

Freedom From Sin

Printed Text • Romans 6:1–14

Devotional Reading • 1 Peter 4:7-11

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will EXPLORE what it means to live by grace rather than living under the law, DISCERN how following Jesus can impact the way they handle these temptations and sins, and CHOOSE to live in the power of Jesus' life and resurrection.

In Focus

Reverend Monica Jackson was recently ordained and senior pastor Rev. Clay Gosberry wasted no time putting her to work. One of the assignments she was given was Baptism Ministry Leader. She thought she would be excited to do it but on baptism day her mood was more reflective. There were 12 people who were going to be baptized including her cousin Raven whom she once ran the streets with.

As Rev. Jackson filled the pool with water, she thought about how God delivered her from recruiting young girls like Raven to be in her gang, to evangelizing on the street and winning souls for Christ. As Monica put on her robe she thought about the time, on a dare, she went into a church drunk and received life-changing prayer at the altar. Once the baptisms began, she and Minister Paul Diaz took Raven's hand as she stepped into the pool. As Raven shared her testimony, Rev. Jackson remembered how God gave her the courage to sever ties with the married man she thought she couldn't live without.

"Based upon your profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, I now baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," said Rev. Gosberry as Rev. Jackson and Minister Diaz baptized Raven and the other candidates.

Once all 12 candidates were baptized, Rev. Jackson asked Rev. Gosberry if she could lead the new believer's class. "I'd like to continue to remind myself and others that God has set us free and we never have to turn back," said Rev. Jackson.

What has God delivered you from? When you are tempted to turn back to your old ways, how do you fight against it?

Keep In Mind

"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." (Romans 6:5, KJV)

Words You Should Know

A. Resurrection (Romans 6:5) anastasis (Gk.) – Standing up again

B. Dominion (v. 14) kurieuo (Gk.) – To rule or lord over

Say It Correctly

Mosaic. moe-ZAY-ik

Soteriology. sow-teir-ee-AW-low-gee

KJV

Romans 6:1 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.

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.

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.

NLT

Romans 6:1 Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace?

2 Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?

3 Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death?

4 For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

5 Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was.

6 We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin.

7 For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin.

8 And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him.

9 We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him.

10 When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God.

11 So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

12 Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires.

13 Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God.

14 Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.

The People, Places, and Times

Grace. The concept of grace is defined as God's undeserved love and favor toward sinful humankind. As Christians, grace is given to us through our faith and relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Bible, the essential meaning of grace refers to God's character to exercise goodwill toward His creation. This favorable disposition of God finds its supreme expression in Jesus Christ. This grace is rendered fully accessible to all humans with no other precondition than a desire to receive it (Titus 2:11–12). As a result, the human condition of separation from God becomes replaced with access to the otherwise unapproachable majesty of the Lord (Hebrews 4:16).

The Law. In the New Testament, this term referred to the Mosaic legislation. "The law and the prophets" refers to all the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The legal body of the Old Testament is not given in one book; moreover, the laws reflect the development from the desert context (Exodus) to the context of the Promised Land (Deuteronomy). The Old Testament's legal material is found throughout Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The purpose of the law is to transform regenerated believers into maturity. Spiritual maturity is not a privilege that was reserved for believers after Christ. Old Testament saints also walked with God (Enoch, Genesis 5:22–24; Noah, 6:9; Abraham 17:1) and lived with integrity in the presence of God (Genesis 17:1; Deuteronomy 18:13; Proverbs 11:5).

Background

God's provided righteousness involves more than declaring believers righteous on the basis of faith. In Romans the first clue to this fact is in Romans 5:5, "God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us." The presence of the Holy Spirit within believers speaks of a new nature. This new nature is created by the sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit, which Paul discusses at length in Romans 6–8. Christians are sure of salvation, but they have to develop in moral stature. Grace does not mean a license to sin (6:1, 14) but moral power (v. 11). Moral obligation continues and should be gladly faced in the newness of life (v. 4) on which the Christian embarks.

