



Freedom

BELIEVERS ARE FREED FROM THE POWER OF SIN.

Scripture Passage: Romans 6:1-14 Memory Verse: Romans 6:11

I learned the value of freedom during a trip to a foreign land. I was part of a group that went overseas to visit sites related to our Christian faith. We had a tour guide, but the guide never mentioned anything about tension between Christians and members of another faith. Unfortunately, our group T-shirt carried a symbol that was considered offensive to some citizens in that place. It never crossed our minds that such a symbol would create chaos, hurt, and confusion. We didn't know, and we certainly meant no harm.

Shortly into our tour, though, armed guards separated our group from the other tours. They took our tour guide away for questioning and later returned to interrogate me, just to be sure he was telling the truth. They wanted to know why he allowed our group to wear this symbol. For thirty long minutes, we were detained in a foreign country with no way of gaining our freedom. We felt helpless. Finally, the guards sent us on our way.

It's easy to take our freedom for granted—both physically and spiritually. As you dig into Romans 6 this week, make a list of the freedoms you enjoy, including your freedom from sin. Consider ways you can spur adults to live in freedom as Jesus intended.



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The words “debt free” make a happy sound in our hearts. So do the words “cancer free.” Each of these terms brings up different realities. However, they share one word in common: free. For a person drowning in debt, being liberated from it would be a game changer. Anyone who’s dealing with cancer would be ecstatic to be told it was gone. Of course, being freed from sin’s power brings the greatest joy. (PSG, p. 46)

In what ways would the promise of freedom make you happy?



Understand the Context (Romans 6:1-14)

Slavery was prevalent in the New Testament world. Of the sixty million people in the Roman Empire, it’s possible that one quarter of them were slaves: fifteen million people.

Many sold themselves into slavery to pay debts. Others were forced into slavery as the empire asserted its authority over conquered territories. Unlike antebellum slavery in the United States, some first-century slaves had an avenue to purchase their freedom. Because of the institution of slavery in the Roman Empire, many people knew the taste of freedom, but they were either forced or voluntarily submitted themselves to a life where that freedom no longer existed.

Paul viewed the unregenerate state of a person as a life of slavery to sin. Unlike slaves working for human masters—who entered slavery sometimes as a child, teen, or adult—every sinner enters slavery at birth. As long as they remain captive to sin, they never experience the life of true spiritual freedom.

But there is a path to freedom. Through the mercy of God, Jesus provided a way for believers who were dead in sin to be made alive and free. Like a slave who was redeemed from physical slavery, Christians have been set free from sin’s enslavement in their own lives. That is not to say they no longer battle sin or they will live sinless lives from that point forward. However, sin as a power no longer holds them in its enslaving clutches.

Slaves in the Roman Empire could not enjoy the benefits of freedom. They were told where to live and how to work. They owed a debt that they had to repay to their master. However, when they were redeemed from slavery, they could own land, choose where to live, and find their own means of employment. Their freedom created new possibilities for the way they would live.

As unbelievers under the slavery of sin, people can never purchase their own freedom, but Jesus took care of that problem. He paid the price for their freedom through His death on the cross. The devastating debt that humanity cannot pay on its own was paid by a perfect, sinless Savior who owed nothing Himself. As believers trust in Him, He forgives them and rescues them from the penalty of their sin. He opens a new way of life.

In Christ, believers can offer themselves as instruments of righteousness. The old rules under the old masters no longer apply. Those who were once enemies of God (Rom. 5:10) serve under a new banner and honor a new Master who makes all the difference.

Read Romans 6:1-14 in your Bible. How does baptism help you visualize the transformation Paul describes in these verses? (PSG, p. 47)

ENGAGE



PREPARE: On a focal wall, display **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*). Prepare copies of **Pack Item 11** (*Handout: A New Way of Life*). On the board, write “_____ Free” and “Free _____.”

READ: Read the opening paragraph on page 46 of the PSG, encouraging adults to consider things from which they have been set free. Note the feelings associated with “debt free” and “cancer free.” Allow adults to suggest other words that might fit in the blanks for “_____ Free” and “Free _____.” Record their responses under the proper heading.

