

Paul and Paraenesis: Implications for Lutheran Preaching

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Even a cursory reading of Paul's letters quickly reveals that they are filled with exhortation about how Christians are to live. Thomas Schreiner has aptly commented that the "Pauline Letters are awash in paraenesis (exhortations)."¹ The word *παραινώ* means to "recommend, urge, exhort, or advise."² The semantics of the term lead us to see paraenesis as a "mode of hortatory communication."³ Paraenesis is exhortation that reminds of moral practices to be pursued or avoided. It expresses or implies a shared worldview and does not anticipate disagreement.⁴

Features of Paraenesis in Paul's Epistles

Examination of the paraenesis in Paul quickly reveals two features. First, much of the paraenesis is context specific. Paul often addresses distinct issues, such as food in Romans 14:1–15:7, sexual immorality and prostitutes in 1 Corinthians 6:12–20, and the collection in 2 Corinthians 8:1–15.⁵ At the same time he includes sections where the paraenesis is more general in nature, such as Romans 6:1–23, Galatians 5:13–6:20, and Romans 12:1–20.⁶ However, as John Barclay has demonstrated in the case of Galatians, this apparent general character does not necessarily mean the paraenesis is unrelated to the context. Instead, it is "framed specifically for the current crisis in the Galatian churches," and it "develops out of and concludes his earlier

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 26.

² Walter Bauer et al., eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. *παραινώ* (hereafter cited as BDAG); Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. with supplement, rev. Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), s.v. *παραινώ*, def. 1.

³ James Starr, "Was Paraenesis for Beginners?," in *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context*, ed. James Starr and Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 81.

⁴ This definition is based on the scholarly discussion at a 2001 conference in Oslo on this subject; see James M. Starr and Troels Engberg-Pedersen, "Introduction," in Starr and Engberg-Pedersen, *Early Christian Paraenesis*, 4.

⁵ Other examples include sexual offense in 1 Cor 5:1–20, food and idols in 1 Cor 8:1–13, 10:23–33, the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor 11:17–34, prophecy and tongues in 1 Cor 14:1–40, and people not working in 2 Thess 3:6–15.

⁶ Other examples include Rom 8:1–17, Eph 4:1–6:20, Phil 4:4–9, and Col 3:1–4:6.

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arguments.”⁷ The apostle may speak in general terms, but we must always be alert to the possibility that he addresses the specific setting in doing so.

The second feature is that Paul’s letters often include a section of paraenesis in the latter portion of the letter. This is seen in Romans 12:1–15:13, Galatians 5:13–6:10, Ephesians 4:1–6:20, and Colossians 3:1–4:6. These sections are marked by a high density of imperative forms, the use of present-stem verbs (present and imperfect), a high density of second-person plural verbs, and the use of words for emotions along with moral and ethical qualities.⁸ David Aune has identified these units as “epistolary paraenesis.”⁹

While identifying such limits is notable and significant, thinking paraenesis is limited to one epistolary unit cannot be allowed to skew our understanding of Paul’s writing. Letters such as 1 and 2 Corinthians do not follow this design, as paraenesis permeates both. 1 Thessalonians has been identified as having a paraenetic style because of a similar phenomenon.¹⁰ Even letters that fit this general form do not do so perfectly. Romans contains paraenesis in the first portion of the letter (6:1–23, 8:1–17). Paul Raabe and James Voelz point to the gospel indicatives sprinkled in the latter section of Romans.¹¹ Thomas Winger has called attention to the gospel found in Ephesians 4:4–13, 5:1–2, 5:14, 5:25–32, and 6:10–17, within the “parenetical” portion of the letter.¹²

While some of Paul’s letters evince a macro structure in which paraenesis is concentrated in the latter portion of the letter, we can also observe micro structures in individual statements. Paul exhorts Christians to action and then provides the gospel reason that makes it possible. Thus, he says in Ephesians 4:32, “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, *as God in Christ forgave you*.”¹³

Paul also states the gospel first, and then exhortation flows from this. He says in 2 Corinthians 5:14, “For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded

⁷ John M. G. Barclay, *Obedying the Truth: Paul’s Ethics in Galatians* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1988), 217, 219.

⁸ Andrew W. Pitts, “Philosophical and Epistolary Contexts for Pauline Paraenesis,” in *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams (Brill: Leiden, 2010), 301. Middendorf describes the distribution of imperatives in Michael P. Middendorf, “The New Obedience: An Exegetical Glance at Article VI of the Augsburg Confession,” *Concordia Journal* 41, no. 3 (Summer 2015): 206, 210–212.

⁹ David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 191.

¹⁰ Aune, *New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 191.

¹¹ Paul R. Raabe and James W. Voelz, “Why Exhort a Good Tree? Anthropology and Paraenesis in Romans,” *Concordia Journal* 22, no. 2 (April 1996): 158.

¹² Thomas M. Winger, *Ephesians*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 152.

¹³ Emphasis added. All Scripture quotations are from the ESV unless otherwise noted. See also Rom 15:1–2 and 15:3; 1 Cor 5:7a and 5:7b; Eph 5:2a and 5:2b; Phil 2:1–4 and 2:5–11.

this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died.” This statement of gospel is then followed by 5:15, in which Paul adds, “and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.”¹⁴

Victor Furnish has underscored the “wide range of stylistic forms” that Paul employs in his paraenesis.¹⁵ Naturally, he uses second-person plural (Rom 6:13, 12:2; Gal 5:16, 6:2; Eph 4:32, 5:1–2; Col 3:1, 3:2, 3:5, 3:7, 3:9) and third-person singular (Rom 6:12; Gal 6:4, 6:6; Eph 4:29, 4:31) imperatives, along with the hortatory subjunctive (Rom 6:1, 6:15, 14:13; 1 Cor 10:8–9; Gal 5:25, 6:9; Eph 4:15). Paul deploys verbs of exhortation such as *παρακαλέω* (“appeal to, urge, exhort, encourage”¹⁶) with the infinitive (Rom 12:1; Eph 4:1; Phil 4:2; 1 Thess 4:10) and *ἵνα* plus the subjunctive (1 Cor 1:10; 1 Thess 4:1; 2 Thess 3:12). He also uses the question *οὐκ οἶδατε* (“do you not know?”) (Rom 6:16; 1 Cor 6:9, 6:15, 6:16, 6:19, 9:13, 9:24) and the phrase *μὴ γένοιτο* (“may it never be!”) (1 Cor 6:15; Rom 6:2, 6:15) with hortatory force. Not to be overlooked are the many indicative statements that have an imperatival force, such as Romans 8:12–13: “So then, brothers, 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.”¹⁷

