

Being Enslaved to Righteousness

Romans 6.12-18¹

Translation²

¹²Therefore, sin must not rule in your mortal bodies, such that you obey the lusts of your bodies, ¹³nor should you present the parts of your bodies to sin as tools of unrighteousness; rather, present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead and [present] the parts of your body to God as tools of righteousness. ¹⁴For sin will not be master over you; for you are not under the Law but [you are] under grace. ¹⁵Then what [should we do]? Should we sin, because we are not under the Law but [we are] under grace? May it never be! ¹⁶Do you not know that you are slaves to the one to whom you are presenting yourselves as slaves for obedience, to the one whom you follow, either [slaves] of sin resulting in death or [slaves] of obedience resulting in righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God that you were slaves of sin but you obeyed from the heart the pattern of teaching to which you were entrusted, ¹⁸and – set free from sin – you became enslaved to righteousness.

Exegetical Idea

WHAT THE ROMANS WERE TO DO

WAS LIVE OUT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS THEY HAD BEEN GRANTED
BY BECOMING ENSLAVED TO RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Exegetical Sentence Outline

IVA1: WHAT THE ROMANS WERE TO DO WAS LIVE OUT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS THEY HAD BEEN GRANTED [12-13].

- a. What they were to do was avoid letting sin lead them into obeying lust [12].
 - i. What they were to do was avoid letting sin rule them [12a].
 - ii. The result of sin ruling over them would be that they would obey lust [12b].
- b. What they were to do was live out the righteousness they had been granted [13].
 - i. What they were to do was they avoid living in sin [13a].
 - ii. What they were to do was live like they were alive for God [13b].
 - iii. What they were to do was live in righteousness [13c].

¹ Most commentators begin this section with v.15 [e.g. Grassmick, Moo, Cranfield, Schreiner, Morris], perhaps because they are looking for rhetorical patterns and they see in v.15 the beginning of a “μη γένοιτο” paragraph. I have received permission from Dr. Fanning to clump these verses together [because I am assigned vv.12-23 and the only good textual critical problem is in v.12], but I also think v.12 is a valid place to begin a new section. My introduction to the commentary section [hopefully] will make my reasoning clear; but please also note that vv.15-18 deal with a possible inference from the content of v.14, so there is a strong integration among these verses.

² This is a dynamic translation, aimed at the average reader. A word-for-word translation is as follows [but see notes in the commentary about adjustments for clarity]: ¹²Therefore, sin must not rule in your mortal bodies such that you obey their [your bodies'] lusts, ¹³nor should you present your members to sin as tools of unrighteousness; rather, present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead and [present] your members to God as tools of righteousness. ¹⁴For sin will not be master over you; for you are not under the Law but [you are] under grace. ¹⁵Then what [should we do]? Should we sin, because we are not under the Law but [we are] under grace? May it never be! ¹⁶Do you not know that you are slaves to the one to whom you are presenting yourselves as slaves for obedience, to the one whom you follow, either [slaves] of sin resulting in death or [slaves] of obedience resulting in righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God that you were slaves of sin, but you obeyed from the heart the pattern of teaching to which you were entrusted, ¹⁸and – set free from sin – you became enslaved to righteousness.

IVA2: WHAT THE ROMANS WERE TO UNDERSTAND WAS THAT THEY WERE FREE FROM THE LAW BUT NOT FREE TO SIN [14-15].

- a. What they were to know was sin did not control them because they were under grace not law [14].
 - i. What they were to know was that sin would not be in control of them [14a].
 - ii. The reason sin would not be in control of them was that they were not under the Law [14b].
 - iii. The reason sin would not be in control of them was that they were under grace [14c].
- b. What they were to understand was that being under grace did not allow them to sin [15].
 - i. What they were to consider was what people should do in this situation [15a].
 - ii. What they were to consider was whether people should feel free to sin [15b].
 - iii. The reason people might feel free to sin was that they were not under the Law [15c].
 - iv. The reason people might feel free to sin was that they were under grace [15d].
 - v. What they were to understand was that people should not feel free to sin [15e].

IVA3: THE REASON FOR THANKSGIVING WAS THAT THE ROMANS HAD BECOME ENSLAVED TO RIGHTEOUSNESS [16-18].

- a. What they were to consider was that they became slaves to whomever they obeyed [16].
 - i. What they were to consider was whether they understood that they became slaves [16a].
 - ii. Who held them in slavery was the one to whom they presented themselves as slaves [16b].
 - iii. Who held them in slavery was the one whom they obeyed [16c].
 - iv. The result of obedience to sin was death [16d].
 - v. The result of obedience to God was righteousness [16e].
- b. The reason for thanksgiving was that they had obeyed biblical teaching [17].
 - i. What Paul felt was thankfulness [17a].
 - ii. The reason for thanksgiving was that their slavery to sin was past [17b].
 - iii. The reason for thanksgiving was that they now were obedient [17c].
 - iv. What they obeyed was the pattern of teaching to which they had been entrusted [17d].
- c. The result of this obedience was freedom from sin and enslavement to righteousness [18].
 - i. The result of this obedience derived from grace was freedom from sin [18a].
 - ii. The result of this freedom from sin was enslavement to righteousness [18b].

Commentary

Introduction: In the beginning of his letter to the church in Rome, Paul made clear that he was commissioned to bring the gospel [or “message of good news”] pertaining to how people could have salvation. This salvation [as explained later in the letter] involves God’s forgiveness of a person’s sin [impurity; going against God’s revelation], the consequent consideration by God that this person is righteous [pure] in his sight, and thus reconciliation of that person into a healthy relationship with God [I: 1.1-17]. First, Paul declared his mission to bring to the Gentile [non-Jewish] nations the gift of God’s gospel, which was promised in the Hebrew scriptures [our “Old Testament”] and is centered on Jesus Christ, who is the declared Son of God [a name implying at least authority from God, and possibly deity], the human descendent of David, the resurrected Lord [a name implying at least authority from God, and possibly deity], and the provider of Paul’s mission [IA: 1.1-7]. Second, Paul declared his desire to visit and establish a relationship with the church in Rome [IB: 1.8-15]. Third, Paul stated the theme of his letter, that he boasted in this gospel, which is the power of God to bring salvation for all who believe in its truth [IC: 1.16-17].