ASK: **In what ways would the promise of freedom make you happy?** (PSG, p. 46)

REVIEW: Remind adults that Paul had already shown everyone needs a Savior and Jesus is that Savior. Summarize this content from page 47 of the PSG to highlight Paul’s next step:

“Paul reminded the Romans that they were not just forgiven of their sins—they were dead to sin. When they accepted Jesus’s sacrifice, they died to sin because all their sins were nailed to the cross. Not only that, but as Jesus rose from the dead, they had been raised to walk in newness of life. They were to stop embracing the old ways and embrace their Savior rather than their sin.”

EXPLAIN: Point to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*), highlighting the fourth point: *New Life in Christ*. Share that today’s session focuses on the freedom believers experience in Christ.

TRANSITION: *In a relationship with God, the natural progression is to move from justification to sanctification. Because we are right with God, our lives should reflect Him to others. As we’ll see, that transformed behavior was Paul’s focus in Romans 6.*



Group Activity Option

Music

Provide lyrics for “Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)” by Chris Tomlin. Play a recording of the song and encourage adults to share what lyrics resonate with them. Point out that in Romans 6, Paul reminded his readers that they were set free—and that this freedom should influence their daily lives.

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

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 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. **5** For if we have been united with him 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, **7** since a person who has died is freed from sin.

(vv. 1-2) In Romans 5:20, Paul had noted that grace abounds where sin once abounded. But that raised a thorny question: Should Christians *continue in sin so that grace may multiply*? Paul wanted to make sure his readers did not misunderstand: Grace covers sin, but grace never provides a license to sin.

Paul responded in the strongest terms: **Absolutely not!** Since Eden, sin has dominated those caught in its clutches. But Paul emphasized that believers have **died to sin**. The Greek wording affirms that this death takes place at a point in time—the moment an individual accepts Christ’s atoning death. From that point on, believers are freed from sin’s dominion (see Col. 1:13).

Death to sin means believers no longer *live in it*. Still, while a believer dies to sin, the temptation to sin will not be eradicated in this lifetime. The struggle is still real.

(v. 3) To describe the relationship of the believer to sin, Paul referred to the physical act of baptism. Baptism by immersion pictures an individual’s death to sin and resurrection to a new way of life. Though sin does not die to the believer, the believer dies to sin.

Paul assumed believer’s baptism. **All of us who were baptized** indicates believers, since baptism represented a person’s public commitment to Christ. We are baptized **into Christ** and into **his death**. It was incomprehensible for Paul to think of a Christian who would not choose baptism (see Gal. 3:27).

(v. 4) In an amazing paradox, God’s people die to live. Paul described it in terms of burial with Christ by **baptism into death**. Along with illustrating our death to sin, baptism pictures a **walk in newness of life**. While death to sin

occurred at a defined point in time, the *newness of life* lasts a lifetime (see Rom. 8:4; 13:13; 14:15). Death to sin meant that sin’s reign had ended and believers live under a new authority.

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. (See Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42.)

(v. 5) Believers **united** with Christ’s death also are united in **his resurrection**. The word *likeness* refers to His death and resurrection. Believers have died and risen with Christ, but their death is only representative of His death. They are not identical in every respect. **We will certainly also be** indicates that Paul intended the end-time resurrection. Though we share in the blessings of Christ’s resurrection now (Col. 3:1), we also cherish the hope of our own resurrection one day (Phil. 3:20-21).

(vv. 6-7) Our **old self** has been **crucified** with Christ (Gal. 2:20). In that moment, our sin-dominated flesh died, and Christ came to rule in our hearts. The **body ruled by sin** was that old nature. Of course, this is not physical death. It was co-crucifixion with Christ.

When a person accepts Jesus, the sin nature is **rendered powerless**. The Greek word used here suggests a loss of dominance. With sin’s power broken, believers are no longer **enslaved to sin**. Though sin still tempts us, we are **freed**.

EXPLORE Romans 6:1-7



APPLICATION POINT: Believers need to understand they live in union with Christ and act accordingly.

READ:

Invite a volunteer to read Romans 6:1-7 as the group underlines recurring words in the verses. Allow adults to share words they noted. Record them on the board.