In this large volume of parenetic material, Paul’s goal is to urge and prompt Christians to live in ways that are concomitant with what God has done for them in the gospel. It is axiomatic in Pauline studies that the apostle does this regularly, and it is described as the “indicative and imperative.” James Dunn summarizes this consensus when he states, “The point, widely agreed then, is that the indicative is the necessary presupposition and starting point for the imperative. What Christ has done is the basis for what the believer must do. The beginning of salvation is the beginning of a new way of living. The ‘new creation’ is what makes possible a walk ‘in newness of life.’ Without the indicative the imperative would be an impossible ideal, a source of despair rather than resolution and hope. The imperative must be the outworking of the indicative.”¹⁸

In surveying Paul’s paraenesis, we must note three critical points. First, Paul’s intent in paraenesis is not to convict readers of their sin (though as we will see, it certainly may do this). Raabe and Voelz comment about Romans, “Paul’s intent in paraenesis is not to accuse the Romans as sinners. He does this in chapters 1–3, where the tone is notably different. Paraenesis uses the language of urging,

¹⁴ See also 1 Cor 6:19–20a and 6:20b; Col 3:13b and 3:13c.

¹⁵ Victor Paul Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), 110.

¹⁶ BDAG s.v. *παρακαλέω*, def. 2.

¹⁷ See also Gal 5:19–23, 6:8; Rom 6:3–4, 6:6, 8:5–10.

¹⁸ James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 630.

appealing, and beseeching rather than that of harsh demanding and condemning.”¹⁹ Instead, in response to the gospel he wants them to live in ways that are true to God’s will. When he says to the Romans, “Love one another with brotherly affection” (Rom 12:10), his goal is for them to love one another. He is not trying to show them that they are sinners.

Second, Paul believes that Christians are able to do this. He tells the Thessalonians, “Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more” (1 Thess 4:1). There will always be the reality of sin, but Paul does not believe the behavior he describes is a pious fantasy.

Finally, the apostle believes that the language of paraenesis helps to enable this behavior. If he did not, he would not say it. Paul wants Christians to live in ways that reflect God’s will. In order to achieve this goal, the apostle uses paraenesis. We may identify this language as “law,” but this cannot prevent us from recognizing the positive role that Paul believes it plays.

Paul’s use of paraenesis stands in marked contrast to two trends in modern Lutheranism. The first is exemplified in the work of Edward Grimenstein. As a confessional Lutheran, he believes in the third use of the law as defined by Formula of Concord article VI. However, the result of his approach is a functional denial of the third use as distinct from the second use. He warns, “No matter how a preacher dresses up the Law, it is still the Law and condemns our sin.”²⁰ Unlike in Paul, it appears that the law has little to no positive role that it can play in assisting Christians to live in God-pleasing ways. For those like Grimenstein, paraenesis is law that in the end can only condemn sin, and the presence of it after the gospel puts people back under condemnation. In a similar way, Robert Schaibley writes,

Moreover, whatever else the Law is doing, it is always accusing! *Lex semper accusat!* This is because, as the Formula says while discussing the third use, “to reprove is the real function of the law.” Now, if proclamation is what Lutheran preaching is about, and if identification of my new being as a child of God is what the Gospel gives me, and if “good works are bound to flow from faith,” as our confessions assert, why would we want to put our hearers back under accusation and the terrors of conscience once again at the end of the sermon?”²¹

¹⁹ “Why Exhort a Good Tree?,” 160.

²⁰ Edward O. Grimenstein, *A Lutheran Primer for Preaching: A Theological and Practical Approach to Sermon Writing* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 102.

²¹ Robert W. Schaibley, “Lutheran Preaching: Proclamation, Not Communication,” *Concordia Journal* 18, no. 1 (January 1991): 22.

The second trend has been developed by Gerhard Forde. Forde denies the third use of the law as he incorrectly defines it solely as a neutral or harmless guide.²² Forde has described sanctification as “the art of getting used to justification.”²³ He emphasizes the free and spontaneous nature of good works.²⁴ Forde denies the law as an eternal standard, and he rejects language that urges the doing of the law, since the spontaneity of faith is lost.²⁵

Pauline paraenesis cannot be understood and used if we fail to understand two points. The first is the eschatological tension in which the new man in Christ is able to do good works but faces the ongoing struggle against the old Adam. Grimenstein’s approach fails to appreciate the former, while Forde and Paulson lose sight of the latter.

Second, there must be the recognition that the law does not only reveal sin.²⁶ Paul demonstrates that the law of paraenesis can also assist the believer in the struggle against sin. In its analysis of the biblical language, Formula of Concord article VI notes that in the third use the Spirit utilizes the law to teach Christians to live according to God’s will as well as to repress and compel the old Adam, all of which assists the new man in the struggle against the old Adam.

Paul teaches that the Spirit enables the new man in Christ to live in newness of life. At the same time, he teaches that the Christian does this while facing the resistance of the old Adam. If the new man has no spiritual abilities, then there is no point in addressing paraenesis to the Christian. If the new man is simply going to carry out the new life spontaneously with no resistance, there is also no reason for

²² Gerhard Forde, “Christian Life,” in *Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 450–451.

²³ Gerhard O. Forde, “The Lutheran View,” in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, ed. Donald L. Alexander (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 13.

