

# Sanctification & the Free Gift

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[ 0 : 00 ] I would like you guys, if you have a Bible with you, to open up to the book of Romans, chapter 6. If you don't have a Bible with you, you're welcome to grab one of the Bibles scattered around in the chairs. If you do grab one of those, it's going to be on page 943. We're going to finish chapter 6 in Romans. If you're struggling to find Romans, it's in the New Testament. The Bible is divided into the Old Testament and New Testament. And so find your way to the New Testament, past the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

There'll be another book, Acts, and then you'll find Romans. So we're in Romans, chapter 6 this morning, and we're going to be at the very end of this chapter looking at verses 20 through 23. And so I want to ask you guys, as you find your place there in your Bibles, to stand in honor of God's Word, and then we'll read together.

The Apostle Paul writes, For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death. But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Father, we are grateful for this Word. And we are expectant, expecting your Spirit who inspired the Apostle to write this, would open our eyes and our hearts to see and treasure the truth here. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. You guys take a seat. You know, almost any great work of literature, any great writing, has within it quotable quips, little sentences that almost demand that you remember them. Even if you don't necessarily make a whole lot of effort to remember them, they almost demand, they almost impress themselves upon your mind as you read and as you hear others read or you hear others talk about those great works of literature, those great writings, those great documents of the past. And so many of you, if I were to say, it was the best of times, it was the worst of times, you would recognize immediately that quote, if you have, if you've ever read *A Tale of Two Cities*, you would recognize that quote from where it comes. Or if I were to say to you, not so much from a document, but from a speech, four score and seven years ago, I could probably just stop there and you guys would all of a sudden think the Gettysburg Address because there are certain memorable statements made within almost every great piece of literature or in every great speech that just sort of command our attention and impress themselves upon our minds. And that's no less the case with Scripture than it is with anything else. Oh sure, we have our Bible memory programs that we sort of work to try to memorize

Scripture a lot of times. But there are certain verses, certain passages that if you've been a Christian for very long, if you've been reading this book for any length of time, or if you've been listening to preachers preach for any length of time, then you probably, if you can't quote them verbatim, they would at least sound familiar to you as you hear them. Great passages like John 3.16 that most of us all know by heart, even many non-Christians would at least recognize it.

[ 3 : 45 ] passages that just press upon our minds. One of the things that struck me this week though, as I was studying this passage, as we find one of those verses in Romans 6.23, for the wages of sin is death. One of the things that occurred to me was just how many of these memorable verses from the Scriptures, particularly from the New Testament, began with the same word.

So many of them began with the fourth word, for. For God so loved the world, right? Many, many, many of them. If we confine ourselves to the book of Romans and begin to think about so many of the quotable verses and phrases from the book of Romans, we'll find oftentimes that we're beginning with this one little word. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, Paul writes in chapter 1, verse 16. Or chapter 3, verse 23, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Over and

over we will find that these verses many times begin with this three-letter word. And that three-letter word is oftentimes a reminder for us. A reminder that these quotable passages, these verses that we love to memorize, they're actually connected to other things around them. They don't just, they're not floating out there in sort of the, just in the ether just ready to be plucked. They're connected to other sentences and other verses. And unless we understand the connections that they have with the passages in which they're found, we will oftentimes find ourselves misunderstanding or misconstruing the meaning of some of our favorite passages. And so what I want us to do this morning, before we close out Romans chapter 6 and begin chapter 7 next week, is I want us to linger just a bit on this final paragraph in chapter 6, trying to understand what exactly does the Apostle Paul mean in this quotable verse.

