

ROMANS 6

Intro

All people belong in one of these realms or the other; and they are now in the one or the other because God has viewed them as participating in the founding acts of these realms: the sin of Adam and the “obedience” of Christ (cf. vv. 12, 18–19) While belonging to a new realm, the believer brings with him into it many of the impulses, habits, and tendencies of the old life, a constant threat to putting into actual practice the realities of our new realm status. It is this “eschatological reservation”—the fact that not until the resurrection and transformation of the body will the believer be severed from all contact with the old Adamic dominion—that explains the “indicative/imperative” combinations that are so characteristic of these chapters: “sin will not rule over you”/“do not let sin reign” (6:13–14); “you are not in the flesh”/“do not live according to the flesh” (8:9, 12).

Diatribes

The Greek word *diatribe*, from which derives our “diatribe,” is not a biblical word. But its parent, *diatribō*, occurs eight times in Acts, always with the meaning of “remain” or “spend time” (e.g., Acts 12:19; 14:3, 28). How did we get from “spending time” to “diatribe”? *Diatribō* derives from *dia* (through, by means of, because of, for the sake of) and *tribein* (to rub hard, to make a path). It referred to spending time at something or wearing away at something, and then was applied to spending time at discourse or study. A diatribe, though having a negative connotation today of a bitter denunciation or discourse, was in the Greek world a respectable format for learning: spending considerable time at discourse and dialogue, wearing away a subject until it has been completely examined.

Romans 6:1–14

In [Romans 5](#), Paul provided a great exposition on sin. It began with the inconceivability of someone being willing to die on our behalf ([5:6–8](#)) and went on to explore the origins and consequences of sin and the gift of grace that turned a new page for all of us ([5:12–](#)

1



ROMANS 6

21). After learning all the devastating consequences of sin and the prospects of abounding grace, you'd think people would turn their backs on sin forever. But if we honestly examine why we sin, we realize the origin can be traced at least in part to some sort of desire ([Jas 1:13-14](#)). There is something about sin—something pleasing that draws us. As we'll see later in [Romans 7](#), we still have to contend with the desires of the flesh. Even after we accept God's gift of grace and are reconciled, we must still choose to reject sin and devote ourselves to God.

The power of our sinful nature and the desire that stems from it can lead us to rationalize why continuing in this destructive behavior can accomplish something positive. Paul seeks to head off this kind of argument in this first section of [Romans 6](#). We learned in [5:20](#) that as sin increases, grace abounds all the more—and this leads to an excuse whereby continuing in sin allows the grace of God to multiply. Sound plausible?

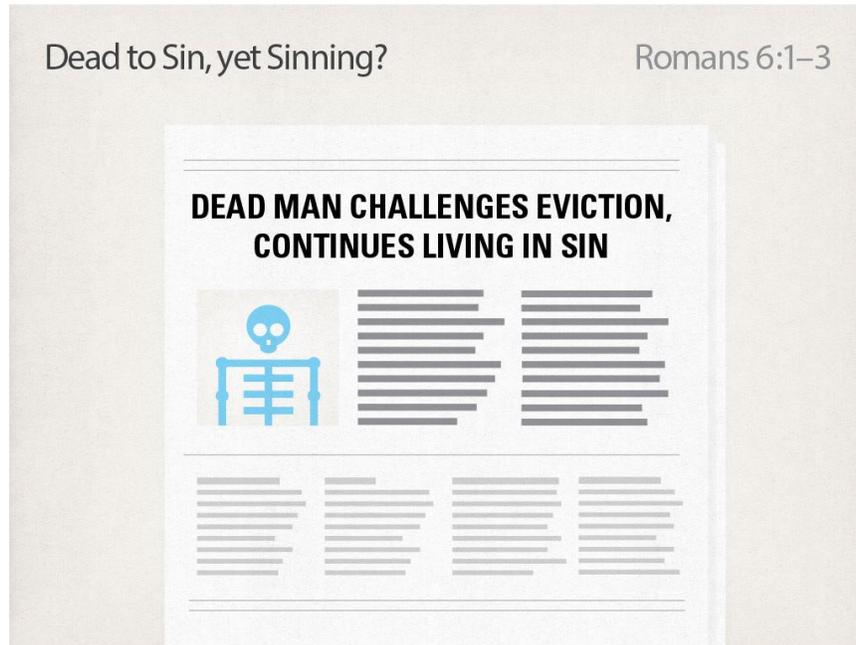
Paul highlights a fundamental difference between life and death here in his discussion of baptism. When something is alive, it has the power and ability to do whatever it was created to do. When something is dead, it loses any power or capability. It is impossible for it to do anything but be dead. Paul uses this principle about death to help us understand the significance of baptism. Baptism is a picture of death—a picture of dying with Christ and being buried, but then rising up into a new life.

