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*Paul, the Spirit, and  
the Sanctification Gap*



*Alan F. Johnson*

*E*vangelical ethics combines the academic disciplines of New Testament studies and theology together with broader cultural concerns. Theological or Christian ethics is rooted heavily in the exegetical and theological interpretation of Scripture, but expands outward to include the church's tradition and contemporary cultural application challenges.

I am particularly concerned for the fate of biblical ethics in a late modern-postmodern culture. In this particular essay I will consider briefly Paul's theological foundations for his understanding and practice of a Christian ethic. In particular I am interested in how the apostle's teaching may address what has come to be called among modern Christians, the "Sanctification Gap." For example, divorce among believers has steadily approached the staggering rates found in the culture at large. Spousal and child abuse of a magnitude unheard of in earlier times has alarmingly increased even within Christian families.<sup>1</sup> Lies and various forms of untruthfulness seem not only to be tolerated but even advocated by some Christians as a necessary means to higher goods. This is not even to speak of the temptation among evangelicals to politicize the Christian ethic and to identify it with various contemporary political and social ideologies, or of the slide toward greed, envy, and gossip within Christian circles.

This gap between belief and practice was brought home to me recently by a memo from the librarian at Wheaton College. The note explained some of the difficulties the library was having with some newly installed digital photocopy machines. One of the major problems was that certain students would start a photocopy job, but then immediately eject their personal copy card to avoid the debit on their card. As a result, the copier prints a single copy but then suspends the job, leaving the machine jammed. At one point outside technicians, surprised that this sort of problem would arise at Wheaton College, commented, "Isn't this supposed to be a Christian school?"

Unfortunately every generation of Christians must deal with what Dietrich Bonhoeffer and, earlier Soren Kierkegaard, described as "cheap grace," grace that saves the sinner, but makes no claim upon the forgiven sinner for obedience and holiness, grace that saves the sinner, but leaves him in his sin.

It seems therefore appropriate in this initial article to turn to one of the greatest chapters in Paul's letters—perhaps in all of Scripture—and one rich in ethical substance. "Romans chapter 8 stands out as one of Paul's greatest, fullest, and most mature summaries of the gospel. Almost any Pauline topic that one might wish to discuss would lead to this chapter sooner or later."<sup>2</sup> If the Bible was a ring, Romans would be the setting and chapter 8 the sparkling jewel in the setting.

While the entire chapter is pregnant with insight on this problem of cheap grace, in the interests of space I will limit my comments to the first seventeen verses.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those

who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him (NRSV).

#### ROMANS 8 AS KEY TO PAUL'S GOSPEL

It is important at the outset to understand as best we can the way Romans 8 functions in Paul's argument, how it fits with the context of the preceding chapters. There have been many attempts to trace the main focus of the Apostle's letter. Since the Reformation it has been common to see chapters 1–4 as emphasizing justification by faith that then becomes the basis, theme and the main burden of Paul's extended letter. Chapter 5, in this common view, is seen as a transitional portion where the Apostle talks about the benefits of justification

by faith and the universality of Christ's saving work in the "Adam-Christ" analogy. Finally, Paul is understood to take up the matter of sanctification or the moral transformation of the life of the justified sinner in chapters 6–8.

We should note well in any discussion of the "sanctification gap" that in popular Protestantism including evangelicalism, justification is not only distinguished from sanctification, but precedes sanctification, as the tree and its root comes before the fruit. This theological understanding is derived largely from the traditional reading of the flow of Paul's argument in Romans 1–8. But it must be asked again if this is really the Apostle's focus and development. Let me be brief but offer a slightly different understanding of what Paul is doing in these chapters.

