately, Paul provides another option: ". . . so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification" (6:19b). Finally, Paul gives his first and primary command. The verb "present" (*paristemi*) seems to be highlighted in this section. A form of the word occurs five times in 6:13–19. In

this context the word simply means “to put yourself at God’s disposal.”<sup>22</sup> Paul commands us to have the same zeal for righteousness that we once had for sin. We were consumed with sin and handed over to all kinds of uncleanness and lawlessness; *now* we are commanded to have that same passion for Christ and His service.<sup>23</sup> Paul says we are to present our members “as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.” In this context, “sanctification” (*hagiasmos*) is “the ongoing process of being set apart for God.”<sup>24</sup> It is “being changed into the likeness of Christ.”<sup>25</sup> It is simply progressive holiness.<sup>26</sup>

Is Paul only referring to the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, and self-denial? No! The concept of biblical holiness is used to describe a life of growing purity. This also includes a concern for the needy, for the unborn child, for the use of wealth. It has things to say about marriage, about being a neighbor, about property, about the widow, the orphan, the immigrant. It is an entire kingdom of righteousness. Paul intends for this to be a motivating, positive exhortation. He is attempting to emphasize the privilege of serving God because we are no longer who we used to be.<sup>27</sup> To summarize: Paul explains that God did not buy Christians out of sin’s slavery to set us free in the world; rather, He bought us to be His slaves!<sup>28</sup>

In 6:20–21 Paul reiterates that sin results in death. He does so by reminding us of our past. In 6:20 Paul explains why we should present ourselves to God. **“For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.”** This verse does not mean that we were all as bad as we could be or that we were “free” (*eleutheros*, cf. 7:3) in the sense that God did not care what we did. It simply means that we were not “slaves of righteousness,” and we did not care one iota about righteousness. Therefore, we had no relationship with it whatsoever—we were “free” from it. In 6:21 Paul then asks the question, **“Therefore what benefit [lit. “fruit”] were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.”** Paul’s question is: Did your former life ever do you any good? His reply is: Absolutely not! The “benefit” or “fruit” was nothing but shame and death.

Maybe you remember Bill Cosby’s comedy routine about a group of co-workers who return on Monday morning talking about the great time they had drinking over the weekend. “I got knockdown drunk like a skunk, sicker than a dog, can’t remember what I said or did, and then was hung over next morning.” Cosby mocks this sad existence by asking the question: “You call that fun?” We can apply Cosby’s words to any sin in our past life: immorality, stealing, lying, fighting, gossiping. Our past life was fruitless, at best. But Paul goes further and says the “outcome” of our sin is “death” (6:21b). This use of “death” may be physical death (cf. Jas 1:13–15), but it is more likely that Paul is referring to present spiritual death.<sup>29</sup>

We must always bear in mind that it is possible for a Christian to sow to the flesh and “reap corruption” (Gal 6:8). Paul’s mention of the way of death is not an idle matter; it has bearing on you and me. Our position has been changed forever—we are in Christ. Our person has also been changed forever—we are slaves of righteousness. But we are still capable of corrupting the life that God has given us. While our position is secure, our experience in life can wither and die (Rom 8:13). Hear this again: If you refuse to present yourself to God, the result is death! This is serious! Paul is implying that you cannot be happy in sin! Admittedly, there is passing pleasure in sin (Heb 11:25b), but it is always insatiable and unfulfilling. Hence, the most miserable person in the world is the Christian who tries to live in sin. The Holy Spirit that lives within this believer is grieved and quenched. God loves this person too much to let him or her remain in a state of rebellion. The Spirit will chasten and rebuke and do whatever is necessary to bring the sinning saint to repentance.<sup>30</sup>

Sin for the believer is nothing better than chocolate-covered Alpo. It may bring momentary pleasure, but the aftertaste will kill you. To go for Alpo when the choicest steak is available is foolish beyond words. Until we understand that sin is as foolish as it is wrong, we probably won't change.<sup>31</sup> Sin is insanity! It brings nothing but grief! Moreover, living for Christ far exceeds living for sin. There's just no comparison! Luis Palau once said, "If you like sin, you'll love holiness." That's what Paul is saying. If you thought sin was fun, try some holiness for a while. It's really fun! There's no bad aftertaste, and there's no guilty conscience, and there's nothing left to be remorseful about. Sin satisfies for a little while. Holiness satisfies forever.<sup>32</sup>