[ 5 : 40 ] What does he mean when he says that the wages of sin is death and the gift of God, the free gift of God, is eternal life in Christ. What does that statement mean? Now on the surface, we can all get to the basic meaning, but I think if we pay attention to the connection between that verse and the previous verses, we will find ourselves seeing more and perhaps even correcting, slightly modifying some of the ways in which we've read this verse in the past. It's a beautiful verse, but it's even more beautiful when we begin to see it in its context. And the first thing, honestly, that jumped out at me this week or the past two weeks as I've been looking at this passage is the connection between what he says here in verse 23 and the very end of verse 22. It's a strange question. It's a strange connection. It's one that led me to ask a question. How in the world can Paul say in verse 23 that the free gift of God is eternal life and yet say at the end of verse 22 that eternal life is the result of sanctification? Do you see that at the end of verse 22? Read verse 22 with me. He says, but now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end or its goal, eternal life. So that in verse 22, eternal life is the goal of God actually making us holy. That's what sanctification means. God working out throughout our lives as followers of Christ, working out in our hearts, real practical righteousness and holiness. And he says in verse 22 that the goal of that process, the goal of our sanctification is in fact eternal life. But then he says in verse 23 that eternal life is a free gift of God, a product of God's grace and not of our own effort. So what is the connection? How do these two statements stand side by side without contradicting one another here at the end of this chapter? That's an important question. I hope that when you read your Bibles and not just casual reading, say in a Bible reading program where you're trying to cover a lot of ground, but when you slow down and you really begin to read and meditate on the scriptures, I hope that the main thing that begins to happen to you is that you begin to ask questions. Because a lot of times as I approach the scriptures, I'm in a sense interrogating the scriptures. I don't mean that in a negative sense.

I reverence the scriptures. I submit to the scriptures, but I want to understand them. I want to know how does this passage relate to this passage and how does this sentence tie into this sentence and how can these things stand together? I ask a lot of questions as I read my Bible and I hope that you do that as well. I hope that you ask questions. I hope that when you read and things strike you as odd or strange or at least unexpected, that you begin to ask questions, that you begin to brainstorm and begin to think about the passage. Because God requires of us, the Apostle Paul says, that we be good workmen when we approach his word. That we handle, he says, the word of truth correctly, which means that we can handle it incorrectly. And one of the most devastating ways to handle the word incorrectly is to simply not think about it. To just casually read through it, never pause, never stop, never think about how things relate to one another. And we don't grow when we do that. We don't grow in knowledge, but most importantly, we don't grow in our love for the God who's revealed in this book. And so I try week after week as I stand before you and preach, particularly in a book of Romans, I try to help you to see or at least to let you hear the questions that I'm asking myself in my study during the week. And the main question that has been on my mind actually for a number of weeks as I anticipated us arriving at verse 23 was, what's the connection? How can he say in verse 22 that eternal life is the goal, the end, the result of the process of sanctification? And then turn around in verse 23 and say that eternal life is a free gift of God, a product of his grace in our lives. What is the connection? And this morning, I hope that by the time we're done, we'll have adequately answered that question from this passage and then drawing from elsewhere in scripture. But the first thing that I want you to be able to see is just sort of the lay of the land. I want you to notice that in verse 23 itself, we see a series of contrasts. There is, for instance, wages contrasted with a free gift. That's the first contrast.

And then, of course, the wages come from the hand of sin, whereas the free gift comes from the hand of God. So that we have a contrast between wages and free gifts, a contrast between sin and God.

And then finally, we have the contrast between death and eternal life. So verse 23 sets up for us two alternative ways of receiving from your master. You can either receive from God free gifts, or you can receive from sin the penalty of death. You can receive payment. Now, once again, just thinking in those terms about this passage reminds us of the context. Because so often, I've simply read verse 23 as if it's saying that the wages of sin are what I deserve for having committed sin. So that I've always read verse 23 as the sin here is the sin that I commit.

[ 11 : 30 ] But in the context of this passage, sin does not simply refer to the sins that you commit. Sin throughout Romans chapter 6, if you'll recall, and if you don't, go back and listen to the sermons.

They're online, alright? But sin, as you will recall, throughout Romans chapter 6, is pictured by the Apostle Paul as a kind of power. He almost talks about sin as if it's a person itself.

