

Free From Sin

Romans 6:1–14 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION: The salty piece of land on which this campus of our church was built has made history by virtue of the fact that no one can seem to hold onto it. The Isle of Eight Flags, it is called.

- In 1562, the lilies of **France** went up when Jean Ribault sailed in and named it the Isle de Mai.
- Three years later, the banner of **Spain** replaced it, and Spanish colors flew for the better part of two centuries.
- In 1763, the **British** raised the Union Jack and named the island “Amelia” after the daughter of King George II. Then Spain returned.
- Then, in 1812, a band that called themselves the **Patriots of Amelia** Island ran up the Patriot flag of the short-lived Republic of Florida — it flew for about a single day.
- In 1817, the **Green Cross of Florida** went up under Gregor MacGregor.
- Within months, a pirate named Luis Aury hoisted the flag of **Mexico** over the place without ever telling Mexico he had done it.
- The **Stars and Stripes** came in 1821.
- The Stars and Bars of the **Confederacy** flew briefly in 1861.
- And since 1862, the flag of the **United States** has flown over this island.

Eight flags. Eight sovereigns. Eight times, the people who lived here went to bed under one government and, in some cases, woke up under another.

And here is the strange thing about every one of those mornings: The boats in the harbor were the same boats, the streets the same streets, the faces the same faces. In fact, outwardly, very little changed at all. The **Spanish moss** still hung in the trees like veils of mourning. The **Dolphin** paid little mind to whose flag was flying.

And yet the deepest thing of all had changed completely — the **realm** to which they belonged, the **sovereign** they were under, the **law** that now governed them. The flag that flew over this island declares that something very important has shifted. There is a new Lord, a new Sovereign.

YOU SEE - in many ways, ***the sand under your feet is a sermon***. It describes what happens in so many Christian lives. **Christ’s colors fly on Sunday morning. By Tuesday, the old flag is creeping back up the pole.**

CONTEXT: That was very similar to the argument Paul was countering in **Romans 6**.

For five chapters, he has surveyed the **battlefield of the human race** — a **field littered with the dead**, all of us slaves under a tyrant called sin. He has portrayed Christ as the sole Victor who can raise the dead and set them free.

He ended chapter 5 with one of the most extravagant sentences in all of Scripture: “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Romans 5:20). Grace does not merely pay off our sin debt; it overpays to the extreme.

NOW - Paul knows the human heart. Paul knows that every single time the Gospel of Grace is rightly preached, the enemy will perform a mental judo move and try to turn grace into **licentiousness** - in other words, a license to sin.

The argument goes something like this. Well, if God is glorified when His grace is shown, and if where sin has abounded grace has much more abounded... Paul, shouldn't I try to sin all I can so God can get a LOT MORE Glory by forgiving me? Someone said it this way - I like to sin, God likes to forgive.... It's a pretty good arrangement we have here.

The theological term is **antinomianism**, literally, "*no law ism*". Frankly, it is more common these days than we might recognize.

TEXT: Romans 6:1–14 (ESV) ¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

If your preaching of grace never once provokes someone to ask, "Then can I just keep on sinning?" you may not yet have preached the grace Paul preached. The very objection is a **backhanded compliment** to the gospel. No one ever accused a religion of works of being too free.

A WORD FOR CHRISTIAN HERITAGE SUNDAY. And this is exactly where the gospel touches the freedom we celebrate today. **John Adams** wrote to the Massachusetts militia in 1798, "*Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.*"

Adams was confessing something Paul would say amen to: external law cannot govern someone who is an internal slave to a different Sovereign.

A constitution is a piece of paper. It can name a crime and punish it, but it has *no power whatsoever to change the heart of the man who wants to commit it.*

Romans 6:1–14 (ESV)

¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

GREEK NOTE: The word translated "continue" in verse 1 is *epimenō* — it does not mean to stumble into a sin and get back up. It means to remain, to settle down, to take up residence, to make your home in something. Paul is not asking whether a Christian will ever sin; **chapter 7 is coming**, and the honest answer is that we do. He is asking whether a believer can move back into the very grave he died in and call it home again. Notice the answer in verse 2.

² By no means!

