

foundational act brought ruin upon our race. The solution is provided by Jesus the Messiah, a far greater King who creates a new race through his own, better foundational act—his death and resurrection.

- It is essential to note in **verse 18** that the “**all people**” condemned by Adam’s transgressions are not the same “**all people**” who are justified by Christ’s one act of righteousness. The two groups do not match precisely, so this verse does not teach universal salvation. From what Paul has said in this letter, we already know that only those trusting in Christ are justified (e.g., 3:22, 26, 28). Later in this letter, Paul will also make it clear that only those whom God has graciously chosen and called exercise faith in Christ (e.g., 8:30). Therefore, the “**all people**” who are justified refers to the “all those who belong to Christ.” Paul likely uses the “all” language to emphasize that Christ saves all people without distinction, whether Jew or Gentile.⁴⁴ “All those who are in Adam die, similarly, all those who are in Christ live. But whereas we are in Adam simply by virtue of being born, we are in Christ only when we receive the gift God offers (v. 17)” (*EBR*, 92).
- It is not immediately clear what Paul means by Christ’s “**one righteousness act**” in **verse 18** or his “**obedience**” in **verse 19**. It could be that Christ’s entire life of obeying his Father is in view, but more likely, Paul is thinking specifically about the culmination of that obedient life, i.e., Christ’s willingness to go to the cross for those he saves (cf. Phil 2:8). All through this chapter, the emphasis is on the benefits believers receive not on their own merits but because they are united with Christ:
 - “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 1)
 - “we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him” (v. 9)
 - “we shall be saved by His life” (v. 10)
 - “we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 11a)
 - “through whom we have now received the reconciliation” (v. 11b)
 - “the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ” (v. 15)
 - “the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ” (v. 17)
 - “through one act of righteousness, there resulted justification of life” (v. 18)
 - “through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous” (v. 19)
 - “eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (v. 21)
- God can consider us justified and reconciled because he views us in union with his perfect Son. The language of “**made sinners**” and “**made righteous**” in **verse 19** is legal or forensic (Murray, 204–5; Schreiner, 293; Thielman, 292; Moo, 371–72). We also sinned on our own and will become righteous as believers, but that is not the focus here.⁴⁵ Instead, Paul uses this legal language to describe how Adam’s sin is

⁴⁴ Jesus uses “all men” in a similar fashion in John 12:32 after some Gentiles came to see him (cf. Jn 12:20–21).

⁴⁵ In other words, those who are declared sinners by virtue of Adam’s sin really do become sinners personally,

credited to us as if we had done it, and Jesus' righteousness is credited to believers as if they had done it.⁴⁶ We may object to being credited with Adam's sin, but we should rejoice that we can also be credited with Christ's righteousness. Christ completely undoes all the damage to our lives brought by Adam's sin. God considers Jesus' death as if it was the believer's death, and he considers Jesus' obedience as if it was the believer's obedience. "As sons and daughters of Adam we enter the world spiritually dead and sinners. But God, in his grace, has reversed the baleful results of Adam's sin by imputing the righteousness of Christ to us. Such an imputation is an act of grace; it is totally undeserved" (Schreiner, 290).

B. Freedom from Bondage to Sin (6:1–23): Chapter 5 addressed the potential obstacle of death. This chapter addresses the potential obstacle of sin. Will sin keep us from the hope of glory? Specifically, the presence of sin leads to **two potential objections**. Moo summarizes the section: "Are we merely treading water here until we can be delivered from this life and enjoy the blessings of heaven? Do we have to wait for our death or Christ's return to enjoy the benefits of new life in Christ? And if that eternal life has already been given to us in Christ, what about sin? Does it really matter anymore what we do in the is life?" (*EBR*, 94).