Sin desires to rule and reign over you. Sin wants entry back into your heart, back into your life. And so Paul tells us, do not let sin reign.

So sin is a power that exercises its authority over our lives. A power that is broken with our conversion, but that nevertheless always seeks to regain entry.

So that sin, in verse 23, is not a description of what we do, although that would be true. But sin is the slave master. There are two possible slave masters.

[ 12 : 31 ] You're a slave whether you know it or not. Whether you feel that way or not, we are all slaves. Paul says we are either slaves of sin or we are slaves of God.

And so sin here in verse 23, sin is a slave master. And sin as a slave master pays wages to those who are under his rule.

Now, the first thing that I want you to notice from the context before we arrive at an answer to our question. First thing I want you to see, though, from these verses is that you cannot have both masters.

You cannot simultaneously be a servant of sin. You cannot simultaneously live under sin's dominion and God's dominion. You cannot have both as a master.

Sin cannot be your master if God is your master. And God cannot be your master or will not be your master if sin is your master. Paul does not hold out any room for us to claim both as our master.

[ 13 : 32 ] Notice what he says here in the context. He says in verse 20, For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

Now, I want you to read righteousness here as basically simultaneous with God. Because Paul flip-flops back and forth in this chapter between calling us slaves of righteousness and calling us slaves of God.

And it essentially means the same thing because God is the righteous one and he produces righteousness in us when we are his servants or slaves. So I want you to read righteousness to mean the same thing as God here, essentially.

So when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. That is, as a slave of sin, God was not your master at that time.

Now move down to verse 22. We'll see the opposite side. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God.

[ 14 : 30 ] So in order to be a slave of God, you must first be set free from sin. So you will either be in the category of slave of sin, free in regard to God and righteousness, or you will be a slave of God and free in regard to sin.

You see that? You cannot have it both ways. It's one or the other. It reminds me of Jesus' words in the Gospel of Matthew where he says, you cannot serve two masters.

Now he's speaking in reference to money or material possessions. You cannot serve, he says, both God and mammon or money or bread or something along those lines. You can't serve both. You must serve one or the other, Jesus says.

And I think the same concept is operative here throughout Romans chapter 6. You cannot claim both God and sin as your master. Or to put it in maybe more applicable terms, you cannot claim God as your master if all the evidence of your life demonstrates that sin in reality is your master.

And on the other hand, you cannot be a slave of sin and serve God fully and genuinely from your heart.

[ 15 : 41 ] There can be outward appearances of submission to God at times in the lives of those who do not know Christ, so that oftentimes we see non-Christians who do good things.

In fact, oftentimes we will see people within the church doing things, serving, and then later on we find out that they never had a real genuine faith in Christ. So that's possible.

Just as we see God's common grace at work in the lives of non-Christians to prevent them from being as sinful as they otherwise would be and to actually cause non-Christians to do things that are on the surface level good, so also though we can see in the life of a person who is a slave of God, so we also see the opposite of common grace at work there.

And that is indwelling sin. That is the remaining sin nature that though sin is not our master still seeks to exert that influence. So that while you cannot have both as your master, you can have though, as a non-believer, you can have the influence of God upon you, changing your actions, directing your course in certain respects.

And as a believer, you will at times, oftentimes experience the encroachment of sin, the old master into your lives as he seeks to regain rule, and he will influence and direct you at times if you are not continuously on your guard.

[ 17 : 06 ] But despite those realities, nevertheless, at the end of the day, the truth of the matter is you can only have one master. You cannot have them both as your master.

So that's the first observation that I want you to get from this text before we arrive at an answer to our question, how can the end of verse 22 and the statement of verse 23 hold together and both be true at the same time?

You can only have one master. But secondly, I want you to notice from this text that whoever your master is, your life will be reflective of their rule and reign.