Paul then used an extensive argument in three parts to make clear that *nobody can attain righteousness and reconciliation with God by his own actions, that all need this gospel to be saved* [II: 1.18-3.20]. First, those who are not religious face God's wrath for their neglect of God and their sin [IIA: 1.18-32]. Second, those who trust in their own self-derived righteousness also face God's wrath because of their misplaced confidence in themselves and their continued sin [IIB: 2.1-16]. Third, even Jews who are passionately religious face God's wrath because of their sin [IIC: 2.17-3.8]. Paul summarized by explaining that all people are under judgment because all people are sinful [impure], and thus they are both alienated in relationship with God and incapable of mitigating this problem [IID: 3.9-20].

Paul's next major section of the letter detailed in five parts that *only grace [an unmerited gift from God] could bring about this salvation* [III: 3.21-6.11]. First, because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, which acted as a substitutionary payment for people's sins, God gives people grace in the form of justification [being considered righteous by God], propitiation [mitigation of God's anger through his forgiveness of our sins], and redemption [freedom from the power of sin, death, evil, and the Mosaic Law, (though this would not be fully explained until later in the letter)], as part of salvation [IIIA: 3.21-26]. Second, people appropriate this grace through faith [belief in God's revelation] in the gospel message that God will save through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ [IIIB: 3.27-4.25]. Third, one result of this grace is hope: this gift of righteousness and salvation leads to peace with God and thus hope; and even present troubles can lead to hope, because they lead to perseverance, which leads to character development, which leads to hope; and this hope is based on being aware of having God's love, which is proven in Christ's sacrificial death for believers despite their unworthiness [IIIC: 5.1-11]. Fourth, the Hebrew scriptures about Abraham show that righteousness and reconciliation with God has always been by grace, through faith, resulting in eternal life [resurrected life after physical death; IIID: 5.12-21]. Fifth, believers in this gospel have died to sin with Christ and with Christ are raised up to new life, free from the power of sin, and alive with Christ for God's purposes [IIIE: 6.1-11].

This last thought provides the transition into the next major section, about how *believers must now identify themselves with Christ* [IV: 6.12-8.39]. Because believers are justified, they should seek to live pure lives in obedience to God [IVA: 6.12-7.6]; and though they all still struggle with sin [IVB: 7.7-25], they are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live and even suffer for God's purposes [IVC: 8.1-39]. The subject passage falls into the first of these subsections.

IVA1: Seeking to live righteously [6.12-13]: This passage begins with the word, "therefore" [οὖν; BDAG 736-737], to make clear that what follows is an implication of the previous statement in v.11, which was that believers should consider themselves dead to sin and alive to Christ [Cranfield, 316; Schreiner, 322]. The implication, as we shall see, is both practical and ethical in nature [Witherington, 162-163].

The first part of this implication is that sin must not rule³ [βασιλεύω; BDAG, 170] in your mortal [θνητόν; BDAG, 458] body⁴ such that [εἰς τὸ + infinitive taken as result; see Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 593] you obey [ὕπακούω; BDAG, 1028-1029] the lusts [ἐπιθυμία; BDAG, 372] of your body.⁵ This is not

³ Often translators phrase this as "Therefore, do not let sin..." [NASB, NET] but the verb is a third-person singular, present active imperative, which is brought out more clearly with a "sin must not" construction. Either translation is correct [Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 486].

⁴ τῷ θνητῷ ὁμῶν σώματι is "your [plural] mortal body [singular]." I have pluralized "bodies" throughout this verse in the translation for clarity and consistency from previous verses; but here, I have discussed singular believers.

⁵ There is a text-critical issue in v.12: ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτοῦ [NA²⁷] vs. αὐτῆ [V¹] vs. αὐτῆ ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτοῦ [V²]. External: NA²⁷ is witnessed by ⋈ [fourth century, Alexandrian, the best Greek manuscript for the epistles (unless otherwise noted, evaluation of manuscripts is from Wallace, "A Brief Introduction to New Testament

to say you can separate the sins of the body from the sins of the mind or some such thing; Paul meant believers should not allow sin to rule in themselves as whole persons, so they would not follow any impulses of lust they might have [Cranfield, 317; Schreiner, 323; Witherington, 163; Moo, 383].

Sin is not really an entity, but Paul personified it to show that – metaphorically speaking – sin had ruled in people in the sense that people were controlled by their sinful desires, and this led to physical death [and perhaps also implied here is the result of separation from God (which is discussed below); 5.12, 21]. The good news is that Christ’s death effectively brings redemption to believers [3.24] and his resurrection broke the power of sin to enforce death [6.9; Barnett, 139]. Furthermore, as the preceding section of 6.1-11 makes clear, believers have effectively died with Christ, and this death broke the power of sin over believers, and the believers also effectively have been resurrected with Christ, to have a spiritual rebirth that leads to a new life of experiential righteousness [Schreiner, 323].

While sin’s stranglehold on the believer is broken, sin is not completely eradicated in the believer [Morris, 257; Schreiner, 323] in that the believer still has some impurity and corruption in nature during this age [Moo, 383], so the believer must choose to resist the influence of sin so as not to obey his own lusts. This resistance should be a passionate desire of the believer, a natural result of having this new life, such that [though it might be difficult] believers will desire to align themselves with God instead of with sin [Stott, 52]. After all, the reference to the mortality of our bodies serves to remind us that sin’s pleasures are limited to realization in a body that is corrupted and will die, but the life in Christ which Paul described brings eternal joy [Morris, 257].

