UNDERSTANDING THE PASSAGE

Alive unto God | *Romans 6:1-14*

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THE AUTHOR

The letter opens, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle" (1:1). This is the former Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee who once hunted down Christians until the risen Lord stopped him on the Damascus road (Acts 9). By now he is a seasoned missionary near the end of his third journey. He calls himself "the apostle of the Gentiles" (11:13). A secretary named Tertius wrote the letter down as Paul spoke it (16:22).

THE AUDIENCE

Paul writes "to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints" (1:7). He had never been to Rome, and he hadn't planted that church (1:13; 15:22). It was a mix of Jewish and Gentile believers. A few years earlier, Emperor Claudius had thrown the Jews out of Rome (Acts 18:2). When he died in AD 54, many came home, including Paul's friends Priscilla and Aquila (16:3). So Gentile believers who had been running things for a while were now sitting beside Jewish believers with a lot of questions about the law.

THE TIME AND PLACE

Paul wrote from Corinth, most likely in the winter of AD 57. Acts 20:2-3 tells us he spent three months in Greece, and this is when he wrote it. A woman named Phoebe, from the little port town of Cenchrea right next to Corinth, carried the letter to Rome (16:1-2). Paul was headed to Jerusalem first with an offering for the poor saints there. Then he hoped to visit Rome on his way to Spain (15:24-28). He did get to Rome, but not the way he planned. He arrived a few years later in chains (Acts 28).

THE SITUATION

For five chapters Paul has made one thing crystal clear. A man is justified by faith, not by works. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (4:3). Then he says something so big it practically begs for an argument: "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (5:20).

Paul had heard the objection before. People were "slanderously" reporting that he taught, "Let us do evil, that good may come" (3:8). If more sin means more grace, why not sin all we want? Chapter 6 is his answer.

WHERE OUR PASSAGE FITS

Romans moves in a clear line. Chapters 1-3 show that everyone is guilty. Chapters 3-5 show how God justifies the guilty by faith. Chapters 6-8 show how a justified person lives the new life: dead to sin (6), struggling against it (7), and walking in the Spirit (8). Chapters 9-11 deal with Israel, and 12-16 turn to everyday Christian living.

So Romans 6 is the hinge. Paul turns from how we are saved to how the saved should live. And he answers the question with who the believer already is, not with a threat. This message is part three of a series: you must be born again (John 3), that life can never die (1 Peter 1), and now, live like you're alive unto God.

KEY WORDS IN THE PASSAGE

English (KJV)	Original / Pronounced	Meaning	Where
Continue	ἐπιμένω *epimenō* (eh-pee-MEN-oh)	To stay on; to settle in and make yourself at home.	Rom 6:1
God forbid	μὴ γένοιτο *mē genoito* (MAY GHEN-oy-toh)	May it never be! Paul's strongest "no." He uses it ten times in Romans.	Rom 6:2
Baptized	βαπτίζω *baptizō* (bap-TEED-zoh)	To dip or immerse; to place into something so it is fully identified with it.	Rom 6:3
Newness	καινότης *kainotēs* (kai-NOH-tace)	Newness in kind, not just in time; a fresh quality of life.	Rom 6:4
Planted together	σύμφυτος *symphytos* (SOOM-foo-toss)	Grown together; united so closely you can't tell where one ends and the other begins.	Rom 6:5
Old man	παλαιὸς ἄνθρωπος *palaios anthrōpos* (pah-lie-OSS AHN-thro-poss)	Who you were in Adam, before you were in Christ.	Rom 6:6
Crucified with	συσταυρόω *systauroō* (soos-tow-ROH-oh)	To be crucified together with someone.	Rom 6:6
Destroyed	καταργέω *katargeō* (kah-tar-GEH-oh)	Put out of business; made powerless. Not annihilated, but unplugged.	Rom 6:6
Serve	δουλεύω *douleuō* (dool-YOO-oh)	To serve as a slave; to take orders from a master.	Rom 6:6
Freed	δικαιόω *dikaioō* (dee-kai-OH-oh)	To justify; to declare righteous. A dead man's charges are dropped.	Rom 6:7
Dominion	κυριεύω *kyrieuō* (koo-ree-YOO-oh)	To be lord over; to have the final say.	Rom 6:9, 14
Reckon	λογίζομαι *logizomai* (lo-GEED-zo-my)	A bookkeeping word: to count, to credit to an account, to write it down because it's true.	Rom 6:11
Reign	βασιλεύω *basileuō* (bah-see-LEW-oh)	To rule like a king; to sit on the throne and give orders.	Rom 6:12
Yield	παρίστημι *paristēmi* (par-IS-tay-mee)	To present; to put something at someone's disposal.	Rom 6:13
Instruments	ὅπλα *hopla* (HOP-lah)	Tools or weapons. Also used for "the armour of light" (13:12).	Rom 6:13
Grace	χάρις *charis* (KAR-ees)	Undeserved favor; God's free gift, and the power to live the new life.	Rom 6:14
Kinsman-redeemer	גֹּאֵל *go'el* (go-ALE)	A relative who paid the price to buy back a family member sold for debt.	Lev 25:48

ONE THING TO WATCH FOR

The first command in Romans 6 doesn't come until verse 11. Ten verses tell what God has done before Paul tells us one thing to do. And the command he gives is "reckon," logizomai, the same word Paul uses again and again in chapter 4: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." When you believed, God counted righteousness to your account. Now Paul says to count what God already did. We never lose our standing, but sometimes we forget where we stand.