

The Book of Romans, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 7: Dead to Sin, Alive in Christ: Baptism and Newness of Life

Romans 6:1-23

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Romans 6 is the central baptism passage in the New Testament, and it is overflowingly positive in tone, so the teacher should keep this lesson both doctrinally clear and genuinely joyful. The chapter answers a challenge: if grace abounds where sin abounds, should we keep sinning? Paul's resounding no is grounded in baptism. In baptism we were united with Christ in His death, buried with Him, and raised to walk in newness of life. From there Paul teaches the crucifixion of the old self, our genuine freedom from slavery to sin, the call to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God, and the two slaveries that end in death or in eternal life. The teacher should be ready to show clearly that baptism is not a mere symbol added on after a person is already saved, nor an optional ritual, but the God-appointed moment in which a believing, repentant person is united with the saving death and resurrection of Christ. At the same time, baptism is in no way a meritorious work by which we earn salvation; it is the act of an obedient faith, the moment grace is received, all of it the gift of God.

The teacher should hold two things together with care. First, baptism genuinely saves and unites us with Christ; Paul could not be plainer, and so could Peter (Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21). We should never reduce it to an outward sign of a salvation already complete. Second, baptism is not a work of human merit that puts God in our debt; it is faith reaching out to receive what God freely gives, the same obedient faith that believes, repents, and confesses Christ. The whole of Romans has been arguing that salvation is by grace through faith, and baptism is not an exception to that; it is faith in action, the place where the empty hand of faith lays hold of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Keep the tone glad: this is not mainly a chapter to argue over but a chapter to marvel at, the wonder of being joined to Christ.

This chapter is also profoundly formative, which is exactly how Paul uses it. He does not teach baptism in the abstract; he reaches back to it to fuel holy living. Because you died with Christ, you are dead to sin; because you were raised with Him, you can walk in newness of life. Many believers carry their baptism as a fading memory and fight sin in their own strength, forgetting the resurrection power they have been joined to. Others are weighed down by an old identity, still defining themselves by their past. The truth that we have died, been buried, and been raised with Christ speaks to both. The disciple being formed here is one who remembers daily that the old self was left in the water and that the life they now live, they live as a person joined to the risen Christ, free from sin's dominion and alive to God.

Question 1

Student Question:

Paul asks, Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead, we too might walk in newness of life (vv. 3–4). What does Paul teach here about what baptism means and accomplishes, how is baptism the moment our faith is united with the death and resurrection of Christ rather than a mere symbol added on after we are already saved, and how is this God's gracious gift received through faith rather than a meritorious work we perform to earn salvation?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest and most important doctrinal question of the lesson, and the teacher should give it room, while keeping the tone joyful rather than combative. Begin with Paul's tone of mild surprise: Do you not know? (v. 3). Paul assumes that every Christian he writes to already understands the meaning of their own baptism. In the New Testament, baptism is not a mystery for the advanced; it is the common starting point every believer shares, taught from the beginning.

Focus on the little phrases that carry the weight: baptized into Christ Jesus and baptized into His death (v. 3). Baptism is the moment a believer is joined to Christ. Paul says elsewhere that as many as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Galatians 3:27); here he says we were baptized into His death. The saving benefits of the cross, forgiveness, cleansing, union with the Savior, are not received at a distance or merely by thinking about them. In baptism, the believing penitent is brought into contact with the death of Jesus, where those benefits are found.

Draw out the rich picture of verse 4. We were buried with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised, we too might walk in newness of life. The going down into the water is a burial; the coming up is a resurrection. This is why immersion so fits the meaning Paul describes. Baptism dramatizes and accomplishes a real union: we die with Christ, are buried with Him, and rise with Him to a new life. The teacher should help students see that something genuinely happens here; it is the appointed moment of transition from the old life to the new.

Now address the common error gently and clearly. Many today are taught that baptism is only an outward symbol of a salvation already received, a public testimony added on after the fact. Paul does not speak that way, and neither does the rest of the New Testament. Peter said, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38), and later, Baptism now saves you (1 Peter 3:21). Paul ties baptism directly to union with Christ's death and resurrection. So we should not demote baptism to a mere symbol; it is the God-appointed moment in which faith lays hold of the saving death of Christ.