The second part of this implication begins with “nor” [μηδὲ; BDAG, 647], connecting to the first part: nor should you present [παριστάνω/παρίστημι; BDAG, 778⁶] the parts [μέλος; BDAG, 628] of your

Textual Criticism,” 54-55)], B [fourth century, Alexandrian, high quality], and the old Latin manuscripts [second century, Western, known for variety so agreement is significant (Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*, 101)]. V¹ is witnessed by P⁴⁶ [third century, Alexandrian, loose transcription] and D [sixth century, the primary Western Greek witness to the Pauline letters]. V² is witnessed by the Byzantine minuscules [believed to reflect a fourth century archetype, but considered as lesser witnesses than the early Alexandrian witnesses]. NA²⁷ has genealogical solidarity for the Alexandrian text-type [though P⁴⁶ favors one of the variants]. V¹ has no genealogical solidarity. V² has genealogical solidarity for the Byzantine text-type. NA²⁷ and V¹ have the best early geographical spread, being represented in Alexandrian and Western text-types. Thus, all three readings have early witnesses, but NA²⁷ has the best quality of witnesses and the best combination of genealogical solidarity and early geographical spread. Internal: An unintentional visual or audio transcriptional error is unlikely; a lapse of memory or carelessness cannot explain the changes. There are no influences due to contextual parallels, common expressions, similar constructions in Paul’s other letters, doctrinal considerations, or other such things. V¹ is the shortest, hardest reading. If NA²⁷ were original, scribes would be tempted to insert αὐτή if they thought Paul was referring to obeying sin, which could lead to V². It is harder to see deleting all of the content of NA²⁷ and inserting αὐτή to get V¹, to shift the meaning from “obey [the body’s] lusts” to “obey [sin].” If V¹ were original, there would be no sensible reason to add the words necessary to get either NA²⁷ or V². If V² were original there might be reason to delete αὐτή to get NA²⁷ if you thought the construction was wordy; the only reason to delete the whole phrase to get V¹ would be if one consciously thought the construction made no sense. In summary, V¹ is the shortest and hardest reading, but it cannot explain the rise of the other options, whereas NA²⁷ and V² can explain the rise of each other. Conclusion: It seems most likely NA²⁷ is original, with V¹ arising due to an intentional change [perhaps originally in P⁴⁶] to reflect obedience to sin, which change then was picked up by many Western witnesses, and V² arising as a blend of the two readings [Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 454].

⁶ παριστάνω, literally, “put at someone’s disposal.” Also, this verb is a present active imperative, as is the verb in v.12. Some scholars interpret the present tense prohibitive imperative as meaning to stop an ongoing action [Cranfield, 316-317; Morris, 258; Witherington, 163]. Wallace showed this assumption is not always valid [714-717]. He said μή + present imperative could be either cessation of a progressive or customary [724]. If Paul were talking to a new believer or addressing a specific sinful situation, the progressive would be evident from context, but here, it seems best to take this as a customary command [Moo, 382: “general prohibition”].

bodies to sin as tools [ὄπλον; BDAG, 716] of⁷ unrighteousness [ἀδικία; BDAG, 20]. Again, “bodies” here implies all of yourself [Cranfield, 317-318; Moo, 384]. So, in other words, the believer’s goal is to resist sin, to refrain from acting out sin in life. Having new life, believers must constantly resist being used [or using themselves] for sinful purposes [Moo, 384].

The third part of this implication is that, in contrast [“rather,” ἀλλὰ; BDAG, 44-45], you present⁸ yourself to God as being alive from the dead. Paul said believers were to consider themselves dead to sin but alive to God [6.11], after explaining that they had effectively died to sin with Christ and been resurrected with Christ to new life [6.3-10], and here he repeated that theme [Cranfield, 318]. This is a conscious decision by the believer to choose God and righteousness over sin and unrighteousness [Schreiner, 323-324; Barnett, 140; Witherington, 163]. This reflects the reality of being resurrected with Christ to new life [6.4, 11]; since they have received new life they now can live for God instead of sin [Schreiner, 324-325; Moo, 385].

The fourth part of this implication is that you present [the verb implicitly carries over from the previous clause] the parts of your body to God as tools of righteousness [δικαιοσύνη; BDAG, 247-248]. In other words, the believer’s goal is to act righteously for God in life [Witherington, 163; Moo, 386], in effect living out the righteousness God granted to the believer by grace [3.24]. In summary, Paul commanded believers to live up to the righteousness they had been granted; first, by not allowing sin to lead them into obeying their lusts; and second, by seeking to live out the righteousness they had been granted by God.

I VA2: Being free from the Law [6.14-15]: The next sentence begins with “for” [γὰρ; BDAG, 189-190], showing what follows is an explanation of the implication just discussed [Morris, 258; Schreiner, 325]: For sin will not be master [κυριεύω; BDAG, 576] over you. Previously stated as a command, now Paul gave this information in the form of a promise⁹: for believers, there is assurance that sin no longer has the power to be their master [Moo, 387; Morris, 259; Schreiner, 325]. This does not mean they will never sin again [Cranfield, 319], but that – by a gift of grace – they now can resist sin and obey God [Schreiner, 325].

