

Freedom
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Romans 6:1-14

Let's begin with a ten-dollar word: *recidivism*. It's the term used when someone who has been released from prison returns to criminal behavior. "According to a U.S. Department of Justice study, nearly half of the prisoners studied returned to prison within five years of their release."ⁱ

We wonder why someone who has been set free would ever do something that might send them right back to prison. Of course, the reasons are complicated, but sometimes people have become so accustomed to their old way of life that learning to live in freedom is a tremendous challenge. The prison door may be open, but they still must learn how to live free.

That brings us to Romans 6 and the fact that we are all born enslaved to our sin nature.

The Point: When we trust Christ as Savior and Lord, He frees us from sin's mastery. To enjoy that freedom, we must let go of who we were before Christ (our old self) and embrace who we are in Christ (newness of life). His Holy Spirit empowers us to do that.

(ESV) 1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? **2** By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

- Paul begins by referring to verse 20 in the previous chapter that said, "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." (Romans 5:20 ESV)
- He anticipates that someone might pervert that to mean, "sin all you want and enjoy even MORE of God's grace." Paul emphatically says, "By no means!"
- Verse two sets up this whole lesson: "How can we who died to sin still live in it?"

3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. **5** For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

- Paul used some key phrases like "baptized into Christ [and] into His death."
- To us, baptism means immersion into water. Here Paul uses baptism to picture our union with Christ. When we trust Christ, we receive new spiritual life—what theologians call REGENERATION.
- Our "old self," enslaved to sin, was "crucified" and "buried" with Christ. This is metaphorical language describing a very REAL spiritual change. Because we are united with Christ, His victory over sin is OUR victory! Verse 4 says we have been raised to walk in "newness of life"—that is the NEW ME!

- Now, Paul explained the FREEDOM “newness of life” brings to each believer.

6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. **8** Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. **9** We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. **10** For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. **11** So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

- When Jesus raised his friend Lazarus from the dead, we read in John 11:44 *“The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”*ⁱⁱ
- Of course, Lazarus was raised to mortal, human life, but his story illustrates what Jesus does for us spiritually: He gives us new life, unbinds us, and sets us free!
- Lazarus didn’t say, *“That’s okay. I kind of liked my old grave clothes and tomb!”*
- Jesus freed Lazarus from death and Lazarus lived like the new man he was.
- John 12:9–11 tells us when they saw what Jesus did for Lazarus, many believed.
- Verse 11: We must consider ourselves “dead to sin and alive to God” in Christ. What does that look like in everyday life as a follower of Christ? Verses 12-13:

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. **13** Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

- Don’t let sin reign --- don’t present your body to sin --- God isn’t demanding the impossible; He’s calling Christ-followers to live as the freed people we actually are in Christ. Our new identity gives us the power to obey His word.
- Verse 13: God gives us a choice about what we do with our bodies. Our sinful nature wants to use them for sin, but that is NOT what the “new me” has been raised to do! Newness of life means offering our bodies to God as instruments of righteousness.
- Later in Romans 12:1, Paul expands on this idea when he urges us to present our bodies as “living sacrifices,” holy and acceptable to God.
- We may think: *“Love that thought Paul, but I know I’ve been saved yet I still commit sins. Was my “new birth” defective?”* Not according to scripture.
- Here are some verses that confirm that Christ-followers still struggle with sin:
 - “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves...” (1 John 1:8)
 - “We all stumble in many ways.” (James 3:2)
 - “The flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit...” (Galatians 5:17)
- This is not about occasional sin, but a pattern of sin. If someone can live comfortably in a settled, unrepentant pattern of sin, without any concern about pleasing God, they have reason to examine whether they’ve truly trusted Christ as Savior and Lord.” (1 John 3:6–10)

- As long as we are mortal human beings, we still have a “sin nature.” But here is the good news from Paul to the Christians in Rome:

14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

- In that one verse, Paul summarizes his point: I still struggle with sin, but as a Christ-follower I am no longer a slave to my sin nature. I like how Eugene Petersen paraphrased it in the Message:

Romans 6:14 (MSG) — 14 Sin can't tell you how to live. After all, you're not living under that old tyranny any longer. You're living in the freedom of God.