I believe we should see chapter 8 not simply as the final stroke in his argument about the moral transformation of believers begun in 5–7 or even the *summation* of the preceding chapters, but as the *key* to the meaning of chapters 5–7 and perhaps the whole of 1–7. Therefore, we should read the apostle's teaching about justification and the righteousness of God in 3:20–4:25 from the vantage point of chapter 8. Likewise we should understand Paul's teaching about reconciliation in chapter 5 and the moral transformation of the believer in 6–7 in the light of chapter 8.

Richard Longenecker has quite recently proposed that we take our clue as to Paul's main purpose in Romans from a passage in the first chapter and one from the last. In 1:11 Paul tells the Roman churches that he wanted to come to them to share with them "some spiritual gift" to strengthen them and himself as well. But since he was hindered from coming to them, the letter to the Romans is Paul's "spiritual gift" to them in lieu of his presence.

This "spiritual gift," Longenecker proposes is what the Apostle refers to at the conclusion of his letter in 16:25 as "my gospel." This "gospel" refers not to the substance of 3:21–4:25, i.e., justification by faith (the traditional view), but instead to the emphases found in 5:1–8:39, which is Paul's particular gospel message for the Gentiles. The first

four chapters, therefore, present basic statements of *agreement* between Paul and Judaism in general and Jewish believers in Jesus in particular. These involve, (1) the impartiality of divine judgment (2:11), (2) Jews and Gentiles being alike under sin (3:9–19, 23), and (3) no one being able to be declared righteous by observing the law (3:20). Chapter 5:1–8:39, then, from this reading, is Paul's *main* message in the letter and it includes themes that are most distinctively Pauline such as, "peace" and "reconciliation" with God, as well as the believer being "in Christ" and "in the Spirit."<sup>3</sup>

If Longenecker is on the right track, and I think for the most part that he is, then chapter 8 of Romans is the key to Paul's thought in 5–7 and perhaps the key to the main message of the whole book. This insight, if true, becomes crucial for understanding what is involved in God saving us and at the same time creating a new life of righteousness for us to live out, which I believe is what the Christian ethic is all about.

The first seventeen verses of the chapter in particular deal with the matter of sin and the expression of *moral* righteousness in the lives of those who have put their faith in Jesus. It is commonly noted that Paul's references to the Holy Spirit abound in this section (15 times) as well as in the whole chapter (some 21 times—more than any other chapter in Scripture). What he has to tell us about the Christian life, then, is connected significantly to the Spirit.

#### NO CONDEMNATION AND THE SPIRIT'S WORK OF SANCTIFICATION

The first four verses of the chapter are exceedingly important and also fraught with a number of difficult exegetical challenges. Paul begins in verse 1 with the declaration: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." The "in Christ Jesus" language and a number of other parallels should alert us that Paul is *not* now thinking of the forensic justification by faith section in 3:20–4:25, that deals with Christ's death *for* us. Rather the emphasis now is on *our* death *with* Christ, the same emphasis found in 6:1–23. The

reader will recall that there Paul deals not with the ungodly but with believers and the alleged charge that a gospel of justification by faith alone, apart from the Mosaic Law, leaves the believer law free and presumably disconnected from God's revealed will and righteousness, hence unaccountable to God for any further sins committed. Paul's response there, in brief, is this. The charge is baseless because believers have been united to Christ in his death to sin and have also been raised with him to resurrection life. Since they are now under a new master, grace, they must present their bodily members to God and his righteousness in a new obedience that leads to holiness of life now, and in the end, eternal life. All of this is quite well known.

But to return to 8:1, Paul states that our condition of "no condemnation" is not because of Christ's death *for* us, but because of our being "in Christ," or in terms of 6:1ff. because of our death *with* Christ. While we would not want to deny that the word "condemnation" has forensic overtones, the context argues that the term here has the primary sense of believers not being under condemnation *because* "they are no longer under the dominion of sin."<sup>4</sup> The next verse explains why we who are in Christ are no longer under condemnation: It is because of the new principle of life at work in those who are united to Christ. Such moral living is effected by the Holy Spirit. So we read in verse 2: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death." What is quite amazing, and often overlooked, is the way that Paul in this text grounds our status of no condemnation, not in the death of Christ, but in the transforming work of the Spirit who frees us from the law of sin and death and who fulfills the "righteous requirement of the law in us" (verse 4).