Paul concludes this passage by arguing that following God results in holiness and eternal life (6:22-23). Just in case we did not hear him the first time (cf. 6:18), in 6:22 Paul again tells us that we have been "freed and enslaved to God." **"But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life."** Once again Paul brings us the phrase "but now" (cf. 3:21). Paul contrasts the new way with the old (the new state we have found ourselves in by the grace of God). As a result of being "freed from sin and enslaved to God," we derive "benefit." We benefit our spouse, our children, our boss, our co-workers, and our church. We benefit all who know us because they would rather be around someone who is growing to be more like Christ than like Attila the Hun. But, it is also a benefit to us because slavery to God frees us to fulfill the destiny for which we were created by God. *True freedom is slavery to Christ.*

Paul expands this thought in the final verse of this section. In 6:23 Paul writes, **"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."**<sup>33</sup> I want to pause here for just a moment. We often use this text evangelistically, applying it to the unbeliever. This is well and good, for the principle is true and surely applies to the unbeliever.<sup>34</sup> But, let us not overlook the fact that here Paul is applying the principle to the saint, not the sinner. He is applying the principle to the Christian, who may be toying with sin, not the unbeliever who is living in sin.

The very first word of 6:23, "for" (*gar*) is often overlooked, yet it serves to connect Paul's thoughts from 6:20-22 (and the whole of his argument beginning at 6:15). Furthermore, in 6:23 Paul uses an interesting word for "wages" (*opsonion*). The word he uses refers to the daily food payment a Roman soldier would receive. So what are the death wages of sin?

- Instant breakdown of fellowship with God
- Removal of God's hand of blessing
- Misery of a guilty conscience
- Loss of personal integrity
- Strained relationships with fellow Christians
- Reproach brought to one's family and to the name of Christ
- Injury to the testimony of the local church

Fortunately, God offers us "eternal life."<sup>35</sup> While the initial possession of eternal life comes at the moment of justification through faith in Christ (3:24; 5:18), the enjoyment or ongoing experience of that life is the fruit of godly living. In other words, "eternal life" begins as "a free gift," and with proper use, can produce more of the same. The principle is equally true of human life. The life of the newborn infant is always the gift of his parents, but that life proceeds to grow and expand by reproducing itself in grandchildren. Life, then, produces life, but never unless first received as a gift. This holds true for natural life and eternal life.<sup>36</sup> In this context, "eternal life" is the resurrection-life experience that Paul develops in 6:1-23.<sup>37</sup> If we "know" (6:3, 6, 9), "consider" (6:11), "present" (6:13), and "obey" (6:15-23) we will experience the benefits of eternal life in time and in eternity. *True freedom is slavery to Christ.*

How can we apply this text more specifically to our lives? Consider the following suggestions:

**(1) Recognize who you are in Christ.** You are no longer a slave to sin. The reason that you sin is because you choose to serve your old master rather than your new one. Yet, he has no authority over your life. Imagine that you are living in an apartment under a landlord who has made your life miserable. He charges an astronomically high rent, and when you are unable to pay, he tacks on exorbitant interest that only gets you further in debt. He barges into your apartment at all hours, breathing threats, soiling your carpet, and then charging you extra for not maintaining the property! One day you open your door and find a stranger standing there. “I’m the new owner of this apartment building. I’m sorry for all you’ve experienced under the previous owner, but I want you to know you can live here—for free—as long as you want.” You are elated over the change in management. Finally, you have been delivered from the clutches of the previous owner. Then one day there is a loud knocking at the door. There stands your old landlord cursing loudly and demanding you pay him the overdue rent. How should you respond? Would you pay him what he demands? Of course not! He is no longer the owner of the building. Would you attack him? Probably not, especially if he is bigger than you are. Instead you would explain to him that he no longer has any authority over you since your apartment is now under new management. If he has a complaint, he can take it up with the new owner. The old landlord may continue to bluster and threaten you, hoping he can bluff you into paying him, but he knows he has no real authority over you. He is just hoping you don’t know that.<sup>38</sup> Focus on your identity in Christ. You are a new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17).