SHARE:

Explain Paul's opening question in verse 1 and why it's significant to understand:

Paul affirmed that God's grace multiplied in response to multiplied sin (Rom. 5:20). Once Paul made the affirmation, he immediately raised a probing question about it. If believers wanted God's grace to be multiplied, should they sin more? Growing disciples would have asked the question innocently and honestly. However, enemies of the gospel would have asked the question in an effort to deceive people who had placed their faith in Christ. Paul's terse answer to the question keeps us from pondering it for even one second. "Absolutely not!" . . . The reason for such a stern response here drives home the truth about the reign of sin in a believer's life. When we gave our lives to Christ, we died to a way of life controlled by sin. (PSG, p. 48)

ASK:

Why shouldn't believers continue living in sin if sin multiplies God's grace? (PSG, p. 50)

DISCUSS:

Highlight the word "baptized" (v. 3). Distribute copies of **Pack Item 11** (*Handout: A New Way of Life*) and encourage adults to scan the article. Lead a brief discussion on why baptism is a useful illustration for what Paul was sharing about new life in Christ. Talk about the contrasting images of death and life.



Group Activity Option

Bible Skill

On one side of a vertical line, identify words and phrases that describe life that is lived with sin as the monarch or ruling authority. On the other side, note words and phrases that describe life that is lived with God as the monarch or ruling authority. Use the first six chapters of Romans that we've covered so far to inform the list that you make:

Sin as the Monarch

God as the Monarch

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

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.

(v. 8) Paul used a condition (*if*) to emphasize that believers have **died with Christ**. In Greek, this type of sentence construction affirms the statement made, more in the vein of the definitive “since” than how we tend to leave a question open with *if* in English. Paul was not doubting the statement or even setting it up as an “if-then” relationship. He was making a declarative statement that all who are in Christ have died with Him.

The previous verses established that baptism represents the reality that believers were incorporated into the death of Christ by faith. These verses may seem repetitive, but Paul is using a form of argument that reinforces the most basic doctrine of Christ’s death for sinners. However, the emphasis of this verse also moves from dying with Christ to living with Him. It signals a shift from justification to sanctification.

How does that shift happen? The first step is to **believe**. To this point in Romans, Paul demonstrated how God has done everything necessary for salvation. However, when it comes to sanctification, Paul emphasized that Christians must express faith. The object of that faith is the resurrection of Christ. Believing in the resurrection also implies belief in the crucifixion since Christ had to die in order to live again.

(v. 9) The hope for new life in Christ is rooted in the certainty of the resurrection. Paul reminded his readers that they could **know** that Christ was **raised from the dead**. While this might seem like common knowledge among Christians, Jesus’s resurrection was unique because Christ will never **die again**. Jesus raised Lazarus (John 11:38-44), a widow’s son (Luke 7:11-15), and a young girl (8:49-55) from the dead, but each of them died again. Others who experienced a resurrection in the Scriptures would die again after being raised (1 Kings 17:17-22; 2 Kings 4:32-35; 13:20-21; Acts 9:36-41; 20:7-12). In contrast, Jesus would never die again. What’s more, those incorporated into His resurrection would not die spiritually again.

(v. 10) Christ died to sin **once for all time**. The writer of Hebrews used this term to describe Jesus’s death as the one-time sacrifice for sin, never to be repeated (Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10). Paul also used it in a non-worship setting to highlight how more than five hundred people saw Jesus resurrected at one time (1 Cor. 15:6).

In the first part of verse 10, Paul emphasized the finality of Christ’s sacrifice, but the second half of the verse focuses on the ongoing result of Christ living **to God**. Jesus voluntarily experienced death to break sin’s dominion. But this one-time event also opened a way of life to all who would trust in Him.

(v. 11) As noted, Paul had used his letter to highlight what God had done to provide salvation through Jesus. Now, he presented the first command for believers in the book of Romans. While He willingly shouldered all the work in justification, God demands that Christians **consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God** as they moved toward sanctification. The word *consider* came from the world of accounting. It could be translated as credit or count. Christians had to recalibrate their minds to embrace the truth of what Christ had done for them. Peter explained this truth in this way: “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree; so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness” (1 Pet. 2:24a).

