

Session 6

# Free

*All who accept the gospel find freedom from the guilt of sin.*

Romans 6:1-14



## **What are some things you can do because you're a Christian? What are some things that you have the power to avoid because you're a Christian?**

We usually think of freedom in terms of being free to do things. We like the idea of doing whatever we want, whenever we want. We appreciate being free to speak, free to work, free to worship, and free to disagree. But freedom has another side—the freedom not to act. Paul wanted the Romans to understand this side of freedom. Our freedom in Christ means we don't have to live in guilt, and we don't have to live in bondage to sin.

## **UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT**

In Rome, Jews and Gentiles alike were tempted to think their forgiveness and eternal security gave them a license to live any way they pleased. Sin didn't really matter because sins could be confessed and cleansed. But Paul emphasized a different path (Rom. 6:1-14).

He reminded the Romans that they weren't just forgiven of their sins. They were dead to them. When they accepted Christ's sacrifice, they died to sin because all their sins had been nailed to the cross. And just as Christ rose from the dead, He gave them a new power for living. They had to stop embracing the old ways and embrace their Savior instead of their sin (6:15-22).

In Romans 7, Paul noted that Jesus' death broke the power of sin and the burden of law-keeping as the means to salvation. But while the law didn't define their standing before God, it did provide some guidance in following the Messiah.

The law shines a light on things that break God's heart. We know what to avoid because the law reveals it to us. And when we stray, the law reminds us that we're going the wrong way. Paul emphasized that the law is holy and good when it fulfills these roles because it helps us become more like Him (7:12).

The truth is, we need help. We're prone to stray from God's plan. Paul lamented the battle between his old self (the flesh) and his new life in Christ. On one hand, he knew what he should be doing as a Christian. On the other hand, he consistently felt powerless to do it. Often, he voluntarily chose to sin, embracing the very things he had been called to hate (7:13-24). The answer for Christians, he said, was to fall at the feet of Christ and let Him live through us.

# ROMANS 6:1-14

**1** What should we say then? Should we continue in sin so that grace may multiply? **2** Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it? **3** Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were **baptized A** into his death? **4** Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in **newness of life B**. **5** For if we have been **united with him C** in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be in the likeness of his resurrection. **6** For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be rendered powerless so that we may no longer be **enslaved to sin D**, **7** since a person who has died is freed from sin. **8** Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him, **9** because we know that Christ, having been raised from the dead, will not die again. Death no longer rules over him. **10** For the death he died, he died to sin once for all time; but the life he lives, he lives to God. **11** So, you too consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. **12** Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires. **13** And do not offer any parts of it to sin as weapons for unrighteousness. But as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness. **14** For sin will not rule over you, because you are not under the law but **under grace E**.

## Passage Outline

Dead to Sin  
(Rom. 6:1-7)

Alive in Christ  
(Rom. 6:8-11)

Tools of Righteousness  
(Rom. 6:12-14)

## Keywords

- A. The act of baptism is a picture of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. We're now dead to our old lives of sin and raised to live new lives in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- B. The "newness of life" comes from the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit within the believer (Rom. 7:6).
- C. Our union with Christ is the assurance we have that we too will experience a resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:10-11).
- D. Christ has broken sin's power in our lives so that we're free to fully obey Him (John 8:31-32; Gal. 5:1).
- E. Grace isn't an excuse to sin but a motivation to live a holy life that pleases God (Titus 2:11-14).

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

If all our sins have been forgiven, then why should we worry about doing what's right? Apparently, that was a question circulating through the church in Rome. It could be that some in Rome were trying to twist the doctrine of justification to explain their own worldly behavior. Paul knew the danger of letting this idea gain steam. He was ready to demolish their arguments.

**BIBLE SKILL: Use a concordance and Bible dictionary.** – Use a Bible concordance to find references in Scripture to “baptize” and “baptism.” Make a list of when baptism was administered and under what circumstances. What can you learn about the purpose and practice of baptism from your list? How do your findings help you interpret Romans 6:3-4?