Again, “for” [γὰρ] leads us to an explanation [Morris, 259; Schreiner, 325]: for you are not under the Law [νόμος; BDAG, 677-678] but under grace [χάρις; BDAG, 1079-1081¹⁰]. The first question we must ask is, to what law is Paul referring, from which law are believers now free? Obviously, this question is significant not only so the believer can understand Paul’s reasoning, but also so the believer can understand his relationship to the Mosaic Law. It is clear from the context that Paul is talking about the Mosaic Law [Moo, 387; Witherington, 164; Barnett, 140; Schreiner, 325]. Up until this point in the letter, Paul has consistently used the word law [νόμος] to refer to the Mosaic Law, as he has discussed various aspects of the Mosaic Law’s relationship with people [Moo, 387]. Out of thirty-seven occurrences so far in the letter, only twice has the word for “law” meant something other than the Mosaic

⁷ Cranfield, 318, identified this as a “genitive of purpose,” referencing Blass, Debrunner, & Funk category 166 [Schreiner, 324, agreed]. However, Wallace, 100-101, said that is a rare form of genitive. Perhaps an attributive genitive would work better.

⁸ Perhaps an ingressive aorist here: “begin to present yourselves”; see Cranfield, 305, 318; Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 719-720. Moo, 385, took this as constative; Morris, 258, described it like a constative, but translated it “once for all”; Witherington, 163, took it as a one-time decision.

⁹ This is a future active indicative verb, taken as predictive or gnomic; see Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 568, 571.

¹⁰ BDAG, 1080, defines ὑπὸ χάριτι in this verse in the category of “favor” or “benefaction,” as “under God’s gracious will.” This seems to complicate the idea unnecessarily.

Law, and clearly in those two situations the word referred to a “principle,” not another system of law.¹¹ We have already learned that God’s righteousness comes to people by grace through faith in Christ, and specifically not through obedience to the Law [3.21-28]. Earlier in this chapter, we learned that believers have died with Christ [6.3-5], and in the passage immediately following this one, Paul will elaborate to say that believers have died with Christ specifically to the Law [7.1-6].

The second question we must ask is, what does Paul mean by this, and what are the implications of this freedom from the Mosaic Law? Again, the significance of this question pertains both to understanding Paul’s reasoning and to understanding the believer’s relationship with the Mosaic Law.

Some think Paul meant believers no longer are under *condemnation* [God’s wrathful judgment] from the Law. Their thinking is that being under the Law is contrasted with being under grace, so it must be the opposite: being condemned [Cranfield, 320]. After all, they argue, Paul said they validated the Law [3.31], will say later in this letter that in believers the righteous requirement of the Law will be fulfilled [8.4], and will mention specifically that believers are not under condemnation [8.1; Cranfield, 320]. However, the context of the discussion about condemnation says believers are free from the law of sin, not the Mosaic Law, so the connection to this passage is not through the Mosaic Law; also, in the next passage, Paul will explain that the believer is dead to the Law [7.4] with no mention of condemnation as the specific freedom there either. As for believers fulfilling the Law, later in this letter Paul will explain that this fulfillment [and validation] is not by doing every ordinance experientially, but through truly loving others, which meets the goal of the Law [13.8-10; along with truly loving God]. This love is only possible in this time of the New Covenant [after Christ’s sacrifice and resurrection], when God is empowering believers through grace.

Proponents of the condemnation theory say being free of condemnation allows believers to resist sin with new strength and boldness [Cranfield, 320]; but it is hard to see how this knowledge about the loss of penalty for sin would be empowering enough to suddenly make people able to resist sin [Moo, 389; Schreiner, 325]. Surely to be under the Law included being condemned by the Law, because of the inevitable failure to keep the Law perfectly, but condemnation was not the fullness of Paul’s meaning here, because that would neglect the contrast in God’s historical plan between the time of the Mosaic Covenant and the time of the New Covenant [Moo, 388-389].

Another theory is that Paul meant believers need not try to use the Law for salvation, which would be a legalistic abuse of the Law. Proponents argue that Paul understood that there is no way to be saved under the Law without grace, and that the Law obviously is in opposition to grace [Morris, 259]. On the other hand, elsewhere Paul argued the Law could lead to an understanding of God’s deliverance [Galatians 3.24; Morris, 259]. Also, the context shows that Paul is speaking of the Law as God gave it and of its intended function [Moo, 388]. Many of the arguments against the first theory above would stand here as well, such as the fact that learning the truth that they did not have to try to earn their salvation would not be sufficient to free people from the power of sin [Schreiner, 325].

¹¹ Some form of νόμος occurs nineteen times in 2.12-27, eleven times in 3.19-31, four times in 4.13-16, and three times in 5.13-20. The only examples that do not refer to the Mosaic Law are in 3.27, where the concept is clearly a “principle.” The theory that Paul used νόμος to refer to only cultural markers like circumcision, not the whole Mosaic Law, is very weak. First, 3.20-28 clearly establishes that Paul’s gospel is one of salvation by grace through faith, having nothing to do with any kind of righteous deeds, not only culturally marking deeds. Second, in 2.25-29 Paul discussed the Law and circumcision together, pointing out that obeying cultural markers is not important if one has the wrong attitude toward the Law in its entirety. Third, in the immediately following passage of 7.1-6, Paul said believers have died with Christ to the Law, in a context that discussed specific ordinances of the Mosaic Law which were not cultural markers.

A better theory is that Paul meant believers are not bound to live by the Mosaic Law. Paul used similar language in 3.9, saying people were “under” sin to imply they were under the control of sin. So here the implication is believers are no longer under the control of the Law, but instead are under the control of grace. The Law brought knowledge of sin [3.20] and an increase of sin [5.20], so the believer needs release from the Law to have true freedom from sin; and it is only in the time of the New Covenant, in which the believer is under grace and empowered by grace, that the believer can have victory over sin [Moo, 389]. This is a new era in God’s historical plan: the Mosaic Law time period is over, and the time of the New Covenant – prophesied long earlier by Israel’s prophets [e.g. Jer 31.31-34; Eze 11.19-20; 36.26-27] – has begun [Schreiner, 326]. As Paul explained earlier, Christ’s sacrifice paid the penalty of the Law’s demands forever [3.21-26], so the Law has no more claim upon believers insofar as holding them accountable [Stott, 52]. If believers were still to live by the Law, it would still have a claim on them for guilt when they violated it [Morris, 259].