1. "Dead to Sin" through Union with Christ (6:1–14)

- In the first section of this chapter (vv. 1–14), Paul addresses the **first objection brought up because of sin**, "**Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?**" (v. 1). If we live in the realm of grace, wouldn't our sin make the realm of grace show up even more? Paul's answer is a strong, "**By no means!**" or "Absolutely Not!" (CSB; v. 2a). His thesis in this section is: "**We died to sin.**"
- In **verses 3–5**, Paul explains what he means by "**died to sin.**" At our conversion, we were united with Christ's death (v. 3), and we also were united with his resurrection (v. 4b). Paul can say that this happened at our "**baptism**" (and he refers to water baptism as the initiation into church membership) because baptism was closely associated with conversion. It is an ordinance that pictures our union with Christ's death, and every believer is expected to obey Christ and be baptized. Since Paul could not imagine a believer who would choose not to be baptized, he uses "baptism" to refer to a person's conversion. Therefore, "we can assume that baptism stands for the whole conversion-initiation experience, presupposing faith and the gift of the Spirit" (Moo, 390; cf. Schreiner, 309). Just as Christ's burial indicated that he

and those who are declared righteous by virtue of Christ's obedience really do become righteous. However, this benefit of our union of Christ is the focus of chapter six and does not appear to be what Paul is talking about at this point.

⁴⁶ The word translated "**made**" can be used to describe the appointment of someone to a position (Lk 12:14; Acts 7:10; Titus 1:5; Heb 5:1; 7:28; 8:3) and is used in James 4:4 to describe someone who is categorized as God's enemy. The use of the future tense "**will be made righteous**" might mean that Paul is referring to our glorification. However, Paul could also be using the future tense to describe the justification of believers who will come to faith in Christ in the future from Paul's perspective (Murray, 205). This option better preserves the parallel with Adam's sin.

was truly dead and led to his genuine resurrection, that same power will raise us to a new life (v. 4b).⁴⁷

- In **verses 6–7**, Paul further explains what he means by saying that we died with Christ. He says that the “**old self**” or “old man” (NET, v. 6) was crucified with Christ. This “**old self**” is the person that we were in Adam—the one who was condemned and corrupted by sin. That person is dead as surely as if he was nailed to Christ’s cross. This is one of several places in this passage where we are said to do something together with Christ:
 - “we have been buried with Him” (v. 4)
 - “we have become united with Him” (v. 5)
 - “our old self was crucified with Him” (v. 6)
 - “we have died with Christ” (v. 8)
 - “we shall also live with Him” (v. 9)
- The death of the “**old self**” or “old man” is another way of speaking of the new birth or regeneration. The “old man” is “not part of, but the whole of what we were prior to conversion, what we were in solidarity with Adam” (Kruse, 263). Therefore, it is not proper to speak of a believer as both the old man and the new man simultaneously or to speak of the old man as only part of a believer. It is the “unregenerate man in his entirety in contrast with the new man as the regenerate man in his entirety” (Murray, 220). Paul uses the “old man” in this same way in Colossians 3:9, where he likens the “old man” to old clothes which the believer took off at conversion.
- That being said, while we wait for our glorification, we still have a nature or disposition towards sin. This nature is likely what Paul refers to as the “**body ruled by sin**” in **verse 6**. The purpose (“**so that**”) for the death of the “old man” was that one day this “body of sin” (NASB, ESV) or this “body which sins” would also be gone. Paul does not mean that we only sin with our body and not our mind (cf. Rom 3:18). Instead, he is likely using “**body**” to describe our whole person who still lives in and interacts with a world dominated by sin and can sin. This “body” can progressively be done away with in this life and will ultimately be done away with at our glorification. The purpose (“**that**”) for this doing away with the “body of sin” is that “**we should no longer be slaves to sin**” (v. 6). Paul explains (“**because**” or “for” at the beginning of v. 7) that, as a general rule, if an enslaved person dies, he is no longer under the power of his master, and this applies to the dominion of sin.