In other words our release from condemnation is here attributed to our being "in Christ." Our union with him has put us under the new rule of the Spirit who is leading us into moral transformation. To state the point even more bluntly—the means of averting the judgment of God in 8:1-2 is not the "alien" righteousness of Christ as in 3:20-25. Rather, condemnation is averted because of the personal righteousness of the

believer that finds its grounding in our *union* with Christ (just as does our forensic righteousness of justification), but not now in Christ's death and resurrection *for* sinners, but in their death and resurrection *with* Christ as in chapter 6. Schreiner helpfully points out that "Those in Christ are no longer under the condemnation of sin (verse 1) because in Christ they have been freed from the power of sin, so that they are now able to fulfill the law."<sup>5</sup>

But the question remains as to whether in asserting this we are not perilously close to abandoning the Protestant distinction between "justification by faith alone" and "sanctification" that follows justification and is rightly directed toward good works. Yet as one astute evangelical observer has put it:

The correlate of a "justification" that has nothing to do with "righteousness" is a "righteousness" which has nothing to do with justification, and this soon presented itself to Protestant thought under the heading of "sanctification." This improper divorce of sanctification from justification bequeathed Protestant churches their characteristic tension between a gospel with no concern for [a righteous] life in the world and a concern for a [righteous] life in the world which has lost touch with the gospel.<sup>6</sup>

While this point alone would warrant an entire essay, we may listen with profit to a respected conservative reformed Protestant, continental voice, Hermann Ridderbos, as he concludes his discussion of the biblical teaching on "judgment according to works":

That justification and sanctification, Christ's dying for the sins of his people and their dying in him to these sins, are inseparable in Paul's preaching, not merely as indicative and imperative, but in the first place as *two redemptive realities coinciding in Christ's death and resurrection*; but the contrast "faith" and "works," as we have met with it in such an absolute sense, is not to be understood in any other way than as a contrast between the grace of God on the one hand and human

achievement as the ground for justification on the other. That faith and works, however, are mutually exclusive only in this sense, but for the rest, where meritoriousness is not in question, belong inseparably together, is evident from the whole of Paul's preaching.<sup>7</sup>

Likewise the sixteenth-century *Edwardian Homilies* (1547) alert us to the eternal peril of separating justification from sanctification:

For the right and true Christian faith is, not only to believe that holy scripture, and all the foresaid articles of our faith are true; but also to have a sure trust and confidence in God's merciful promises, to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ: whereof doth follow a loving heart to obey his commandments. And this true Christian faith neither any devil hath, nor any man, which in the outward profession of his mouth, and in his outward receiving of the sacraments, in coming to the church, and in all other outward appearances, seemeth to be a Christian man, and yet in his living and deeds sheweth the contrary. For how can a man have this true faith, this sure trust and confidence in God, that by the merits of Christ his sins be forgiven, and be reconciled to the favour of God, and to be partaker of the kingdom of heaven by Christ, when he liveth ungodly, and denieth Christ in his deeds? Surely no such ungodly man can have this faith and trust in God."<sup>8</sup>

In a quite perceptive recent article Chuck Lowe has also argued that

[personal moral] righteousness is necessary because the basis of divine judgment has not changed; sin leads to death, and obedience to life (6:15-23). . . . The disavowal of works in chapters 1-5 [of Romans] and the insistence on works in chapters 6-8 are not contradictory but complementary. . . . Historic Protestant theology sought to capture both of these complementary truths in the aphorism: "saved through faith alone, but saving faith is never alone." Populist evangelicalism often emphasizes

the former at the expense of the latter. The result is complacency untouched by any trace of urgency.<sup>9</sup>