Paul was not implying that during the Mosaic Covenant time period, nobody was able to resist sin, though this was generally the case [Schreiner, 327]; but it is noteworthy that the notable exceptions to the rule of sin in the Hebrew scriptures were people who had a special anointing from God: prophets and other spiritual leaders; and even they sometimes willfully sinned [e.g. Jonah and David]. In the present era, all believers are free from sin’s control, and while believers will still slip up in sin, they can avoid willful sin. Paul also is not implying that there is no law for the Christian believer [see 8.2]; rather he is saying that there is a new system now, because the Mosaic Law was obsolete [Witherington, 164].

A last question worth asking is whether believers are to obey any parts of the Mosaic Law as part of the new system; but we cannot determine that from this passage, because Paul was addressing the Law as a system and focusing on the shift from the time of the Mosaic Covenant to the time of the New Covenant [Moo, 390].

The Mosaic Law was not evil or flawed, but it could not empower people sufficiently. First, it could not save from judgment; even its sacrifices were only temporary appeasements until Christ would come. Second, it could not empower the believer to obedience [Barnett, 141], nor to transformation so as to delight in obedience. So the Law as a system was not effective enough for what God had planned for his people. Also, the Law was now obsolete for two reasons: first, it was meant as a national legal code for Israel, which had ceased to be the representative people of God for the time being when it rejected its promised deliverer in Christ; and second, with Jesus’ death and resurrection, the time period of the New Covenant had begun, a time period characterized by new forms and levels of grace. By God’s grace, believers are reborn into new spiritual life [6.11-13; 8.11], are led by the Holy Spirit into obedience and behavioral righteousness [8.14], and even transformed into a more pure person [12.2]. This is what Paul meant by being under grace, even beyond receiving the grace that forgives and saves, which he explained earlier in the letter. These forms of grace are great cause for rejoicing among believers!

After this weighty promise, Paul immediately turned to refuting a possible inference. He asked, “Then what?” [Τί οὖν; BDAG, 736] He was asking, “What should we do with this information?” Again, he asked, should we sin¹² [ἁμαρτάνω; BDAG, 49-50], because we are not under the Law but [we are] under grace? Then Paul provided his own answer, a strongly stated, “May it never be!”¹³

¹² ἁμαρτήσωμεν is first person plural, aorist active subjunctive. I interpret this as a rhetorical deliberative subjunctive, as implied by Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 467-468.

¹³ μὴ γένοιτο. γένοιτο is third person singular, aorist middle optative, from γίνομαι. For the phrase μὴ γένοιτο, BDAG, 197, offers the following somewhat interpretive options: “by no means,” “far from it,” or “God forbid.” My translation matches the NASB. Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 482, uses this translation for the same phrase in two other verses.

Paul is about to provide a good reason for not taking grace as a license to sin, but even before we consider Paul's argument, every believer should be able to see from these four verses alone that he should be grateful for the grace God has given him and should feel obligated to live righteously in response. And if the believer is living righteously, he will not be sinning. But Paul also wanted believers to understand that sin is a terribly bad thing, even for one who is saved by grace and not deeds, even for one who is always protected by being under grace [Cranfield, 321; Morris, 260-261], thus his emphasis on this improper inference never being lived out by believers. Grace is liberating believers from the Law, the power of sin, death, and eternal punishment, but grace also is constraining believers, as it transforms them and leads them into willing obedience [Moo, 398].

IvA3: Becoming a slave to righteousness [6.16-18]: Paul next asked another question, and this time there were some serious teaching implications built right into the rhetorical question. He asked, “Do you not know that you are slaves [δοῦλος; BDAG, 259-260] to the one to whom you are presenting [παριστάνω, the same verb as in v.13] yourselves as slaves for obedience [ὑπακοή; BDAG, 1028], to the one whom you follow [ὑπακούω;¹⁴ BDAG, 1028-1029], either [slaves] of sin¹⁵ resulting in¹⁶ death [θάνατος; BDAG, 442-443] or [slaves] of obedience resulting in righteousness?” There are four implications to the content of this rhetorical question.

The first implication that Paul indicated is that there are two possible choices: one can choose to follow the path of sinful behavior and be outside of God's will or one can choose to follow the path of obedient behavior and be within God's will. What is in view is a self-surrender, either willful sin or willful obedience [Cranfield, 322; Stott, 54]. It is interesting that there is no third alternative presented: there is no absolute freedom for any person; even a believer will be bound to sin or bound to obedience, and anyone thinking he is bound to neither is actually bound to sin [willfully ignoring the obligation of obedience to God] though deceived about it [Cranfield, 323; Schreiner, 331; Witherington, 171]. What grace gives the believer is the freedom to make this choice, the freedom to choose obedience to God [Witherington, 170-171].

The second implication is that whatever you choose to follow – or to whichever powerful force you present yourself – to that you will become a slave who is under compulsion [Cranfield, 322; Moo, 398]. Even for a believer, continued willful sin will lead to a compulsion to sin [Moo, 398]. This is not now about legal status – which has already changed for the believer from sin's mastery to God's – rather it is about a living experience [Moo, 398]. The believer is now free because of Christ, and so Paul is arguing it would be wrong to continue submitting to sin and thus put oneself back into bondage to sin.

Some scholars view this verse differently, arguing Paul's point is that who you obey reveals to whom you are already a slave, and so the sinning unbeliever reveals his slavery to sin, but the obedient believer reveals a slavery to obedience and God [Morris, 261; Schreiner, 332; Witherington, 170]. Thus, since the change in ownership has already occurred for the believer, the believer must now shift his obedience [Morris, 262]. However, in the context of this passage, Paul was emphasizing behavioral decisions for the believer, so clearly he also was talking about the ramifications of those decisions for the believer, not the difference between an unbeliever and a believer [Moo, 399].