**(2) Welcome Christian slavery.** Many people wrongly assume that if they choose to live for themselves they can experience true freedom. However, this is a lie from Satan. The choice is not, “Should I retain my freedom or give it up and submit to God?” but “Should I serve sin, or should I serve God?”<sup>39</sup> You may be thinking, I’m not sure I like this idea of being a slave—even if it is God’s slave. Remember, though, that slavery does not have to be a negative image. Nearly eighteen years ago I flew my first kite on my honeymoon in Lincoln City. Lori enjoys flying kites and wanted to do that together while we were on the beach. Flying that kite taught me a very valuable lesson. A kite is free to fly only when it is a “slave” to the string. Cut the string and the kite’s freedom to fly is severed as well. In the same way, slavery to God fully frees us to be what we were created to be. *True freedom is slavery to Christ.*

**(3) Don’t give up in your battle with sin.** I would guess that when you commit a particular sin, perhaps your besetting sin, you feel the temptation to give in or give up. The thought is: “Well, I’ve already committed the sin; I might as well continue or give up pursuing God altogether.” Yet, God wants you to turn to Him even in the midst of your sin. Confess your sin to the Lord. Keep short accounts. Press on to spiritual maturity. There is a Chinese proverb that says, “You don’t drown by falling in the water, you drown by staying there.”<sup>40</sup> Don’t give up!

**(4) Believe God has the best in store for you.** God doesn’t want to deprive you of any good thing. He wants to bless you and give you every good and perfect gift (Jas 1:17). Trust Him in this! A number of years ago in Georgia, a family was driving down the road in a Volkswagen. They came across a farm that was burning down. As they passed the farm, they noticed a man, a woman, and two kids walking down the road. Yet, the car was so packed that there was no place to put the destitute family. The man then gave \$50 to the farmer. The farmer thanked him, and the family went on their way. They stopped at the nearest bank to retrieve \$200. Returning down the traveled road the family again stopped when meeting up with the farmer and his family. The man said, “Would you please give me the money back?” The farmer thought about it for a moment, and then gave it back. The man then combined the two gifts and gave the farmer \$250.

This is what the Lord does in our lives. He takes what we give Him and gives us all of Himself. He always has His glory and our best in mind. We can bank on it! Since slavery is inevitable, we had better choose the right daddy. Since slavery is intentional, we had better rely upon God's strength to present ourselves to Him. *True freedom is slavery to Christ.*

### **Scripture References**

Romans 6:15–23

Romans 8:1–17

Romans 12:1–2

Romans 13:8–10

Galatians 5:16–25

2 Peter 2:18–22

Galatians 6:8; 1 Timothy 6:12

### **Study Questions**

1. How do I view sin (Romans 6:15–16)? Do I really believe that I am “under grace” and set free from sin? Is there a sin in my life that I am having trouble shaking? Do I use the words “I can’t help myself” in describing my sin? Am I content with pursuing holiness, or do I envy the wicked? Read Psalm 73.
2. Why did Paul include the phrase “obedient from the heart” (Romans 6:17–18)? Specifically, how can I show my wholehearted obedience to God rather than to sin this week? What must I do to exercise my will so that I do not fall prey to temptation?
3. Have I moved from being a slave to sin to being a slave to righteousness? Are others able to see me bearing the fruit of righteousness? What tangible differences are there in my life since I trusted in Christ? How can I inspire and motivate others to sacrificial slavery?
4. Besides the gift of eternal life, what “benefits” have I experienced as a result of becoming a slave of righteousness (Romans 6:20–21)? Why are these benefits better than the benefits of the wicked? When one weighs both the benefits and consequences of sin, is it worth it?
5. Have I thanked God today for the gift of eternal life that He has provided in Jesus Christ (Romans 6:22–23)? How have I experienced “eternal life” in my present Christian life? How have I experienced “the wages of sin?” What have I learned through these experiences?

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Romans*. The IVP NT Commentary series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 160.

<sup>2</sup> Schreiner rightly notes, “The metaphor of slavery dominates these verses; words related to slavery are used eight times.” Thomas Schreiner, *Romans*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 330.

<sup>3</sup> See Bob Dylan’s website for lyrics: [www.bobdylan.com/songs/gotta-serve-somebody](http://www.bobdylan.com/songs/gotta-serve-somebody).

<sup>4</sup> This is the fifth time Paul has used the *Ti oun* (“What then”) formula to introduce a question (Rom 3:1, 9; 4:1; 6:1). Here he seems to draw out the implications of 6:1–14.

<sup>5</sup> This is the last occurrence of the verb *hamartano* (“to sin”) in the entire book of Romans.

