

A Study in the Book of Romans

13

Romans 6:1-14

Key Verse

“ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. ”

Having just made the statement at the close of **chapter 5** that “where sin increased, grace increased all the more,” and that through Christ grace is now reigning, Paul immediately answers the objection he knows will rise in the minds of some, that he is advocating sin in order to bring glory to God (**6:1**). A significant number of his readers, coming from a background of legalism under the Law of Moses, would be concerned that Paul’s teaching would result in a lax attitude toward sin. You will remember that back in **3:8**, Paul had already sought to answer the accusation that he taught “let us do evil so that good may result.”

To refute this, Paul expands on what he has been saying in the last ten verses of **chapter 5**. He now details how Christ’s work on the Cross is actually made real in experience.

Chapter 5 deals with *what* Christ did. As our representative before God, he put to death the old creation and brought to life a new race of people. **Chapter 6** deals with:

- How God did it (**verses 3-7**)
- How it becomes experience in my life (**verses 8-12**)
- How victory over sin can be practically mine each day (**verses 15-23**)

Introduction

The Gospel’s Three Revelations

The Gospel’s Three Answers

The Gospel’s Answer to Israel

The Gospel in Action

Conclusion

How God Did It

As we have seen, our *acts of sin* were dealt with by Christ's identification with us – as my substitute dying in my place. Now Paul is showing how our *sin nature* is dealt with – not just the individual sins that I commit, but the inner factory that keeps churning out sin. Once again the Gospel's answer is identification, but instead of just Christ identifying *with me* (dying as my substitute before God), I identify *with him!* Not only did Christ die for me on the Cross, I also died in him!

When the Father looked down upon the Cross at his Son, he saw *me* being put to death in Christ. I was the one hanging upon the Cross, receiving full judgment as a sinner before God. I was the one taken down off the Cross and buried in the tomb. I was the one who went into the depths of hell and suffered the agony of total separation from God. I was the one who then rose triumphantly over all the powers of darkness and sin (**Colossians 2:12-15**). I was the one who ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father (**Ephesians 2:6**). All because I was *in Christ!*

This is the power of identification. And this all-embracing identification – the fact that I was in Christ in his death, burial, resurrection and ascension – lies at the core of the Gospel message (read **Galatians 2:20**).

Let's take a look in closer detail at how Paul spells out each of these stages of identification in **Romans 6:2-7**:

Dead

Read Romans 6:2-3,6-7

On the Cross, I experienced death. All that I was in Adam – all the traits I inherited as a member of his race – died in Christ. If a member of a natural family dies, it means he no longer has any contact or association with that family. The decisions and influence of the family no longer have any effect upon him. He has passed right out of the scene. In the same way, we have died in relation to Adam.

Take a closer look at the way Paul phrases this truth. In **6:2**, he exclaims:

“...*We died to sin*; how can we live in it any longer?”

As we saw in **Module 102**, the tense that Paul uses is very important. He is not saying we *need* to die to sin. He is not encouraging us to *try* to die to sin. He is stating an accomplished fact – we have *already* died to sin! 2000 years ago, on the Cross of Calvary, I died to sin – done, completed, *finito*, once and for all time. Now Paul says, because we have *already* died to sin, how can we continue to live in sin any longer?

This remarkable statement by Paul changes forever the way we view our lives as Christians. As the *NIV Bible Commentary* explains:

“Death to sin is not something hoped for by the believer; it is something that has already taken place. It is a simple fact basic to the living of the Christian life.”¹

Paul leaves no room for doubt regarding the power of the Cross in the Christian life. He explains quite simply, “We died to sin.”

Following on from our previous analogy, suppose the member of the family who had died had been an alcoholic. All his life, liquor had been a terrible problem to him, and his family had encouraged his drinking by continually placing the temptation before him. But now he is dead. The family visits the grave. Maybe one of the brothers has brought a bottle of alcohol with him. “Come on, Jack,” he says, holding the bottle out over the grave. “Have a drink for old time’s sake.” But there is no response from Jack. He is dead to alcohol.