"By no means," stands on *mē gen-oito* (μή γένοιτο) "may it never be," or "God forbid."

This is the strongest phrase Paul had at his disposal in the Greek language short of cursing. It is not the calm "no" of a man refusing seconds at dinner. It's the "no" you would give to a person asking if it's ok to feed a baby arsenic.

2a. How can we who died to sin still live in it?

And notice the reason he gives. He does not say we **should not, or must not, or ought not**. He says we died. "**How can we who died to sin still live in it?**"

The Christian's relationship to sin is not first a matter of prohibition; it is first a matter of history. Something has already happened to you. There is a grave in your past.

Paul does not say we are dying to sin, or should try to die to sin. He says that at a definite point, we actually did die to sin. That turns the **objection** into an **absurdity**.

ILLUSTRATION: MARRIAGE - When we perform a Christian marriage ceremony, every Christian minister is very careful to say that what the Lord and the State have given us the power to proclaim is that TWO people become ONE, but only for a brief and limited time - it is TILL DEATH DO THEY PART. Now, that doesn't sell well in a highly romanticized society. Of course, a couple of you may be relieved. But most of us think - but wait, I thought love was forever. It is, but marriage isn't. It is absolutely vulnerable to death.

My MOTHER was married to my father for many years, but the moment he went to be with the Lord, she was as single as when she was 17. That's the nature of human marriage. I don't love this fact, but if she wanted to date a Christian man, she has every right to do so. WHY? My Father died! She is no longer bound to what has died.

Well, the same is true for your relationship with sin - the OLD YOU who was a slave to sin, DIED with Christ.

NOW - Paul lays out three things you must do, and not one of them is **"try harder."** You must **recognize** it. You must **reckon** it. And you must **respond** to it.

1. RECOGNIZE IT – Know What Is Already True (vv. 3–10)

That great work of theological theater - **G.I. Joe** used to end every episode with a simple, straightforward PSA (public service announcement), like how to put out a fire, or how to climb a rope. The kid would say, "Now I know," and Sergeant Slaughter would respond, and **"Knowing is Half the Battle"**.

Well, freedom begins with knowing.

Three times in this paragraph, Paul says some form of "do you not know" and "we know" (vv. 3, 6, 9). He is hammering one nail: there are facts about you that you must recognize before you will ever live them.

a. Recognize that you died with Christ (vv. 3–5)

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.

When Paul says "do you not know," he means "you are supposed to know this already — this is basic Christianity."

And what you are supposed to know is staggering: somehow, mystically, when Christ died, all of your sin was transferred onto Him. As He sweat drops of blood in Gethsemane, this is what He was facing. As the high priest laid his hands on the head of the scapegoat and confessed the sins of Israel over it, so God the Father laid every one of your sins on His only begotten Son.

Your sins were nailed to the cross — in Christ. Your sins suffered the crushing of the Father in Christ. Your sins breathed their last — in Christ. Your sins were laid in a borrowed tomb — in Christ. But on the third day, your sins were left in the grave, folded up like the burial cloth and dealt with, no longer of any necessity — and the new you came up alive in Christ.

That phrase “in Christ” appears some 120 times in the New Testament. It is the number-one way the Bible describes a Christian.

GREEK NOTE: Everything hangs on the small preposition “into,” *eis*. We were baptized *eis* Christ — into Him, joined to Him, placed in Him.

This is not speaking of your water baptism, the Greek word baptizo means to IMMERSE. So Paul is saying you were IMMERSSED into Christ - that is, your old self, your sin, was in Christ on the Cross being Judged, it was in the grave, that the new you might be raised with Him.

ILLUSTRATION: BAPTISM. God is so determined that you grasp this that He gave you a picture for it: baptism. He wants the very first thing you learn as a believer is to reenact that reality via the mode of Baptism into water. You see?

GREEK NOTE: And the new life He raises you into is described with the word “newness,” *kainotēs*, from *kainos*. Greek has two words for new. **Neos** is new in **time**. **Kainos** is new in **kind** — something that never existed before. Paul chooses Kainos. The risen life is not a refurbished caterpillar 2.0; it is a butterfly, it is capable of things the old self was not capable of.