But guard the other side just as carefully, for this is where the balance of the whole letter matters. Baptism is not a meritorious work by which we earn or achieve salvation. It does not put God in our debt. It is the act of an obedient faith, the empty hand reaching out to receive what God freely gives in Christ. Romans has argued from the start that salvation is by grace

through faith, and baptism is not an exception to that truth; it is that very faith in action, the moment grace is received. Colossians 2:12 makes this explicit: we were buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through faith in the powerful working of God. So the teacher should help students hold both truths joyfully: baptism truly unites us with the saving Christ, and it does so as the gift of God received by faith, never as a wage we earn. Keep the wonder central. To be baptized into Christ is to be joined to the Savior, clothed with Him, raised with Him. That is not a hoop we jump through; it is the day we were united to the risen Lord.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Baptism as union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (6:3–4)
- Baptism as the God-appointed moment faith contacts the saving death of Christ, not a mere symbol added after salvation
- Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and as that which saves (Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21)
- Baptism received through faith and by the working of God, never a meritorious work that earns salvation (Colossians 2:12)
- Immersion as fitting the burial-and-resurrection picture Paul describes
- Baptism as the act of an obedient faith, the empty hand receiving God's free gift

Discussion Prompts

- What does Paul say actually happens in baptism?
- How would you answer someone who says baptism is only an outward symbol of a salvation already received?
- How do we hold together that baptism truly saves and yet is not a work that earns salvation?

Question 2

Student Question:

Paul says we were raised with Christ to walk in newness of life (v. 4). A new kind of life began at your baptism. Are you walking in that newness, or living as though nothing fundamental changed? Name one specific area where the old way of living still has the upper hand, and what walking in newness of life would look like there.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question takes the newness of life Paul describes (v. 4) and asks whether students are actually living in it. The teacher should help the class move from the doctrine of new life to the daily experience of it.

Name the gap. Many believers were genuinely raised to new life in their baptism but live as though little changed, slipping back into old patterns of thought, speech, and habit. Paul says a new kind of life began; the question is whether we are walking in it.

Help students locate the specific area. Rather than a vague sense of falling short, invite each person to name one concrete area where the old way still has the upper hand: a recurring sin, a destructive pattern, an attitude carried over from before Christ. Naming it specifically is the first step to change.

Point to the resource. Walking in newness of life is not white-knuckle effort; it flows from the resurrection power we were joined to in baptism. The old self was left in the water; the life we now live, we live as people united to the risen Christ. Encourage one concrete step toward living, in that one area, like the new person they already are.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Newness of life as the intended daily experience of the baptized (6:4)
- The gap between positional new life and practical old patterns
- Change flowing from resurrection power, not mere willpower
- Specific, concrete repentance rather than vague aspiration

Discussion Prompts

- Are you walking in newness of life, or living as though little changed?
- What is one area where the old way of living still has the upper hand?
- What would walking in newness of life look like in that specific area?

Question 3

Student Question:

Paul says our old self was crucified with Christ so that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, and that one who has died has been set free from sin (vv. 5–7). What does it mean that our old self was crucified with Christ, and how does this passage teach that the believer has genuinely been set free from slavery to sin?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul says our old self was crucified with Christ, so that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, and that one who has died has been set free from sin (vv. 6–7). The teacher should help students grasp the decisive break with sin that occurred in their union with Christ.

Explain the old self. The old self is who we were under the dominion of sin, the person we were before Christ. Paul says that self was crucified with Christ. This is not merely an improvement of the old life but its execution. In union with Christ's death, the old enslaved self came to its end.

Stress the freedom Paul declares. One who has died has been set free from sin (v. 7). The chains of sin's slavery have been broken. This is crucial: the believer is no longer a helpless captive of sin but a freed person. The teacher should let students feel the hope in this. We do not fight sin hoping someday to be free; we fight from a freedom already won.

Apply it carefully against fatalism. Some Christians believe deep down that they are simply doomed to keep losing to a particular sin. Paul confronts that despair. Freedom from sin's dominion is a real accomplishment of the cross applied to us. We may still struggle, but we struggle as free people, not as slaves, and that changes the entire posture of the fight. (This sets up the right reading of the struggle in chapter 7.)

