



Believers Are Dead to Sin and Alive to God Romans 6

Introduction

From Romans 3:21 through the end of chapter 5, Paul has been writing about justification by faith. He has shown that God is just in justifying those who believe. Justification is a gift of grace and is received through faith in Jesus Christ, our redeemer and reconciler. Consequently, those who are justified by faith have peace with God and stand in His grace.

Now Paul moves from writing about justification to an explanation of sanctification, the process by which God grows believers in grace and makes us holy. In chapters 6 through 8, Paul explains that justification results in living a holy life that is pleasing to God.

In chapter 5, Paul insisted that the sin of Adam brought forth the abounding grace of God (Romans 5:15). In addition, as sin increased by the introduction of the law, grace abounded even more (Romans 5:20). Paul has emphasized that God's grace is free and has nothing to do with meritorious works of men and women. God's grace is freely poured out on sinners! This might lead some to ask, "If God's grace abounds to sinners, why not continue sinning?" Paul's answer stresses that for a believer to continue in sin is a contradiction of who he or she is. All believers are united to Christ. This means that a believer is a new person in Jesus Christ. "In chapter 5, we saw that as human beings we are united to Adam so that his fall became our fall and we were condemned in him. In chapter 6, we see that as believers, justified by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, we are now united to Jesus Christ, so that His death for sin became our death to it and His triumph ours" (Romans, Volume 2, James Montgomery Boice). By the power of God, believers have a new life (Romans 6:4 and 23), a new self (6:6), a new master (6:14 and 16-18), and a new freedom (6:22). Paul will show that the doctrine of justification by faith, based on grace and not works, does not lead to unrestrained sin but to sanctification which is holy living. This is God's purpose for you who believe.

Keep in mind that in this chapter, as in the last, Paul is speaking to believers, those who have been justified by faith in Jesus Christ.

Outline of Romans 6

- I. Believers Have a New Life - Romans 6:1-14
- II. Believers Serve a New Master -
Romans 6:15-23

I. Believers Have a New Life - Romans 6:1-14

In chapter 6, Paul deals with questions which arise from his argument in chapter 5. He anticipates that some might draw the wrong conclusion from what he has just taught and he does not hesitate to confront their objection.

A. Should believers *continue in sin*? - Romans 6:1

Paul has just written that the increase in sin led to the increase of grace (Romans 5:20). If this is the case, why not sin all the more so grace can increase all the more?

B. Believers have *died to sin* - Romans 6:2-3

The answer is a very strong rejection, Certainly not! As a believer you have *died to sin*. How can you continue to live in it any longer? The verb tense of the word *died* is the Greek aorist tense which denotes a single action which has taken place and been completed in the past. A believer is not just dying to sin. A believer is actually dead to sin. Death to sin marks the end of the reign of sin and the beginning of the reign of grace in one's life (Romans 5:21). Believers are dead to the old life of sin and cannot go back to it! Of course, this does not mean you will never again commit a sin, but a believer cannot continue to live a life dominated by sin. "Believers have been united with Christ in His death and resurrection. This has made such a drastic change in our condition that continued sin is not just inappropriate but actually impossible" (New Geneva Study Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers). See 1 John 3:9.

C. Believers have been baptized into Christ's death - Romans 6:3-4

These verses are a restatement of verse 2 with more detail added. Paul uses the illustration of baptism to drive his point home. He is not thinking of the sacrament of baptism but of the spiritual reality which water baptism signifies. In water baptism, immersion signifies death to the old life and the rising up from the water symbolizes entering the new life. This is a picture of what has happened in our union with Christ. This union or identification with Christ is the baptism of which Paul speaks. (Paul uses baptism in the same sense in Galatians 3:27 where he writes, *as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*, and in 1 Corinthians 10:2 where he writes that

the Israelites *all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea*. In each case, identification or union with Christ (or Moses) is the issue. For further insight into this, see Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive and Readable Theology by James Montgomery Boice.)