¹⁴ I normally would translate this verb “to obey,” but obeying obedience is confusing, so I chose to use another gloss provided by BDAG, “to follow.”

¹⁵ ἁμαρτίας and ὑπακοῆς might be taken as personified genitive direct objects of the verb ὑπακούω [see BDAG, 1029], but probably are possessive genitives modifying δοῦλοί [as per Moo, 399; Leedy diagrams in BibleWorks].

¹⁶ BDAG, 290, says εἰς connotes a result here, though they offer different glosses than what I used. Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 369, instructs that εἰς + an accusative can indicate result.

The third implication is that the path of sin leads to death, while the path of obedience leads to righteousness. If one believes that this verse is about the change in alliance as a sinful unbeliever becomes an obedient believer, then it makes sense to assume that death here refers to an eternal death of separation from God after the final judgment [BDAG, 443], and so righteousness would refer to a final justification at that time of judgment.¹⁷ However, if we observe that Paul was talking about the behavioral decisions of the believer, this death cannot refer to eternal death, for the believer is assured of his salvation, and thus most likely also this righteousness cannot refer to final justification as the contrast to death. These terms must refer to the believer's experience in some way. Thus it is easy to conclude that the righteousness result in this verse is an experiential righteousness [Barnett, 142], it is righteous behavior and perhaps even transformation into a more righteous person as God's sanctification [purification] process continues in the believer [Morris, 262]. In that case, death is harder to define, for all believers still physically die even if obedient, and all believers still spiritually live even if sinful. It seems best to conclude that – since true life is a life of intimacy with God and of reflecting God's image [i.e., being who God created one to be] – death in this experiential sense is a loss of all this that is true life [Morris, 262], and so it is a loss of intimacy with God and a move to walk in spiritual darkness instead of in God's light.

The fourth implication is that Paul has reinforced his point from v.15: sin does have negative implications even for a believer, and the believer has an obligation of obedience [Cranfield, 322-323].

Paul's own response to his rhetorical question was to be thankful that the Romans had chosen to be obedient to God. "But [δέ; BDAG, 213] thanks be to God [χάρις ... τῷ θεῷ; BDAG, 1080] that you were [imperfect ἦτε] slaves of sin but you obeyed [aorist ὑπηκούσατε] from the heart the pattern [τύπος; BDAG, 1019-1020] of teaching [διδασχί; BDAG, 241] to which you were entrusted [παραδίδωμι; 761-763], and [δέ, continuing the sense of the prior occurrence; Cranfield, 325] – set free [ἐλευθερώω;¹⁸ BDAG, 317] from sin – you became enslaved [δουλώω;¹⁹ BDAG, 260] to righteousness."

The sense is that although [a concessive sense; Cranfield, 323; Schreiner, 334] the Roman believers had once [and, one can infer, always] been slaves to sin, they had responded to the gospel²⁰ and other

¹⁷ What makes less sense is how Cranfield, 322, can claim this is eternal death – and righteousness here is final justification – when his view of the verse is that these are choices for a believer. Yet less sense can be made from Moo, 399-400, who also viewed this verse as representing choices for a believer and thought this was eternal death, but then argued that the righteousness here was moral righteousness or obedient conduct. He said the weak contrast between eternal death and moral righteousness was not important because the contrast between sin and obedience was not strong either. Morris, 262, seemingly was inconsistent in the other direction: claiming this was about a shift from being a sinful unbeliever to an obedient believer, but arguing that death and righteousness were largely experiential [though this is more possible than the argument of Cranfield and Moo]. Schreiner, 332, was consistent in his view of the verse, but his reasoning was convoluted: he looked forward to death's contrast to eternal life later in v.23 and so determined death here also must be eternal death and final condemnation [though to him this would include the experiential aspects of physical death and present separation from God], and then defined righteousness based on this contrast to be eschatological also.

¹⁸ This is a masculine nominative plural, aorist passive participle. I interpret it as "having been set free," but "set free" serves well enough, without risking controversy.

¹⁹ This is an aorist passive indicative, which I take to be ingressive based on the logic of the sentence.

²⁰ Moo, 400, thought the aorist ὑπηκούσατε indicated only the response to the gospel [so also Schreiner, 334; Witherington, 171; Stott, 54; Barnett, 142], but he had no good reason for Paul using the phrase "τύπον διδασχίς," which would suggest a response to more than just the gospel, to include other apostolic teachings on the way of Christian life; in fact, Moo himself suggested on the following page that this phrase might refer to early Christian teaching. Barnett, 142, thought the aorist was ingressive, but his apparent reason was that this being aorist was in

apostolic teaching²¹ with obedience, thus choosing to follow God instead of their sinful impulses. It is interesting to note that Paul wrote they were entrusted to the teaching, not the other way around, suggesting the teaching's authority over them [Moo, 401; Morris, 263; Witherington, 171; Barnett, 143]. It also is interesting to note that in the other letters in which Paul used the Greek word for "pattern" [τύπος], it clearly had a meaning of being a behavioral example for others [see 1 Tim 4:12; Phi 3:17; 1 The 1:7; 2 The 3:9; Tit 2:7; 1 Cor 10.6], suggesting that here it implies the example set by the early Christian teaching which they obeyed [Moo, 402; Cranfield, 324].

Paul expressed his thanks to God for this obedience of the Romans. It is possible he was just thankful to God in a general sense because he recognized God's blessing in all good things, but more likely one can infer that Paul saw this obedience as a gift of grace from God rather than cause for human praise, even though this was a genuine human choice to obey [Cranfield, 323; Morris, 262; Stott, 54; Schreiner, 333-334].