<sup>6</sup> The phrase “not under law” prepares for Rom 7, where Paul will discuss this in detail. Osborne, *Romans*, 160 notes that the potential error in 6:1 was sinning more to experience more grace, while in 6:15 it is sinning freely because grace has replaced the law.

<sup>7</sup> F. F. Bruce goes so far to say, “To make being ‘under grace’ an excuse for sinning is a sign that one is not really ‘under grace’ at all.” F. F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 141.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Romans” (2010 ed.): [www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/romans.pdf](http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/romans.pdf), 74.

<sup>9</sup> *Contra* Schreiner who says that “death” in Rom 6:16 “includes physical death but cannot be limited to such, since it is explicitly contrasted with ‘eternal life’ in verse 23. The death that is the result of sin, therefore, is separation from God, eternal death, and final condemnation.”

<sup>10</sup> As Lopez notes, there is an allusion here to Moses in Deut 30:15, “‘See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity.’ In that text as in this one, ‘death’ is the poor result of disobedience, and ‘life’ or ‘righteousness’ (best understood here as moral uprightness [so Moo, 400]) is the result of deciding to obey. Just as Israel was presented with choices and expected those choices to produce results, so we should expect our choices to have consequences. If we obey, we too will experience the sanctification, righteousness, and fellowship that Paul wants us to enjoy. If, on the other hand, we present ourselves to sin the consequence is ‘death.’” René A. Lopez, *Romans Unlocked: Power to Deliver* (Springfield, MO: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Press, 2005), 137.

<sup>11</sup> Osborne, *Romans*, 161.

<sup>12</sup> For more information, see [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remember\\_the\\_Titans](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remember_the_Titans).

<sup>13</sup> Robert Jeffress, *Grace Gone Wild!* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook, 2005), 33. Jesus inferred the same truth when He declared, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth” (Matt 6:24; cf. Luke 16:13).

<sup>14</sup> See John 8:34; Eph 2:1–4.

<sup>15</sup> Morris says, “For him [Paul] freedom in Christ is not an invitation to splendid self-centeredness. The freed in Christ have become slaves to righteousness. They are not aimless, purposeless. They have been freed from sin in order that they may give themselves over wholly to worthwhile causes, boldly expressed here as being enslaved to the right. Elsewhere Paul tells us that, while the slave is Christ’s freedman, the free man called to be a Christian is Christ’s slave (1Co 7:22). We remember that Jesus said that a good tree ‘cannot’ bear bad fruit (Mt 7:18). Paul is saying much the same in his own way. Those set free do not wander in a moral vacuum. They are slaves to righteousness.” Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 264.

<sup>16</sup> Paul’s only other use of “teaching” (*didache*) in Romans occurs in 16:17.

<sup>17</sup> Stott comments: “That they had ‘obeyed’ is understandable, since the proper response to the gospel is ‘the obedience of faith’ (1:5, RSV). But here it is not God or Christ whom they are said to have obeyed, but a certain *form* (RSV ‘standard’) of teaching. This must have been a ‘pattern of sound teaching, or structure of apostolic instruction, which probably included both elementary gospel doctrine and elementary personal ethics. Paul evidently sees conversion not only as trusting in Christ but as believing and acknowledging the truth. Moreover, Paul writes not that this teaching was committed to them, but that they were committed (*entrusted*) to it. The verb he uses is *paradidōmi*, which is the regular word for passing on a tradition.” John R. W. Stott, *Romans: God’s Good News for the World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), 184. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 401 writes: “Paul wants to make clear that becoming a Christian means being placed under the authority of Christian ‘teaching,’ that expression of God’s will for NT believers. The new convert’s ‘obedience’ to this teaching is the outgrowth of God’s action in ‘handing us over’ to that teaching when we were converted.”

<sup>18</sup> Lopez, *Romans Unlocked*, 138.

<sup>19</sup> Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 264; Osborne, *Romans*, 163.

<sup>20</sup> Rom 6:19 forms something of a parenthetical comment in Paul’s argument (see NET study notes).

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<sup>21</sup> See the classic version with Larry Bird and Kareem Abdul-Jabar: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRzcyjw916xo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRzcyjw916xo).

<sup>22</sup> BDAG s.v. *paristemi* 1a: “place beside, put at someone’s disposal.”

