



FREE

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

ROMANS 6:1-14

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.

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?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

ROMANS 6:1–7:25

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.

Read Romans 6:1-14 in your Bible, looking for motivations for living a God-honoring life. How are these motivations borne out of a person's faith in Jesus?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

DEAD TO SIN (ROM. 6:1-7)

¹ What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? ² God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? ³ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ⁴ Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: ⁶ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. ⁷ For he that is dead is freed from sin.

VERSES 1-2

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. Paul had just said that God's grace and mercy are magnified through His forgiveness of sin (Rom. 5:20). If more sin leads to more grace, why not sin as much as possible and magnify God's grace as much as possible? 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.

Paul used the Greek phrase rendered *God forbid* 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. The reason was simple: No one who claims the power of the gospel should intentionally go looking for chances to sin.

When we accept Christ's death as the sacrifice for our sins, we don't just disavow sin; we die to it.

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.

BIBLE SKILL: *Use a concordance and Bible dictionary to learn more about a feature of Israel's religious life.*

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?

VERSES 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. Today, a pastor might say, "buried with Him in baptism" to emphasize this connection. The act 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 really means much more. It’s also a public confession of our faith moving forward. 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.

How does the act of baptism demonstrate what has happened in the believer’s life?

VERSES 5-7

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 *planted together in the likeness of his death* and *in the likeness of his resurrection*.

We didn’t just receive forgiveness of our sins. We also received a new power to live differently.

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 the *old man* 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 *be destroyed* 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.

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).

ALIVE IN CHRIST (ROM. 6:8-11)

⁸ Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: ⁹ Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. ¹⁰ For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. ¹¹ Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

VERSES 8-11

Paul had reminded the Romans that following Christ meant identifying with His death. As a teacher, he repeated his primary teaching in order to reinforce the truth. He wanted to make sure his readers understood what it means to be one with Christ’s 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. As in verse 5, *if* in verse 8 might be better rendered “since.”

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.

In verse 11 Paul mentioned the responsibility of believers to *reckon* themselves ***dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ***. Jesus lives in intimate fellowship with the Father, and we share that relationship through Him.

We cannot earn salvation, but we can choose how to live out our salvation. The Greek term for *reckon* 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 will 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?

TOOLS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (ROM. 6:12-14)

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. ¹³ Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

VERSES 12-13

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. They had little choice but to obey its demands.

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 *let not 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 *yield 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?

Christ freely offered Himself on our behalf so that we might freely offer ourselves to God.

VERSE 14

Paul ended this section with the declaration that sin will not rule over you. In summarizing his point, Paul returned to a theme from earlier in the letter: the law versus grace. Since sin no longer reigns in our lives, we no longer need to worry about satisfying the demands of the law or being condemned by it. Instead, we live under grace, which places us squarely within the loving embrace of our heavenly Father. Christ freely offered Himself on our behalf so that we might freely offer ourselves to God.

IN MY CONTEXT

- 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 Needs