²⁴ Forde, “Christian Life,” 439–441; Forde, “The Lutheran View,” 14, 30. The chief proponent of Forde’s theology today is Steven Paulson. Like Forde, Paulson maintains that good works are purely spontaneous. The justified sinner is a new creation, and “[f]or the first time good works and love are not a goal and mere potentiality, but actual and present, emerging organically, freely and spontaneously (albeit hiddenly).” Steven D. Paulson, *Lutheran Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 228.

²⁵ Forde, “Christian Life,” 427.

²⁶ Lutherans often say, based on Ap IV 38, that “the law always accuses.” The Apology can even say that “the law . . . only accuses” (Ap IV 257; older enumeration IV [III] 136). Yet both of these statements describe the experience of the law *apart from Christ*. The situation is completely different for the those who believe in Christ. In their case, the Apology says that “the law cannot accuse” them (IV 179; older enumeration IV [III] 58). When the expression “the law always accuses” is taken out this context in the Apology and used by itself, it gives the impression that the law is always a negative force, and associates it only with the second use of the law. Yet this is not what Lutherans believe and confess about the law. Translations from *Triglott Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church, German-Latin-English*, [ed. and trans. F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau] (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921).

paraenesis. Because both the positive and negative realities are true of Christian life before the parousia, paraenesis is needed and helpful.

Paraenesis in Galatians

Let us begin with Galatians. This letter is a remarkable work in which Paul defends the truth that the Christian is justified by faith in Christ and not through works of the law (2:16). Throughout the first four chapters, Paul tells the Gentiles in Galatia that their inclusion in God's people is already a fact through faith in Christ and has nothing to do with works of the law. In a rousing conclusion to this entire line of thought, Paul writes, "For freedom [Τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ] Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (5:1). Paul issues a final warning in 5:4 that pursuing the way of works and law will result in the loss of salvation: "You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace."

It would seem that at this point, Paul's work is done. He has vigorously reminded the Galatians "that in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith" (3:26). He has destroyed the notion that anyone can be justified before God by works of the law (3:10–11). Yet the apostle is not finished, and considering what he has just said, he moves the discussion in what seems to be a surprising direction. Paul has emphasized the crucial role that faith has in justification. Now in 5:6 he says, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love." Faith in Christ justifies. Yet that is not all it does. Faith also works though love.

After arguing for more than five chapters that Christians are free from the law, in 5:13 Paul makes an unexpected rhetorical pivot that plays off the statement about "freedom" in 5:1. He states, "For you were called to freedom [ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ], brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" (5:13). The apostle warns that freedom from works meant to achieve justification does not mean freedom for sin. Instead, this freedom is the setting in which faith works through love to serve others. Paul now says that love is a fulfillment of what the law is really all about: "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (5:14).

In Galatians 5–6, Paul speaks about how the Christian is to live. He does not assume that since they have received the Spirit through the hearing of faith (3:2) and are justified they will now just live according to God's will. He does not believe the matter is as simple as "a good tree produces good fruit." Instead, he demonstrates a need to continue to exhort Christians about how they are to live in paraenesis. Paul contrasts the "works of the flesh" in 5:19–21 with the "fruit of the Spirit" in 5:22–23

as he sets forth the two ways of living in parenetical fashion. He employs imperatives, such as in 6:2 when he says, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

Paul makes it clear in Galatians that he believes that Christians are able to live in this way. In Galatians 5:16 Paul says, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will certainly not gratify the desires of the flesh” (my translation). As Barclay notes, Paul’s “resounding confidence is striking” in 5:16, since οὐ μὴ with the aorist subjunctive provides the strongest form of negation of the future.²⁷

The apostle follows this up by saying in 5:17, “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.” The statement introduced by γάρ in 5:17 that describes the opposition does not negate the assertion of verse 16. Instead, it supports and describes *why it is necessary* to walk by the Spirit. This is needed because the flesh provides real opposition that only the Spirit can overcome.²⁸

While there is a struggle, Paul believes that a definitive change has occurred. He says in 5:24, “Those of Christ [οἱ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ] have crucified [ἐσταύρωσαν] the flesh with its passions and desires” (my translation). The phrase “those of Christ” links the text back to Baptism, which Paul had mentioned in 3:26–29. Paul describes the crucifying of the flesh with an aorist form of the verb as he emphasizes the difference that exists in the life of a Christian. This is followed by the statement in 5:25, “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” Here Paul argues that Christians have a role to play in this living, and that they are able to do so.²⁹

Paraenesis in Romans

After considering Galatians, the discussion of the struggle against sin leads us to the key text of Romans 7:14–25. This portion of Romans has had an immense impact on modern Lutheranism. It has often created the impression that Christians should expect to fail. When Lutherans hear the reference to “Romans 7” it usually

²⁷ Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*, 111. See also F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and rev. Robert W. Funk (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), sec. 365.

²⁸ Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*, 113–115. See the discussion of the exegetical issues in A. Andrew Das, *Galatians*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014), 563–566.

²⁹ Das comments on 5:16, “Paul admonishes believers in Christ to *apply themselves* in drawing on the Spirit’s power. The Spirit takes the lead in the Christian walk and provides the empowerment, but the Christian must determine to follow the Spirit’s leading (so also 5:25). Paul’s concern for the sanctified Christian life must be reflected in the church’s preaching and teaching. The indicative of Christ’s completed work along with the Spirit’s adoption always ground the subsequent imperative, but the exhortation *must* follow.” *Galatians*, 561–562; emphasis original.

calls to mind the fact that Christians stumble in sin. We will find that while Paul acknowledges the great challenge of sin, he also believes the new man is able to live in ways that show through, and he exhorts believers for this very reason.³⁰ Paul's expectation is not failure but an ongoing struggle against sin.

The reading of Romans 7:14–25 cannot be isolated from what precedes in chapter 6 and follows in chapter 8. Dunn comments, “In short, 7:7–25 has to be seen within the context of chaps. 6–8, as an exposition of an unavoidable aspect of the believer's life within this world, an aspect impossible to ignore, but never to be viewed in isolation from the preliminary statement and exhortations of chap 6 or from the complementary exposition of chap. 8.”³¹ We will see that while the wording of 7:14–25 is striking, Paul does not forget what he has said in chapter 6, and he returns to it in chapter 8.