<sup>23</sup> Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 404 explains this with vigor: “Paul in this verse employs a comparison: ‘just as you presented . . . so now present.’ He thus makes clear that Christians should serve righteousness with all the single-minded dedication that characterized their pre-Christian service of such ‘idols’ as self, money, lust, pleasure, and power. Would that we would pursue holiness with the zeal that so many of us pursued these other, incomparably less worthy goals!”

<sup>24</sup> Osborne, *Romans*, 164.

<sup>25</sup> Stott, *Romans*, 185.

<sup>26</sup> Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 405 puts it this way: “‘Sanctification’ may refer to the state of ‘holiness,’ as the end product of a life of living in service of righteousness. But most of Paul’s uses of this word have an active connotation: the *process* of ‘becoming holy.’ This is probably the case here also. Committing ourselves as slaves to doing what is right before God (‘righteousness’) results in living that is increasingly God-centered and world-renouncing.”

<sup>27</sup> Michael Eaton, *Romans: A Practical Exposition*, forthcoming.

<sup>28</sup> John P. Correia, “No Free Agency” (Rom 6:15–23): unpublished sermon notes.

<sup>29</sup> It is possible to sow to the flesh and “reap corruption” (Gal 6:8).

<sup>30</sup> Michael Eaton, *Romans*. Preaching Through the Bible (Kent, UK: Sovereign World Trust, 2010), 113.

<sup>31</sup> Dwight Edwards, *Experiencing Christ Within* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook, 2001), 155.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Ray Pritchard, “You Gotta Serve Somebody” (Rom 6:15–23): [www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/1993-01-06-You-Gotta-Serve-Somebody/](http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/1993-01-06-You-Gotta-Serve-Somebody/).

<sup>33</sup> Lopez, *Romans Unlocked*, 142 summarizes the chapter: “Eternal life at glorification (the last stage of Christian salvation) will transpire in the future (Matt 25:46; Mark 10:30) but it is also a present possession of Christians (John 3:16; 5:24; 6:47). Hence believers may experience the effects of eternal life now since they exist in the realm of resurrection-power (cf. Rom 6:1–14; John 10:10). Thus, though all Christians have eternal life now and can experience it now, the full revelation of this life will not be manifested until the resurrection (1 Cor 15:35–58). While the *death* and *life* motif here is a general principle applicable to everyone, the primary thrust of Paul’s point is for believers to overcome the deadly effects of sin and experience life; which in the fullest sense may be called *eternal life* (cf. 5:21). Thus, Paul concludes by stating how Christian victory, as described in chapter 6, is possible: First by being in . . . *Christ* and second by adhering to Him as *Lord* (cf. 5:21).” However, Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 408 notes that Rom 6:22 may simply express “the goal or outcome to which a life of sanctification moves.” As he observes: “‘Life,’ while it begins for the believer at the moment of conversion (cf. 6:4 and 8:6), is not granted in its full and final form until ‘that which is mortal is swallowed up by life’ (2 Cor. 5:4).” In support of this understanding, the verse immediately following makes an explicit contrast between the consequence of sin, which is death, and “the free gift of God . . . eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (6:23). Eternal life here is most evidently a reference to the blessing shared by all who place their faith in Christ. Thus, with two references to “eternal life” so close together, it is difficult, if not impossible, to see a distinction in meaning in the two consecutive verses. Furthermore, Paul’s statement that believers have been “freed from sin and enslaved to God” underscores God’s gracious initiative.

<sup>34</sup> Charlie Bing, “Should Romans 6:23 Be Used in Evangelism?” *Grace Life Notes* no. 36: [www.gracelife.org/resources/gracenotes.asp?id=35](http://www.gracelife.org/resources/gracenotes.asp?id=35); Constable, “Notes on Romans,” 75.

<sup>35</sup> In John 17:3 Jesus defined eternal life as the knowledge of God.

<sup>36</sup> Eaton, *Romans*, forthcoming.

<sup>37</sup> Lopez, *Romans Unlocked*, 142.

<sup>38</sup> Jeffress, *Grace Gone Wild!*, 33–34 uses this illustration but acknowledges that it has been paraphrased from Larry Christiansen, *The Renewed Mind* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1981), 41–42.

<sup>39</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*. New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 399.

<sup>40</sup> Brian Bell, “New Master—New Love!” (Romans 6:15–7:6): [www.ccmurrieta.com/archive-study-detail.asp?bookID=Romans](http://www.ccmurrieta.com/archive-study-detail.asp?bookID=Romans).