Whoever your master is, your life will be reflective of their rule and reign. Paul uses the language of fruit here in this particular passage. He says, for instance, in verse 21, referring to our slavery to sin prior to us coming to Christ, He says, what fruit were you getting at that time, before you trusted in Christ, what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? What fruit were you getting? It's a rhetorical question. The answer is obvious. Nothing good. No good fruit. Nothing healthy. Nothing that would be good. Nothing that we would actually want to have.

[ 18 : 23 ] In fact, if you just look up a few verses earlier in verse 19, in the middle of verse 19, Paul describes this sort of fruit of being a slave to sin. He says, just as you once presented your member as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, leading to more lawlessness.

So what is the fruit of being a slave of sin? Or what is the product of being a slave of sin? The answer would be impurity and lawlessness that leads to more lawlessness.

It just compounds. It just adds up and it becomes worse the further along our slavery to sin goes.

So there's all the difference in the world normally, regularly, between a young person who does not know Christ and has not been exposed to the gospel, and a much older person who does not know Christ has been exposed to the gospel many times and yet has utterly rejected it.

There are years of slavery to sin between those two, which means that there are years worth of more fruit that that slave master has produced in your life.

There is fruit. There is a product that comes from being a slave of sin. It's lawlessness. It's sinfulness. But then on the other side, Paul says that there is fruit among those who have become slaves of God.

[ 19 : 46 ] Take a look back at our passage again. Verse 22, one more time. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification.

There's a new kind of fruit being produced if you're now a slave of God. It's new. You didn't have it before. Now you have it. And it leads to sanctification.

The fruit is itself righteousness. God begins to work righteousness into our hearts. He begins to actually genuinely change who we are.

And as a result of that, we see the process of sanctification take place inside of us. I'm throwing around this terminology as if we're all familiar with it, but I hope that you're somewhat familiar with it if you've been here with us through Romans.

But when we talk about justification, which we spent several, several months talking about, when we talk about justification, which Paul mentions a number of times in Romans, we're talking about something that happens at a point in time.

[ 20 : 50 ] It happens in a moment. God declares us to be righteous when we trust in Christ. But when we talk about sanctification, we're not talking about something that necessarily, at least in Paul's usage of it here in this verse, we're not talking about something that happens in a moment.

We're talking about a process that occurs throughout our lifetimes once we've come to faith in Christ. And Paul says that slavery to God results in sanctification or holiness.

It results in a transformative process that begins to take place the moment we trust in Christ and then continues throughout our lives. That is God at work as a new slave master producing a new kind of fruit within us.

Now, if you were to ask the question, how does that work exactly? How does God begin to produce the fruit of righteousness leading to sanctification in our lives?

What exactly is happening there? Well, in a sense, that's what we've been talking about since we began chapter 6. We've been talking about how God goes about making those righteous who are not justified declared righteous by Him on the basis of their own works.

[ 22 : 05 ] How does He go about practically making them into holy and righteous people? In a sense, that's what we've been talking about. And we will continue to talk about that throughout chapters 7 and 8.

And so I don't want to spend a whole lot of time talking about the process because that's what we've been talking about and we're going to continue to talk about it. But I think I could point out a few things to you from the book of Romans about this process.

And we could gather them under three heads. It's easy to remember this way. The means by which God produces fruit in our lives is the work of the Son, which we'll look at first because it's highlighted in this chapter, the work of the Spirit, and then the work of the Father.

So quickly, how does God produce fruit in our lives? Well, step number one occurs the moment we trust in Jesus. Because Paul has argued throughout this chapter that when we put our faith in Christ, we are united to Him.

We become one with Him. He becomes our spiritual brother so that His Father becomes our Father. We are united with Christ, which means that we die with Christ, we experience His death in our own persons, and we rise and we experience His life.

[ 23 : 15 ] Both now in a spiritual fashion, we experience new spiritual lives, and then in the age to come, we will experience actual resurrection, physical life that endures forever. So that by being united to Christ, something happens to us.