Don't miss this important point about the power of sin in a believer's life. By dying with Christ, our body that used to be devoted to sin dies. The significance of being raised with Christ is that we no longer are enslaved to sin. This is Paul's point in verses [1-2](#). If we have died to sin, how can we live in it anymore?

ROMANS 6

Dead to Sin, yet Sinning?

Romans 6:1–3



Dead to Sin, yet Sinning? Paul answers the rhetorical question about continuing to sin by asking an oxymoronic question: How can we who have died to sin go on living in it? If we have indeed died, then there is no option but to move out of the old house of sin we used to live in.

Paul makes the same point in [Galatians 2:19–20](#): "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me, and that *life* I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Figuratively, if we crucify our old self, we vacate the old place in which we used to live—our body devoted to sinning. Instead, we have a new life, which is Christ living in us. So why would we want to go back to a horrible life of guilt, shame, and impending judgment? This is precisely Paul's point here in [Romans 6](#). If we find ourselves tempted to return to old ways—despite knowing the outcome—we need to remember that the old life is dead. And if it is dead, then how can we go back and live in it? Paul reveals the lunacy of this way of thinking.

"Absence makes the heart grow fonder," the saying goes. Unfortunately, looking back on past sins, I know this to be true in my own life. I tend to forget the consequences and remember the appeal. Paul reminds us of the horrific consequences of sin to avert any heart-growing-fonder notions about going back. In [6:4–5](#), he tells us that if we have been

3



P.B.N. MINISTRIES Pastor Maurice Anderson
December 02, 2015

Wednesday,

ROMANS 6

identified with Christ in His death, then we will be identified with Him in life. When we were still His enemies, God went to all this effort to redeem us and to give us hope; we would be crazy to devote any thought to going back. Death is forever, with no option for return, and this is precisely how Paul wants us to view our old, sinful life. We are redeemed believers in Christ, and we need to leave sin behind and quash any fond feelings from reemerging.

It can be difficult to wrap our minds around identification with Christ. Although God's gift of redemption frees us to serve Him, we still face the problem of our mortal bodies' inclination toward sin. When Jesus died and was raised from the dead, death no longer had power over Him. Baptism is to have the same effect on us by identifying us with Christ in life. Baptism is a picture of our identity with Christ. Just as He died, so we die with Him—buried, as it were, in the water. And just as He was raised, so we are raised from the water to a new life in Him. The only hope we have of living in freedom from sin is to die to it. Since we aren't going to physically die (at least not yet), identifying ourselves with Jesus' death and resurrection is the key to overcoming the power of sin in our present, fallen state.

Extra I

V S : 3 - 4 : Baptism does not appear to be an optional event in the Christian experience as it is for many modern believers.

This is almost unheard of in contemporary Christendom. Often weeks, months, even years will pass between the time a person becomes a believer in Christ and his or her baptism. In modern Christianity, the primary emphasis is placed upon the intellectual event of "believing," which is completely consistent with the post-**Enlightenment environment of rational intellectualism.** However, in the New Testament, equal emphasis appears to be placed on the physical—repenting and being baptized (Acts 2:38), accompanied by exhortations, warnings, and teachings that baptism without faith is a dead work; that

ROMANS 6

baptism must be, as the Anglican catechism says, “an outward visible sign of an inward spiritual grace.”