Recognize you died with Christ...

b. Recognize that your old master has been dethroned (vv. 6–10)

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.

The “old self,” the old man, is the person you were in Adam — your whole identity under the reign of sin. And Paul says that man was crucified with Christ. Not reformed. Not counseled. Crucified.

Now hear me carefully, because countless sermons get this backward: Paul does not tell you to crucify your old self. He says **it was crucified** — past tense, a finished act. You cannot climb up on the cross and nail your own hands down. You cannot kill the old man, because the old man is already dead.

GREEK NOTE: “Brought to nothing” in verse 6 is *ka-targeō* — and it does not mean annihilated or made to vanish. It means **rendered powerless**, put out of operation, stripped of authority. It can shout like a TYRANT, but it has the authority of the BEGGAR.

ILLUSTRATION: CALLER ID. One of the great inventions of the age is caller ID. Before caller ID, when the phone rang, you answered it. Not anymore. In fact, there is a way to set up my iPhone so that it doesn’t even ring unless my wife, my mother, or my kids call. Now if they

call in the middle of the night - it will ring. BUT, if Pres. Donald J. Trump calls while I'm studying or fishing... it will not ring. Don't you love that?

NOW - Paul is saying that because of Christ, when sin calls, you can now choose not to answer.

So, first, we are to **recognize** that our old self died with Christ...

2. RECKON IT – Believe What You Know (v. 11)

¹¹ So you also must **consider yourselves** dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

This is the **first command** Paul gives in the whole chapter, and notice — it is not a “do,” it is “**consider**.” Before Paul tells you to change a single action, he tells you to do some math.

GREEK NOTE: “Consider” is from the word *logizomai* — an accounting word. It means to reckon, to calculate, to enter in the ledger, to count as true.

It is the same word Paul used in **Romans 3:28**, “we reckon that a man is justified by faith.” and the same word used of Abraham, who “**reckoned**” that what God promised God was able to perform.

It is crucial to see what it does not mean. It does not mean to **pretend**. It is not the standing at the mirror chanting, “*Every day, in every way, I am getting better and better.*”

To reckon is the very opposite of talking yourself into something that is not so. It is drawing the only honest conclusion from something that is so. **You reckon yourself dead to sin because, in Christ, you actually are dead to sin.**

This is where so many believers stumble, because they say, “**But I don't feel dead to sin.**” And here is one of the great secrets of the Christian life: **your feelings are liars.**

ILLUSTRATION: I tell my assistant, don't start throwing things at me as soon as I walk in the door. You see, I'm on 75% Christian before I've had some coffee. Am I actually 75% saved? No! 75% saved would be 100% lost. But I feel more saved after coffee. You see, my feelings lie to me.

So, first, we are to **recognize** that our old self died with Christ... Then we reckon it as so...

3. RESPOND TO IT – Live Out What You Believe (vv. 12–14)

Now Paul gets practical, and this is something you actually do. He gives you two verbs and one promise. Three verbs - **resist, render, rest.**

a. RESIST – refuse sin the throne (vv. 12–13a)

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.

GREEK NOTE: “Reign” is basil-e-uetō — “*let it not be king.*” Sin is pictured as a deposed monarch still campaigning to win back a crown it has legally lost; your job is to refuse it the throne.

ILLUSTRATION: Your sin nature is Nicolás Maduro still trying to run Venezuela from the Brooklyn Detention Center. More than that, it's Bin Laden, trying to run Al Qaeda from the

bottom of the ocean.

ILLUSTRATION: I remember one day when Cole was a little boy. Little boys do dumb stuff sometimes. He had been out playing in the woods all day. We told him to take a shower before dinner - he went and took a shower, then put back on the old, stinky clothes he had on before the shower. I'm like, "Son, are you ignorant?" You just defeated the purpose of the shower. Sometimes, I wonder if God looks at us from Heaven and says, "Son, are you ignorant?"