At-A-Glance

1. Baptized with Christ (Romans 6:1–4)
2. Crucified with Christ (vv. 5–11)
3. New Life with Christ (vv. 12–14)

In Depth

1. Baptized with Christ (Romans 6:1–4)

Paul's questions command our attention. The teaching on God's justification of sinful people (Romans 3:21–5:21) and the declaration that the Law was made to make sin abound, so that grace could abound more (5:20) might lead some to believe what Paul expressed: shall we go on sinning so

that grace may increase? Some may have reasoned that since grace increases all the more when sin abounds, then believers ought to sin more so they could experience more grace! The Apostle Paul penned this idea only to reject it fervently: by no means! In no way is the abundance of God's grace designed to encourage sin.

Paul explains why this thinking is erroneous. Believers died to sin. Being dead to sin means being "set free from sin" (vv. 18, 22). With that said, Paul asks, if believers have died to sin how can they live in sin anymore? All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death.

Christ's sacrificial death involved taking on all the world's sin in His body and killing them on the Cross. Christians' "burial" with Christ affirms we too have died to our former sinful ways of living. Our identification with Christ in His death means that just as Christ was raised from the dead to the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. The resurrection of Jesus was not just resuscitation; it was a new form of life. In the same way the spiritual lives of believers in Jesus have a new, fresh quality. In the process of sanctification, the Holy Spirit works by separating the believer from the power of sin and restoring a new quality of life.

How does Paul say baptism is like a burial?

2. Crucified with Christ (vv. 5-11)

A believer's "old sinful self" or "old man" is the person they were spiritually before they trusted Christ. The "old man" was under the influence of sin: powerless, ungodly, and an enemy of God. The former self was then "crucified" with Christ so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless. The phrase "the body of sin" does not mean that a human body is sinful in itself. It means that one's physical body is controlled or ruled by sin. This was the condition of each believer before conversion. But now at salvation, the power of controlling sin is broken. Before salvation, a believer was enslaved to sin. Since we have "died" with Christ who has set us free, sin no longer has the legal right to force its mastery and control over us.

In resurrection Jesus Christ was victorious over death. Resurrection life is eternal in quality and everlasting in duration. What is true for Jesus Christ is true for us! We ought to count ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. Since we are dead to sin's power, we should recognize this fact and not continue to sin. Instead, let us acknowledge and rejoice in our new resurrected life in Christ! (Ephesians 2:5-6; Colossians 2:12-13).

In what ways is our freedom from sin a once- and-for-all gift, and in what ways is it a daily choice?

3. New Life with Christ (vv. 12-14)

In our new life, sin should not reign as it did before salvation. When sin reigns in a person's life, they obey its evil desires manifested through their words and actions. As Christians we should not be used as instruments of unrighteousness or wickedness. We ought to present our minds, hearts, and bodies over to God to be used as instruments of righteousness. In Christ we are new creations, alive in Him; so let us live for God! It is God's design that sin not be our master. It is by God's strategy that we no longer live under the law but under grace. If believers were still under the law, it would be impossible to keep sin from exercising mastery. But since believers are under grace, it is possible to live this new life victoriously by having faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Search the Scriptures

1. What does the Scripture say about our old sinful self (Romans 6:6)?
2. When we died with Christ what were we set free from (v. 7)?
3. Since we no longer live under the law, what do we live under now (v. 14)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. When we are “dead” to our old self and no longer mastered by sin, how does this knowledge change our attitudes about daily living?
2. How might it appear in our actions toward our family, work, and church? How does it motivate our choices in life?

Liberating Lesson

Evil is rampant in our society. We see evidence of its devastation on the evening news and in social media. Stories of violence, mayhem, abuse, and affliction can make us feel helpless. When we are a victim of one of these senseless acts, we might decide to retaliate and become instruments of unrighteousness. Despite all the wickedness going on in the world, we are not without hope. We do not have to respond to life’s tragedies out of sinful desires or become instruments of unrighteousness. We can live a life dead to sin by trusting and relying on God’s grace manifested in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Application for Activation

When we think about our past, before conversion, we can honestly admit that some of the things we did were not motivated by godly intentions. We understand now that our God-given skills and talents should be used to glorify God. Are you a gifted storyteller? An excellent organizer, a painter, or an exceptional orator? Whatever skills you possess, ask the Lord where best to use them and volunteer your time! We are growing in grace and becoming more like the righteous instrument God created us to be!