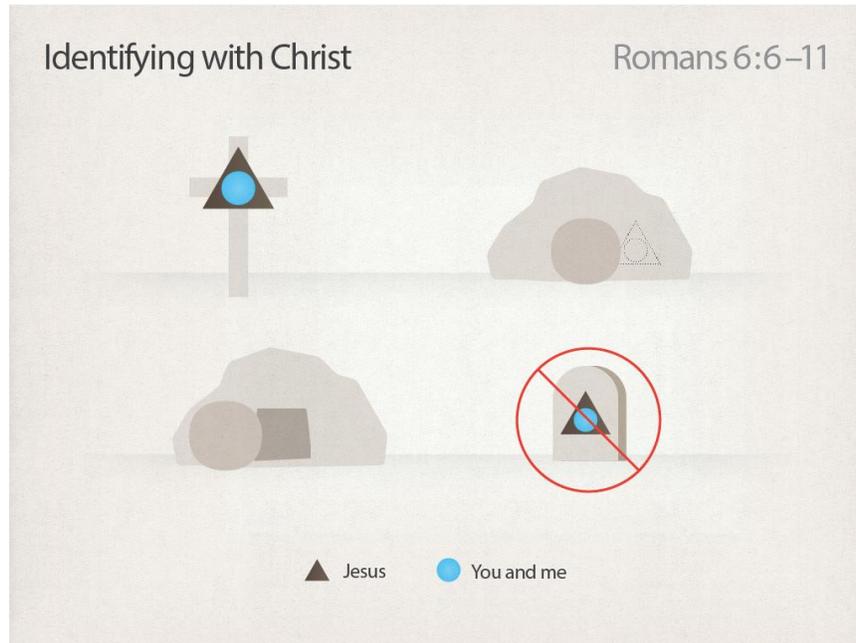
The Enlightenment

In the generations following Calvin, the role of tradition in biblical interpretation was increasingly limited by a growing emphasis on the individual interpreter, a trend seen in the rise of the Enlightenment. (The Renaissance led to two great movements: the Protestant Reformation, which emancipated the Bible from ecclesiastical imprisonment, and the Enlightenment, which carried forward the attack on authority structures to ridicule the authority of the Bible, birthing the Modern era.) The essence of the Enlightenment was a rejection of the biblical doctrine of the utter brokenness of humanity and a belief that the human mind was capable of arriving at truth when unhindered by external authorities such as the church, tradition, or the Bible.

To many Enlightenment thinkers, the Bible became an untrustworthy book created by churchmen to keep minds captive under the threat of punishment. Thus, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, university scholarship embraced the intellectual and philosophical assumptions of the Enlightenment, turning its full force against the veracity of the Scriptures. The Bible became viewed as a parched landscape with an occasional oasis. At best, it merely contained truth; it was not itself truth. The lasting effects of this approach have contributed to the dissolution of the Christian worldview, at least in Western industrialized nations.



ROMANS 6



Identifying with Christ: Jesus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection accomplished much more than forgiveness for those who believe. As we identify ourselves with Jesus, we figuratively go through the same process. Our old sinful self has been crucified and buried with Jesus, raised again to newness of life. The end goal of this identification is to consider ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God (Rom 6:11).

Identifying ourselves with Christ trumps the "What Would Jesus Do" question. It prompts us to ask "What *did* Jesus do?" He allowed His physical body to die on the cross even though He owed no penalty for sin. He paid our penalty instead. To truly conquer sin and the death sentence it requires, Jesus had to conquer death as well. His physical resurrection in a new body meant He would not die again. Period. Remember, **death is a consequence of sin,** not just of having a body. If the body is without sin (like Adam and Eve were before the fall), then there is nothing to fear about death. Since all have sinned, the point is that after we have physically died to sin and received a new body like Christ's, we have no reason to fear death as a consequence of sin.

In verse [12](#), Paul provides a summary conclusion for the chapter thus far. Read very closely here. Paul's command is to not let sin reign in your mortal bodies. Two key words are underlined. Paul does not declare that sin will no longer reign in our mortal bodies; sin

ROMANS 6

does reign in our mortal bodies, without any hope for change apart from Christ. Even as redeemed believers in Jesus, we must still contend with the ongoing presence of sin in our bodies. Paul refers to our mortal bodies because he anticipates a day when we will receive new, immortal bodies, like Jesus did. Only then will sin truly be dead. Until that day, the power of sin is still present in our flesh. The only question is how we respond to it: whether we give it power it no longer has, or whether we allow Christ to live in us and put to death the deeds of the flesh.

As we await these immortal bodies, God's indwelling Spirit not only redeems us, but also empowers us to live free from the bondage of sin. Sin may still dwell in our bodies, but we have a choice as to whom we will serve.

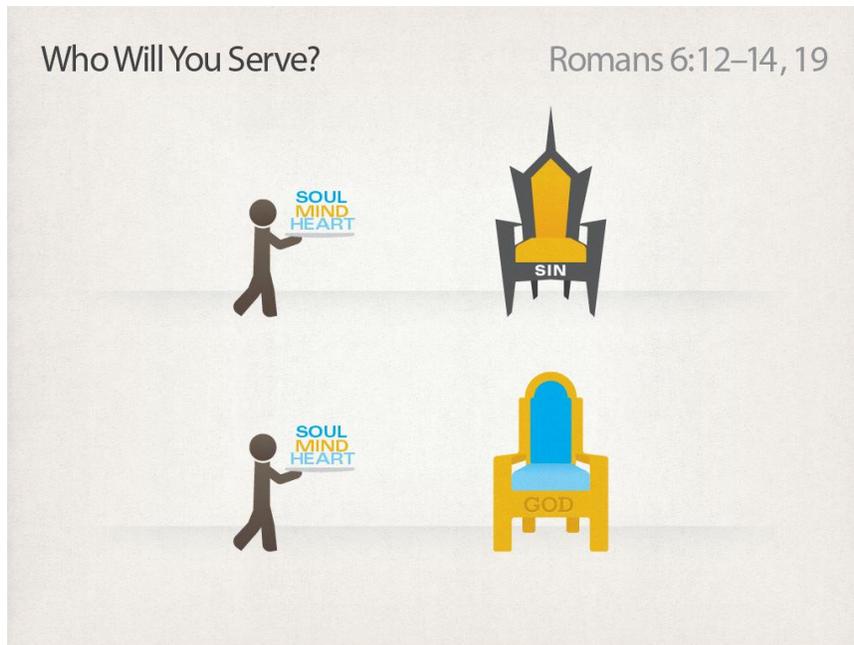
Extra II

The dead have been **freed from sin**. They are free from the temptation of it. They are freed from the committing of it. They are freed from the guilt of it. And they are freed from punishment for it. They are **freed from sin**. That is easy to understand for the dead, but Paul is talking about the living.

Verse 6: Believers have been **crucified with him** (Christ) so that we might enjoy, while living, the same benefit that the dead enjoy—freedom from sin. Only one thing can free a person from the temptation, commission, guilt, and punishment of sin—death!

- *The capacity to sin still lives, but our old life does not. The life of “transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air,” by which we gratified “the cravings of our sinful nature” and followed “its desires and thoughts”—that life died with Christ (Eph. 2:1–3).*
- *The life we lived as “sexually immoral ... idolaters ... adulterers ... male prostitutes ... homosexual offenders ... thieves ... greedy ... drunkards ... slanderers ... swindlers”—that life died with Christ (1 Cor. 6:9–10).*
- *“That is what some of you were,” Paul says. “But you were washed ... sanctified ... justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 6:11; see also Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9)*

ROMANS 6



Who Will You Serve? Even though believers have been set free from slavery to sin, we must still contend with our mortal body's inclination toward sin until Jesus returns to complete the redemption of creation ([Rom 8:23-24](#)). Thus we have a choice to make about whom we will serve. Will we allow sin to reign in our mortal bodies, and thus serve sin, or will we present ourselves to God as instruments of righteousness. Who are you going to serve?

You see, if we go back to obeying sin's desires, it means we allow it to reign in our bodies. The old desires will still be present, but we are no longer enslaved to them. The exhortations in [6:13](#) outline three steps we must take, actions we must do or refuse to do. **First**, when sin calls to us, we must stop reporting for duty! We died to sin, so let's not go back. Instead—**Second**—we are to offer ourselves to God as those who are alive and free from sin. **Third**, we are no longer to offer our body parts in service of sin, but to use them as instruments of righteousness.

Think about the last news story you heard about a person narrowly escaping death. Remember how thankful they were, how that experience changed their lives and priorities? **A new life provides an opportunity for a fresh start. Paul explains how this is possible in [6:14](#).** When we lived under the law, the law magnified the problem of sin. But

ROMANS 6

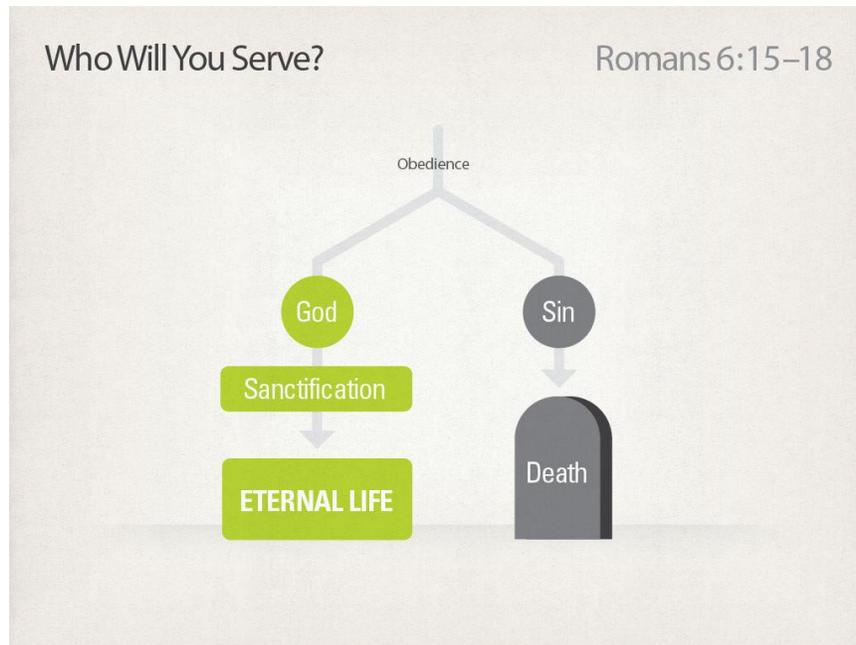
now we live under grace, and that grace abounds to address our ongoing struggle with sin. Paul is not saying this gives us a green light to go off and multiply sin so that grace will multiply too (remember [6:1](#)?). **Grace makes this new life possible—as long as we choose to offer ourselves completely in service to God rather than to sin.**

Romans 6:15–23

Paul concludes the first half of this chapter with exhortations to refuse to allow sin to reign in us, and to offer ourselves to God instead, as instruments of His righteousness. Paul now continues by offering a rationale for following these commands. In [6:15](#) he asks a rhetorical question that forms the basis for the argument that follows in this section. Should we continue in sin because there is no longer any condemnation awaiting us? If the penalty of sin is removed, why not just go ahead and sin? Paul answers by addressing the issue in terms of slavery.

He frames verse [16](#) as if the answer is obvious. When we choose to sin, our action has greater ramifications than we might realize. We are choosing to offer ourselves to sin instead of to God ([6:12–13](#)). **In doing so, we choose whom we will obey—to whom we will enslave ourselves.** Before Christ entered our lives, we had no choice—we were slaves to sin ([17a](#)), and that enslavement leads to death.

ROMANS 6



Who Will You Serve? Our choice about who we serve has significant ramifications. If we serve sin, the only outcome we can anticipate is death. Contrast this with serving God, a choice that leads to sanctification and eternal life. By presenting it this way, Paul makes the decision simple; we just need to focus on the long-range consequences of our decisions.

But now, we have a choice about what or whom we serve. Responding in faith to Christ enables us to serve God, which leads to sanctification and ultimately to eternal life. Although we were once slaves to sin, Paul states that obeying the teaching God has entrusted to us will change our outlook (6:17). We are able to enslave, or devote, ourselves to righteousness and service to God. In 6:19, Paul lets us know that this analogy breaks down at some point—that he is relying on familiar concepts to communicate most effectively with his audience. Even so, at the end of the verse, Paul challenges us to devote ourselves just as fully to pursuing righteousness as we used to devote ourselves to sin and lawlessness.