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The old self crucified with Christ, the decisive break with sin (6:6)
- Genuine freedom from slavery to sin (6:7)
- Fighting sin from freedom already won, not toward a freedom hoped for
- Hope against fatalism, the believer is not doomed to lose to sin

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that our old self was crucified with Christ?
- How does this passage teach that the believer is genuinely set free from sin?
- How does fighting sin as a free person differ from fighting as a helpless slave?

Question 4

Student Question:

Paul speaks of the old self being crucified so we would no longer be enslaved to sin (v. 6). What old patterns, attitudes, or habits, things that belonged to the person you were before Christ, are you still allowing to live in you? What would it look like to count those things crucified rather than negotiating with them?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question presses the crucifixion of the old self (v. 6) into honest self-examination. The teacher should help students identify the specific holdovers from their pre-Christ life that they are still permitting.

Name the carryovers. Conversion does not instantly erase every old pattern. Many believers tolerate attitudes, habits, and reactions that clearly belong to the old self: a temper, a grudge, a lust, a dishonesty, a pride, a way of speaking. We often negotiate with these rather than counting them dead.

Expose the negotiation. The tempting middle path is to manage a sin rather than put it to death, to keep it on a leash, indulge it occasionally, excuse it as just how I am. Paul's language of crucifixion leaves no room for that. The old self is not to be managed but executed.

Apply with hope. To count those things crucified is to refuse them the authority they once had, to stop identifying with them, and to bring them under the lordship of Christ. This is done not by

gritting our teeth but by reckoning ourselves dead to them (the next verse) and walking in the Spirit. Invite students to name one old-self pattern and to stop negotiating with it this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Old-self patterns that persist after conversion
- The difference between managing a sin and putting it to death
- Counting sin crucified, refusing it its old authority
- Mortification by reckoning and the Spirit, not mere gritted effort

Discussion Prompts

- What old patterns from your pre-Christ life are you still allowing to live?
- Where are you managing a sin rather than counting it crucified?
- What would it look like to stop negotiating with that sin this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

Paul instructs us to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (v. 11). What does it mean to consider or reckon ourselves dead to sin, and why does Paul ground our daily fight against sin in this settled fact about who we already are in Christ rather than in mere willpower?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul gives the first command of the chapter: consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (v. 11). The word consider (also reckon or count) is an accounting term. The teacher should help students see that Paul grounds the daily fight against sin in a settled fact, not in mere effort.

Explain reckoning. To reckon ourselves dead to sin is not to pretend or to work up a feeling; it is to count as true what God has declared true. Because we died with Christ and were raised with Him, we really are dead to sin's dominion and alive to God. Reckoning is acting on that reality, taking it as the basis for how we live.

Show why the order matters. Paul does not say, try hard to die to sin so that it might become true. He says, you have died to sin; now consider it so. The indicative (what is true of us in Christ) comes before the imperative (how we must live). We do not fight in order to become free; we live out of a freedom already given. This protects us from both despair and self-reliance.

Apply it to the moment of temptation. When sin calls, the believer can answer from settled fact: I am dead to that, and alive to God; that master has no rightful claim on me. This is not denial of the struggle but a reframing of it. Our willpower is weak; the fact of our union with Christ is

strong. The teacher can help students learn to preach this fact to themselves in the moment of temptation.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Reckoning, counting as true what God has declared true (6:11)
- The indicative before the imperative, identity grounding behavior
- Fighting sin from a settled fact rather than mere willpower
- Preaching our union with Christ to ourselves in temptation

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean to consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God?
- Why does Paul ground the fight against sin in fact rather than willpower?
- How could you preach this fact to yourself the next time you are tempted?

Question 6

Student Question:

Paul urges us to present ourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and our members to God as instruments for righteousness (vv. 12–13). We are constantly offering our bodies, our time, our attention, and our energy to something. Honestly, to what are you most often presenting yourself, and what would it look like to deliberately offer those same things to God this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question takes Paul's call to presentation (vv. 12–13) and makes it concrete. We are always presenting ourselves, our bodies, time, attention, and energy, to something. The teacher should help students notice where these are actually going.