Christians have died to sin, but they must choose to live in the righteousness found only in a relationship with Jesus. Going through the motions, pretending to be dead to sin, isn’t enough. We should consider that it is a reality granted by the cross. With sin no longer our master, we should devote our loyalty to our new Master: **Christ Jesus**.

**READ:**

APPLICATION POINT: Believers are to consider themselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.

Invite a volunteer to read Romans 6:8-11, listening for the contrast between being dead in our sin and alive in Christ.

DISCUSS:

Write *Suggestion* and *Command* on the board. Allow adults to share differences between a suggestion and a command. Record their responses on the board under the proper word. Read the following sentences and encourage the group to share if they are suggestions or commands:

- *Clean your room.*
- *Try to eat healthy today.*
- *Consider yourself dead to sin and alive in Christ Jesus.*

ASK:

What does it mean to consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God? (PSG, p. 51)

SHARE:

Explain that Romans 6:11 is not optional; it is a command to be obeyed. Highlight the role of Jesus's death and the importance of our obedient response to die to sin:

Jesus voluntarily experienced death to break sin's dominion. But this one-time event opened a way of life to all who would trust in Him. . . . In verse 11, Paul focused on the responsibility of believers to consider themselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. The word "consider" came from the world of accounting. It could be translated as "count, credit, or think." It carries the challenge to accept God's words as true. We have died to sin, and we are alive to God in Christ Jesus. We must consider that truth as reality and live in it. (PSG, p. 51)

SAY:

Paul used the term "in Christ" eighty-six times in his letters, eleven times in Romans, and twice in chapter 6 (vv. 11,23). To be "in Christ" means to live out a new identity as He lives in us, reshaping our character, priorities, and purpose. We are connected to Christ as the head of His body and to the other members of His body.

ASK:

How does the resurrection of Jesus give you confidence in your daily struggle with sin? (PSG, p. 51)

TRANSITION:

The Christian life is never just about knowing more. It's also about doing. We are His hands and feet in this world.

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

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.

(v. 12) Considering ourselves dead to sin and alive to God doesn't come naturally, but Paul highlighted a second command that makes it possible. The key to this life-and-death scenario is refusing to **let sin reign in your mortal body**. The use of **therefore** provides the connection between the command in verse 11 and this follow-up direction in verse 12.

As Paul did throughout this entire passage, he compared sin to a monarch, ruling over and controlling those who do not believe in God or accept Christ's death as the penalty for their sins. However, the apostle made it clear that individuals can shake off the bondage of this "king" and become loyal to a new leader. They can move from the camp of sin into the camp of God, thanks to Jesus's work on the cross.

This refusal to serve sin is not divorced from God's grace (see v. 14), but it does involve an exercise of the will. Believers have a responsibility to declare war on sin in their lives. To reckon ourselves dead to sin, we actively need to struggle against its temptations and avoid falling into its traps. We reject its dominance in our lives, most typically demonstrated through the sins we commit in our bodies—both internally and externally.

As we stop yielding our bodies to the power of the enemy, our spiritual death to sin should tamp down our yearning to **obey its desires**. Since we cannot eradicate sin completely in this lifetime, *desires* for sin can rise up and tempt us. Sins of the flesh can control resurrected people if they fail to rein in those sins. They will not lose their salvation (a matter of justification), but they can experience the painful and frustrating consequences of unrighteous choices (a matter of sanctification).

(v. 13) Paul kept the discussion about sanctification extremely practical. Christians should not **offer any parts** of their bodies to sin.

This Greek wording operated in two contexts. First, it was the language of sacrifice and worship (Rom. 12:1). We should not offer ourselves as instruments of worship to sinful desires. Second, it included military imagery. This military context encouraged the translations **weapons for unrighteousness** and **weapons for righteousness**. While Christians are still tempted by sinful desires, they should not yield to those temptations in the face of spiritual warfare. If they yield to sin, they become tools used by the enemy in his battle against God. But if they yield to God, they will become His agents of righteousness. The difference is the object of our worship and devotion.