Paul begins chapter 6 by responding to what he has just said in 5:20: “but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” This prompts the apostle to ask, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?” (6:1). The question compels Paul to respond with a paraenetic *μή γένοιτο* (“may it never be!”) as he then asks, “How can we who died to sin [*ἀπεθάνομεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ*] still live in it?” (6:2).

The language of death has been featured in chapter 5. Paul has talked about how Christ died (5:6, 5:8, 5:10). Sin and death have been connected as we learn about how many died through the trespass of the one (5:15), and death reigned through the trespass of the one (5:17). Death has been described as occurring through sin (5:12). Yet now in 6:2 Paul says that we have *died to sin*. A dramatic change has occurred, and the apostle informs us that it has taken place in Baptism. Those who have been “baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death” (6:3).

Paul sees the importance of Baptism, however, as incorporating more than death. He goes on to say in 6:4, “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 [*ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν*].” While we expect the apostle to say that we will share in Christ's resurrection (a point he finishes in the next verse), instead he focuses on what the resurrection of Christ means right now for how we live.

Paul has spoken about Christ's death in 5:6, 5:8, and 5:10 and has previously explained its salvific character in 3:24–25. Romans 6:3 says that we were baptized into Christ's death, and 6:4 states that we were buried with Christ through Baptism.

³⁰ When Paul writes of the “new man” (Eph 4:24) or “inner man” (Rom 7:22; Eph 3:16–17; 2 Cor 4:16), he always understands this “man” christologically in light of the baptismal union with Christ, who is in the baptized even as the baptized are “in Christ.”

³¹ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (Dallas: Word, 1988), 412.

It is apparent that through this event we receive the saving benefits of the cross. However, Paul is not talking about Baptism in Romans 6 in order to discuss forgiveness; he has mentioned it because he is talking about how Christians live.

The dying to sin mentioned in 6:2 does not specifically describe receiving salvation. Instead, the phrase “we too might walk in newness of life” indicates that it means no longer living in sin. This is why Baptism provides the answer to Paul’s question in 6:1, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?” Sharing in Christ’s death through Baptism means that a person has died to sin, and so now walks in newness of life.

Paul grounds the walking in newness of life on Christ’s resurrection.³² Yet we can say more. We are baptized into the death of the Lord whom the Father raised. The connection between Christ’s resurrection and our new life remains unexpressed until 8:11, when Paul says that the Spirit who raised Jesus (cf. 1:4) is also in us. The resurrection power of the Spirit is at work in us now, and it will reach its consummation when the Spirit gives life to our mortal bodies at the resurrection.

After affirming the baptismal connection of our future resurrection in 6:5, Paul proceeds to say in 6:6, “We know that our old man was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing [καταργηθῇ τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας], so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin [τοῦ μηκέτι δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ]” (my translation). This is a remarkable statement, and it should not be overlooked. As Michael Middendorf comments, “The fact that our old self was crucified with Christ in Baptism means that sin’s *enslavement* in and over the body is now negated or rendered impotent or powerless.”³³ Paul declares that the old man no longer has dominion over us. This is what it means to “die to sin” (6:2).

After stating in 6:7 that the one who has died has been justified from sin, the apostle draws out a parallel in 6:8–11 between Christ and the believer. We have died with Christ, and so we will also live with him (6:8). Paul then states about Christ, “We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God” (6:9–10).

Christ died to sin and lives to God. The Christian has been baptized into Christ’s death. Therefore, Paul draws the conclusion, “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (6:11). If Paul stopped there, we would all have to go out and join a holiness church. He has stated in the most strenuous terms in 6:1–11 that sin no longer has dominion over the believer because we have

³² Thomas Schreiner, *Romans*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 313.

³³ Michael P. Middendorf, *Romans 1–8*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 464; emphasis original. Schreiner comments, “What has been shattered is not the *presence* of sin but its *mastery* over believers.” *Romans*, 318; emphasis original.

shared in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ through Baptism. In fact, Forde claims that “all evangelical treatment of sanctification should be little more than a commentary” on Romans 6:1–11.³⁴

Yet just when we might get this impression, Paul adds his own commentary by saying, “Let not sin therefore reign [Μὴ οὖν βασιλεύτω] in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present [μὴδὲ παριστάνετε] your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present [παραστήσατε] yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace” (6:12–14).³⁵

If what Paul said in 6:1–11 is true, why does he need to express these imperatives? Why is there need for this paraenesis? Have not Christians died to sin? There is obviously more to the story, and it is simply not enough to leave things to spontaneous living in the Spirit. Instead, Paul sees the need to exhort Christians because “sin’s rule is not merely a possibility, but a reality to be resisted all the time.”³⁶

The remainder of chapter 6 shows an alternation between the view expressed in 6:1–11 and that found in 6:12–14. A definitive event has occurred in the past that has changed the Christian and made it possible to live free from sin. Yet Paul also continues to exhort Christians to a concerted effort in living against sin. Thus, he says in 6:15–16, “What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?” This is more of Paul exhorting Christians in paraenesis. Christians are described as if they face a choice. Obedience to sin leads to death, but obedience to God results in righteousness.

The apostle then shifts in 6:17–18 to past tenses and the passive voice as he describes the Christian.³⁷ He states, “But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin [ἦτε δοῦλοι τῆς ἁμαρτίας] have become obedient [ὕπηκούσατε] from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin [ἐλευθερωθέντες], have become slaves [ἐδουλώθητε] of righteousness.” They were slaves of sin but have become obedient to the teaching. They have been freed from sin and are now enslaved to righteousness.

Before the reader can settle back into this new condition in which we are free from sin’s dominion, Paul again reverses in 6:19 and says, “I am speaking in human

³⁴ “The Lutheran View,” 21.