Yes, God justifies us. Yes, He declares us righteous when we trust in Him. But He's up to more. He's doing more than that. He's freeing us from the old slave master sin.

Just notice what He says throughout the chapter. He says, for instance, in verse 3, Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

We died, we rose with Christ. Verse 5, If we've been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be with Him in a resurrection like His. Verse 7, The one who has died has been set free from sin.

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. He says in verse 9, Death no longer has dominion over Christ. And the death He died to sin, He died once for all.

[ 24 : 29 ] So that more happens the moment we trust in Christ than our justification. And in terms of the process of being made holy, that process has begun when Christ removes the power that sin once had over us.

Sin was our master. And we, whether we recognize it or not, whether you realize it or not, whether you call it that or not, we were obligated and fully willing from our own hearts to obey that taskmaster.

But now in Christ, Christ begins the work of sanctification by severing that connection and by establishing a new connection between us and God Himself.

So that Christ begins the work of sanctification when He sets us free from not merely the penalty of sin and justification, but from the power of sin over our lives.

But then secondly, the Holy Spirit has a major role in this thing that we call sanctification. In fact, He's called the Spirit of holiness many times, oftentimes because He is the Spirit who produces holiness within us.

[ 25 : 40 ] And so the Spirit is continually at work within us to transform us and to change us and to make us new. He is the one responsible for taking us from being not righteous at all at the moment of conversion to the end of our lives to being much, much more righteous, to having real holiness actually expressed and come out in our lives.

There is a temptation among many of us. Because we recognize the doctrine of total depravity, there is oftentimes a temptation among some of us to think that there's no good thing that we can do.

Well, that's true if you're outside of Christ. That's absolutely true. Paul says there's none righteous, no, not one, but that's a description of humanity apart from Jesus.

But those who are in Christ have been given a new nature. We have been transformed. And most importantly, the Spirit of God has come to live within us to empower us and enable us to actually live holy lives.

That's possible for those who are in Christ. It's no longer an impossibility. It can happen. And it can happen, much of the reason for that is because of the work of the Holy Spirit within us.

[ 27 : 00 ] Who's the one producing the fruit that leads to sanctification? It's the Spirit of God. Hold your place in Romans and turn over just a few pages in your Bibles to Galatians, to the book of Galatians chapter 5, to a passage that is one of those quotable passages that some of you may have memorized, at least part of it.

Paul says in Galatians chapter 5, verse 22, that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

And he says, Against such things there is no law. These sorts of things, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, all of these things are the product of the Holy Spirit at work within us.

This is the fruit that leads to sanctification. This is what is produced within us by the Spirit of God so that people will look at our lives as followers of Christ and they will label us as those who are holy, those who are sanctified.

They may say it in a jeering way, they may say it in a mocking tone, but the reality behind that is the Spirit at work within us changing us. Because I am not, on my own, a very loving person.

[ 28 : 13 ] I am not, on my own, a very patient person. Ask my children. I'm not. Alright? But the Holy Spirit begins to work within you and He Himself begins to produce this fruit.

So the Son begins the process by setting us free from the slave master sin. The Spirit comes inside of us to begin now to transform us from the inside out and actually produce this kind of fruit.

fruit, but there's still a problem. I mean, there's the problem. First of all, I haven't finished my illustration with the Trinity and gotten to the Father. But there's a problem that leads me to finish that illustration and that is that sin does remain.

Does it not? Some of us still lack some of this fruit or it's fleeting fruit at times. We'll be patient one day and the next impatient.

We'll be kind to some people and then we'll be unkind to other people. And so there is a serious deficiency within us. Though we want to say and though we ought to say rightly that believers, followers of Jesus can live holy lives, we recognize the reality that there is still a great deficiency within us.

[ 29 : 28 ] Sin, though not our master, is still at work in our lives and even at times within our hearts to seduce us, to draw us back into old patterns or perhaps even create new patterns of sin in our lives.