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

Romans 6:1–14

The apostle Paul begins the chapter with a series of questions to ascertain, in a sense, “how should we respond to the aforementioned dilemma?” (cf. Romans 5:18ff). He contends that the condemnation of Christ and His subsequent exaltation, should prompt men and women to part ways with sin so that the atonement is not cheapened. The result of Christ’s sacrifice should lead us to lives of greater freedom. Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection has created new lenses to view through. Within these verses, if studied carefully, one can witness the inferences to Adam and how Paul contrasts life in him with life in Christ.

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

Paul begins by using a rhetorical question to anticipate an appropriate response from the audience. This is accomplished by use of the subjunctive (a mood of probability) to query, “Should we just keep on sinning?” Paul phrases the question in such a way as to expect a negative response. Sin particularly in an uninterrupted state represents an inappropriate response to Paul’s argument. In the previous section he says “so one man’s act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men” (5:18), which means that sin’s power to hold onto the believer has been broken. We should be ever mindful not to cheapen the grace of God by seeing the death of Jesus as a singular event without implications for here and now. His death resonates for all eternity for the believer and should compel us to respond as such.

2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

The death of Christ appeases the judicial requirements of sin. His death paid a debt that we owed. As a means to argue his case, Paul engages in a hypothetical scenario. His logic suggests, “If we have received salvation without personal merit, why not go ahead and sin like there’s no tomorrow?” What harm would come to us? In fact, would not grace increase in a moment like this? These rhetorical questions serve to make Paul’s argument penetrate deeper. The answer comes to us in one of the strongest negations in the Greek language (me genoito, MAY GEH-noy-tow), “no way!” The Christian life provides freedom to the adherent such that craven impulses to appease the flesh should gradually diminish. Paul therefore asks, “How could Christians who are dead to sin keep on living in sin?” Though forgiven, the believer will constantly need to evaluate their behavior and impulses to ensure that they keep short accounts in the event that they do sin. We cannot return to life as usual after identifying with Christ, and Paul wants to make this clear.

3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

As the third interrogative in this section, Paul appeals to the early creedal understanding of baptism and its act as a type of initiation into the Christian community. Such an appeal interrogates the recipients’ understanding of Jesus’ sacrifice once again. Worded differently, Paul would be saying, “Don’t you know what Jesus’ death means for you?” The outcomes of Jesus’ successful mission were the early sources for grassroots efforts in the early Christian community. Hence, solidarity within this community was evident by the strong bonds that were signaled in the act of baptism as the participant now identifies with this community of Christ followers. By posing this question, Paul furthermore appeals to the group association that was similarly communicated in his letter to Colosse, “you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead” (Colossians 2:12). Consequently, we cannot return to any form of life as usual because we are dead and buried.

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.

The results of Christ's atonement yield a corollary that early Christian teaching affirms. Christ's Cross work substituted His righteousness for our sinfulness, but it did more than that too. Those who are in Christ have been ushered from the "old humanity" into a new, richer, and more fulfilling "messianic humanity." The metaphor of baptism in these verses suggests that the dramatic outworking of Christ's three-day interment was not only symbolic, it was also inclusive of those who would believe on Him for all time. The outworking of our solidarity with Jesus amounts to a new way of living our lives that is as distinct from our old lives as Christ's resurrected body and life was different from His prior 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:

As the apostle Paul continues his argument through a series of conditional statements in this verse, he proposes a complete embrace of the implications of Christ's successful mission (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 3:10). The "if... then" construction serves as a powerful literary device to illustrate the profundity of our union with Christ. This phrase "if we have been planted (Gk. *sumphutoi*, SOOM-foo-toy, literally united, born together with) together" suggests that there is symmetry between our existence and our new corporate identity in Christ. Such a partnership and gathering will be heightened as the subsequent clause suggests, "we shall be also in the likeness (Gk. *homoiomati*, hoe-moy-OH-mah-tee; figure, resemblance such as amounts almost to equality or identity) of his resurrection." Such a promise is contingent upon our appraisal of Christ's death in order that we might be animated by His resurrection (cf. 1 John 3:2-3). It is evident that through this discourse, Paul has sought to demonstrate a rhetorical symmetry between the acts of Christ and the inclusion of the audience as participants.

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.

The knowledge that Paul appeals to in this verse at the time of writing was in its earliest stage of development. The meaning of the crucifixion was what occupied Paul's writings during the decades following the Christ event. However, even here, Paul elaborates upon the effect of Jesus' sacrifice so that the early church community could understand what an ideal response should resemble. Therefore, in providing a type of editorial summary of the verses above, Paul provides us with insight to one of his major contentions: the old versus the new man in Christ. Are believers still corporately tethered to Adam? Or have they been led out of the old humanity into a new mode of existence in Christ? Of course the latter is Paul's conclusion. In order for us to appreciate the new existence that Christ has called us to, we must see our old Adamic nature as dead, inoperative, and no longer "calling the shots" in our lives. Such a posture not only aids one's ability to comprehend their union with Christ, but also helps to live a life of freedom that is being offered here.

When the Scriptures are read in unison with each other, one can gather the broad themes and theological import that cause them to speak with one voice. In this verse, Paul captures the theological outworking of a right way to view the crucifixion. It should prompt us to leave the bondage of sin behind.

7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Paul signals that the slaves in bondage to sin have been emancipated! Death in this sense is tied to the aforementioned crucifixion of Christ and further defined as the meaning behind baptism. Therefore, the means of their manumission was not physical currency, but the blood of Jesus Christ. Hence, now that freedom is theirs, all Christ followers must learn to live according to this reality (cf. Acts 13:39; 1 Peter 4:1).

A radical shift like this must be placed into context. While it is appropriate to consider new life in Christ as an exodus from a life of sin and self-centeredness, it does not completely prevent the believer from engaging in sin from time to time. It simply means that sin no longer serves as their master. The term “freed” (Gk. *dikaioo*, dee-kie-OH-oh, to declare, pronounce, exhibit, evince, righteousness) underscores a judicial standing for the believer—one that renders a verdict of guiltlessness and provides proof that freedom represents a more robust idea than a simple “lack of confinement.” It speaks to the pronouncement God makes over those whose lives are lived in Christ.

8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

Paul returns to his trusted literary device in this section by building off of another conditional clause. “If we be dead with Christ” functions as the protasis, (the clause expressing the condition in a conditional sentence) and is resolved by the apodosis “[then] we believe that we shall also live with him.” Much can be said about the implications of this verse. First, this text assumes that the apostle Paul has clearly communicated the scope of the atonement here and in his other texts (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:17; 2 Timothy 2:11) namely that the death of Christ provides entry into an eternal existence with Him. Second, Paul makes it unequivocally clear that belief (Gk. *pisteuo*, peese-TEW-oh) is absolutely necessary for entry into this life with Christ. Taken together, both aspects are at work in this verse creating another way of elaborating upon life in the Messiah.

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

Verse 9 begins with a participle rather than its own subject and verb, anchoring this verse to the previous one. If we rightly evaluate our life as “dead with Christ,” and the quality of our subsequent life that we can experience in Him, then we should also know that death itself has been rendered powerless by Christ and He cannot be subject to its influence any more. Jesus has overcome death by means of the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:54–55). This knowledge should compel the believer to enjoy a type of freedom that removes the fear of death.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

By dying, Jesus had a cleansing effect upon the world. He fought the dark world of the dead, and overcame it. This was a one-time event (1 Peter 3:18) with everyday implications. We know that His post-resurrection life continues in the church and the community of faith. The post-death life that Jesus now enjoys is uniquely equipped, physically and spiritually, to lead others to God. Believers benefit from the life that Christ lives unto God not only in an ultimate sense—bringing believers to heaven—but also in an immediate sense (cf. Galatians 2:19) providing us with assurance and wisdom. Finally, in being united with Christ, His followers also have the means to throw off the old nature of sin and live into their new existence in Christ.