ILLUSTRATION: "I DON'T HAVE TO LIVE; I DO HAVE TO BE FAITHFUL." When **Daniel** was carried into Babylon, they changed his address, his language, his curriculum, and his name — and Daniel let them. But when they came for his conscience, he made up his mind beforehand that he would not defile himself. "Throw you in the lions' den?" Well, if you must. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were ordered to bow, they said in effect, "Our God is able to deliver us — but even if He does not, we will not bow." ***That is a free man.***

That is the citizen **John Adams** was talking about — the only kind of person fit for liberty: the one who can say, "*I do not have to keep my life; I do have to keep faith with my King.*" A republic is only ever as free as its people are inwardly unbowed.

Resist...

b. RENDER — hand your whole self to God (v. 13b)

13b. but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

Resisting is the negative; **rendering** is the positive.

Literally take the parts of your body that you once handed over to unrighteousness and present them to God for His glory. And do not miss why Paul insists on the body, on "your members," your actual limbs and organs.

A WAY TO PRAY IT. When I prepare to walk on this stage and preach, I pray something like this. I am your vessel, Lord, take every cell of my being and own it as yours. Loosen my tongue to speak Your Word, enlightening my mind to think Your thoughts. Well, that is basically what we should do every day of our lives.

Resist...Render...

c. REST — under the reign of Christ (14)

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

Do you see what Paul does? He seals the command with a promise. He has just told you how to fight — and now he tells you the outcome of the fight is already certain.

GREEK NOTE: "Will have no dominion" is kyrie-u-sei, a future indicative — "sin shall not lord it over you." It is not a wish or a dare; it is a guarantee.

And the ground of the guarantee is breathtaking: "not under law but under grace." The law could name sin and condemn it, but the law was never able to dethrone it — the law is a mirror, not a power. Grace is the regime under which sin's reign is actually broken, because grace joins you to a living Christ.

We do still sin; that is why Romans 7 lies ahead. But sin is no longer our master.

ILLUSTRATION: THE YOKE. How does this actually work, day by day? Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me... and you will find rest for your souls.” A yoke joins two animals — and you never yoke two young oxen together; they have no sense.

You yoke a young one with a seasoned one. The old one knows the master’s hand; he leads, he sets the pace — slow down here, lean left there, stop.

Jesus is not standing behind the cart driving you. He is in the yoke beside you, saying, “Come walk with me. I am gentle and lowly. Let me carry the weight, and learn my pace.” That is sanctification. You know it, you reckon it, you respond — and you walk it out yoked to Him.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION: On the first day of 1863, President Abraham Lincoln signed an executive order known as the **Emancipation Proclamation**, legally declaring free some three million men, women, and children held in slavery.

The news traveled south faster than the army that enforced it. The headlines read: “Slavery Abolished.”

And yet, according to one historian, something tragic happened. The great majority of the freed went right on living as though they were not free — rising in the dark to a master’s bell, working a field that no longer owned them, free on paper and slaves in fact.

One old man, asked what he thought of the Great Emancipator whose proclamation had set him free, mumbled, “***I don’t know nothin’ ’bout Abraham Lincoln ‘cep they say he set us free. And I don’t know nothin’ ’bout that neither.***” The hardest part of emancipation was never the signing of the document; it was believing the document was true.

ILLUSTRATION: I watched day after day the bombing of Iran, the annihilation of the authorities. The man they say is the Supreme Leader, currently, the son of Kamani, has never been seen publicly. We don’t know for certain that he actually exists. But the people of Iran continue living as if they are under that regime. Frankly, Trump can’t free Iran - the people must rise up and demand their freedom.

This year, we are celebrating the fact that 250 years ago, our ancestors did just that. They said enough with Tyranny, we will purchase a better future with our blood. You can come here and worship freely because they did.

NOW LISTEN TO ME: You can still pay taxes to the King of England if you want. You are that free - you don’t have to live like an American. But who would be so foolish? That’s Paul’s argument here - you are free from sin through Christ, you can still sin if you want - but who would be so foolish. Blood has been shed, the grave defeated - you are free. Now live like it.

- Recognize it — you died with Christ and were raised with Him.
- Reckon it — do the math God has already done, and count yourself dead to sin and alive to God.
- Respond to it — resist the old master, and render your hands, your eyes, your tongue, your whole self to God as weapons of righteousness. Strike the old colors. Walk out of the old field. Walk in newness of life.

John Adams was right this Republic was designed for a people who know how to live in the Freedom they have been given.