But God has a plan for that as well. God has not merely left it up to who does more work, the spirit or the flesh, the spirit or sin.

No, God has not done that. The Father intervenes. The Father comes when He sees that we are moving in a wayward direction and He does something. Turn over to the book of Hebrews and I'll show you a snapshot of this real quickly before we get back to Romans.

Turn over to the book of Hebrews in chapter 12. Paul, or the writer of Hebrews, speaks at length about the issue of discipline within the lives of those who are followers of Christ.

I want us to jump in at verse 7. Paul says, It is for discipline that you have to endure and God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

[ 30 : 38 ] If you're left without discipline in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them.

Shall we not much more be subject to the father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them. But He disciplines us for our good that we may share in His holiness.

For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

So God the Father has a role in the producing of the fruit of righteousness within our lives and that role is that of disciplinarian. It's not for no reason that the Bible uses the word Father to describe this person of the Trinity.

It's not for no reason at all. It's not for no reason that we have to reject those who would want to revise the Scriptures and begin to try to use gender neutral terms and refer to God as mother or she on occasion.

[ 31 : 44 ] No, the Bible upholds this kind of language because the Bible understands that fathers have a unique role in the discipline and instruction of their children.

They do. Mothers discipline children. Mothers instruct children. But if your children are wayward, it will fall upon the father who is ultimately responsible for that. And so God uses this terminology to describe His relationship with those of us who have become His children by adoption so that we will understand what He's doing.

And when sin encroaches, when the old master tries to come in and take control and He begins to lead us down dark paths, the Father will intervene and He will discipline us.

And that discipline will be painful many times. It will be unpleasant. It will hurt. But it's necessary for those of us who have trusted in Christ and received a new master but who yet live in this fallen world and still possess a fallen sinful nature.

It is necessary at times for Him to step in, intervene and discipline us so that the Spirit can get back to the work of reshaping and reforming us.

[ 32 : 57 ] So how does this happen? How does God go about producing the fruit of righteousness that leads to sanctification in the lives of those who belong to Him? It happens in three parts.

It happens by Christ severing the hold that sin once had over us. It happens by the Spirit at work to produce fruit within us. And it happens by the work of the Father who comes and disciplines us when we go aside, when we are wayward.

And He brings us back so that the Spirit begins once again to soften and work upon us and fruit is produced. God is fully engaged in your sanctification if you know Jesus.

He's not slacking. He's not sleeping. He's not just seeing how things turned out. He is engaged, all members of the Trinity, in ensuring that those who claim to know Christ and those who actually have a relationship with His Son, ensuring that they become holy people, He will do that work.

If it takes pain, it will be painful. But He will do it and fruit will spring from us. If we know Jesus, it will happen. Which brings me back to our initial question.

[ 34 : 09 ] Why does Paul say in verse 22 that sanctification has a goal and the goal of sanctification is eternal life? And then in verse 23, say that eternal life is an utterly free gift from God.

Is eternal life dependent upon our sanctification? Or is it a free gift that we receive regardless of what we do?

What is the answer to that question? The answer lies in understanding the connection between our conversion and our sanctification.

If you think that your sanctification is optional, if you think that your sanctification is the product merely of your own effort, oh, you have effort, you participate in this, but even your effort is a God-driven effort.

If you think that your personal holiness is merely the result of your increased striving, then you will not be able to reconcile these passages. But if your sanctification is the work of God, Father, Son, and Spirit to produce fruit, and it is inevitable for all those, it is as inevitable that you should produce the fruit of righteousness as an apple tree should produce apples or an orange tree oranges.

[ 35 : 36 ] If you see that as the inevitable work of the Father, not dependent, but including your own effort, then you will begin to see how these things can cohere, how they can come together.