1. We were buried with Christ - 6:4

Paul further stresses the believer's identification with Christ by saying that we have been *buried with Him*. For believers, the old sinful life and nature are dead and buried. "To go back to sin once you have been joined to Christ is like digging up a dead body" (Romans, Volume 2, James Montgomery Boice).

2. We have new life in Him - 6:4

Death and burial with Christ is not the end. Christ was raised from the dead and we also are raised—to a new life. Having been baptized into Christ (united with Him) through His death, burial, and resurrection, our old life in Adam is over. We have new life in Christ. No longer are our lives merely lives of sin with nothing to look forward to but death. We have new lives of righteousness. (See Romans 5:17.) Therefore, we should walk in newness of life.

3. Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father - 6:4

This is important. The *glory of the Father* refers to the manifest power of God exercised in a glorious way. The power of God which raised Christ from the dead is the same power which works within believers so that we are able to *walk in newness of life* to His glory. (See also Philippians 3:10 and Colossians 2:12-14).

D. Believers have died with Christ and shall also live with Him - Romans 6:5-10

All Christians, having identified with Christ in His death, have died to the old sinful way of life. But death is not all there is to it. In dying, believers have also entered into newness of life because Christ's death was followed by His resurrection (6:5). *For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him* (2 Timothy 2:11).

1. We have been united together...in the likeness of His death...(and) resurrection - 6:5

The word *united* means "grown together." In the Greek it is a term that is descriptive of grafting a branch into a tree. (Christ is the vine and we are the branches in John 15:1-6.) The fact that we *have been united* (perfect tense) means that the union is permanent. There is no undoing it — there is no turning back.

The word *likeness* shows the symbolic nature of our death and resurrection. Christ died a physical death and was resurrected bodily. Our present death and resurrection is not physical, but it is none the less real. Christians live the resurrected life in Christ, the abundant life, now!

2. Our old man was crucified with Him - 6:6-7

Paul begins this statement by saying, *knowing this*, an inference that his original readers already knew this. It is a foundational teaching. We can therefore be sure that it is something important for us to know. Paul says that our old man was crucified with Christ so that *the body of sin* (*sinful self* in the NEB) might be rendered powerless. The *old man* of which Paul speaks is all that we were in Adam (Romans 5:12-19). We were helpless (5:6), ungodly (5:6), sinners (5:6 and 19), enemies (5:10), condemned (5:18), and under judgment (5:18). That life is over for us. Union with Christ is the end of the old way of life. *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me* (Galatians 2:20). Is that the story of your life?

The old man was crucified and rendered powerless so we would *no longer be slaves of sin...for he who has died has been freed from sin*. Prior to our death in Christ we could not resist sin. We served sin and it had control over us just as a master has control over his slaves. But having died with Christ, we are freed from sin. Just as a physically dead person is freed from the dominion of sin, so is a Christian. The word *freed* is literally "acquitted" or "cleared." It carries the idea of justification. Our sin has been imputed to Christ (Romans 5:7-8) and His righteousness has been imputed to us by faith (Romans 3:21-22).

3. If we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him - 6:8-10

This is the third time Paul has said that dying with Christ also means living (Romans 6:4 and 6:5). It is something which Christians need to know and believe. Living with Christ means that we are *alive to God* (Romans 6:11). This life began at the moment we died with Him and it continues now and for all eternity.

a. Death no longer has dominion over Him - 6:9

Christ has been raised from the dead and will never die again. This fact is based on knowledge (note *knowing* at the beginning of verse 9). It is based on what believers know, or at least what we should know. Paul has said that death reigned from Adam to Moses (Romans 5:14).

In other words, death reigned before the law as well as after the law. This shows the power of death. But Christ has defeated death. *I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore* (Revelation 1:18). Death no longer has dominion over Him. Literally, death no longer “lords it over” Him. Death is not lord. Jesus Christ is Lord!

b. *He died to sin once for all...He lives to God* - 6:10

Christ's death was for our sins. But Paul says *He died to sin*. Leon Morris explains, "Dealing with our sins meant coming into this world of sin and then dying the death to put sin away. That death was a death “to sin,” for it meant the end of Christ's being in the realm of sin. It was a death to His whole relationship to sin" (The Epistle to the Romans). His death to sin was *once for all*, proving the excellence of His sacrifice. *Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption* (Hebrews 9:12). And now *He lives to God*. This means that His life belongs to God; He lives forever to glorify God.