Make the offering visible. Paul speaks of presenting our members as instruments, either for sin or for righteousness. Our eyes, hands, tongues, and minds are tools that serve a master. An honest look at how we spend our hours, what we look at, what we say, where our energy goes, reveals to whom we are presenting ourselves.

Invite honest inventory. Ask students to consider, without shame but with honesty, where most of their attention and energy actually flows: to entertainment, to work, to worry, to a particular appetite, to self-promotion. The point is not guilt but awareness; we cannot redirect what we have not noticed.

Turn toward deliberate presentation. Paul calls us to present ourselves to God as those brought from death to life (v. 13). This is an active, deliberate offering of the same eyes, hands, time, and energy to God's purposes. Encourage one specific act of presentation this week: an hour, a habit, a faculty deliberately offered to God as an instrument for righteousness.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Presenting our members as instruments for sin or for righteousness (6:13)
- The body, time, and attention as offerings to a master
- Honest inventory of where our energy actually flows
- Deliberate, active presentation of ourselves to God

Discussion Prompts

- To what are you most often presenting your body, time, and attention?
- What honest inventory reveals about the master you are actually serving?
- What is one specific thing you could deliberately offer to God this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Paul says sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace (vv. 12–14). How does being under grace rather than under law actually empower holiness rather than encourage sin, and why does Paul insist that grace, far from giving us license to sin, breaks sin's dominion over us?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul makes a striking promise and gives a surprising reason: sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace (v. 14). The teacher should help students see how grace, far from licensing sin, is precisely what breaks its power.

Address the surprise. We might expect Paul to say sin will not rule you because you are under strict law. Instead he says it is because you are under grace. How can grace, not law, be the power that breaks sin? This is the heart of the question.

Explain why law cannot break sin's dominion. Law can tell us what is right and condemn us when we fail, but it gives no power to obey, and it often even provokes the very rebellion it forbids (as chapter 7 will show). Law leaves us still in slavery, now with a clearer knowledge of our chains. It defines sin but cannot dethrone it.

Explain how grace breaks sin's dominion. Grace does what law cannot. It joins us to Christ in His death and resurrection, gives us a new identity and the Spirit, removes the condemnation that drove us, and motivates us by gratitude and love rather than fear. The person who knows they are freely and securely loved is freed to obey from the heart. Grace is not permission to sin; it is the power that dethrones sin. The teacher should make clear that this is the opposite of the license Paul rejected at the start of the chapter: grace does not loosen our pursuit of holiness but fuels it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Grace, not law, as the power that breaks sin's dominion (6:14)
- The inability of law to give power to obey
- Grace working through union with Christ, the Spirit, and grateful love
- Grace as the enemy of sin's reign, not a license for it

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Paul say grace, not law, breaks the dominion of sin?
- What can law do, and what can it never do, about our sin?
- How does being secure in grace actually free us to obey from the heart?

Question 8

Student Question:

Paul says we must not let sin reign in our mortal bodies to make us obey its passions (v. 12). Where is sin still trying to set up its throne and reign in some corner of your life? What is one practical step you can take this week to dethrone it and refuse to obey its passions, in the strength Christ supplies?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question takes Paul's warning, do not let sin reign in your mortal body (v. 12), and asks students where sin is still trying to rule. The image of sin as a would-be king seeking a throne is vivid and useful.

Help students locate sin's throne. Sin always seeks dominion, a corner of life where it gives the orders and we obey its passions. Often there is one area, an appetite, a relationship, a reaction, a private habit, where sin still reigns more than we would like to admit. Invite honest naming.

Clarify the believer's authority. Because of what Christ has done, sin no longer has the right to reign; it can only usurp. We are commanded not to let it reign, which means the choice is genuinely ours, in Christ's strength. We are not helpless subjects of sin but freed people called to refuse its rule.

Move to a practical step. Dethroning sin in a specific area may mean removing an occasion for it, confessing it to a trusted brother or sister, replacing it with a holy habit, or simply, in the moment, refusing to obey its passions because we belong to another King. Encourage one concrete step this week, taken in the strength Christ supplies rather than alone.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Sin as a would-be king seeking to reign in the believer (6:12)
- The believer's God-given authority to refuse sin's reign
- Refusing to obey sin's passions as a real and present choice
- Practical means of dethroning sin in Christ's strength

Discussion Prompts

- Where is sin still trying to set up its throne in your life?
- What practical step could dethrone it this week?
- How does knowing you belong to another King change the way you face that temptation?