³⁵ Verse 6:14 aligns sin and the law and continues the incomplete statements about the law that have occurred in 3:20, 4:15, and 5:20. The full explanation awaits until 7:7–13.

³⁶ Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 336.

³⁷ Dunn notes that this shift is “very powerful, recalling the most emphatic statements of vv 2–4.” *Romans* 1–8, 345.

terms, because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present [παραστήσατε] your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification” (my translation). The reader is exhorted to act in accord with the new status that is his. This is not something that “just happens.”

Prior to concluding the chapter in 6:23 with his statement about the wages of sin and the free gift of God in Christ, Paul shifts back one more time. In 6:21–22 he 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 [νυν] that you have been set free [ἐλευθερωθέντες] from sin and have become slaves [δουλωθέντες] of God, the fruit you are getting [ἔχετε] leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life” (my translation). Christians stand in the condition of having been set free from sin and of having been enslaved to God. The result is that they now are getting (a present-tense) fruit that leads to sanctification.

The alternation in Romans 6 is striking. Romans 6:1–11 expresses freedom from sin’s dominion, and this is reiterated in 6:17–18 and 6:20–22. Yet in 6:12–14 Paul begins exhorting Christians to live against sin, and this is repeated in 6:15–16 and 6:19. There is a marked tension in his treatment that requires an explanation, which comes in chapter 7. Yet we cannot forget what we have seen here. Middendorf captures this well when he writes, “The ongoing struggle expressed in 6:12–23 also betrays the notion that holiness of living is somehow temporally attainable, rather than a continual battle this side of eternity. Yet they also do not make sense if our struggle against sin and our efforts to live for God are a matter of complete futility and, therefore not to be energetically pursued.”³⁸

When Lutherans hear the phrase “Romans 7” they usually think of what seems to be an always losing struggle against sin described in 7:14–25. Because this is so, it is important to pay attention to what else Paul says in the very same chapter. Paul begins the chapter with the married-woman analogy in 7:1–3 as he teaches that Christians have died to the law. Then he draws the conclusion in 7:4: “Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God [ἵνα καρποφορήσωμεν τῷ θεῷ].”

With this language we are securely back in the perspective of Romans 6:1–11. Through the baptismal death with Christ believers have died to the law. They belong to the One who was raised, and the purpose of this is to bear fruit to God. Schreiner comments, “His point is that believers have died with Christ and the power of the

³⁸ *Romans 1–8*, 510.

resurrection has flowed into their lives so they can now bear fruit to God. . . . This expression is conceptually similar to 6:4, where participation in Christ's death is for the purpose of 'walking in newness of life.'"³⁹

Paul explains this further in 7:5–6 when he contrasts the life in the flesh with what is now true. He says in 7:5, "For when we were in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death" (my translation). Paul's puzzling statement that this occurred "through the law" will receive its explanation in 7:7–13. We note that living in the flesh is described as something in the past. At that time, rather than bearing fruit for God they bore fruit to death.

Then in 7:6 the apostle adds, "But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit [ἐν καινότητι πνεύματος] and not in the old way of the written code" (my translation). Here there is a new condition, and the result is described with same phrase, "in newness" (ἐν καινότητι), that was seen in 6:4. For the first time Paul explicitly connects this renewal with the work of the Spirit.⁴⁰ The apostle continues to unpack the truth that the work of the Spirit is the resurrection power present in the lives of believers (cf. 8:11).

As we stand on the brink of Paul's discussion of the law in 7:7–25, it is essential to observe that 7:4–6 presents the same view seen in 6:1–11. Just as Paul said those who have been baptized into the death of the risen Lord now live "in newness of life" (6:4), so he says in 7:4 that they have died to the law through the body of Christ. They belong to the One who rose from the dead, and this serves the purpose of the Christian bearing fruit to God (7:4). No longer in the flesh (7:5), they now serve in the "newness of the Spirit" (7:6). This content of "Romans 7" cannot be forgotten.

Paul finally provides the explanation about the relationship between the law and sin in 7:7–13.⁴¹ The law in itself is holy (7:12), but sin operates through the law and uses it (7:8–11). By its use of the law, sin is revealed as being utterly sinful (7:13). This leads to his discussion of the believer's experience in 7:14–25.⁴² In 6:1–11 and 7:4–6, Paul has emphasized the new man who has been freed from sin's dominion. Now in 7:14–25, he explains why the language of paraenesis in 6:12–14, 6:15–16, and 6:19 has been necessary. The "not yet" of the Christian life still involves the

³⁹ *Romans*, 350.

⁴⁰ Moo observes that this anticipates and prepares for the focus on the Spirit in chapter 8. Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 420.

⁴¹ Here Paul writes from his Christian perspective. "These verses reveal an insight into the Law and its effects which Paul perceived only after his encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus." Middendorf, *Romans 1–8*, 549.

⁴² For a defense of the view that 7:14–25 describes the Christian, see Middendorf, *Romans 1–8*, 584–597.

presence of sin against which the Christian must contest. For this reason, there is every need for paraenesis to be addressed to Christians.

There is no doubt that 7:14–25 emphasizes the fact that sin does occur and that Christians fail. While the law is spiritual, Paul acknowledges in 7:14 that he is fleshly and sold under sin. Almost every verse contains some kind of statement describing sin by the Christian. However, as Middendorf notes, it is not as if Paul attributes “*all* of his actions to sin, as if he *never* did anything good but only and always evil.”⁴³ Instead, Paul depicts “this tense battle in the sharpest possible terms, in part, by making reference only to the failures of the ‘I’ to enact his will.”⁴⁴ Paul emphasizes the continuing reality of sin against which the Christian must struggle. He has not forgotten what he wrote in 7:4–6 but here stresses the battle against sin that is necessary as we live with the old man who is present.