In fact the great reformer, Calvin, is just as insistent:

Why, then, are we justified by faith? Because by faith we apprehend the righteousness of Christ, which is the only medium of our reconciliation to God. But this you cannot attain, without at the same time attaining to sanctification. . . . Christ, therefore, justifies no one whom he does not also sanctify. For these benefits are perpetually and indissolubly connected, so that whom he illuminates with his wisdom, them he redeems; whom he redeems, he justifies; whom he justifies, he sanctifies. . . . Thus we see how true it is that we are justified not *without* works, yet not by works; since union with Christ, by which we are justified, contains sanctification as well as righteousness.<sup>10</sup>

If we ask at this point how it came about that God has in Christ through the Spirit broken the power of sin over our actual human experience so that personal divine righteousness might be evident in the lives of forgiven sinners, Paul tells us in verses 3 and 4: "For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

We only have space to touch on a few key terms in these verses. We cannot now deal with the whole matter of Paul's view of the Mosaic Law that has been the subject of extensive recent discussions. But we can ask, "What couldn't the Law do?" Paul's answer: The Law could not condemn sin effectually in our flesh and produce personal righteousness in us. Therefore, God's plan was to send the Son to become incarnate in our very own sinful, fallen human flesh. Let us pause for a moment over this difficult expression: "in the likeness of sinful flesh." While the meaning of the term is debatable, in my opinion the Eastern father, Athanasius, has captured the sense well:

For in taking upon himself the form of a servant, the Lord transferred to himself fallen Adamic humanity which he took from the virgin Mary, that is, our perverted, corrupt, degenerate, diseased human nature enslaved to sin and subject to death under the condemnation of God. However, far from sinning himself or being contaminated by what he appropriated from us, Christ triumphed over the forces of evil entrenched in our human existence, bringing his own holiness, his own perfect obedience, to bear upon it in such a way as to condemn sin in the flesh and to deliver us from its power."<sup>11</sup>

Likewise Gregory of Nazianzen:

The unassumed is the unhealed, but what is united to God is saved. If only half of Adam fell, then what Christ assumes and saves may be half, but if the whole of his nature fell, it must be united to the whole nature of him who was begotten, and so be saved as a whole.<sup>12</sup>

And further, in an almost poetic expression of beauty, Gregory says:

Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us. Let us become divine for his sake, since he for ours became man. He assumed the worst that he might give us the better; he became poor that we through his poverty might be rich; he took upon himself the form of a servant that we might receive back our liberty; he came down that we might be exalted; he was tempted that we might conquer; he was dishonored that he might glorify us; he ascended that he might draw us to himself, who were lying low in the fall of sin. Let us give all, offer all, to him who gave himself a ransom and reconciliation for us.<sup>13</sup>

But Paul continues. God sent his own Son to assume our sinful human flesh "to deal with sin" (NRSV) or alternately, "as a sin offering" (NIV). The translation of this expression as well as our understanding of the following words, "condemned sin in the flesh," are both difficult and will reflect

strongly our theological leanings. The NIV rendering, "as a sin offering" leads to the conclusion that Paul has in mind the death of Christ for the removal of our sin's guilt, a truth found in 3:25-26. I can only offer my conclusions at this point. I believe the rendering "to deal with sin" and "condemned sin in the flesh" should be understood in this context not as primarily a reference to the death of Christ for the guilt of our sins, but to the death of Christ *to* sin (6:10) and *for* the liberation of believers from sin. While there are contemporary commentators that have seen this connection, an older expositor, E. H. Gifford, captures well the sense:

God condemned sin practically and effectually by destroying its power and casting it out: and this is the sense especially required by the context. The law could condemn sin only in word, and could not make its condemnation effectual. Christ coming "for sin" not only made atonement for it by his death, but uniting man to himself "in newness of life" (6:4), gave actual effect to the condemnation of sin by destroying its dominion "in the flesh" through the life-giving sanctifying power of his Spirit.<sup>14</sup>

This sense is to be preferred exegetically over the NIV rendering, "as a sin offering."

The final purpose of the incarnate mission of the Son and God's action is stated by Paul in verse 4: "so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." To what does the expression, "the *just requirement (dikaionoma)* of the law," refer? Some see this as a reference to the perfect obedience required by the law and since none are perfect in obedience except Christ, then the reference is to *Christ's obedience* which is forensically imputed to us.<sup>15</sup> This understanding must be rejected because the whole context from verse 1 onward has to do with personal moral righteousness expressed *by* us. Also the reference to "walk" clearly refers not to Christ's but to the believers life lived under the direction of the Spirit (verses 5-11).



Wright believes the reference is to the "law's 'righteous decree' of life" that is now fulfilled in believers because of the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Torah is thus vindicated and now through the Spirit succeeds whereas formerly because of sin its promise of life was ineffective. This sense supports Wright's (and others) view that for Paul the law has both a negative (exposes our sin) and a positive (offers the promise of life) feature.<sup>16</sup> But this sense is not supported by the lexical usage of the term in the New Testament or in the Septuagint Old Testament and there is no clue in the immediate context that Paul is spinning the word in this direction.

Therefore, it must be admitted that the precise sense of the expression, "the just requirement of the law," that believers fulfill is unclear. What did the law of God require ultimately? Was it holiness? Was it love? Was it obedience? Was it personal righteousness? Perhaps it was all of these. Paul, in summing up the Law's moral emphasis in 13:8 says, "For the one who has loved another has fulfilled the law. . . . The commandments . . . are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the Law. Again the Apostle says in 14:17, "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Whatever sense we adopt, it seems to me that we must not reimpose the Mosaic Law as a system of life for righteousness upon Christians, even with the help of the Spirit. That would be contrary to Paul's whole argument here and also in Galatians. However, this does not mean that we cannot learn divine truth from the Mosaic Law and adapt certain of its precepts into the Christian framework of living.

As to *perfect* obedience, God does not require or expect it, otherwise we would not need the intercessory work of Christ (8:38; 1 John 2:1-2). Nevertheless, God does expect, as Schreiner again rightly points out, that Christians indwelt by the Holy Spirit will "experience substantial, significant, and observable victory over sin" in their lives.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps you have seen the bumper sticker that reads, "Not perfect, just forgiven." This I believe sends a false message; it is only testable at

death. The fundamental Christian doctrine is *regeneration* or new birth by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's presence and work in us produces substantial, significant, and *observable* victory over sin, yet not perfection. Perhaps the sticker should read: "Not perfect, but *not* just forgiven."

Paul now turns in verses 5-11 to an elaboration of his thesis given in verses 1-4. He focuses on the new obedience to God brought about by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

### THE NEW OBEDIENCE OF THE SPIRIT

In verses 5-8 Paul contrasts those who live their lives by their gaze focused on and limited by their own sinful flesh, that is, on their whole unregenerate selves, body, soul, and spirit, and those who live by their gaze focused on one who is other than themselves, upon God, the Spirit. Allowing the life to be determined by the sinful flesh results in death, eternal death (6:23). But to have one's focus on the Spirit is life and peace. Furthermore, the life lived by giving attention to the sinful flesh is hostile to God and does not, nor cannot, submit to God's law. Note that there is no reference to any warfare occurring between the two. This is simply Paul's description of two fundamental types of humanity, determined by the worldview, lifestyle, and nature of each. Early fathers such as Chrysostom and Augustine identified the wisdom of the flesh with such things as acquisitiveness, fear of losing everything through worldly evils, self indulgence, and extravagance.<sup>18</sup>

In verses 9-11 the apostle identifies Christians as those who are not in the flesh but as those who have the "Spirit" in them, or alternately who are "in the Spirit" or who "have the "Spirit of Christ" in them or simply "Christ" in them. This interchange of terms reveals not the identity of the Spirit with Christ but the Trinitarian interpenetration of the persons of the Godhead or what the early fathers called the *perichoresis*. The Spirit's presence and activity in us is at the same time the risen Christ's presence and activity in us. This risen life we experience now is the guarantee of our future resurrection because we are united to Christ not only in his death but also in his resurrection.