Question 9

Student Question:

Paul says we are slaves of the one we obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness; that having been set free from sin we have become slaves of righteousness leading to sanctification; and that the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (vv. 15–23). What does this passage teach about the impossibility of neutrality (that everyone serves one master or the other), about the radically different outcomes of these two slaveries, and about the contrast between what sin pays as wages and what God gives as a free gift?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul develops the image of two slaveries: we are slaves of the one we obey, either of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness (vv. 15–16). Having been set free from sin, we became slaves of righteousness, and the fruit is sanctification (vv. 17–19). The teacher should draw out three truths from this passage.

First, the impossibility of neutrality. Paul allows no third option. Every person serves a master, either sin or righteousness, either self or God. The modern dream of total autonomy, belonging to no one and answering to nothing, is an illusion. We will be slaves of something; the only question is which master. This confronts the common notion that freedom means having no master at all.

Second, the radically different outcomes. The two slaveries do not lead to similar places. Slavery to sin leads to ever-deeper bondage and ends in death; slavery to righteousness leads to sanctification, a life increasingly set apart and made holy, and ends in eternal life. The trajectories diverge completely. Paul wants students to weigh where each road actually goes, not just how it feels at the start.

Third, the contrast between wages and gift in the famous final verse: the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (v. 23). The teacher should highlight the deliberate contrast. Sin pays wages, what we have earned and deserve, and the payment is death. God does not pay wages; He gives a gift, undeserved and free, and the gift is eternal life. We earn death; we are given life. This single verse holds the whole gospel: the justice that sin deserves and the grace that God offers.

Close by uniting the chapter's two concerns. The freedom Christ won for us (the first half of the chapter) leads naturally into glad slavery to righteousness (the second half). To be free from sin is not to be masterless but to belong, joyfully, to God. The teacher can help students see that this slavery to righteousness is the truest freedom, and that its end is the free gift of eternal life.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The impossibility of neutrality, everyone serves a master, sin or righteousness (6:16)
- The diverging outcomes, sin leading to death, obedience leading to sanctification and life
- Sanctification as the fruit of slavery to righteousness (6:19, 22)
- Wages versus gift, the wages of sin is death, the free gift of God is eternal life (6:23)
- Freedom from sin as glad belonging to God, the truest freedom

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Paul say there is no neutral option, no being your own master?
- How do the two slaveries lead to completely different destinations?
- What is the difference between wages and a gift in verse 23, and why does it matter?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across this pivotal chapter. Paul has shown you baptism into Christ's death and resurrection, the crucifixion of the old self, freedom from sin's slavery, the call to present yourself to God, and the free gift of eternal life. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth from Romans 6:1–23 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone question asks students to look back across the chapter and name how Jesus is forming them through it. The teacher should gather the threads and keep the tone joyful.

Recall the journey: baptism into Christ's death and resurrection, the crucifixion of the old self, real freedom from sin's slavery, the call to reckon and to present ourselves to God, grace breaking sin's dominion, and the free gift of eternal life.

Encourage a single takeaway. For one it may be a renewed wonder at their baptism; for another, the hope that they are genuinely free and not doomed to lose to a particular sin; for another, learning to reckon themselves dead to sin in the moment of temptation; for another, deliberately presenting some part of life to God.

Close in gratitude and resolve. The disciple being formed here is a person who remembers daily that the old self was left in the water, who lives as one joined to the risen Christ, free from sin's

dominion and alive to God, and who receives eternal life not as a wage earned but as the free gift of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Baptismal identity as the ground of daily holy living
- Freedom from sin and aliveness to God as the believer's reality
- Eternal life as God's free gift, the chapter's joyful climax
- Spiritual formation flowing from union with the risen Christ

Discussion Prompts

- Which single truth from Romans 6:1-23 most needs to shape your week?
- How does remembering your baptism change the way you face sin?
- Where do you most need to live as one who is dead to sin and alive to God?