To illustrate his point, Paul turned to the ordinance of baptism. When new believers go under the water, Paul said, they are associating themselves with the death of Jesus.

## **How does the act of baptism demonstrate what has happened in the believer's life?**

Jesus' death paid the penalty for sin. His resurrection sealed the deal because it defeated the power of death once and for all. Like two sides of the same coin, neither is complete without the other. Paul told the Christians in Rome that salvation worked the same way. In coming to Christ, they didn't confess only His death and burial. They also confessed the power of His resurrection. They were *united with him* in both His *death* and His *resurrection*.

**KEY DOCTRINE: Baptism** – Baptism is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus (Col. 3:12).

Paul had reminded the Romans that following Christ meant identifying with His death. Paul also wanted them to know that Jesus' death was only one part of the story. His crucifixion reflects our death to sin, but His resurrection means life for us. Because we died with Him, we will also live with Him. Paul saw this as an established fact.

## **How should considering ourselves dead to sin and alive in Christ affect our daily lives? What might a person considering themselves “dead to sin” look like today?**

Salvation is not only about eternity. It has implications for the here and now. It calls for a particular lifestyle—a lifestyle based on righteousness. Paul's teaching shifted from the theological union of believers with Christ to the ways they should live it out each day. When they accepted Christ, the Romans surrendered to a different King. Previously, sin had been in charge.

## **In what practical ways can believers offer themselves as weapons in the fight for righteousness?**

# APPLY THE TEXT

- Jesus' death frees the believer from the slavery of sin.
- Jesus' resurrection secures eternal life for the believer.
- Believers demonstrate their salvation through righteous living.

**Examine your life for sinful attitudes and actions. What steps do you need to take to be free from that sin?**

**Discuss as a group ways of encouraging one another to die to sin and live for Christ. What actions might the group need to take in light of this discussion?**

**How does your everyday life point others toward Christ? What needs to change in your words, actions, and attitudes to more effectively point others to Christ?**

## Prayer Requests

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# DAILY EXPLORATION

## Day 1: Believers should no longer be enslaved to sin.

**Read Romans 6:1-2, considering Paul's strong response to believers living in sin.**

Paul used the Greek phrase rendered *absolutely not* ten times in Romans (3:4,6,31; 6:2,15; 7:7,13; 9:14; 11:1,11). Each time, he distinguished orthodox teaching from heresy. While the English translation here feels strong, it really doesn't reflect the degree of Paul's dismay. ("God forbid" in the King James Version may come closest in English.) The reason was simple: No one who claims the power of the gospel should intentionally go looking for chances to sin.

We understand that a corpse no longer participates in the things of this world. Dead people can't eat or drink or go out with friends. They no longer respond to the stimuli that excite the rest of us. It's impossible to live while dead. That was Paul's point about Christians and sin. When we accept Christ's death as the sacrifice for our sins, we don't just disavow sin; we die to it. We become a "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17). While sin might continue its attempt to have influence, believers no longer should respond to the old stimuli that led us down that path.

**How has sin enslaved you? How does the salvation Jesus offers free you from sin's slavery?**

## Day 2: Baptism acknowledges that we intend to live for Christ.

**Read Romans 6:3-4, underlining verse 4.**

Baptism serves as a confession that Jesus died in our place and that our sins have been buried with Him. Burial is the ultimate proof of physical death, and being *buried with him* is the ultimate confession of our death to sin.

Burial is only one part of the picture of baptism. Just as Jesus did not stay in the tomb, believers do not stay under the water. God *raised* Jesus by His *glory*, and He raises believers to live for His glory as well. No longer under the domination of sin, Christians are telling the world that they intend to walk in the resurrection power of Jesus. They leave the old ways behind. As pastors often say, they are "raised to walk in newness of life."