That choice to obey, which came by grace, exercised the freedom the Roman believers had been given by Christ's sacrifice, to realize their release – or deliverance – from the power of sin and to choose to obey God. And, consistent with what Paul said earlier in this passage, that choice to obey God has led the Roman believers into an enslavement to righteousness. Righteousness here is personified, as sin has been throughout this passage, but it seems clear from the context [especially the following verse] that Paul was referring to continued obedience by the Roman believers, an experiential righteousness exhibited by obedient behavior [Barnett, 144]. And while this enslavement is not nearly as dreary as enslavement to sin, or even to another person, it still represents an obligation and a growing compulsion for righteous behavior [Schreiner, 334; Moo, 403] and for effecting righteousness in the world [Morris, 264]. In v.16, Paul's favored option was to be a slave of obedience resulting in righteousness, while here he said it was to be a slave of righteousness. They amount to the same idea: to be obedient is to live righteously and promote righteousness; to live righteously is to be obedient.

Conclusion: Paul's emphasis in this passage is that believers are to live out the righteousness they have been granted, by becoming enslaved to righteousness. By grace, believers have been declared righteous in God's sight, but now God expects them to live righteously as well. To effect that, God extends further grace, empowering the believer to resist temptation and sin, freeing the believer from bondage to both the Mosaic Law system and the power of sin, and transforming the believer to be more pure in nature such that the believer desires – experiences a compulsion for – experiential righteousness.

One important application is to understand and accept the theology in this passage, for only then will one experience the transformation desired as the Holy Spirit interacts with God's Word to effect change in the believer. Additionally, there are specific commands from this passage. On the negative side, believers are to resist temptation and sin, which includes believers not allowing themselves to be a part of

contrast to the imperfect tense of ἦτε, which obviously is weak logic since there is no aorist form of εἶμι. Paul's point seems to be that the Roman believers have submitted to willfully obey Christ as opposed to obeying sin, not that this happened at any specific moment, such as upon acceptance of the gospel, particularly since [as reasoned above] the language seems to indicate more teaching than just the gospel [Barnett, 142-143, called it "the teaching of the Word of God" and the teaching they would have received at their baptism]. Morris, 262-263, said the aorist pointed to "a decisive act of obedience when they turned to God," but did not make it clear if he meant at conversion [though that seems likely], and suggested the teaching was more than just the gospel.

²¹ The idea that Paul is trying to contrast Christian teaching with Jewish teaching based on the Law [mentioned by Moo, 402; Schreiner, 336] has its attractions given the mention of the Law in this context, but establishment of this contrast is not necessary to understand Paul's point here: the Romans had responded to the early Christian teaching with obedience. The idea that Paul is trying to contrast his teaching with that of John or Peter [mentioned by Morris, 263] has no merit, particularly since he had not taught in Rome [Schreiner, 336].

unrighteousness in daily life. On the positive side, believers are to actively submit to God in obedience, which includes believers seeking to contribute to bringing about righteousness in daily life.

6.12: ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτοῦ [NA²⁷] vs. αὐτῆ [V¹] vs. αὐτῆ ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτοῦ [V²]:

External: NA²⁷ is witnessed by \aleph and B, two fourth century witnesses of the Alexandrian text-type, and the old Latin manuscripts, which date back to the second century and represent the Western text-type. V¹ is witnessed by \mathcal{P}^{46} which is the earliest Greek Pauline witness, from early third century and Alexandrian in text-type, and D, which is the primary Greek witness to the Pauline letters for the Western text-type [though from the sixth century]. V² is witnessed by the Byzantine minuscules, which scholars believe reflect a fourth century archetype. Thus, all three readings have early witnesses.

\aleph is considered to be the best Greek manuscript for the epistles [unless otherwise noted, evaluation of manuscripts is from Wallace, “A Brief Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism,” 54-55]. B also is considered to be a high quality manuscript. There are only a few old Latin manuscripts for Paul’s letters, but it is significant when they agree, because the old Latin manuscripts were known for variety [Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*, 101]. NA²⁷ is a longer reading, though not as long as V²; characteristically, its Alexandrian witnesses would reflect the shorter reading, though the Western Latin witnesses tend to be longer. \mathcal{P}^{46} is a looser translation. D is the primary Greek witness to the Pauline letters for the Western text-type. V¹ is the shortest reading, characteristic of its Alexandrian witness, but not so of its Western. The Byzantine minuscules generally are thought to be lesser witnesses than the early witnesses of the Alexandrian text-type. V² is the longest reading, characteristic for its Byzantine witnesses. Thus, NA²⁷ has the best quality of witnesses, but V¹ has \mathcal{P}^{46} , which also is significant.

NA²⁷ has good genealogical solidarity for the Alexandrian text-type, though this is weakened by \mathcal{P}^{46} favoring one of the variants. V¹ has no genealogical solidarity. V² has genealogical solidarity for the Byzantine text-type. NA²⁷ and V¹ have the best early geographical spread, being represented in the Alexandrian and Western text-types. Thus, NA²⁷ has the best combination of genealogical solidarity and early geographical spread.

In summary, while all three readings have early witnesses, NA²⁷ is preferable because it has the best combination of quality witnesses, genealogical solidarity, and early geographical spread.

Internal: It is unlikely an unintentional transcriptional error would occur in this passage due to visual or audio issues. Nor is it likely such changes would have been added or deleted inadvertently by a hurrying scribe experiencing an error of memory or moment of carelessness. There is no reason to believe there were any influences on the scribes due to harmonizing tendencies, contextual parallels, common expressions, similar constructions in Paul’s other letters, conflation, or doctrinal considerations.