Sanctification is not merely the product of our effort. And eternal life does not hinge upon your abilities. Eternal life here hinges upon whether or not God will give us His full array of gifts. Not just justification, but freedom from sin. Not just declaring us righteous, but making us righteous throughout the process of sanctification.

So that God will inevitably sanctify those who belong to Him, and that sanctification sanctification will serve as a sign and seal and evidence that those earlier works of God have been performed in your life.

You want to know whether or not you've been justified? Ask the question, am I now being sanctified? You want to know whether or not God has declared you to be righteous? Ask the question, is God right now working righteousness and holiness into my life?

[ 36 : 47 ] Despite the bumps, despite the times where we take a downward spiral, and God has to come in and discipline us, in the broad picture of your life, post-conversion, do you see an upward trend of holiness and righteousness at work?

Because that upward trend, sanctification, is evidence and proof that you have, in fact, received a new master and all the benefits that come along with being a slave to God.

No longer paid wages by Him, but now given gifts by Him. I don't think this idea of the inevitable fruit of righteousness is an idea that the Apostle Paul invented here for the sake of argument and to answer His detractors.

I think that these ideas Paul is drawing from Jesus Himself. In fact, I want you to hold your place in Romans and turn all the way back to the book of Matthew. Because I want you to see how deeply ingrained this idea of the inevitability of fruit being produced in our lives depending upon our master is.

I want you to see just how ingrained in the New Testament it is. It's not something that crops up here at the end of chapter 6 of Romans and then disappears. It's found throughout. So for instance, in Matthew chapter 7, coming near the end of Jesus' greatest sermon, at least His greatest recorded sermon in the Gospels, the Sermon on the Mount, coming near the end of that sermon, Jesus discusses how to recognize false prophets.

[ 38 : 27 ] But He does it with the language of fruit. He says in verse 16, You'll recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? So every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.

A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. You see what Jesus says here? Jesus says the evidence of the truthfulness of a prophet or someone who claims to speak in God's name is the fruit of their lives. You don't produce fruit in keeping with God's work within your heart and you claim to be a prophet of God.

You are not a prophet of God and you'll be cast into the fire. But Jesus broadens on this analogy. Turn over to the Gospel of John. It's the last place we'll turn, I promise. Jesus broadens this analogy from false prophets to all of us in John chapter 15.

A great passage, one that we will eventually get to and study in detail, where Jesus says that He is the great vine. He is the vine that nourishes those who are in Him.

[ 39 : 42 ] It says in chapter 15, verse 1 of the Gospel of John, He says, I am the true vine and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit He takes away and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes that it may bear more fruit.

Can you hear? Sort of the echoes or I guess Hebrews would be echoing this Gospel. The echoes of the fatherly discipline of God to produce fruit as Jesus talks about the Father pruning those that do bear fruit.

Verse 3, Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me and I in you as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine. Neither can you unless you abide in me.

In other words, you cannot produce the fruit of righteousness unless you are united to me. Paul uses different language to describe our union with Christ. He doesn't use the analogy of the vine. He uses different language.

He uses the language of being united with Christ in life and death. But nevertheless, it's the same concept. It's the union with Jesus that makes the difference. Verse 5, I am the vine, you are the branches.

[ 40 : 45 ] Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing. You cannot bear this fruit if you are not united to me. And in verse 8, what I think is maybe the most significant for our purposes this morning in this passage, verse 8, By this my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

So the role of fruit bearing in the lives of those who claim to follow Christ is that of proof, of demonstration, the product of righteousness in your life, the production of the fruit of righteousness leading to sanctification and its goal, eternal life, that product proves and demonstrates that we are Christ's disciples, i.e. that we are united to him.

And if we are united to him, we have his righteousness covering us and our sins forgiven and eternal life is ours. It is a free gift.

Yes, it is absolutely precious free. We do not earn it. But it only belongs to those in whom the evidence of real genuine faith exists.

Sanctification. And because of that, the end and goal of sanctification, eternal life. Let's pray. Amen.