E. Believers do not let sin reign - Romans 6:11-14

The first exhortation of this letter comes in Romans 6:11. Paul has been expounding Christian doctrine for nearly six and a half chapters. Now he will finally apply the doctrine, telling us how believers are to live. This shows the importance of doctrine! It should also be a lesson to us that we certainly cannot know how to live the Christian life unless we first know sound doctrine! That is why Bible study is so important.

1. Reckon yourselves dead to sin but *alive to God* - 6:11

Paul has stated that Christ has died to sin *once for all* and now *lives to God* (verse 10). We are to do likewise. We are to consider what Christ has done. It is factual, it is true, and it is real. We know the truth and now we are to act upon it. Christ died and rose again and that has changed our condition. We have died and risen too. We are new people with new lives. In Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10, Paul says you are a *new man*. You are no longer a slave to sin. That doesn't mean you won't ever sin again. What it does mean is that it is no longer in your character to sin. You are dead to sin and alive to God. You stand in His grace (Romans 5:2) to please Him, to serve Him, to glorify Him in your life, and to enjoy Him forever! As James Montgomery Boice puts it, "**A believer has better things to do than keep on sinning**" (Romans, Volume 2).

It is also important that we are alive to God *in Christ Jesus our Lord*, an expression of the depth of our unity with Christ, having died with Him and been raised with Him. Only when we are *in Christ* can we be *alive to God*.

2. *Do not let sin reign in your mortal body* - 6:12

Paul has personified sin as a monarch in Romans 5:21 (*sin reigned*). He does so again in this passage, as he gives another command. Christians have died to sin, and even though sin itself is not dead, sin does not have dominion in your life (Romans 6:14). You are no longer a slave to sin (Romans 6:6). You have been freed from sin (Romans 6:7). Therefore, don't let sin rule. Depose it! *Do not let sin reign in your mortal body*.

3. Do not present yourself to sin but to God - 6:13

Paul has been talking about the *mortal body* and now he talks about its *members*. These include not just physical members such as eyes, tongue, and hands, but also thoughts and desires. Our *members* are any part of our “selves”. We are not to offer any part of ourselves to sin to be used as an instrument to promote unrighteousness. Rather, believers are to *present yourselves to God*. Robert Haldane urges, "Yield yourselves, soul and body" (Exposition of Romans). It should be natural for believers to present ourselves to God because we are alive from the dead. We have died with Christ, we have risen with Him, and now we are *alive to God* (Romans 6:11) to serve Him for the purpose of righteousness.

4. *Sin shall not have dominion over you* - 6:14

This is a promise. Sin cannot rule over you because you are *not under law but under grace*. God's grace sets you free from sin's dominion and is the controlling factor in your life. Believers still struggle with sin because sin is still alive. But, by the power of God through Jesus Christ, we have been set free from sin's power. God's power is greater than the power of sin and we belong to God! Christ *bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness* (1 Peter 2:24).

II. Believers Serve a New Master - Romans 6:15-23

As usual, Paul anticipates the possible objection to his argument and addresses it with a question and an adamant answer. *Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!* (Romans 6:15). Paul continues his answer, picturing his readers as slaves and sin as an evil master.

A. You are slaves of the one you obey - 6:16

Everyone knows that you are the slave of whatever or whomever you obey. If you obey sin, you are a slave to sin (John 8:34), and that leads to death. But if you are a slave to *obedience*, that leads to *righteousness*. The implication is that *obedience* (verse 16) refers to obedience to the gospel of God (as in Romans 1:1) since verse 17 speaks of obedience to the gospel and verse 22 speaks of being free from sin and slaves of God.

