THE EXIT AND ENTRANCE

According to Paul, there are two realities: the reality created by Adam, and the reality created by Jesus (Romans 5:12–21). Adam’s reality is under the reign of sin and death and is filled with condemnation (Romans 5:18, 21). Jesus’ reality is filled with righteousness, grace, and eternal life (Romans 5:21).

Romans 6 tells us how to exit the reality of sin and death created by Adam and how to enter into the reality of righteousness and life Jesus created. According to Paul, baptism is the way we leave the reality created by Adam and immerse ourselves in a new reality created by Jesus.

When we are baptized, we are baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3). This includes being united to Christ’s death and resurrection (Romans 6:5). When we are baptized, we are to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God (Romans 6:11). We have left the old reality of Adam and are freed from sin (Romans 6:7) and liberated from the dominion of death (Romans 6:9). In the new reality created by Jesus, we can bear fruit to holiness, and in the end, we will enjoy everlasting life (Romans 6:22, 23).

Every exit is also an entrance. Baptism is an exit from the reality of Adam and an entrance into the reality of Jesus. If you are in the world of Adam, Jesus has made a way of escape. Flee now. If you are in the world of Jesus, present yourself to God and enjoy the promise of everlasting life.
Write out Romans 6 from the Bible translation of your choice. If you are pressed for time, write out Romans 6:5–11. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
Ingest

Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw Arrows to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse in Romans 6. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

How can I walk in the reality Jesus created rather than the reality Adam created?

Our New King

Have you ever had a brush with death? Those who have come near to death often see it as a transformational experience. It can cause people to reevaluate their past and choose a better future going forward. Baptized believers have had just such an experience. They have come face-to-face with their death. They know that eternal death awaited them, but God graciously gave His Son Jesus to die for them and rescue them from death. Baptism acknowledges the fact that we were doomed to die but God took our place in Christ. More than that, baptism is a resurrection to a new and everlasting life.

Baptism should be a time of reevaluation of the past and should inspire commitment to live a new life. Sin often has an addictive component that makes us feel powerless to embrace a new life. The enslaving power of sin weaves its way into the very fabric of our lives and makes us feel as if we are under the rule of a tyrannical despot. Fortunately, if we’ve expressed our faith in Christ through baptism, the power of sin has been broken. Through baptism, we’ve left the tyrannical reality that Adam created and embraced the liberating reality that Jesus established. In this new reality, sin no longer needs to be our king. We don’t need to obey the demanding lusts of sin (Romans 6:12).

When we are united with Christ in a death like His, “our old man was crucified” (Romans 6:6). Our old man is the person we were when we were living in the reality created by Adam. That person was crucified with Christ. Because that person is now dead, we no longer need to be slaves of sin (Romans 6:6). If we’ve died with Christ, we’ve been freed from sin (Romans 6:7).

How do we begin to live out the freedom we’ve been given at our baptism? First, we need to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God (Romans 6:11). In other words, we need to acknowledge what has happened when we put our faith in Christ and were baptized. The old me died, and all my connection to the reality of Adam has been severed. The new “me” is now connected to Christ and all that He is doing.

Next, we should present our members—our body parts—to God as those that have been brought from death to life. We must give our whole selves to God so that He can use us as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:13).
THE LIFE-CHANGING POWER OF GRACE

There once was a middle school student who couldn’t get to class on time, even if his life depended on it. He was late to every class every day. His “tardies” earned him daily after-school detentions and regular in-school suspensions. They even brought the punishment of making him go to school on the weekends. No penalty, no matter how severe, had the power to change his behavior.

His parents, teachers, and the principal met to discuss this pressing issue. What could be done to change his behavior? The principle was a tall, redhead woman with a storybook-sounding name, Peggy Piper. She came up with a creative and counterintuitive idea. Rather than punish the student when he was late, all teachers would reward him if he ever got to class on time. The reward was simple, a small business card that said “Attaboy.” When he had earned ten Attaboy cards, then the student could obtain a prize at the office. One teacher was outraged by the idea and exclaimed, “What happens if he is late?” To which the principal replied, “He doesn’t get an Attaboy card.”

With the school’s new strategy, the boy was never late again. Never. Late. Again.

Grace can do what the law is powerless to do. Paul says, “Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace” (Romans 6:14). Grace can liberate us from the dominion of sin in a way that the law never could. The boy in our story found out the truth of this text. Being under grace instead of under the law doesn’t change the rules. Class still starts at the same time, and God has never changed the definition of morality. Grace changes how we’re treated when we’ve broken the rules. Through faith in Christ, we now live under grace.

More and more punishment can’t change the heart the way grace can. Grace can motivate a middle school student in a way that punishment never could. Would the recipients of grace dare use it as an excuse to live lives of rebellion? Certainly not (Romans 6:13)! Those who have come face-to-face with their own death and condemnation and have seen Jesus take their place would never use grace as an excuse to sin. They see grace for what it is—the extravagant yet freely given generosity of God. They have also experienced the transforming power of God’s gracious generosity in their lives.