⁴⁷ The use of the word translated “**like**” in v. 5 is probably intended to mean that our death is not *exactly* like Christ’s death, but our death, as Paul will explain in vv. 6–7, is nonetheless real. Something truly transformative happens to the believer at his conversion.

- In **verses 8–10**, Paul further explains what he meant by “**new life**” (NIV) in **verse 4**. Christ died and rose, never to die again, and those who are united with him have not only died but have also been given a new life that will never be taken away and will eventually lead to a physical resurrection. Sin can no longer threaten the believer with death. In **verse 11**, Paul urges us to accept this reality of the gospel message as being true.
 - Moreover, if this is true, then we should “**not let sin reign**” in our bodies (**v. 12**). That is, we should not go back to our old master, Sin, and present ourselves to him for service (**v. 13a**), but instead, we should present ourselves to God (**v. 13b**). Sin no longer rules over us (**v. 14a**) “**because**” we are no longer in the realm ruled by “**law**”⁴⁸ but are instead in a new realm dominated by God’s grace (**v. 14b**).
2. Freed from Sin’s Power to Serve Righteousness (6:15–23)
- The second objection flows out of Paul’s teaching in vv. 2–14. Someone might argue that if we have changed realms and are no longer “**under the law**” but are instead “**under grace**,” there is nothing to stop us from continuing to sin (**v. 15**). The difference between the objection in verse 1 and verse 15 is subtle. It might be said that 6:1 “is a question of sinning *in order to gain more grace*, while in 6:15 it is a question of sinning *because we already have grace*” (Moo, 424).
 - Or, to put it another way, the objection assumes that the believer is now free to do whatever he pleases. “The question raised here seems to come from those who are afraid that the doctrine of justification by faith alone will remove all moral restraint” (NASB/NIV Study Bible). Paul’s response is essentially, “Everyone has a master; the only difference is which one you choose.”⁴⁹
 - The one that you obey is your master, either sin or “**obedience**” (**v. 16**). Serving sin results in “**death**,” and serving “**obedience**” results in “**righteousness**.” The believer was freed from sin’s mastery when he obeyed the gospel and is now a slave “**to righteousness**” (**vv. 17–18**). In other words, verse 16 presents two options, and **verses 17–18** make it clear that genuine believers all fall into option one—they are all slaves to righteousness.
 - Paul knows that his use of slavery might be misunderstood because our slavery as believers is not precisely like slavery in the world, but, as he explains, we as

⁴⁸ Paul seems to be using “**law**” for the realm where people’s lives are regulated by God’s law, but where they inevitably fail to keep those laws and thus are rightly condemned. Everything that Paul assumes here about “**law**” would have certainly been true for those under the Mosaic covenant, but it also would have been true of anyone, before or after (or outside) the Mosaic covenant, who stood condemned by their failure to keep God’s moral law and needed God’s grace to remedy the situation. Believers still must keep God’s law, but they have the ability by God’s grace to obey and the provision of forgiveness when they fail. Thus, Paul describes this new realm as one “**under grace**.”

⁴⁹ To be precise, Paul’s response is “**May it never be!**” in v. 15b, and then his reason for that response is found in v. 16.

imperfect people sometimes need things explained to us with analogies “**because of [our] human limitations**” (v. 19a). However, slavery well illustrates Paul’s primary point in this section—like we used to serve sin, we now need to serve God through doing what is righteous, and this will result in us progressively becoming sanctified (v. 19b). We did not stop having a master at conversion; we instead received a new master. And this new master gives us a much better reward.