B. *Though you were slaves of sin,...you became obedient* (NASB) - 6:17-18

Paul gives thanks to God that the believers in Rome are no longer slaves to sin. Paul says *you obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine to which you were delivered* (6:17). This means they made a heart commitment to the gospel of God, which they had been taught, and now have been delivered (6:17) to a new master. Having been set free from sin, they have become slaves of righteousness.

James Montgomery Boice comments on this passage. "True freedom comes through knowing the gospel and being committed to the Lord Jesus Christ in His service. Can I put this sharply? The only real freedom you are ever going to know, either in this life or in the life to come, is the freedom of serving Jesus Christ. And this means a life of righteousness. Anything else is really slavery, regardless of what the world may promise you through its lies and false teaching" (Romans, Volume 2).

C. You were slaves of lawlessness, now become slaves of righteousness - 6:19

In reference to use of the analogy of slavery to express the doctrine he is teaching, Paul says he is speaking *in human terms*. His original readers understood slavery well; it was a part of the everyday world in which they lived. The picture of slavery was a teaching aid. However, it did not do justice to the doctrine, so Paul is apologetic. "After all, the new life in Christ is not "slavery" as it exists among men; it is the highest and only freedom. But the institution of slavery does service to set forth the totality of our commitment to God in that emancipation from the bondage of sin which union with Christ involves" (The Epistle to the Romans, John Murray).

Paul calls his readers to live holy lives. He says, just as you formerly gave yourself wholeheartedly to sin and consequently sinned more and more, now turn around and change course. Rather than living for *lawlessness*, give yourself wholeheartedly to righteousness so you can live for *holiness*.

D. When your master was sin, your wages were death, but God gives the gift of eternal life - Romans 6:20-23

In these verses, Paul contrasts the results of serving sin and serving God.

1. Slaves to sin are *free in regard to righteousness* - 6:20

Those who are slaves to sin are totally ruled by sin. Righteousness does not exert any authority over them, so they have no compulsion to do what is right.

2. Slaves to sin have no fruit - 6:21

Those who are slaves to sin have no fruit in their lives because the result of sin is shame and death, not fruit.

3. Slaves of God have fruit - 6:22

Happily, Paul's readers in Rome had been *set free from sin* and are now *slaves of God*. Paul writes to them, *you have your fruit*. Every Christian bears fruit. Jesus spoke of bearing fruit, more fruit, and much fruit (John 15:1-5). In his letter to the Colossians, Paul prays that his readers might bear fruit, *that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God* (Colossians 1:10).

a. Fruit leads to holiness (sanctification)- 6:22

The word translated *holiness* or *sanctification* (NASB) "denotes God's work in the believer, His ethical renewal... it indicates a process rather than a state" (Romans, A Shorter Commentary, C.E.B. Cranfield). Therefore, *being fruitful in every good work* (Colossians 1:10) leads to spiritual growth. Our thoughts and actions become more and more conformed to God's good pleasure. As He works in us, His way, the way of holiness, becomes our way of life.

b. The outcome of fruit and holiness is everlasting life - 6:22

A life which is growing spiritually with God is *everlasting life*. It is a life of enjoying God now and forever.

4. Slaves to sin earn a wage - 6:23

Death is the final result of sin. It is what we earn when we sin. We get what we have earned.

5. Slaves of God receive *the gift....eternal life*
- 6:23

Whereas sin pays the wage of death, God gives a free gift—*eternal life*. The only way to receive eternal life is as a gift from God, because the essence of eternal life is knowing God and His Son Jesus Christ (John 17:3). The gift of eternal life is found *in Christ Jesus our Lord*. See also 1 John 5:11. When we obey from the heart the glorious gospel of God, we are baptized into Jesus' death and born to eternal life, a life of knowing Him and abiding in Him.