### HOW THE SPIRIT EFFECTS RIGHTEOUSNESS IN US

In the final section, verses 12-17, Paul tells us more about how the actual practice and emergence of the Spirit's moral transformation in our lives occurs. While still not directly exhortation, the overall effect is to draw us into the reality of what he describes. Having seen the final end of eternal death for those who live under the direction of the sinful flesh, we who belong to Christ should not feel any obligation to indulge its passions that are opposed to God's will. Instead, "If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live [eternally]." The idea is to hand over to the Spirit the passions of evil that tempt us while we are still in this mortal body that has been corrupted by sin (6:6), so that the Spirit might "kill" them.

The best commentary on this process of "mortification" is Paul's own in Colossians 3:5-10:

Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator (NRSV).

Origen has an interesting comment:

Putting to death the deeds of the body works like this: Love is a fruit of the Spirit, but hate is an act of the flesh. Therefore hate is put to death and extinguished by love. Likewise, joy is a fruit of the Spirit, but sadness is of this world, and because it brings death it is a work of the flesh. Therefore it is extinguished if the joy of the Spirit dwells in us. Peace is a fruit of the Spirit, but dissension or discord is an act of the flesh; however, it is certain

that discord can be eliminated by peace. Likewise patience overcomes impatience, goodness wipes out evil . . . and so on. . . . But we must realize that this mortification of the deeds of the flesh comes through patience—not suddenly but step by step. At first they start to wilt in those who have been converted, but then, as they progress in their faith and become more dedicated, the deeds of the flesh not only wilt, they start to die out. But when they reach maturity to the point that there is no longer any trace in them of any sinful thought, word or deed, then they may be reckoned to have completely mortified the deeds of the flesh and passed from death to life.<sup>19</sup>

To so live our lives as to hand over to the Spirit for killing our sinful passions is for Paul equivalent to be led by the Spirit: "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God" (verse 14). David says, "He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Psalm 23:3). Not ecstasy or violent seizure, as in being "slain" in the Spirit; not guidance, but the Spirit's leading us into the practical and substantive expression of righteousness in our lives is the sense.

Several years ago a pastor friend of mine moved to Houston, Texas. Some weeks after he arrived, he had occasion to ride the bus from his home to the downtown area. When he sat down, he discovered that the driver had accidentally given him ten cents too much change. As he considered what to do, there alternately appeared to his imagination little angelic figures sitting on his two shoulders and whispering opposing instructions into his ears. One said, "You better give the dime back. It would be wrong to keep it. Christ wouldn't keep it." On the other shoulder a voice whispered, "Oh, forget it. It's just ten cents. Who would worry about this little amount. Anyway, the bus company already charges too much fare. With their millions every day they'll never miss it. Accept it as a gift from God and keep quiet." When his stop came up, he paused momentarily at the front door, and handing the driver the dime he said, "Here. You accidentally gave me too much change." The driver replied, "Aren't you the new pastor in town? I have been thinking lately about going to church

somewhere. I just wanted to see what you would do if I gave you ten cents too much change." When my friend stepped off the bus he literally grabbed the nearest lamp pole, held on, and said, "O, my dear God, I almost sold your Son for ten cents!"

Finally, to be led of the Spirit into moral transformation is to recognize our identity as the adopted children of God. The two go hand and glove. The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are God's children when we cry out in prayer, "Abba, Father" (verse 15). Our identity as children of God also carries with it both the reality of our future inheritance as well as our present sufferings. Both realities as well impinge on our moral expression of God's righteousness in our lives. But we must draw these exegetical and theological observations to a conclusion and application.