- We could spend much more time in Romans six, but our time is limited. This chapter is PACKED with theology and doctrine so at the end of our notes I've provided a chart for further study.

So, what's the Takeaway?

- Sin is no longer my master. Christ has given me the freedom of God's grace. ⁱⁱⁱ
- The best news: God hasn't left us to fight temptation in our own strength. He gave us His Holy Spirit to help us live in the freedom Christ provided.
- To enjoy that freedom, we must let go of who we were before Christ (our old self) and embrace who we are in Christ (newness of life). His Holy Spirit empowers us to do that. That is why other scriptures give us these promises:
 - “Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:16)
 - “God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)
 - “But if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.” (Romans 8:13)
 - “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7)
- Being a follower of Christ doesn't mean we will never be tempted or never stumble. It means we no longer have to surrender to sin as our master.
- Christ sets us free. The Holy Spirit empowers us to live free.
- Christ hasn't set us free to live however we please. He's set us free to live as God intended. This week, when we are tempted to act like slaves to our sinful nature, let's ask the Lord to help us live as people who have been FREED in Christ!

(See below for a Doctrinal Summary of this passage.)

Doctrinal Summary — Romans 6:1–14

Doctrine	What It Means	Scripture
Grace	God's undeserved favor saves us from sin; it is never permission to continue living in sin.	Romans 6:1–2
Union with Christ	Through faith, we are spiritually united with Christ. His death and resurrection have changed our relationship to sin.	Romans 6:3–5
Regeneration (New Birth)	God gives us new spiritual life. We are no longer the people we were before Christ.	Romans 6:4; Titus 3:5
Baptism	Baptism identifies us with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, picturing our new life in Him.	Romans 6:3–4
The Old Self	Our former identity under sin's mastery was crucified with Christ. Sin no longer has rightful dominion over us.	Romans 6:6–7
Sanctification	God progressively transforms how we live as we turn from sin and offer ourselves to Him.	Romans 6:11–13
Freedom from Sin's Dominion	Christians still struggle with sin, but sin is no longer our master.	Romans 6:6, 12–14
Life Under Grace	We live under God's grace rather than under the law as the governing basis of our relationship with Him. Grace establishes a higher motivation than law. The law no longer condemns us or rules over us; Christ is our master, and his death releases us from the law's condemnation. ^{iv} His Spirit enables us to understand the law's value and delight in applying it to our lives.	Romans 6:14
The Holy Spirit	The Spirit empowers us to resist sinful desires and live in the freedom Christ has given us.	Galatians 5:16; Romans 8:13
Resurrection Hope	Our union with Christ assures us that we will share in His resurrection life.	Romans 6:5, 8

Three Stages of Salvation

Doctrine	Freedom From	When
Justification	The penalty of sin	When we trust Christ
Sanctification	The dominion of sin, with ongoing growth in holiness	Throughout our Christian lives
Glorification	The presence of sin	When we are made perfect with Christ

The Big Picture: Justification changes our standing before God. Sanctification changes how we live. Glorification completes what God began.

The Point: Christ has already freed us from sin's mastery. Our responsibility is to embrace our new identity in Christ and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, learn to live free.

ⁱ Durose, Matthew R., and Leonardo Antenangeli. Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 34 States in 2012: A 5-Year Follow-Up Period (2012–2017). Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, July 2021, p. 9, Table 8.

^l ch. 19:40

^m [ch. 20:7]

ⁱⁱ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Jn 11:44). (2025). Crossway Bibles.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ro 6:14). Tyndale House Publishers.

^{iv} Brian H. Edwards, [*Grace: Amazing Grace*](#) (Leominster, UK: Day One Publications, 2003), [81](#).