- The main command of this section is found at the end of **verse 19**, “**offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness.**” Beginning in **verse 20**, Paul gives support (“For” in NASB) to this command. He reminds the Roman believers and us that we had a certain freedom before conversion, but it was a freedom from the beneficial power of the Spirit, and it was a freedom that allowed us to continue on our path towards destruction (see esp. v. 21). “As ‘slaves to sin,’ people are free from the power and influence of the conduct that pleases God; they are deaf to God’s righteous demands and incapable of responding to them even were they to hear and respect them. For Paul makes it clear that those outside Christ, to varying degrees, can recognize right and wrong (see Rom. 1:18–32; 2:14–15); but the power to do the right and turn from the wrong is not present. All are ‘under sin’ (3:9) and therefore incapable of doing God’s will” (Moo, 431–32).
- **Verse 22** contrasts (“**But now...**”) the previous two verses. Everyone who has been “**set free from sin**” has “**become slaves of God.**” There is no middle option. There is no freedom from sin that results in a neutral state where the freed person has to decide whether or not he or she wants to submit to God as master. We can only serve one master, *and* we always have had one master. This conclusion answers the original objection raised in verse 15 regarding the believer being free to do as he pleases. Free to make choices without a master ruling over us was never a reality.
- The ultimate benefit that we will receive from serving God will be the “**free gift**” of “**eternal life**” (appears twice in vv. 22–23). Before, we were not free to receive this, but now we have been freed in order to serve and be graciously given this. However, for those who do not heed Paul’s warning but continue to serve sin, the wages earned will be eternal “**death**” (vv. 21, 23).

C. Freedom from Bondage to the Law (7:1–25): Chapter 7 continues Paul’s response to the possible obstacles on the path to the believer’s glorification. In chapter 5, the obstacle was death. In chapter 6, the obstacle was sin. Here in chapter 7, the potential obstacle is the Mosaic Law. “There is an apparent parallel between Romans 6 and 7. Romans 6 describes the believer’s death to sin (6:2), as it has freed him from its dominion but not yet from its continuing presence and attending problems. Romans 7 describes the believer’s death to the law (whether Mosaic or God’s unchanging moral law; 7:1–8), but not yet from the accusatory power of “the law of God” (7:25) that continues to produce an internal contradiction and a frustration over the lack of perfection in his daily life.”⁵⁰ Paul is specifically addressing the Mosaic Law because there would have been Christians (even Gentile Christians) who were concerned about their failure to keep the Mosaic Law or wondered whether they needed to try harder to keep it.⁵¹ However, much of what Paul says about the Mosaic Law applies to a believer’s relationship to God’s eternal moral law.

1. Released from the Law, Joined to Christ (7:1–6)

- In **verse 1**, Paul states the basic principle that Mosaic Law had “**authority over someone only as long as that person lives.**” He illustrates this point in **verses 2–3**—if a married woman’s husband dies, she is free to marry another man without it being considered adultery. The death severs the legal connection between the woman and her first husband. Similarly, the believer died with Christ (“**through the body of Christ**”); thus, the legal connection between the believer and the Law has been severed (**v. 4a**). This release from the Law is the main point of the paragraph.
- The purpose of this death (“**that**”) was that we could be united with Christ. The purpose of this union (“**in order that**”) was that we “**might bear fruit for God**” (**v. 4b**). The “old man” could not have produced fruit for God.
- When we were in the “**realm of flesh**” (i.e., the realm dominated by sin), Paul says that the believer’s sinful passions were aroused by the Law and produced fruit that led to death (**v. 5**). However, having now died to the Law, the believer can now “**serve the new way of the Spirit,**” i.e., the new way of living that is produced by the Holy Spirit and leads to eternal life (**v. 6**; cf. 6:22). “To be ‘dead to the Law’ does not mean that we lead lawless lives. It simply means that the *motivation* and *dynamic* of our lives does not come from the Law: it comes from God’s grace through our union with Christ” (Wiersbe, 535). This new life will be the topic of Romans 8, but Paul pauses in the next section to address two possible objections.

⁵⁰ Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity*, 3 vols. (Allen Park, MI: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009–10), 3:134.

⁵¹ “Many of the gentile converts probably had been God-fearers, who attended synagogue and read the Scriptures before their conversion to Christ” (*EBR*, 106).