This is not merely a work of human discipline. With the words **as those who are alive from the dead**, Paul reminded believers that the answer to spiritual warfare is becoming the people God made us to be. Forgetting or disregarding that truth leads us to offer ourselves to the wrong god.

(v. 14) Paul concluded his teaching about this command with a promise. He declared that **sin will not rule over** Christians. How could he make such a bold claim? He believed that grace supplied the will and power necessary for believers to obey God rather than the desires of sin. Even though Paul gave a serious command that involved people's will to resist sin's power, he also knew that ultimate victory was available because they were **under grace**, rather than the authority of old rules and regulations.

Under the law, sinners deserve death, but **under grace**, that death penalty has been satisfied in the death of Christ. Even obedience was ultimately a gift of God, but it did not occur without the cooperation of believers who refused to let sin reign in their bodies, choosing instead to serve God by nurturing righteousness in their lives.



	APPLICATION POINT: Believers are to offer themselves to God for the accomplishment of His righteous purposes.
READ:	Invite a volunteer to read Romans 6:12-14 as the group listens for the challenge that comes with being alive in Christ.
EXPLAIN:	Highlight the word <i>therefore</i> and explain how Paul turned his attention to the newfound freedom believers enjoy in Christ.
ASK:	How can a person keep from obeying sin and its desires? How can a person avoid allowing sin to become his or her master? (PSG, p. 53)
REVIEW:	Explain the “ruler” image Paul’s wording conveys in these verses. Highlight the challenge to decide who or what will govern our lives as believers. <i>Paul portrayed sin as a cruel taskmaster. Sin dominates and enslaves those who live under its authority. But everything changes in Christ. The phrase “do not let sin reign” is a command in Greek. Throughout this passage, Paul has referred to sin as a monarch, reigning over those who do not believe. Not letting sin reign over us involves an exercise of the will. It is not completely divorced from grace, though, as Paul says in verse 14. However, as believers, we have a responsibility to declare war on sin in our lives. To consider ourselves dead to sin (v. 11), we actively struggle against its temptations and lure in their own lives. (PSG, p. 52)</i>
SAY:	<i>Romans 6:12 is a command, indicating believers have a choice and a responsibility. We are dead to sin, but we still need to reject sin’s temptations and influence. We need to replace that desire for sin with a passion for obeying God and being used by Him to fulfill His purposes in our lives and in the world.</i>

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Passport

Display a passport. Ask the group to describe the purpose of a passport. Talk about other forms of photo identification we might need in certain situations. (*Examples: driver’s license or badge at work*) Explain that photo identification helps us demonstrate who we are and where we live. Encourage adults to compare that to what Paul wrote about revealing our identity in Christ.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE:

Review these points from Apply the Text on page 54 of the *Personal Study Guide*:

- *Believers need to understand that they live in union with Christ and act accordingly.*
- *Believers are to consider themselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.*
- *Believers are to offer themselves to God for the accomplishment of His righteous purposes.*

DISCUSS:

Lead adults to talk about the imagery of baptism in this session's verses and its significance for believers.

ASK:

How does it symbolize your new life in Christ? How does recalling your baptism encourage you to remain focused on devoting yourselves to God? (PSG, p. 54) If adults have not been baptized, challenge them to take that step of faith.

REFLECT:

Direct adults to read the second set of questions on page 54 of the PSG silently. Suggest they spend time this week talking with God about what His new life should look like in them. Urge them to make changes that He reveals.

PRAY:

Remind adults that salvation comes to us as a free gift from God because of His grace. Call on a volunteer to close in prayer, thanking God for His gift of salvation and asking that each adult will have the strength to abstain from sin and to follow Christ in obedience during the week ahead.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by sending the group a text or an email that encourages them to consider how effective they are at denying sin and offering themselves as instruments of God's righteousness. Remind them that spiritual warfare is a part of the Christian life, but God has given us everything we need to be victorious. Challenge them to reflect on the gift of God's justification with a commitment to sanctification in their lives.

ADULT COMMENTARY



Want to go deeper in your study?
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offers additional information and biblical
insights related to the key passages.
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