E. Whose slave are you?

Paul has contrasted two ways of life: the way of sin and the way of righteousness (the way of God). You can be a slave to sin and live a fruitless life of shame which leads to death. Or you can be a slave of God and live a fruitful, holy life which is now and forever with God in Christ. John Calvin comments on these closing verses of Romans 6, "This, unless we are immeasurably stupid, ought to create in our minds a hatred and horror of sin, and a love of and a desire for righteousness" (Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, Romans and Thessalonians). Whose slave are you? Do you choose death or eternal life? *I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life* (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Applications

1. In Romans 6:1, Paul asked *Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?* This question is real, and it confronts those who make excuses to sin. What excuses do you make for your sins?
2. Three times in Romans 6 Paul uses the word *know* (6:3) or *knowing* (6:6 and 6:9). These refer to knowing the doctrines which explain what God has done for you and what has happened in your life as a result of your salvation. It is essential for Christians to have knowledge of these basic doctrines. It is only by knowing what God has done, that we can live holy lives. Will you stop right now and thank God for the Bible and for bringing you to Bible study so you may know what He has done for you and know how to live a life which glorifies Him?
3. Knowing that you have died with Christ and been raised in newness of life, that your old self in Adam has been crucified and that you now live with Christ, have you reckoned yourself dead to sin and alive to God? Have you grasped the incredible truth that you are free from the dominion of sin and free to live for God? Will you step out in obedience to this knowledge? How will this change your life?

QUESTIONS

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

Day One: Read all notes and references.

1. a. Describe what it means to be baptized into Christ.

b. ♥ (Heart Question) What does this mean to you personally?

2. a. What does it mean to be a slave of righteousness?

b. Explain how a person's life changes when he or she is set free from slavery to sin.

Day Two: Read Romans 7:1-6.

3. a. In verse 1, what point does Paul make concerning the law?

b. In your own words, summarize Paul's illustration of this point in verses 2 and 3.

4. a. How does Paul apply this illustration to believers?

b. ? (Thought Question) What does it mean that you *have become dead to the law through the body of Christ*? Try to incorporate into your answer some things you have learned in your study of Romans up to this point.

c. What kind of fruit do we bear once we have become *dead to the law* and joined to Christ? How is this different from the fruit that resulted when we were *in the flesh*?

5. a. Once we have been *delivered from the law* (7:6), what else changes?

b. Use Romans 2:29, 2 Corinthians 3:5-6, and Galatians 2:19-20 to explain what Paul means by *servicing in the newness of the Spirit* (7:6).

Day Three: Read Romans 7:7-13.

6. a. What question is raised as the result of Paul's teaching in verses 1-6?

b. What is the answer?

7. What is the purpose of the law, and what example does Paul use?
8. a. How did sin take advantage of the law (or *commandment*)? Give verse.
- b. How did this change the status of both sin and the commandment?
- c. What effect does Paul say this had on him? Give verses.
9. a. How does Paul describe the *law* and *commandment*?
- b. What does the law show us about sin?

Day Four: Read Romans 7:14-20.

10. a. How does Paul describe himself as being different from the law?
- b. What does Paul mean by saying he is *sold under sin*? See Romans 3:9, 3:23, 7:15, and 7:23 to help with your answer.
- c. What does Paul say his struggle shows him about the law? Give verse.
11. Give two statements which express why Paul does the things he hates. Give verses.
12. a. What is it that Paul wills to do?
- b. What does he not want to do?
- c. What does he end up doing?
13. a. What is Paul's conclusion?
- b. Do you think this is just an excuse? Why or why not?

Day Five: Read Romans 7:21-25.

14. What is the principle or *law* Paul sees in all he has described?
15. a. What *law* does Paul delight in?
- b. What *law* holds him captive and why?

16. a. What is Paul's lament?

b. What is his victory?

17. a. What is the final conclusion?

b. Give an illustration of this from everyday life.

Day Six: Read Romans 7:14-25.

18. What is the struggle Paul has described in this passage?

19. Do you think the person who is struggling here represents a believer or non-believer?
Give some statements, with verses, to support your conclusion.

20. ♥ (Heart Question) Can you relate to the struggle Paul has described? Explain why or why not.