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inSpect

What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Matthew 3:1–17
Galatians 2:20
Colossians 2:9–12; 3:1–11
Titus 2:11–14

What other verses/promises come to mind about dying and rising spiritually?

Review your memorized verse from Romans 6.
FOLLOW THE MODEL

One of the great pleasures of life is talking to a baby and trying to get it to repeat what you are saying. When a mother or father hears their baby babble “Momma” or “Dada,” their hearts thrill with joy.

Mirror neurons are responsible for a baby’s imitative drive. Mirror neurons are neurons that fire when we act and that fire when we observe others doing the same action. When mirror neurons fire, they make us feel good. Because we have mirror neurons, we are by definition imitative beings.

Unfortunately, since the sin of Adam, the patterns we have to imitate are the fallen patterns of the world (Romans 5:12–21). Sin has taken advantage of our imitative nature by enslaving us to these fallen patterns, which end in death (Romans 6:16).

The coming of Christ has liberated us from our slavish devotion to sin and has given us a new model to imitate and a new pattern to follow. According to Paul, baptized believers obey from the heart “that form of doctrine to which you were delivered” (Romans 6:17). The phrase “form of doctrine” can sound a bit sterile, but it is anything but sterile. The word translated “doctrine” just means teaching. The Greek word transliterated is tupos. It is translated “pattern” in Hebrews 8:5 (NKJV). The original Greek means something like a pattern, mold, or model. As Christians, we obey from the heart the pattern, mold, or model of teaching. What is the pattern, mold, or model of Christian teaching? A better question might be, who is the mold or model of Christian teaching? Who is the pattern of Christianity? It is none other than Jesus Himself. As Christians who are loved by God and saved by the generous self-sacrifice He offered on our behalf (Romans 5:6–9), our response is heartfelt obedience to Jesus—the ultimate model of behavior (Romans 6:17).

There is no absolute freedom from slavery. We can be slavishly devoted to sin, or we can be slaves of God and righteousness (Romans 6:18, 22). We can be devoted to sin, or we can be devoted to obeying the pattern of teaching—Jesus Christ. Our mirror neurons can either imitate the disobedience of Adam or the obedience of Jesus. Either way, according to Romans, we are slaves. But our Master is so good that He was willing to become a slave to save us (Philippians 2:6–11); His yoke is easy, and His burden is light (Matthew 11:30). Even though we’ve earned death by our sin, our Master gives us the free gift of everlasting life when we put our faith in Him (Romans 6:23).
HOW TO TELL IF YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN

“God has made every provision for our justification and sanctification. He has given Christ to us, that through him we may be made complete. Christ gave his life for sinners. By his death he opened a fountain in which all may wash their robes of character, and make them white. He died on the cross, but he rose from the tomb, proclaiming, ‘I am the resurrection, and the life.’ He made his followers joint heirs with him in his glory. . . .

“Heaven’s resources are limitless, and they are all at our command. Why, then, I ask, is the progress of the Lord’s work in our world so slow? Why are not the Lord’s followers increasing in knowledge and purity, holiness and power?

“Are there not presented before Christ’s followers the highest virtues to be cultivated, the greatest honors to be gained? God calls upon them to enter a race in which every one may win. He calls upon them to enlist in a warfare in which every one may be a conqueror. A robe of righteousness and a crown of everlasting life,—this is the reward held out before the overcomer.

“The inhabitants of the heavenly universe expect the followers of Christ to shine as lights in the world. They are to show forth the power of the grace that Christ died to give to men. God expects those who profess to be Christians to reveal in their lives the highest development of Christianity. They are the recognized representatives of Christ. Their work is to show that Christianity is a reality. They are to be men of faith, men of constant growth, men of courage, whole-souled men, who without questioning trust in God and his promises.

“God calls for men of undaunted courage, men full of hope and faith and trust, who rejoice in the thought of the final triumph, refusing to be hindered by obstacles. He who steadfastly adheres to the principles of truth has the assurance that his weakest points of character may become his strongest points. Heavenly angels are close by him who strives to bring his life into harmony with God and his holy law. God is with him as he declares, ‘I must overcome the temptations that surround me, else they will drive Christ from my heart.’ He combats all temptation and braves all opposition. By the strength obtained from on high, he holds in control the passions and tendencies which, uncontrolled, would lead him to defeat . . . .

“When the Christian takes his baptismal vow, divine help is pledged to him. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit stand ready to work in his behalf. God places at his command the resources of heaven, that he may be an overcomer. His own power is small; but God is omnipotent, and God is his helper. Daily he is to make known his wants at the throne of grace. By faith and trust, by availing himself of the resources provided, he can be more than a conqueror.”


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Since giving your life to Christ, in what ways have you struggled to see authentic change?

What does it mean to you to reckon yourself dead to sin and alive to God? How have you put this into practice in your life?

Are you comfortable with the fact that we are slaves of sin or righteousness?

What does Paul mean when saying to present our members as slaves of righteousness (Rom. 6:19)?

What does “we are free from the dominion of sin because we are not under law but under grace” mean to you?

How does this teaching have any practical value in your life?

How does sin remain in our mortal bodies even though we don’t let it reign (Romans 6:12)?