

Romans 6:1-4

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Grace will always abound; God covers all sins—past, present, future. But we've been given a new life, raised up in Christ's resurrection. We have the resurrection power of Jesus to live a transformed life. Why would we keep sinning?

The Apostle Paul has written this letter to the Roman believers (whose faith is famous throughout the world, Romans 1:8). In this letter, he is dealing with slanderous statements made by competing Jewish “authorities” in Rome who have misrepresented the gospel Paul preaches. It is likely that this letter to the Roman believers is, in part, intended to support Aquila and Priscilla, who were fellow Jews who preached the gospel with Paul in Greece, and are now returned to Rome where they have started a church in their home (Romans 16:3-5; Acts 18:2, 18, 26). Doubtless they have been contending with the competing Jewish “authorities” in Rome, and have possibly reached out to Paul for help.

In Romans 3:8, Paul specifically quotes what the slanderous charges are, “And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), ‘Let us do evil that good may come?’” Each of the ten times in Romans where Paul asks something like “And *what shall we say?*” Paul is citing an accusation or argument from the competing Jewish “authorities” so that he can defend and dismantle such arguments. He begins his answer with “*May it never be*” to give emphasis to the extent to which this particular charge is false.

So far in his letter to the Roman Christians, Paul has argued against the slanderous claim that he encourages people to live sinfully. Now, in 6:1, Paul directly addresses this core misrepresentation.

The competing Jewish “authorities” argued something along these lines:

“See! Here’s what Paul teaches. He says if you sin more, then grace abounds more. So if that’s true, then the best thing you can do for God is to sin. Because the more you sin, the more it shows how gracious God is, and you’re doing God a favor by showing how wonderful He is. See how crazy Paul’s teaching is? But in reality, you have to follow the law to be righteous.”

Paul now directly addresses this slanderous misrepresentation, that we should continue *to sin so that grace may increase*. His immediate answer is that when we, as believers, were baptized into the death of Jesus we *died to sin*. Just as Jesus was raised from death to walk in resurrection power, we are raised in Christ with the resurrection power to walk in the newness of life.

Since this is true, Paul asks what sense it makes to choose to walk in the deadness of sin instead of walking in the resurrection power of Jesus? “Why would we choose to be dead when we have the power of life?” Paul demonstrates that the slanderous charge of the competing Jewish “authorities” is built on poor logic: *Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death (vv 1–3)?*

Paul rhetorically asks if we should continue to sin so that grace can increase, just as the more a child disobeys his parent, the more opportunities the parent has to show mercy toward the child's disobedience. But if the child continues to disobey, they are missing out on doing what the parent wants. In the same way, believers miss out on the good works God has prepared for them if they continue to sin. Christians have been *buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life* (v 4). We have been resurrected from that old way of life, so that we might walk in newness of life, and are now empowered to obey God—by choosing to do so.

Jesus's blood covers all our sins; it's impossible to out-sin God's grace. By simply believing we are assured of justification in the presence of God, our legal status in God's eyes is that our sins are fully paid. However, as we continue to live on this earth, we still make choices on a daily basis whether to follow God or to follow sin. Christians can feel the painful consequences of sin if we follow our sin nature. That is a reality but has nothing to do with our legal status in God's eyes. We have been redeemed, we have received power, but how we live our new life is up to us.

As Paul explains, we as believers have the resurrection power of Jesus to live a transformed life. It's the power to live the resurrection life of Jesus on a daily basis. The question is whether we will take advantage of that power. Paul told us in the theme verse of Romans 1:16–17 that the gospel is the power of God. It is impossible to conceive of any greater power than the resurrection power of Jesus. Paul emphasizes that believers have that power because we have been raised with Christ (v 4). Paul also told us the point of the gospel was righteousness—which takes place through faith—from the first time we believe until we die. Faith is the means by which resurrection power is engaged for daily living.

In verses 3–4, Paul revisits the gospel of Jesus Christ (His death and resurrection) and the symbolic nature of baptism. Jesus came to earth in the body of a man, was killed, and three days later He was raised back to life by the power of God. In the same way, baptism represents Christ's legacy, where the professing Christian is submerged into water (death, burial) and brought back to the surface (resurrected from the grave) to then live in the *newness of life* (v 4). Because we Christians have spiritually died to our old lives of sinful living and now have been given new spiritual lives through God's grace, why would we choose to go back to sinning and to death?

Biblical Text

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.