ROMANS 6



Slavery and Freedom: We used to present ourselves as slaves to sin. But having been set free from sin, we now have the opportunity to present ourselves as slaves to righteousness, leading to sanctification.

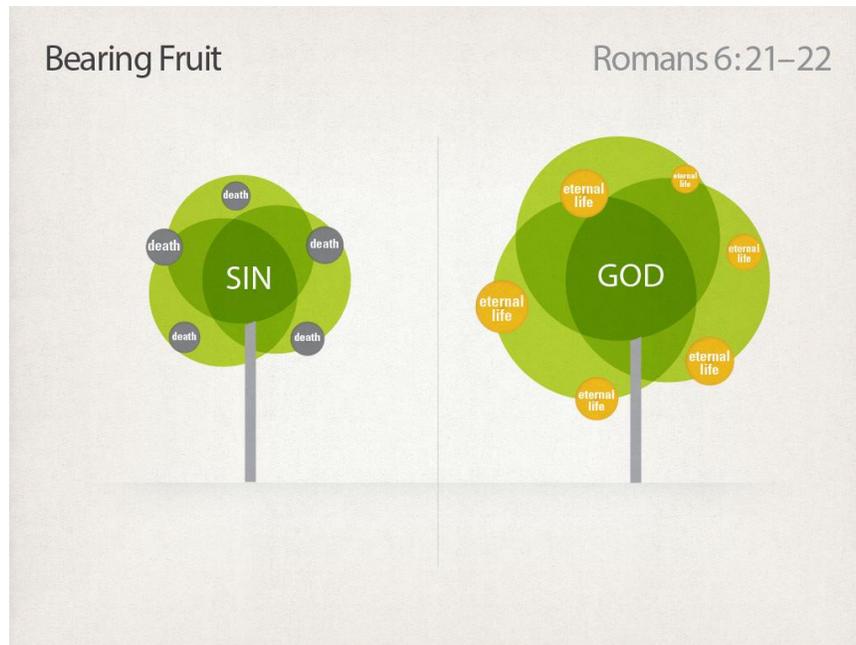
Verse [20](#) sounds odd, but it's an important idea. The freedom from righteousness we enjoyed as slaves to sin wasn't really freedom since we had no other choice.

For many years I misunderstood this idea, so let's look at this verse more closely. I acted as though once I became a Christian, sin would die, and I'd just serve God. Sure, there was a struggle, but it wasn't a big deal. But by reading Romans more closely, I realized that Paul never says sin is dead. Instead, he tells us to consider ourselves dead to sin (6:11). That's a huge difference. God does not promise that sin will never reign in me; He exhorts me not to allow it to happen (6:12). This brings us back to the issue of choice.

Now that we have a choice about whom we serve, we need to make that choice consciously. Our natural inclination is to fall back on our old patterns and re-enslave ourselves to sin. Paul challenges us in verse [21](#) to **pause and think back to our old**

life, the one we are to consider dead. Actions that brought us remorse or shame—do we really miss them? **Do we want to go back to that way of life?**

ROMANS 6



Bearing Fruit: Paul uses the analogy of bearing fruit to create another contrast between serving sin and serving God. Either way, we will bear fruit—but what kind of fruit do we want to bear?

What kind of fruit do you want to produce with your life—fruit that leads to death or fruit that leads to eternal life?

In [6:23](#) Paul concludes the chapter with what has become a famous memory verse—but one I doubt is properly understood in its broader context. Paul appeals to believers not to return to their old lives, and he offers this statement as motivation to fight the urge to re-enslave ourselves to sin. In his parting shot, Paul forces us to consider what “wages” we will receive for our devotion. A life devoted to serving God leads to eternal life. This life won't be easy, but we have the promise that being indentured to God will sanctify us and make us more like Him. The alternative is death—death is the “reward” for a life of sin. As believers, even though we have accepted God's gift of righteousness by faith and we are delivered from the penalty of sin ([6:1](#), [15](#)), we still must choose where we will devote our lives. Paul challenges us to invest in a life that will pay the dividends that God intended.

ROMANS 6

13



Pastor Maurice Anderson
December 02, 2015

Wednesday,