The struggle is intense, but this does not mean that what Paul has said about the Christian in 6:1–11 and 7:4–6 ceases to be true. In this section the “I” consistently is aligned with good and seeks to do what the law of God describes. In 7:15 Paul refers to that which he wishes to do and that which he hates. He agrees with the law that it is good in 7:16, and he says in 7:18 that the willing lies close at hand. Paul states in 7:19 that there is the good he wants, and in 7:21 that he has a willing to do the good.

Notably, the apostle writes in 7:22–23, “For I delight in the law of God according to my inner man [συνήδομαι γὰρ τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον], but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind [τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου] and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members” (my translation). Here we find Paul’s most explicit description of the struggle between the old and new man.⁴⁵ There is warfare going on, and the “I” that is aligned with the new man can and does lose.

Paul says in response to this, “Wretched [Ταλαίπωρος] man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (7:24, my translation). This need not be read as a cry of despair in the face of inevitable defeat by sin. Instead, both Dunn and Middendorf maintain that it is the cry of frustration by the new man who has been described in 6:1–11 and 7:4–6 but who faces the challenge of living in the “not yet.”⁴⁶ The future tense of “rescue” (ῥύσεται) indicates that this final deliverance from the

⁴³ *Romans* 1–8, 562; emphasis original.

⁴⁴ Middendorf, *Romans* 1–8, 577.

⁴⁵ In the only other occurrences of the phrase “inner man,” in 2 Cor 4:16 and Eph 3:16, “Paul clearly applies it to the Christian as he is under the influence of the Holy Spirit.” Thomas W. Winger, “*Simul Justus et Peccator*: Did Luther and the Confessions Get Paul Right?,” *Lutheran Theological Review* 17 (2004–2005): 100.

⁴⁶ Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 396, 410; Middendorf, *Romans* 1–8, 577.

body of death will occur on the Last Day when Christ raises the body (cf. 8:23).⁴⁷ Until then, the body remains one in which sin is easily at work.

It is understandable that Paul's cry in 7:25a captures our attention: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" But the verse does not end there. Instead Paul adds a conclusion that draws an inference using ἄρα οὖν in 7:25b: "So then [ἄρα οὖν], I myself serve the law of God with my mind [αὐτὸς ἐγὼ τῷ μὲν νοῦ], but with my flesh I serve the law of sin."⁴⁸ Paul's statement returns to what he said in 7:23. It must be observed that Paul emphatically (αὐτὸς ἐγὼ) aligns himself—his "I"—with the law of God. Both realities are true, but there is no doubt which side the Christian is on in this struggle. How can it be otherwise based on what Paul has said in 6:1–11 and 7:4–6? This again explains why paraenesis can accomplish something. The true "I" of the Christian is new man and is not old Adam. He wants to live in ways that are true to God's will.

Paul has depicted the struggle in the most intense and realistic terms by focusing on the failure that can and does occur. He then asserts in 8:1 that the sin present in our life is "neither final nor finally determinative. What counts is their being 'in Christ.'"⁴⁹ The apostle states, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." The phrase "in Christ Jesus" reaches back to what Paul said about Baptism in 6:1–11.⁵⁰ There is no condemnation because the Christian has shared in the saving death of Christ through Baptism (6:3–4; cf. 3:24–25).

Paul explains further in 8:2–3. The first of these verses poses challenges to interpreters: "For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death." With Andrew Das and Middendorf, I am convinced that the referent of νόμος continues to be the Torah referenced throughout Romans 7.⁵¹ Here the Spirit works through the Torah, which testifies about Christ.⁵² The next verse is much clearer: "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 for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh" (8:3). What the law could not do because of sin's ability to make use of it, God did by sending Christ and condemning sin in him.⁵³

Paul says in 8:4 that this serves a purpose: "in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but

⁴⁷ Schreiner, *Romans*, 390.

⁴⁸ BDAG s.v. ἄρα, def. 2b.

⁴⁹ Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 435.

⁵⁰ Schreiner, *Romans*, 395.

⁵¹ A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 228–232; Middendorf, *Romans 1–8*, 607.

⁵² See Middendorf's discussion in *Romans 1–8*, 604–608.

⁵³ Most likely the statement "concerning sin" (περὶ ἁμαρτίας) is a reference to the sin offering. N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 220–225.

according to the Spirit.” Christ has accomplished this fulfillment, and it is attributed to us because we are in Christ.⁵⁴ Important for our discussion is the fact that the apostle says that it is fulfilled *in us* (ἐν ἡμῖν) who walk according to the Spirit. While Paul has acknowledged the struggle against sin and failure in 7:14–25, he returns to the fact that the Christian is a new man (cf. 8:9) who is able to live in ways that fulfill God’s will. As Moo comments, “God not only provides in Christ the full completion of the law’s demands for the believer, but he also sends the Spirit into the hearts of believers to empower a new obedience to his demands.”⁵⁵

There is no doubt which side the Christian is on. Paul states this in 8:9: “You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.” Yet the struggle against sin remains real, so the apostle continues with paraenesis. The antithesis between the flesh and the Spirit in 8:5–8 acknowledges the struggle against sin but does so in a parenetical fashion.⁵⁶ These words urge Christians to live as what they are, according to the Spirit, and not according to the flesh.

Paul then says, “But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (8:10). The more typical “in Christ” language is here expressed as “Christ in you.” The eschatological paradox appears in stark terms. The body is dead because of sin. It is destined for death and easily manipulated by sin. The presence of the Spirit, however, means life before God, because of his saving work in Christ to put all things right.

Ultimately the Spirit will mean resurrection life. Paul continues in 8:11 by saying, “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.” Paul connected Christ’s resurrection and the Christian living in “newness of life” already in 6:4. He has set the resurrection of Christ and Christian living in parallel in 6:8–11. He has described the Christian life as lived in the “newness of the Spirit” in 7:6. Now we finally hear the explanation for why this is so. The Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is in us and will be the instrument by which God will raise us up. This means that the resurrection power of the Spirit is already at work in us now, helping us to live according to God’s will.

The final text I want to consider in Romans is 8:12–13. Paul writes, “So then, brothers, 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 [πνεύματι] you put to death [θανατοῦτε] the deeds of the body, you will live.” Again using ἄρα οὖν, Paul draws a conclusion from what he has said thus far in chapter 8. As noted earlier, the

⁵⁴ Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 482–484.

⁵⁵ *Epistle to the Romans*, 485.

⁵⁶ Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 441–442.

statement is in the indicative, but it has an imperatival force. It is paraenesis, which Paul continues to deploy in this portion of the letter that is not usually associated with paraenesis.

We have seen that 7:14–25 has described the struggle against sin. But because Paul believes what he has said in 6:1–11, 7:4–6, 8:4, and 8:9, he does not think that failure is inevitable. Instead, the Christian can be urged to live in ways that resist sin. In fact, *he needs to be urged*, because the battle against sin is real. The Christian must engage in the continuing work of putting to death the deeds of the body. *Θανατοῦτε* is a present indicative in 8:13.⁵⁷ At the same time this is a work that is made possible only by the Spirit (*πνεύματι*). The believer is always dependent on God for the newness of life.⁵⁸ Sanctification depends on Christ in the believer through the Spirit.

In Romans 6–8, Paul demonstrates that the new man is able to live in ways that are true to God’s will because Paul understands the new man as “Christ in you” (8:2). Paraenesis is not wasted on a subject who is incapable of living in this way. At the same time, until death the Christian is in a constant battle against sin. Christians need paraenesis so that they are urged, encouraged, and exhorted to struggle against sin.

A Theological Analysis of Paraenesis in Light of FC VI

We have observed how Paul believes that the language of paraenesis helps the believer. He deploys it so that Christians will live in God-pleasing ways. It serves a positive role for Paul as it assists the believer. He does not think that this law will only reveal their sin. But how does this paraenesis provide assistance?

The answer to this question requires a theological analysis of paraenesis. We are fortunate as Lutherans that Formula of Concord article VI has already provided this analysis in its treatment of the third use of the law. This article helps us to understand how Paul’s language functions.

Some confusion has been generated by the term “use.” It is often assumed that the preacher “uses” the law in the third use. Formula of Concord VI explicitly asserts, however, that it is *the Spirit* who uses the law.⁵⁹ It states that “the Holy Spirit uses the written law on them” (FC SD VI 3; see also FC SD VI 11–14).⁶⁰ At the same time, the term “use” of the law refers to the reception of the law (how it is received),

⁵⁷ Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 449; Middendorf, *Romans 1–8*, 632.

⁵⁸ Schreiner, *Romans*, 416; Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 495.

⁵⁹ So also Jonathan G. Lange, “Using the Third Use: Formula of Concord VI and the Preacher’s Task,” *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* 3, no. 1 (January 1994): 23; Gerhard P. Maag, “The Third Use of the Law,” *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* 15, no. 1 (Epiphany 2006): 39.

⁶⁰ In *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, trans. Charles Arand et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 587.

and the term indicates the *effects that the law has on the individual*.⁶¹ While in the second use the Spirit employs the law to reveal sin (FC Ep VI 1), in the third use the Spirit employs the law to teach Christians to live according to God's will and to repress and compel the old Adam.

Formula of Concord VI states that the law is "a sure guide, according to which they can orient and conduct their entire life" (FC Ep VI 1).⁶² It adds that "the Holy Spirit uses the law to instruct the reborn and to show and demonstrate to them in the Ten Commandments what is the 'acceptable will of God' (Rom. 12[:2]) and in which good works, 'which God prepared beforehand,' they are 'supposed to walk' (Eph 2[:10])" (FC SD VI 12).⁶³ We learn how we are to live from the law as it provides needed guidance and understanding.⁶⁴

The second aspect of the third use is that the Spirit utilizes the law to compel and repress the old Adam.⁶⁵ FC Ep VI 4 says, "Likewise, it is necessary so that the old creature not act according to its own will but instead be compelled against its own will, not only through the admonitions and threats of the law but also with punishments and plagues, to follow the Spirit and let itself be made captive."⁶⁶ Or as FC SD VI 19 states, "As far as the old creature, which still clings to them is concerned, it must be driven not only by the law but also by tribulations, because it does everything against its own will, under compulsion."⁶⁷

In the third use, the Spirit utilizes the law so that the actual behavior of the Christian reflects God's will. The Lutheran Confessions are absolutely clear in stating that Christians do fail in the struggle against the old Adam (Ap IV 175–176; LC I 316, III 86–87; FC Ep II 12). This is consistent with Romans 7:14–25. On the other hand, they are also clear in confessing that the regeneration worked by the Spirit creates a change in the Christian that impacts the way we live (Ap IV 45–46, 64–65, 125–127, 136, 175, 250–251, XII 82; LC II 1–4, 53, 67–69, III 52, IV 64–67, 74–76;

⁶¹ Scott R. Murray, "The Third Use of the Law: The Author Responds to His Critics," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (April 2008): 108.

⁶² In Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 502.

⁶³ In Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 589.

⁶⁴ It also prevents our tendency to make up our own way of serving God (FC Ep VI 4; FC SD VI 2–3). This emphasis on the teaching function is a correction from an earlier treatment (Mark Surburg, "Speaking Like Paul and Luther: Pauline Exhortation and the Third Use of the Law," *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* 27, no. 2 [Eastertide 2018]: 21–23), which did not take this into account.

⁶⁵ Discussions of the third use often overlook this. However, article VI is replete with language describing this effect of the law. The metaphor of "rule" that is frequently used to explain the third use indicates the teaching function of the law. Yet when our explanation of the third use stops there, we have not conveyed the full truth confessed by the Formula of Concord.

⁶⁶ In Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 502–503.

⁶⁷ In Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 590. See also FC Ep VI 7; FC SD VI 6, 9, 12, 19, 24.

FC SD II 39, 48, 70, 89, IV 10–12, 38). Here they state what Romans 6:1–11 and 7:4–6 teach.

It is the Spirit who always supports the new man through the gospel so that he can struggle against the old Adam. It is the new man who struggles against the old Adam (FC Ep VI 4; FC SD VI 18, 23). The Spirit utilizes the law to teach the Christian how to live according to God's will. He also utilizes the law to compel and repress the old Adam. Both of these actions aid the new man *so that the new man determines what the individual actually does*. In this way (and this way alone) it is entirely correct to say that the law helps the Christian live according to God's will.

The Christian, of course, is not only old Adam. In Christ he is also new man. Because of this fact the third use of the law also has a *positive* side. Formula of Concord article VI (SD VI 4) quotes the language of Psalm 1:2, which speaks of those "whose delight is in the law of the Lord," and references Psalm 119, where on several occasions the psalmist expresses delight in God's law (119:19, 119:47, 119:70, 119:97). FC SD VI 5 then draws upon Romans 7:22 as it says that the reborn "delight in the law of the Lord according to their inward persons."⁶⁸ For the new man, the third use of the law is the effect of *delighting in God's law*. This is also seen in the fact that he obeys and carries out the law "from a free and merry spirit" (FC SD VI 17).⁶⁹ For the new man, the law is something he wants to hear.

Conclusion: Paraenesis in Lutheran Preaching

Paraenesis is law, and so the Spirit may in fact use it to convict the hearer of sin (the second use). The preacher today cannot control how the Spirit will utilize the law. When it comes to the deployment of exhortation to Christian living, we must recognize that Paul could not control how the Spirit utilized the law either. And yet, Paul employed paraenesis extensively in his letters with the goal of helping Christians live in God-pleasing ways. He provides the model that we should follow.

In his use of paraenesis, Paul's intent is not to convict sin. Instead, Paul wants believers to live in ways that are true to God's will. He believes the gospel prompts people to live in these ways. In Romans 6–8, Paul's statements of paraenesis are grounded by gospel in 6:1–5, 7:4–6, and 8:1–4. He also believes that Christians are able to do this. Paul indicates in 6:1–11 that sin no longer has dominion. At the same time, his paraenesis in 6:12–14, 6:15–16, 8:5–8, and 8:12–13 is based on the understanding that until Christ returns there is an ongoing struggle against sin. The sin

⁶⁸ In Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 588.

⁶⁹ In Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 590. FC SD VI 23 also says they act "from a willing heart." In Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 591.

described in 7:14–25 is a very real possibility, and that is why Christians need to continue to hear paraenesis that assists the new man in the struggle against sin.

Lutheran preaching should follow the apostle by regularly including paraenesis. As we do so, we should share Paul's presuppositions. First, our intent in paraenesis will not be to convict hearers of sin. Instead, with our paraenesis grounded in the gospel we will want hearers to live in ways that are true to God's will. We will recognize that the gospel is the only possible source of the life that is the goal of paraenesis. Second, we will believe that Christians are able to do this. The new man really is present, and he makes a difference in how Christians live. Finally, we will believe that the language of paraenesis helps to enable this behavior. We will trust that the Spirit can and does use this language to teach God's will and to repress and restrain the old Adam so that the new man can carry the day. Paul believed that paraenesis helped Christians to live in ways that are true to God's will, and we should too.

In doing so, we will avoid the error that sees paraenesis as simply more law that always condemns the sinner. The Spirit does not use the law only to reveal sin. Here Formula of Concord article VI has provided us with the analysis of Paul's paraenesis and why he uses it. The Spirit can and does utilize the law to teach and to repress and restrain the old Adam.

We will also avoid the error that assumes that the response in the Christian life is purely spontaneous. Paul engages in extensive use of paraenesis because the old Adam continues to be present as we live in the "not yet." There is the need to struggle against sin, and the language of paraenesis assists the new man in this struggle.

Finally, we will avoid the error of modern Lutheranism that reads into Romans 7:14–25 an assumption about failure in the Christian life. Christians can and do fail, but the context of Romans chapters 6–8 does not sustain such an understanding. Instead, the new man is called to the ongoing daily struggle against the old Adam, and Paul believes that he can succeed.

Paul's own varied method demonstrates that this does not have to occur in only one way. Second-person imperatives that directly address the congregation will be used along with the equivalent of the hortatory subjunctive, "let us . . ." Verbs of exhortation such as "I urge, I exhort, I encourage, I appeal" can be employed. Paul's technique of asking a question that the hearer already knows must have a negative answer (such as seen in Rom 6:1–2) is an effective rhetorical device. At the same time, we have seen that indicative statements that set forth the two options and their results (such as Rom 8:12–13) have an important role to play.

As in Paul's letters, it will not be unusual for paraenesis to be found in the latter portion of sermons. It seems quite natural for the earlier portion to have applied law and gospel, and then for paraenesis to follow that exhorts Christians to live in ways produced by the gospel as they engage in the ongoing struggle against the old Adam.

Yet it is also appropriate to use paraenesis in other parts of the sermon, just as Paul does in his letters. Paraenesis need not be limited to the latter portion of a sermon.

Paul's micro structures of exhortation followed by gospel and of gospel followed by exhortation are instructive in two ways. First, they provide models by which we can intersperse gospel within sections that focus on paraenesis. The presence of paraenesis does not inherently mean the absence of gospel statements. Instead, gospel statements can be placed in the midst of paraenesis.

Second, they demonstrate that either movement is inherently acceptable. Exhortation can be grounded in gospel, or gospel can lead to exhortation. What matters is not the ordering but the fact that the gospel predominates in the sermon as a whole. The indicative is what makes the imperative possible in the first place. It is the reason that we do not have mere moralism. Where the gospel is the controlling force of the sermon, paraenesis can be deployed in helpful ways.

Paul's letters demonstrate how we should speak to Christians who live in the eschatological tension in which the new man in Christ is able to do good works but faces the ongoing struggle against the old Adam. His paraenesis has as its goal to exhort and admonish Christians to live in ways that are true to God's will because of what he has done for us in Christ. Paul made this a priority in his letters, and we need to do so in our preaching as well.