This is the nature of the victory won for us on the Cross! In Christ we died as a member of Adam’s race, and in that death the power sin had over us was broken.

Buried

Read Romans 6:4

A burial service is conducted only for someone who has already died. When we go down into the waters of baptism we are enacting the fact that we were in Christ when he was buried in the tomb.

Raised

Read Romans 6:4-5

“Death” is the only way to separate us from the Adamic problem. “Resurrection” is the only way into God’s new creation with its abundant supply of grace. But “resurrection” is not the reforming of the old life – that is left behind in the grave. It is a new life altogether. We are raised “a new man” to “live a new life.”

In **Romans 6:2-7**, Paul describes these three elements of our identification with Christ upon the Cross. But in **Ephesians 2:6**, Paul takes it one stage further.

Seated

Read Ephesians 2:6

Not only were we raised together with Christ, we were also in him when he ascended into heaven. This is the completeness of our identification with Christ in his death and resurrection. Our position now before God is seated next to him at his right hand in Christ! Paul’s prayer in **Ephesians 1:18-2:6** is still the desire of the Holy Spirit for believers today:

“I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know...his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come...And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus...”

No words can fully describe the magnitude of what God accomplished in the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Christ. In fact, we will be discovering the full impact of the Gospel victory for the rest of our lives!

The Victory Won

Read Colossians 2:11-15

In this passage, Paul graphically describes the victory of the Cross, amplifying what he has taught in **Romans 6:2-7**. Let's step through this passage phrase by phrase. At the Cross...

- ☞ **He cut off the sinful nature** – As Jesus hung upon the Cross, bearing the sin of each one of us, he was representing our “flesh” – our sinful nature (see **Romans 8:3-4**). By his death, we were spiritually “circumcised.” Our sinful nature was cut off.
- ☞ **He cancelled the written code** – According to the custom of Bible days, when a person's debt was publicly declared as having been cancelled, the legal contract that had bound that person was folded and a nail hammered through it into the trunk of a tree. This is what Paul is alluding to here. When Jesus was nailed to the Cross, the “written code” with all the regulations that were against us was canceled!
- ☞ **He disarmed powers and authorities** – All the authority that Satan had wielded against us were stripped from him. He no longer has any grounds of authority over us, because the person he once “owned” is now dead and the new one belongs to God.
- ☞ **He made a public spectacle of them** – In Paul's day, if any army was victorious over an enemy, the conquering general would lead his victorious host in a triumphant march through their home-city. He would parade the defeated foe behind them as a spectacle before all the people, so that they could rejoice in the victory they had won over their enemy. This is the picture Paul is using here. Jesus rose victoriously from the dead, defeating Satan and all the powers of darkness, “parading” them so that we might rejoice over the victory with him (see **Ephesians 4:7**).
- ☞ **He triumphed over them** – Christ's death and resurrection was a total triumph over the enemy (note **Ephesians 1:19-21**; **Philippians 2:9-11**). But the incredible declaration of the Gospel is that we were *in him* in that death-and-resurrection victory! It is our victory too!

The Pivot Point of Romans

Read Romans 6:6-7

In **6:6**, Paul makes the most dynamic statement in his letter – a pivot-point against which Paul will leverage his entire message to the Romans. He sums up the entire message of the Cross with these words: “...our old self was crucified with him...”

In this handful of words, Paul reveals the completeness of God's work of salvation for us. We have already seen that when Jesus died on the Cross, he was not only dying as your substitute, taking the judgment you deserved for your sins instead of you. He was also dying as your representative – *as you!* Now, in this short statement, Paul opens us what that actually means.

Our Old Self

In Greek, the original language in which Paul was writing, the word translated “self” in the *New International Version* is the word *anthropos*, which means literally “a man, a person, a human being.”