V¹ is the shortest and hardest reading. If NA²⁷ were original, scribes would be tempted to insert αὐτῆ if they thought Paul was referring to obeying sin. This could lead to V², rendering the phrase, “so that you obey [sin] in [the body’s] lusts.” It is harder to see deleting all of the content of NA²⁷ and inserting αὐτῆ to get V¹, to shift the meaning from “obey [the body’s] lusts” to “obey [sin].” Similarly, if V¹ was original, there would be no sensible reason to add the words necessary to get either NA²⁷ or V². If V² were original there might be reason to delete αὐτῆ to get NA²⁷ if you thought the construction was wordy; the only reason to delete the whole phrase to get V¹ would be if one consciously thought the construction made no sense as is, which is not likely.

In summary, the internal evidence is split; V¹ is the shortest and hardest reading, but it cannot explain the rise of the other options, whereas NA²⁷ and V² can explain the rise of each other. It seems most likely NA²⁷ is original, with V¹ arising due to a conscious change [perhaps originally in \mathcal{P}^{46}] to reflect obedience to sin, which change then was picked up by many Western witnesses, and V² arising as a blend of the two readings [Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 454; see also Cranfield, 317; Moo, 353; Schneider, 328].

- 12 Μὴ οὖν βασιλευέτω ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐν τῷ θνητῷ ὑμῶν σώματι
 εἰς τὸ ὑπακούειν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτοῦ,
- 13 μὴδὲ παριστάνετε τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν ὄπλα ἀδικίας τῇ ἁμαρτία,
 ἀλλὰ παραστήσατε ἑαυτοὺς τῷ θεῷ ὡσεὶ ἐκ νεκρῶν ζῶντας
 καὶ [*] τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν ὄπλα δικαιοσύνης τῷ θεῷ.
- 14 ἁμαρτία γὰρ ὑμῶν οὐ κυριεύσει·
 οὐ γὰρ ἐστε ὑπὸ νόμον
 ἀλλὰ [*] ὑπὸ χάριν.
- 15 Τί οὖν [*];
 ἁμαρτήσωμεν,
 ὅτι οὐκ ἐσμὲν ὑπὸ νόμον
 ἀλλὰ [*] ὑπὸ χάριν;
- μὴ γένοιτο.
 οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι
 ὃ παριστάνετε ἑαυτοὺς δούλους εἰς ὑπακοήν,
 δοῦλοί ἐστε
 ὃ ὑπακούετε,
 ἢτοι ἁμαρτίας [*] εἰς θάνατον
 ἢ ὑπακοῆς [*] εἰς δικαιοσύνην;
- 17 χάρις δὲ [*] τῷ θεῷ
 ὅτι ἦτε δούλοι τῆς ἁμαρτίας
 ὑπηκούσατε δὲ ἐκ καρδίας
 εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε τύπον διδασκαλίας,
 18 ἐλευθερωθέντες
 δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἐδουλώθητε τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ.
- 12 Therefore, sin must not rule in your mortal bodies
 such that you obey its [your body's] lusts,**
- 13 nor should you present your members to sin as tools of unrighteousness;
 rather, present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead
 and [present] your members to God as tools of righteousness.**
- 14 For sin will not be master of you;
 for you are not under law
 but [you are] under grace.**
- 15 Then what [should we do]?
 Should we sin,
 because we are not under law
 but [we are] under grace?
 May it never be!**
- 16 Do you not know that you are slaves
 to the one to whom you are presenting yourselves as slaves for obedience,
 to the one whom you obey,
 either of sin resulting in death
 or of obedience resulting in righteousness?**
- 17 But thanks be to God
 that you were slaves of sin
 but you obeyed from the heart
 the pattern of teaching into which you were given over,**
- 18 and
 – set free from sin –
 you became enslaved to righteousness.**

¹² Μὴ οὖν βασιλευέτω ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐν τῷ θνητῷ ὑμῶν σώματι εἰς τὸ ὑπακοῦειν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτοῦ,

¹³ μηδὲ παριστάνετε τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν ὄπλα ἀδικίας τῇ ἁμαρτία, ἀλλὰ παραστήσατε ἑαυτοὺς τῷ θεῷ ὡσεὶ ἐκ νεκρῶν ζῶντας καὶ τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν ὄπλα δικαιοσύνης τῷ θεῷ.

¹⁴ ἁμαρτία γὰρ ὑμῶν οὐ κυριεύσει· οὐ γὰρ ἐστε ὑπὸ νόμον ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ χάριν.

¹⁵ Τί οὖν; ἁμαρτήσωμεν, ὅτι οὐκ ἐσμὲν ὑπὸ νόμον ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ χάριν; μὴ γένοιτο.

¹⁶ οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ὃ παριστάνετε ἑαυτοὺς δούλους εἰς ὑπακοήν, δοῦλοί ἐστε ὃ ὑπακούετε, ἥτοι ἁμαρτίας εἰς θάνατον ἢ ὑπακοῆς εἰς δικαιοσύνην;

¹⁷ χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ ὅτι ἦτε δοῦλοι τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὑπηκούσατε δὲ ἐκ καρδίας εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε τύπον διδασκῆς,

¹⁸ ἐλευθερωθέντες δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἐδουλώθητε τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ.

¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,

¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.

¹⁴ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!

¹⁶ 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, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?

¹⁷ 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,

¹⁸ and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its desires,

¹³ and do not present your members to sin as instruments to be used for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead and your members to God as instruments to be used for righteousness.

¹⁴ For sin will have no mastery over you, because you are not under law but under grace.

¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Absolutely not!

¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or obedience resulting in righteousness?

¹⁷ But thanks be to God that though you were slaves to sin, you obeyed from the heart that pattern of teaching you were entrusted to,

¹⁸ and having been freed from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness.

¹² Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires.

¹³ Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God.

¹⁴ Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.

¹⁵ Well then, since God's grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not!

¹⁶ Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.

¹⁷ Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you.

¹⁸ Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living.