

“WE TOO MIGHT WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE”
(Dead to Sin, Alive to God Part 1)

Romans 6:1–7

Key Verse: 6:4

“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.”

“Who do you think you are?” Those words can sound confrontational. But in Christian life, this is where our battle starts—in how we think about ourselves. In Romans 6 Apostle Paul addresses this as it relates to our sanctification. To put it bluntly, if we *think* we are slaves to sin, then we *will* be. Paul knows every human being needs to be reconciled to God by the death of his Son (5:10). At the same time, he challenges us, quite often, to overcome the reign of sin in our lives.¹ But if we don’t think it’s possible, why even try? Romans 5:17 tells us that in Christ, we are promised to “reign in life.” It’s because of the free gift of abounding grace in Jesus. But many think they’ll have a victorious life only in heaven, after being doomed to live defeated by sin in this life.

So, who are we in Christ? We know that, after we believe in him, our sins aren’t instantly annihilated; they still wage war against our soul (1 Pet. 2:11). We may feel as if we’re in a constantly losing battle. Where’s the “reign,” the victory? It starts with learning to think based on faith. Soon Paul tells us, “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (6:11). This word—“consider”—is the first imperative verb in Romans. “Imperative” means you *have* to do it, you *have* to *think differently* about yourself. How? As **dead to sin** and **alive to God** in Christ Jesus.

Over the next two weeks we’ll take a deep dive into this new way of thinking. In Part 1 we will focus on “Dead to Sin”; next week, in Part 2 we will focus on “Alive to God.” Today, verses 1–7 are all about persuading us to think of ourselves as “dead to sin.” Why? Paul says it’s so that “we too might walk in newness of life.” Beautiful words...but what do they mean? How do we truly live this way? May God speak to us through his word.

I. Dead to Sin (1–3)

Paul begins, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means!” (1–2a) Paul often uses this question and answer

¹ 6:12–13,19; 8:12–13; 12:1–2,21; 13:12–13

method to shock us to think rightly. We might think of sin and grace in a way that allows us to continue as we are. But as we experience newness of life in Christ, we think of sin and grace differently. We treasure the grace of Jesus so highly, as our most precious gift, never to be abused. And we see our sin for what it is: a destructive disease that first gets into our minds, to be conformed to the world (12:2) and set on the flesh (8:5–6), then can control our bodies, spiraling into impurity and more and more lawlessness (6:19).

In just this one chapter, the word “sin” is repeated 16 times. Notice it’s not in the plural form “sins,” but the singular, “sin.” In chapters 1–3 Paul listed many kinds of sins. But in chapter 6 he describes sin as an entity. What is “sin”? It’s a state of being separated from God. We all inherited sin from Adam in our nature; we also learn to sin; and, we choose to sin. But all sin begins with wanting to be autonomous from God. As Paul wrote earlier, sin starts when we don’t want to honor God as God or give thanks to him. We don’t want to humbly depend on God and give him the credit.

This separation from God is basically a godless way of thinking. If we think of sin only as bad behavior we have to overcome, we’re missing its cause. Sin means leaving God out of our thought world. It’s a secular way of thinking that saturates our worldview and thought processes. It’s what all our bad behavior stems from. God gave us our intelligence and abilities to use well. But they won’t work well apart from him. Apart from God our thinking becomes futile (1:21b). And this godless way of thinking seems impossible to eradicate. We may want to continue in sin in the name of grace, thinking only of bodily sins as guilty pleasures. But to continue in sin also means not to have to struggle too much against our godless thought world.

The grace of Jesus is abounding to forgive all our sin. But it’s never meant to condone it. So what do we do? Look at verse 2b. Paul asks, “How can we who died to sin still live in it?” He begins by telling us that we are those “who died to sin.” He puts this in the *past* tense. It’s something that’s *already happened*. What’s he talking about? How can this be true, when to us, our sin may seem very much alive right now? Let’s read verse 3. Paul is saying that when we were baptized at the beginning of our Christian life, we were baptized into the death of Jesus. Later he writes, “For the death he died he died to sin, once for all...” (6:10). Being baptized into Christ means being baptized into his death to sin. This is a matter of our faith. Christ was sinless. And when he died on the cross, he put to death our sin. Paul tells us in Colossians 3:3: “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” In baptism Paul is describing this living, mystical union with Christ. It’s not for the super-spiritual; it’s a reality for every Christian. The ritual of water baptism is not the point; union with Christ in his death is.

Though our inner experience and bad habits may be telling us otherwise, our new reality is that we have died to sin, because we are in Christ by faith. Realizing this is having our way of thinking gospelized. Because by faith in Christ we died to sin, we don't think we have to still live in it. Paul writes elsewhere: "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age..." (Titus 2:11–12). The grace of God is not for us to abuse; it's given to train us to renounce our ungodliness and worldly passions. In our prayers each day, let's ask God that his grace would train us.

II. "We Too Might Walk in Newness of Life" (4–5)

Still, as we see our inner life and how we live, we may wonder how this reign, this power of sin, can actually be broken in us. Paul goes on. Let's read verse 4. Here, "buried with him" is another way of saying that we're really, truly dead to sin. When a person is buried, it means their death is final; their life on this earth is over. In the same way, when we are buried with Christ, our life of sin on this earth is over. It's over! We need to learn to think of ourselves like this.