Simply put, your “old man” or “old self” is everything you were as part of Adam's fallen race. To fully appreciate what Paul is saying, let's return to some ground we covered in **Module 102** and review the events that occurred in the Garden of Eden – for it is the fall of man, as recorded in **Genesis 3**, that shaped the “old man” that God had to deal with so decisively on the Cross.

Read Genesis 2:8-9,15-17

Read Genesis 3:1-13

The temptation was far more than just wanting to taste a delicious piece of fruit they had been told not to eat. The temptation that Satan presented was very clear – in tasting of this fruit, a specific result would happen. It was Adam and Eve's desire for this end-result that lay at the core of the original temptation.

What was this end-result that enticed our first parents? It was, as **Genesis 3:5** relates it, that “*you will be like God*, knowing good and evil.” **Genesis 3:6** then goes on to say that Eve ate because she “saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also *desirable for gaining wisdom*.”

Genesis 3:5-6 thus identifies the two key components of the temptation – what it was that caused Adam and Eve to take that fateful step in disobedience against God's command:

- **Self-Deification** – They desired to “be like God.” In other words, they wanted to be gods in their own right, on an equal footing with God himself. In defying God's command, they effectively deified themselves. Self became god in their lives.
- **Independent Wisdom** – They desired to know “good and evil” (gain wisdom) independent of God's guidance. You will notice that it was not just the knowledge of *evil* that they gained, but the knowledge of good *and* evil. In other words, by disobeying God and eating the fruit, they were choosing to gain an ability to judge between what is right and wrong – but outside the parameters of relationship with God. In desiring a wisdom of their own, they rejected the wisdom of God for their lives.

Everything that we previously read in **Romans 1:18-32** is the result of that one fateful act. At that one moment in time, Paul says, “sin entered the world”

([Romans 5:12](#)) and corrupted human nature. This is when the “old self” came into being – a nature of self-deification and independent wisdom – that God chose to end decisively on the Cross.

What Makes Up the Sin Nature?

It is important for us to see what makes up the sin nature – also known as “the Adamic nature” and “the old man” – for it is this sin nature that God put to death on the Cross in Christ. This sin nature involves three principal things:

The Lost Image of God

The Bible is clear that God created man in his own image and likeness ([Genesis 1:26-27](#)). And [Genesis 2:7](#) records that when God created man, he did something special – something not recorded in his creation of any other creature. God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.” God imparted his own Spirit to man.

When Adam sinned, the “breath of life” (the Spirit of God) that had been breathed into him at the time of his creation ([Genesis 2:7](#)) left. To be sure, Adam was still alive physically, but God’s very breath – his own life – was no longer the governing force in Adam’s existence. Through his disobedience, Adam died spiritually and the image of God, imprinted upon his nature, became marred and corrupted.

Of particular interest is one seemingly insignificant event that took place after the Resurrection. In [John 20:22](#), the Lord Jesus appeared to his disciples and did exactly what God had done to Adam at the time of his creation: “...he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.””

This receiving of the Holy Spirit is also described in the Bible as the “new birth” experience ([John 3:3-7](#); [1 Peter 1:3,23](#)). When we are “born again” of the Spirit of God, the image of God is again restored to us.

Read Ephesians 4:24

Read Colossians 3:10

The Reign of Self

As we have seen, the very core of Adam and Eve’s yielding to the temptation of the serpent was the desire to deify themselves and to “be like God.” This is the very essence of the fallen human nature – the Adamic old self. Self is the center of everything. Self – who *I* am, what *I* want, what *I* need, what’s good for *me* – reigns. And because self reigns, sin reigns.

The Knowledge of Good and Evil

When Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that act of eating pictured for them a spiritual reality. Just as the natural fruit that they ate was digested and became a part of them physically, so by disobeying God, the spiritual reality embodied in the natural tree – the knowledge of good and evil – was imparted to them and became imprinted upon their nature.

The Bible says that at the moment of their eating “their eyes were opened” and they could now distinguish between “good and evil.” They received the ability to judge between what is right and wrong. The Bible indicates that if they had’ve chosen instead to eat of the tree of life, they would have received the knowledge of good and evil (wisdom to distinguish between right and wrong), as part of a larger package deal. For that capability would have then been accompanied by the other aspects of God’s nature – his love, righteousness, wisdom and grace.

It is in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life that we see the essential contrast between the old self and the new self:

- **Old Self** – Independent wisdom, distinguishing between what is right and wrong, but with self as the focus, devoid of God’s other essential characteristics – love, righteousness, wisdom and grace.
- **New Self** – God-dependent wisdom, distinguishing between what is right and wrong, but with God as the focus, energized by God’s other essential characteristics – love, righteousness, wisdom and grace.

It was this old self – corrupted and self-focused – that the Father put to death in Christ. This is what Jesus bore on the Cross! This “body of sin” was “destroyed” (KJV) and “rendered powerless” (NIV) – literally “rendered inoperative, made inactive”! We died to sin!

How It Becomes Experience

Our identification with Christ is a historical and legal fact before God. It is a complete and finished work, accomplished by Christ on the Cross. But how does it become ours in experience? Is it just “theory,” or can the truth of **Romans 6:6-7** be applied practically to daily life?

The first thing that we must emphasize is that the ability to sin is still a reality for the Christian. In fact, John speaks strongly on this point. In **1 John 1:8,10**, he writes:

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us ...If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”

Does this mean that what Jesus did on the Cross for us doesn’t work out in reality? Does this mean that **Romans 6:6-7** (“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – because anyone who has died has been freed from sin”) is just mere words on a page, with no impact upon the real world of daily life? Is it just a “legal” work accomplished for us before God, but without “experiential” outworking? Does our faith in Christ simply set us on the right path, but we will not see it fully expressed in us until we get to heaven?

Paul’s purpose in **Romans 6** is not only to show what Christ did for us before God – our legal standing – but also how it works in reality in our lives today!

Three Steps to Experiencing the Gospel

The key, as always with the Gospel, lies in our response in faith to what is a historical and legal fact before God. Christ's work is the *foundation* of our faith, and in the first 14 verses of **Romans 6**, Paul gives three keys to make this truth *reality* in our daily experience. These three keys are true faith in operation.

Let's take a look now at the three key steps to appropriating the truth of the Gospel in our personal experience.

Knowing

Read Romans 6:1-10

Three times in this passage, Paul uses the word "know":

- **6:3** – "Or don't you *know* that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?"
- **6:6** – "For we *know* that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin."
- **6:8** – "For we *know* that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him."

There are two types of "knowing." We must first hear and understand the facts. How can we believe if we don't know about it?

Read Romans 10:14-15

The truth of this passage is a principle that not only applies to hearing the message of forgiveness of sins for the first time (the first Gospel message we respond to), but also to every truth of the Gospel, including **Romans 6:6-7**.

Suppose a man is in terrible debt and has no way of paying his bills. But then an event takes place that potentially changes his life forever. His uncle dies, leaving a sizeable fortune to him as his sole heir. Legally, the man is now rich. And even if the man never knows what has been left to him, that inheritance still belongs to him – but it will do him no good, because he doesn't *know* about it.

Many Christians are like that. They believe in the fact that Jesus died for them, but they have never fully realized all that was accomplished for them on the Cross. They have an inheritance – it belongs to them and potentially can change their lives forever – but they have never appropriated that inheritance because they don't *know* about it.

But the knowing that Paul is speaking of in **Romans 6:1-10** is actually far deeper than just being informed of the facts.

Read Ephesians 1:17-19

The knowledge that Paul is speaking of can come only from the Spirit of God (see **1 Corinthians 2:11-14**). This revelation knowledge penetrates not just our mind

but our *heart* – our innermost being. It is a knowledge that sets us free!

Read John 8:32

Counting

Read Romans 6:11

Once we know what Christ has achieved for us on the Cross, the next step is to count it as a fact for ourselves – personally. The word translated “count” (NIV) or “reckon” (KJV) is the same word we use when we calculate mathematical figures. If I want to work out the cost of the groceries I have purchased, I list down the facts and figures and count them up to get the result. This is what Paul is saying in **6:11**! Our death, burial and resurrection in Christ is not a myth; it is a *fact*! Now, says Paul, reckon up the *facts* and count them as true for you!

Let’s follow through with our illustration of the man whose uncle left him a fortune. Suppose the uncle’s solicitor calls the man into his office to inform him of his inheritance. The man now *knows* exactly how much has been left to him and goes home excited about the knowledge. But it still won’t do him any good until the cash is actually in his hands. Only when he has put it on the table in front of him and carefully counted it will he sit back satisfied, because now it is his possession.

Offering

Read Romans 8:12-14

Before we came to Christ, we did not have to force ourselves to sin. We sinned because it came naturally to us. We had a “bias” for sin within. That bias is broken at the Cross. The moment we know it and count it to be true for ourselves, it becomes a reality in our experience. But now we are called to walk in that reality.

Let’s consider the man with the inheritance again. He has come to the place where he both *knows* about his inheritance and has *counted* it as his own. He feels as though a great burden has lifted from him because now he knows he can pay all his debts. He has more than sufficient right there in his hands. Yet still he must do one more thing for that to become a reality. He must put what he has into operation. He must go out and actually pay his bills! Before he had no choice – he had nothing to meet his debts. Now all he needs is in his hands, but he must act on it.

So Paul brings us to the third and final key for seeing Christ’s work become a daily reality in our own lives. By a conscious act of our will we are to offer, or yield, ourselves to God. In fact, Paul gives four specific commands **6:12-13** – commands that now, because of Christ, we are able to obey!

- “...do not *let* sin reign...” (**6:12**)
- “...but rather *offer* yourselves to God...” (**6:13**)
- “*Do not offer* the parts of your body to sin...” (**6:13**)
- “...*offer* the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness” (**6:13**)

Herein lies the simple secret to the Christian life. When we are self-focused (the principal attribute of the old self), we are biased toward sin. But when we realign

our heart and lifestyle toward God, by actively offering our lives to him, we experience the power of the Cross working in our lives. The Cross does not make it *impossible* for a Christian to sin. It make it *possible* for him *not* to!

In the Same Way

Paul tells us that, in the light of the truth of **Romans 6:6-7**, we should now “count [ourselves] dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” But the first four words of **6:11** provide a critical clue to exactly *how* we should count ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. Paul starts **6:11** with the words: “In the same way...”

In what way are we to count ourselves dead to sin and alive to God? To find out, we must look at the context of **6:11**.

Read Romans 6:9-10

In these two verses, Paul makes a number of statements that are preparing us for what he is about to declare in **6:11**. These statements are:

- **6:9** – “**For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again...**” – The Cross was a no-repeat performance. Christ died once and only once, never to die again.
- **6:9** – “**...death no longer has mastery over him**” – Death no longer has any claim against the Lord Jesus. There are no outstanding bills, no loose ends left untied.
- **6:10** – “**The death he died, he died to sin once for all...**” – The key phrase in this verse is “once for all.” This means that Christ’s death on the Cross was a one-time, never-to-be-repeated, effective-for-all-time event.
- **6:10** – “**...but the life he lives, he lives to God**” – Now, on the other side of the Resurrection, the whole orientation of Christ’s life is toward his Father.

Now we begin to see the significance of Paul’s wording in **6:11**. “In the same way,” he says, “count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” In what way? In the same way that Jesus is now dead to sin and alive to God! It is a one-time, never-to-be-repeated, effective-for-all-time fact in your life. You are not trying to die out to sin. No! You are to count yourself dead to sin and alive to God in the same way that Jesus is dead to sin and alive to God:

Once for all!

¹ *NIV Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994).

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