### CONCLUSION

We began by raising the question as to whether there is a sanctification gap among contemporary Evangelicals. How do we get belief together with the *practice* of righteousness? How do we understand the theological foundations of the Christian moral life? In our exegesis of Romans 8:1-17 we argued that Paul understands the necessity for forgiven, justified sinners to be morally transformed as evidence of God's righteous judgment. Justification by grace through faith is one very important part of God's righteousness in redemption effected by the death of Christ *for* us. The simultaneous and second aspect of our redemption is our union with Christ in his death *to* sin and in his resurrection life. The Spirit effects transformative moral and personal righteousness within and through us as we by faith live in and claim the sanctification that has already been obtained for us by our union with Christ in his death. Our identity as God's children brings our future inheritance of glory to bear on our present sufferings as the Spirit fills us with hope eternal.

Finally, there is an urgency to what I have been arguing. The church needs a new emphasis on the *obedience* of believers. Obedience first to the triune God and then obedience also

toward one another, not as a mark of weakness but as a sign of our moral maturity.<sup>20</sup> This expressed obedience cannot be viewed merely as optional for those who profess union with Christ, hence the urgency of this teaching for the evangelical community. Perhaps Paul himself summarizes well this concern to weave together in our lives the themes of grace, faith-justification and good works wrought by the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 2:8-10:

For by *grace* you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of *works*, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for *good works*, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life. (NRSV, italics added)

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### Notes

1. Catherine C. Kroeger and James R. Beck, editors, *Women, Abuse, and the Bible, How Scripture Can Be Used to Hurt or Heal* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1996); James Alsdurf and Phyllis Alsdurf, *Battered into Submission, The Tragedy of Wife Abuse in the Christian Home* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1989).
2. N. T. Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul," in *Pauline Theology, Volume III: Romans*, David Hay and Elizabeth Johnson, editors (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 55.
3. Richard Longenecker, "The Focus of Romans: The Central Role of 5:1-8:39 in the Argument of the Letter" in *Romans and the People of God*, Sven Soderlund and N. T. Wright, editors (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids,

- Michigan, 1999), 57, 68.
4. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1998), 399, who quotes also Murray.
  5. Schreiner, *Romans*, 399.
  6. Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, revised, 1994), 254.
  7. Herman Ridderbos, *Paul, an Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 179.
  8. *The Third Part of the Sermon of Salvation in Creeds of the Churches*, John Leith, editor (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox, revised, 1973), 249.
  9. Chuck Lowe, "'There Is No Condemnation' (Romans 8:1): But Why Not?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 49:2 (1999), 246, 248-49.
  10. *Institutes*, III.6.1.
  11. T. F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 161.
  12. Torrance, *Trinitarian*, 164.
  13. Torrance, *Trinitarian*, 180-181.
  14. E. H. Gifford, "Romans" in *The Holy Bible According to the Authorized Version (A.D. 1611) with an Explanatory and Critical Commentary*, Volume III, F. C. Cook, editor (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), 147-48; for a contrary viewpoint based on the translation, "for a sin-offering," see N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), chapter 11; and his recent commentary on Romans: *Romans in The New Interpreters Bible: Volume 10* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 579.
  15. Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1996), 483-84.
  16. Moo, *Romans*, 580.
  17. Schreiner, *Romans*, 391.
  18. Quoted in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, Volume VI, *Romans*, Gerald Bray, editor (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1998), 208-09.
  19. *Ancient Commentary*, 215.
  20. Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches, *Christians Among the Virtues*, Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), chapter 8, "Is Obedience a Virtue?"

Choruses have remained a part of evangelical spirituality and have proliferated in the last quarter of the twentieth century, often with mantra-like repetitions. They are usually traditional in language and imagery and without the theological profundity of Watts, Wesley or Cowper.

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