But the power of verse 4 is in the second half of it: "...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." It's not us; it's the resurrection power of Jesus at work within us that enables us to walk in this "newness of life." And it's not a static thing. Paul writes elsewhere: "...always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor 4:10–11). It's a new life of dying with and living with Jesus every day.

Let's pay attention to this word "newness." In Greek, it means not a new moment in time, but rather, a totally different kind. A new kind of life. "Brand new" is a fitting expression here. Like a brand new car, instead of a used car that looks pretty but that's full of problems inside. It means living as a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). It's not a life that only looks good but is perpetually enslaved, dark, defeated, and engrossed in self. It's a brand new kind of life. It's not just lots of new kinds of activities, but a new quality of life. It's a life that's really alive, a life actually in love with God. Paul began to describe it at the beginning of chapter 5. It's a life of peace with God, a life of standing in his grace, not in myself, a life of hope in the glory of God, not in this world, a life deeply confident of God's love, a life of obedience to God like our Lord Jesus had, a life that brings good influence into the world instead of bad. It's not a lofty concept; it's a life we can actually "walk in," meaning we can go around living it, each and every day.

To really live it, we need to start thinking, “That’s *my* walk!” “Newness of life in Christ!” The devil, the accuser, doesn’t get to define who we are; our past doesn’t get to define us, either; our Lord Jesus, who died for us and rose again, defines who we are and how we walk.

He also defines our future. Let’s read verse 5. What a glorious promise this is! Spend a moment to take it in. And there’s another key word here. It’s the word “united.” In English it’s powerful. But in Greek, this word literally means to be ingrafted and grown together. The newness of life is not a life where we call on Jesus in emergencies only; it’s a life intertwined and deeply dependent on him, a life where we admit we can’t do anything without him, a life that draws on his grace and his power every day, a life that takes us where we couldn’t go on our own, a life where Jesus actually shines through us for others to see.

III. Set Free from the Old Self (6–7)

To help us be sure that this really is our new life, Paul goes on. Let’s read verses 6–7. Here Paul famously mentions “our old self.” It’s who we were before we accepted Jesus. It’s our ugly old sinful nature. It’s our arrogant, selfish, enslaved self, the one who was inciting God’s wrath and anger and was a bad influence in the world. Paul doesn’t say it “has to be” crucified; he says it “was crucified with him.” He goes on: “in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing.” It’s a figure of speech that can mean “unplugged and rendered powerless.” In Christ, that’s what our body of sin is.

And there’s one more key expression here. Paul says “set free.” Actually, in Greek it’s exactly the same word as “justified.” This is where justification and sanctification connect. It’s the justification from our old self that sets us free to live out our new, sanctified life. Apostle Paul experienced this personally. He used to be a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. He was self-righteous and conceited. But when the mercy and grace of our Lord Jesus overflowed for him, he had a brand new life, a life of truly glorifying God, building up his church, and surrendering in full submission to him (1 Tim. 1:13–17).

Before his conversion, St. Augustine spent years entangled in false religion, skepticism, and worldly philosophy. He was driven by an insatiable appetite for human praise and consumed by intellectual pride, trusting in his own brilliant mind rather than God. But when he encountered Christ, his entire worldview transformed; he had to count that proud, self-centered intellect as dead to sin so that he could rely wholly on divine grace. Then he wrote what is considered his greatest theological treatise, “On The Trinity,” which greatly contributed to our understanding of God and a godly way of thinking.

Centuries later, C.S. Lewis, a professor of literature at Oxford, sat entrenched in academic snobbery, viewing believers with condescending disdain. Yet when God broke through his intellectual defenses, Lewis surrendered his rebellious self, allowing his academic ego to be crucified with Christ so that his gifts could be used for the gospel. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis noted that we must let our independent self die so Christ can live in us. Both men demonstrate that walking in newness of life begins when we deliberately consider our old, proud selves dead to sin.

Conclusion & Community

Our old ways of thinking about ourselves are a real problem. But this is not about psyching ourselves to think, “I’m a winner, not a loser!” It’s about realizing who we’ve become in Christ. Baptized into Christ, we are a new creation, each and every true believer. Sanctification starts with believing this spiritual reality. We need to believe it, and we need to be around others who believe it. How can we encourage one another? Kind words are a good start. Acts of loving service are another. And private prayer for each person is irreplaceable. But sizing one another up and inwardly dismissing each other is fake, toxic, and poisons all we do. On the other hand, lovingly reminding each other of who we are in Christ creates a community in which we can really grow. Don’t you want this newness of life? Don’t you want to be a part of building this kind of community?

So, let’s review this new way of thinking we have in Jesus. We see sin and grace with new eyes (1–2). We have a new foundation: baptism with Christ in his death and resurrection (3–4). We have a new inner life, a new walk, and a new future (4–5). We grow deeper with Christ in his death and resurrection (5). Our old self was crucified with Christ (6). We see ourselves in Christ, not as slaves of sin, but as those justified, set free (7). Let’s read verse 4 again. May God help us believe and think based on this newness of life we already have in Jesus.