11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The term reckon (Gk. logizomai, low-GEED- zo-my) suggests the idea of appraisal. Appraise your life in light of your death to sin. To do so further embeds our ability to identify as Christ followers in the complete sense. Dying to sin means that it no longer maintains its grip upon the believer, enabling them to live their lives with a renewed sense of vigor. This is made possible by the animating power of God as alluded to in the second clause. We are to simultaneously see ourselves as unresponsive to sin while actively living to please God.

Another key aspect introduced in this verse is the idea of being “in Christ.” To be in Christ is to be in union with Him. This important theme for Paul is at the heart of biblical soteriology (the doctrine of salvation). It is necessary to see both actions (dying to sin and living unto God) as part of the appraisal process for believers to live the normal Christian life.

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

The entreaty of this verse (“Let not sin reign”) purports that sin is not just an individual issue, but a corporate one. The “your” and “ye” are plural in Greek. Paul appeals to the entire group to heed his advice about it. Not only must one keep short accounts with sin, we must do all that we can to eradicate it from our lives. To do so marks a radical departure from our old nature. If, as this discourse has suggested, the apostle Paul is advocating that we depart from life according to Adam and embrace a new manner of existence in Christ, then such a shift must be evident in our lives. Being in union with Christ is to adopt a new way of living. It is a life wherein our normal lusts are not entertained, acted upon, or obeyed. They are jettisoned with the aid of the Holy Spirit. This section has combined two beliefs together (don’t let sin reign... don’t obey its offspring lusts) to illustrate that the meaning of Christ’s atonement immediately incites a new mode of existence.

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.

In tandem with a refusal to give in to lust, Paul recommends that we keep the members of our bodies in check. Elsewhere (Colossians 3:5-7), Paul has suggested that body parts can be complicit in carrying out sinful acts and are in need of reigning in. This concept seems to allude to a type of fragmentation of the body, yet in the apostle’s theological imagination he merely posits that enticement can affect us in various ways. It stands to reason that believers should be vigilant in yielding their lives to God not only at conversion but every subsequent day. Members of our body should not be enticed to do their own thing; they must function within the economy of the whole self. An active submission as an instrument of righteousness allows others to see Christ within. If believers willingly submit their bodies to the leading of God, they can rest assured that He has tailor-made purposes in mind for each of us.

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

The discourse concludes with an affirmation that sin and its effects are rendered void in the life of the believer. Within this brief section, the apostle Paul has argued that a transference of power has officially shifted. No longer are believers bound to obey sin and its cruel demands; instead, they have opted to be governed by grace and its effects. Christ has freed believers from bondage. We have new marching orders from a benevolent God.

Perhaps more than any other group, African Americans understand Paul's concept of manumission at work here. It resonates deeper within the audience. If you listen closely, the words to James Weldon Johnson's "Lift Every Voice and Sing" can be heard as the songwriter shares how God has walked side by side with the men and women of color in recent history. This song mimics the notes of freedom that Paul lays bare here. Freedom is always the outcome for believers in Christ and as such communicates just how far-reaching it can impact, touching both the community and the individual.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Out of the Depths I Cry
(Psalm 130)

TUESDAY

Go and Sin No More
(John 7:52–8:11)

WEDNESDAY

God's Righteousness Disclosed in Christ
(Romans 3:19–31)

THURSDAY

The Justified Have Peace with God
(Romans 5:1–11)

FRIDAY

God's Free Gift Brings Justification
(Romans 5:12–21)

SATURDAY

Seek the Lord and Repent
(Isaiah 55:6–13)

SUNDAY

Baptized into Christ's Death
(Romans 6:1–14)