While it's easy to interpret baptism as a public confession of our salvation, it means much more. Baptism acknowledges that we have died to our past and that we intend to live for Christ in the future. That future should not include a desire to go back into the bondage of sin.

**Have you been baptized? If so, what did that represent in your life? If not, what is holding you back from taking that step?**

### Day 3: Sin has been rendered lifeless through the cross.

*Read Romans 6:5-7, identifying how we are united with Christ through baptism.*

In practical terms, we didn't just receive forgiveness of our sins. We also received a new power to live differently. Baptism serves as a tangible reminder that the Christian life involves both dying and living. Paul wasn't sharing anything his readers didn't already know. The Roman believers knew that their *old self was crucified* with Christ on the cross and that His death freed them to live a new life under a new Master. Our hope rests on the foundation of our death to sin—that our sin was nailed to the cross with Jesus. The Greek phrase translated *rendered powerless* refers to something that has lost all power and influence. Sin has been rendered lifeless and impotent through Christ's work on the cross. His resurrection makes it possible for us to live differently—in the power of Christ. Based on that, it makes no sense to believe that sin could provide any benefit for our lives. As believers, we can remember what life was like before coming to Jesus. We know what slavery to sin involved. We should never forget the high price Jesus paid to break those chains of sin. When we fail to focus on everything God has done, our logic—our spiritual vision—gets a little fuzzy. It's easier to fall for the lies of the enemy and wander back into our old habits. That's what Paul challenged the Romans to avoid. They needed to live like they were dead to sin, and so do we.

**What does it look like for you to daily die to sin?**

### Day 4: Believers choose how to live out their salvation.

*Read Romans 6:8-11, noting what believers gain through Christ's death and resurrection.*

The resurrection sets Christ apart from any other would-be messiahs. Jesus died on the cross, but the Father raised Him. Unlike other religious leaders, Jesus didn't stay in the grave, and He will never die again. Several biblical figures were raised from the dead. For example, Jesus raised Lazarus in John 11. But Lazarus died a second time. Paul made it clear that once Christ rose, He would never taste death again.

As a result of His resurrection, we are free from sin in this life and the next. We are justified (declared righteous), but we are also sanctified (set apart for God's purposes) in God's sight. We live in the power and presence of Jesus each day.

We cannot earn salvation, but we can choose how to live out our salvation. The Greek term for *consider* carries the challenge to accept God's words as true. We believe in what He has done for us, but we also believe what He says about who we now are in Him.

**How does considering yourself dead to sin and alive in Christ affect your daily life?**

**What does that look like for you?**

## Day 5: We are living sacrifices.

**Read Romans 6:12-14, noting sin's role in a believer's life.**

Sin is always a cruel taskmaster. It dominates and enslaves those who fall under its authority. But Paul emphatically reminded the Romans that God has changed everything through Christ. The phrase *do not let sin reign* is an imperative command in the Greek, challenging readers to reject their old lives and honor God during their short stint in these human bodies.

Spiritual warfare is taking place all around us. Before we came to Christ, we were weapons for unrighteousness. The enemy owned us and used us in his battle against God.

The idea behind *offer yourselves* pointed back to the old sacrificial system. Now we offer ourselves as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1-2) to a loving Father who also knows our potential in spiritual battle. God calls us to devote our entire beings—including our bodies—to lead others into the kingdom by living righteously.

**In what practical ways can you offer yourself as a weapon in the fight for righteousness?**

## TALK IT OUT

**Reflect on the truths found in Romans 6, sharing with other members of your Bible study group.**

How can we be “dead to sin”? How can we be “alive to God”?

How do we keep sin from reigning in our bodies? What is our part? What is God's part?

What does it look like to live free from the guilt of sin? What's the only thing that frees us from guilt?



For additional context, read “InSites: Baptism: Its Origin and Practice” in the Spring 2020 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Available at [LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator](http://LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator).