
Under Sin, In Sin, Dead to Sin, Freed from Sin

The four expressions “under sin,” “in sin,” “dead to sin,” and “freed from sin” can be considered as foundational truths for anyone who has accepted Jesus Christ.

“Under Sin”

The expression “under sin” occurs in Romans 3:9.¹¹⁷

Romans 3:9

⁹What then? Are we [Jews] better than they [Greeks]? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all **under sin**;

A key to the meaning of the phrase “under sin” is to first consider the phrase “already charged.” This phrase is one Greek word, [*proaitiaomai*](#), which is a forensic term referring to a legal accusation or charge.¹¹⁸ The “charge” was laid out in Romans 1:18ff where evidence was presented showing that the Greeks and the Jews had violated God’s “law.” Both groups were considered by God, through Paul, to be guilty of violating either unwritten moral law¹¹⁹ [Romans 1:18–32] or the Mosaic Law [Romans 2:1–3:8]. So, from the immediate context, we see that “under sin” should be considered as a legal declaration.

We should also consider the word “under.” Here are two examples of how the word may be used.

Matthew 5:15a

¹⁵nor does anyone light a lamp and put it **under** a basket...

Matthew 8:9

⁹"For I also am a man [a centurion] **under** authority, with soldiers **under** me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes...

In Matthew 5:15, a lamp can literally be placed **under** a basket. In this case, “under” describes the physical relationship between the lamp and the basket. In Matthew 8:9, the centurion is not literally **under** a superior officer; nor are the soldiers he commands literally **under** him. Here, “under” expresses the idea of “subject to.” In both cases, the word “under” describes a relationship, either between things or people. It might describe a relationship between both a thing and a person, e.g., a person standing under a bridge. In the case of Romans 3:9, the relationship is between people (the Jews and the Greeks) and sin. It is obvious that people cannot literally be “under” sin like a person being under a bridge. Nor are people “subject to” sin as if it were a superior officer, except in a figurative sense (which figure occurs later in Romans). In this context, “under” means “subject to” but in the sense of “under/subject to a certain condition.”

¹¹⁷ This phrase occurs in [Romans 7:14](#) with the definite article “the sin.” In the NASB it is translated as “to sin.” This exact phrase, “under sin,” occurs in [Galatians 3:22](#).

¹¹⁸ See Vincent’s Word Studies here: <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/vws/romans/3.htm>.

¹¹⁹ For more on “unwritten moral law,” see the section “[Sin and Law](#).”

In Romans 3:9, “sin” is being used figuratively to refer to *the judgment and punishment associated with sin*.¹²⁰ The phrase “under sin” could therefore be rendered “subject to a guilty verdict and the punishment that is due sin.”

This understanding is reinforced by the preceding context. Note the occurrences of “judgment of God” in Romans 2 vv. [2](#) and [3](#), and more specifically the following verses.

Romans 2:5 and 12 (ESV)

⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you [Jews] are **storing up wrath** for yourself on **the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed**. ... ¹² For all who have sinned without the law [“Greeks”] will also **perish** without the law, and all who have sinned under the law [Jews] **will be judged** by the law.¹²¹

Context indicates whether “judgment” is positive or negative. This is similar to the word “verdict” which can be “for” or “against.” On the positive side, judgment could mean not guilty (a verdict to acquit). On the negative side, judgment means guilty (a verdict to convict). In this context, judgment means guilty and therefore subject to God’s wrath—ultimately the second death. In this sense, both Jews and Greeks (and all by extension) are “under sin,” that is, subject to a guilty verdict and a death sentence since all have committed sin. No type or amount of personal activity can alter this “death sentence.” In a sense, every person is a “dead man walking,” an expression that describes a convict walking towards execution.

Regarding death, there are two literal deaths identified in Scripture.¹²² The “common death” is what all experience regardless of what they do or do not do. This death is a consequence of Adam’s disobedience in the garden. This death is temporary as all will be brought back to life at some point in the future. On the other hand, the “second death” is a consequence of each person’s own intents and actions. The unrighteous and unjust will experience this death.¹²³ This death is permanent. Here in Romans 3:9, “under sin” primarily refers to the judgment and punishment associated with this “second death.”¹²⁴

Regarding the phrase “under sin,” some commentaries insert the word “power” in the expression and say, “under *the power of sin*.” This implies something different than what the verse is declaring. While “Sin” is personified later in expressions like, “slave of Sin,” that is not the sense of the word “sin” in this context. As is declared subsequently in Romans, those who accept Christ and his accomplishment are judged “not guilty” and, therefore, are no longer “under the death sentence associated with sin.”

Before leaving this section, we note that Romans 3:10 through 18 are quotes primarily from Psalms but paralleled in other OT writings and can generally be considered to be quotes from “the Law.” These quotes, while they may apply to all, are specifically addressed to Jews who would be familiar with them. This section may be viewed as further indictment of the Jews and is summed up in v.19.

Romans 3:19

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the Law says [referring to the previous 8 verses], it speaks to those

¹²⁰ This is the figure of speech metonymy “in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated, as in the use of *Washington* for *the United States government* or of *the sword* for *military power*.” (The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language: <https://ahdictionary.com>.)

¹²¹ Regarding the “final judgment,” see also [John 5:28, 29](#); [Acts 24:15](#).

¹²² See the section “[Two Death](#).”

¹²³ See Revelation 20:[14b](#) and [15](#); [21:8](#).

¹²⁴ Note that babies and infants are not held accountable. They are subject to the “common death” because of Adam’s disobedience, but they are not held accountable for their own actions until they reach an “age of accountability.” This is not a specific age but an age at which the individual can distinguish right and wrong.

who are under the Law [the Jews], so that **every mouth** may be closed and all the world [including Jews] may become accountable to God;

The expression “every mouth may be closed” is not being addressed to “everyone” but specifically to those Jews who might still be considering themselves righteous before God based on their supposed adherence to the Law. Both the Jews and the Greeks have already been charged and found guilty meaning there is no further case to be made. However, there may be some Jews who have taken issue with Paul’s indictment, so here he levies the testimony of the Law to “shut the mouths” of those who may yet consider themselves righteous based on their supposed adherence to the Law. The remaining verses in the chapter bring forward the truth that righteousness before God is based on faith/trust/believing¹²⁵ in God and His word and not by the carrying out of actions prescribed by the Law.

“In Sin”

Romans 6:1

¹ What shall we say then?¹²⁶ Are we to **continue in sin** so that grace may increase?

This verse introduces the phrase “continue in sin.” A handful of versions have, “continue sinning;” turning the noun “sin” into a verb. We believe this does not accurately represent the sense of the phrase in context. Paul was certainly acquainted with the verb and could have written, “continue sinning.” In fact, 14 verses later in v. 15 we see, “Shall we sin (verb)...?” The fact that he wrote “continue in sin” using the singular noun in v. 1 indicates a different sense than “continue sinning.”

In consideration of this phrase, “continue in sin,” we feel it necessary to provide the context leading up to the question posed here. We previously considered Chapters 1, 2, and 3 where Paul identified various activities and/or mindsets that would be considered sinning and, because everyone sins, everyone is considered guilty. Towards the end of Chapter 3, we clearly see that the way out from “under sin” is not by “works of the Law.” Rather, a person is considered or declared righteous in God’s sight through trust in Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:21 and 22

²¹ But now apart from the [Mosaic] Law the **righteousness** of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the [Mosaic] Law and the Prophets, ²² even the **righteousness** of God through **faith** [trust] **in Jesus Christ for all those who believe**; for there is no distinction [between Jew and Greek];

Some Jews may yet have had trouble “buying into” the truth that righteousness before God was based on trust and not adherence to the Mosaic Law. The balance of Chapter 3 declares that this righteousness before God is a gift and therefore no one can boast about having earned it, that is, through “works.” This truth does not nullify the Mosaic Law but upholds it in the sense that the Mosaic Law confirmed that Abraham was declared righteous by his trust in God [[Genesis 15:6](#)]. Abraham was considered righteous when he finally believed God’s promise that he would have a child and be the father of many nations. Chapter 4 goes into great detail on this point.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ The words “faith/trust/believing” can have subtle variations in meaning in peoples’ minds. See <https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/Appendix/2/bb>. Based on that information, we will use “trust.”

¹²⁶ [Vincent’s Word Studies](#): “A transition-expression and a debater’s phrase” (Morison). The use of this phrase points to Paul’s training in the Rabbinical schools, where questions were propounded and the students encouraged to debate, objections being suddenly interposed and answered. This rhetorical method has also been described as “diatribe” where the writer is presenting a supposed audience member who is questioning him.

¹²⁷ See [James 2:21](#) and [22](#). In this context, the “works” proved or “perfected” Abraham’s faith.

Chapter 5 then opens with a restatement of Romans 3:22.

Romans 5:1

¹Therefore, having been **justified by faith** [trust], we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

The word “justified” [*dikaioō*] is used in a variety of contexts and can carry various meanings. The root word *diké* means “**right**, especially a **judicial verdict** which declares someone approved or disapproved; a judgment (just finding) that regards someone (something) as ‘guilty’ or ‘innocent.’” The phrase can therefore be translated as “judged/declared righteous based on trust” and can carry the legal sense of “acquitted.” Being acquitted is a **permanent legal standing** before God that is based on Christ’s sacrifice of his life.

What follows in Chapter 5 begins to go “deeper” into the issue of sin—not just sins or sinning which have been addressed at least in part up to this point. Remember, we are endeavoring to grasp the sense of the expression “continue in sin.” It is one thing to have God—The Righteous Judge—declare a person acquitted, i.e., free to leave the courtroom no longer facing a death sentence. It is quite another thing for The Judge to want a **relationship** with the acquitted. This relational aspect is expressed in the next verse in Romans.

Romans 5:2a

²through whom [our Lord Jesus Christ] also we have obtained our introduction by faith [trust] into this grace in which we stand;

Having an “introduction into grace” is like an open door into the presence of God—having access to a relationship with God and all the benefits that come with it. This goes beyond just being acquitted. Not only is the charged party “free to go” but now they are “free to come” into a relationship with The Judge. Establishing a personal relationship between The Judge and the acquitted will require some changes. One significant change that is necessary for this relationship to develop is the gift of holy spirit.

Romans 5:5

⁵and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit [the spirit-gift] who [that] was given to us.

The phrase “through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” can literally be rendered as “through holy spirit, the one *spirit*, having been given to us.” There is no article “the” associated with “holy spirit” in the text. Most versions capitalize “holy spirit” and include “the” because the words are translated by individuals or groups who believe the gift of holy spirit is a person. We believe holy spirit is a gift, an enablement that gives its recipient the ability to have a direct relationship with God (who is spirit) and the ability to exercise His power (like Christ did).

Throughout the OT there were individuals who had spirit, e.g., Saul, Samson, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc., but that spirit was not guaranteed or permanent for them (note Saul and Samson in particular). Now, not only is this gift of holy spirit available to anyone who believes, but because this gift is permanent, it is considered a “down payment” for ultimately having a complete and unhindered relationship with God in the future [[Ephesians 1:13b, 14](#); [2 Corinthians 1:22](#)].

The idea of receiving spirit or having a relationship with God would not be totally “new news” to the Jews...only that it was available to anyone who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, including Gentiles. But the following verses would certainly be new and shocking news.

Romans 5:6, 8, 10

⁶ while we were still **helpless** ... Christ died for the **ungodly** ... ⁸ ... while we were yet **sinners** ...
¹⁰ ... while we were **enemies** ...

Not many, if any, Jews would have considered themselves to be “helpless,” “ungodly,” “sinners,” and especially “enemies” of God. This description is applicable to all, including Jews, and indicates why it is necessary for there to be a new and better relationship with God. We begin to see how this letter is gradually going “deeper” into the issue of sin, which is something more than sinning.

In the following verses, the establishment of this new relationship with God is described as being “reconciled to God”—not just acquitted but brought back into a relationship with God.

Romans 5:10 and 11

¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were **reconciled** [*katallassó*] **to God** through the death of His Son, much more, **having been reconciled** [*katallassó*], we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have **now received the reconciliation** [*katallagé*].

Below we have indicated where “reconcile” and “reconciliation” occur in Scripture.

katallassó: Romans 5:10 (2x); 2 Corinthians 5:[18](#), [19](#), and [20](#); [1 Corinthians 7:11](#).

katallagé: Romans 5:11; 2 Corinthians 5:[18](#) and [19](#); [Romans 11:15](#).

It is clear from both Romans 5:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:18 and 19 that God made it available for people to be reconciled to Himself through the work of Christ. It is not as though anyone met God “half-way” to be reconciled or even that anyone except Christ could have done anything to accomplish the reconciliation. If not for Christ, all would be subject to God’s wrath and permanent death, which means, no relationship with God ever. The sacrifice of Christ means that God is not counting (or charging) anyone’s trespasses against them [2 Corinthians 5:[19](#)], but perhaps more importantly, those who believe on Christ are reconciled to God. So, in addition to the legal aspect of acquittal, there is a personal/relational aspect to what has been accomplished through Christ.

The “root” of the relationship problem, i.e., the lack of a relationship with God, is brought forward in the following verse.

Romans 5:12a

¹² Therefore, just as through one man [the] sin entered into the world, and death through [the] sin...

The text includes the definite article “the” with the word “sin” in both instances. This is typically not indicated in translations; however, it is potentially important here and in the phrase under consideration, “continue in [the] sin,” where again the definite article “the” is used. The following was considered in the section “[Sin as a Condition](#)” but is worth repeating here.

Now here is where the definition of Sin as used in Romans 5–8 might be a bit confusing. First note that “sin” is singular, so it is not “sins” but “sin” the significance of which becomes more apparent from the next fact. In many (most) of Paul’s uses of hamartia [sin] in Romans 5-8, Paul places the definite article “the” before “sin” (even though the “the” is not translated in most English versions for it would be somewhat difficult to read). In this way Paul is speaking of “Sin” figuratively, in what is referred to as a metonym ... which describes the substitution of a word referring to an attribute for the thing that is meant (eg, the use of the word “crown” to refer to the entire “monarchy”). ... what Paul is doing with the Sin (he hamartia) is to use this word not to describe the actions or

results (i.e., the specific sins we commit in thought, word or deed) but to describe the **underlying root cause** ...¹²⁸

We consider the “underlying root cause” to be the **consequences** of Adam’s disobedience detailed in Romans 5 (and other places). It is the consequences of Adam’s disobedience that have been passed on to all his progeny. Every person is subject to these consequences which have created a condition (status or state) that everyone is **in** or **impacted by**. Here are some of the consequences included in this condition: being subject to the “common death;” the possibility of premature death through injury, disease, or accident; being “breath-life” only (not having spirit); and living in a world dominated by an evil spirit being. Each of these consequences carries associated problems not the least of which is the fact that being “breath-life” only while living in a world dominated by an evil spirit guarantees that a person will commit sin and therefore be subject to God’s judgment and condemnation. In general, these consequences describe the condition of being helpless, ungodly, sinners, and enemies.

We note that Adam’s progeny are not considered **guilty** of Adam’s disobedience. This would be contrary to God’s sense of justice [Ezekiel 18:20]. However, it is possible that one person’s sinful act can result in others experiencing consequences. We might consider Achan [Joshua 7] whose violation of a direct command resulted in the death of 36 men and defeat in a battle. All the children of Israel were not held guilty for Achan’s disobedience, but they suffered consequences.¹²⁹ In like manner, one act of disobedience on Adam’s part has resulted in consequences for all of humanity. The “whole truth” regarding the consequences of Adam’s disobedience was never declared in the OT because there was no immediately available resolution to address the consequences.

Following is a summary of Chapter 5 vv. 15–21. These verses provide more detail on “the sin condition” and how God through Christ was able to “remedy” the condition.

Adam	Christ
v.15 “many died” [apothnέskó]	“the gift”
v. 16 “judgment” [krima] ... “condemnation” [katakrima]	“justification” [“declared right”] [dikaióma]
v. 17 “death” [thanatos]	“the gift of righteousness” [dikaiosuné]
v. 18 “through one transgression” “condemnation” [katakrima]	“through one act of righteousness” “justification” [“acquittal”] [dikaiósis]
v. 19 “through one man’s disobedience” “many made sinners”	“through the obedience of the one” “many made righteous” [dikaios]
v. 21 “sin [Sin] reigned in death” [thanatos]	“grace [Grace] would reign through righteousness [dikaiosuné] to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord

In these verses, we see “died,” “judgment,” “condemnation,” “death,” and “made sinners” as consequences of Adam’s disobedience. Every person’s relationship with these consequences was unheard of in the OT writings. What is presented here would truly be “new news” to the Jews (and anyone hearing or reading it). So, we see we have entered “new territory.”

¹²⁸ See https://www.preceptaustin.org/romans_717-20. We note that “the sin” is personified in several contexts and could, by English rules of grammar, be capitalized, e.g., “Sin reigned” [5:21]. In such a case, there would be two “layers” of figure: 1) personification and 2) metonymy. In this example, the sense would be, “[Sin] As if an emperor [personification] reigned, meaning sin, as the consequences of Adam’s disobedience [metonymy] dominated everyone’s life.”

¹²⁹ Ultimately, Achan was found guilty and punished with death, along with his family.

We note that several of the words highlighted above have legal overtones. Adam's disobedience, his "crime," brought "judgment" and "condemnation" which essentially means a "death sentence." This can primarily refer to the "common death" that all are subject to regardless of what they do or do not do. We previously noted that Adam's progeny are not held guilty for Adam's crime; however, all are subject to this "death sentence" as a consequence of Adam's disobedience. Beyond that, It is only through the promise of a "redeemer" that a person's own, personal sins can be "acquitted" and they can escape the "second death." God cannot violate His nature and simply "accept" or "ignore" sin; His judgment is mandatory and righteous. Christ's obedience, his righteous act of offering his life, of being the redeemer, brought about the availability of being declared righteous to anyone who has or who will believe on him.¹³⁰

In Romans 5:19, the expressions "made righteous" and "made sinners" are both unique expressions, i.e., this is the only place in Scripture where these expressions occur. "Made" in both cases is *kathistémi*, a word used in a variety of contexts. Here it may perhaps carry the sense of *give standing (authority, status)*. If so, the sense is that Adam's disobedience put everyone in the status/standing of "sinner" before God, whereas Christ's obedience put everyone (who accepts him) in the status/standing of "righteous" before God. This would be apart from any action on the individual's part. The word "designated" might work well. There are several other verses where people are "designated" as "rulers" or "officers" or "elders."¹³¹ This would make the point that nothing has changed "within" a person that is so designated only that they have a certain position or standing.

"Made sinners" does not mean that a person is inherently evil and can only do evil any more than "made righteous" means that a person is now inherently righteous and always acts righteously. This standing is based on Christ's obedience just as the "sinner standing" is based on Adam's disobedience. It is accurate to say that the consequences of Adam's disobedience put everyone into a condition that guaranteed sinning to one degree or another but that is not the main focus here. Where this view is particular helpful is that it does not negate free will—a person, like Abraham, Moses, or David can choose to be more God-centered than self-centered. The person who has accepted Christ and has been "made righteous" can choose to act out that righteousness and can be successful in that endeavor to one degree or another. Subsequent verses encourage such action.

All of this is background leading up to the question posed in Romans 6:1, "Are we to continue in the sin?"

As previously considered, "the sin" refers to the condition that is the consequence of Adam's disobedience. In other words, "sin" is not referring to any particular act or acts of sinning, but rather, "the sin" is referring to the condition or status/standing of all because of Adam's disobedience. We might say that all have been forced into a relationship with the consequences of Adam's disobedience.

The word "in," like "under," is a relationship word. In its literal sense, "in" describes the relationship of a subject to an object, e.g., water is **in** the glass, the nail is **in** the wood, etc. These are examples that demonstrate a physical relationship of one thing to another. If someone lives **in** Louisiana, we are describing the relationship of the person to a physical location. If we say, "I am **in** trouble," we are describing our relationship to circumstances. In the expression, "Shall we continue **in** the sin," it is

¹³⁰ It is possible that Adam and Eve were forgiven as indicated by God "covering" them with animal skins. This implies a "blood sacrifice" which points to the Christ. They were not executed but eventually experienced the "common death" which was one of the consequences of Adam's disobedience.

¹³¹ Vincent's Word Studies: <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/romans/5-19.htm>—"Used elsewhere by Paul only at [Titus 1:5](#), in the sense of to appoint to office or position. This is its most frequent use in the New Testament. See [Matthew 24:45](#); [Acts 6:3](#); [Acts 7:10](#); [Hebrews 5:1](#)."

implied that there is a relationship between a person and the sin condition. In light of this, we are perhaps justified in translating “in the sin” in 6:1 as “with the sin” to perhaps emphasize a relationship. In this case, Paul’s meaning might be along the lines of, “Shall we continue **in** our relationship **with** the condition we were made subject to because of Adam’s disobedience?” Or, said another way, “Should we continue as if we are still helpless, ungodly, sinners, and enemies of God?”

The following is perhaps a bit technical, but it provides support for the foregoing proposition. “Sin” in this verse is in the dative case. There is no word “in” in the text. It is supplied by the translator to reflect the dative case. There are different types of datives. In this context, we might apply the “dative of instrumental association.” An example of this is in Mark 2:15, “...many tax collectors and sinners were dining **with Jesus.**”¹³² This type of dative indicates an association, relation, or affiliation of some kind.¹³³ Based on the preceding and subsequent context of Romans 6:1, we feel that “continue **with** the sin,” meaning “continue in a relationship with the sin,” or, personified, “continue in a relationship with Sin,” would perhaps better communicate the sense than “continue **in** sin” which tends to imply continue sinning.

We recognize that in Chapter 6, Paul (God) encourage people to change their behavior in a positive way, i.e., to not sin; however, before sinning can be subdued, a change in mindset must occur. With this in mind, we note the following. In Chapter 6 vv. 1–14, there is a focus on “death/dead” vs. “life/alive”—two very different states. In vv. 15–32, the focus is on “slave” vs. “free”—two very different conditions. These themes are used to contrast the old condition/state with the new condition/state. As these themes are grasped and taken to heart, new behaviors can follow.

In summary, all were not only “under (subject to the condemnation associated with) sin” but “in a relationship with the sin condition” or, personified, “in a relationship with Sin.” It is clear that those who have accepted Christ are no longer “under sin” because of what has been accomplished through Christ. Why and how that person should no longer continue “in a relationship with Sin” is addressed in subsequent verses.

This brings us to...

“Died/Dead to Sin”

We first note that “death” is a theme throughout Chapter 6.

“**death**” [*thanatos*]¹³²—7x (vv. 3, 4, 5, 9, 16, 21, 23);

“**died**” [*apothnēskō*]¹³³—6x (vv. 2, 7, 8, 9, 10 (2x)); and

“**dead**” [*nekros*]¹³⁴—4x (vv. 4, 9, 11, 13).

In addition to these frequent occurrences, the noun “sin” occurs 15x. Of these occurrences, it is worth noting that there are only 6 in the dative singular.¹³⁴ Each of these occurrences is unique in Scripture and each also includes the definite article “the” in the text. These facts call for some degree of focus.

[v. 1](#) shall we continue in the sin

[v. 2](#) we who died to the sin

¹³² See https://www.blueletterbible.org/esv/mar/2/15/t_conc_959015.

¹³³ https://ugg.readthedocs.io/en/latest/case_dative.html.

¹³⁴ Blue Letter Bible, see ἀμαρτία—7x here: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g266/esv/mgnt/0-1/>. The only other occurrence of this form is in [John 8:21](#)—the text reads, “die in [en] the sin of you.” Regarding the dative, see https://ugg.readthedocs.io/en/latest/case_dative.html.

[v. 6](#) we would no longer be enslaved to the sin

[v. 10](#) Christ died to the sin

[v. 11](#) consider yourselves dead to the sin

[v. 13](#) don't use your members as instruments of unrighteousness to the sin¹³⁵

Note in vv. 2, 10, and 11 that it does not say, “died/dead to **sinning**” but “died/dead to **the sin.**” We have heard the expression, “he/she is **dead to me**” which parrots the father of the prodigal son who said his son was “dead” [Luke 15:[24](#) and [32](#)]. The sense of “dead” in these expressions is that the speaker is saying there is no active relationship with the one they are referring to. The sense in v. 10, “Christ died to the sin,” is that “the sin (condition)” or “Sin (personified)” has no active relationship with Christ or no more influence on Christ (or even potential influence). Jesus suffered significant abuse at the hands of Sin, figuratively speaking, even to the point of death. Having been resurrected as a new man, Sin has no more influence over him. It is true that Christ is “free from sinning,” but that is not what is being declared here. He is “free from the sin condition” or “free from the consequences of the sin condition” or personified, “free from Sin.” We are considered to have died with Christ; therefore, we are to consider that we are also dead to the sin condition or ultimately to the consequences of the sin condition or dead to Sin. Unlike Christ, we are certainly not “free from sinning” (yet). The way it is stated in Romans 6 makes the point that neither Sin nor Death are dead (yet). These “characters” continue to dominate and abuse those who are in relationship with them, and they will continue to be active and abusive until the end [[Revelation 20:10 and 14](#)].

We will first consider “died to the sin” in v. 10 which refers to Christ and might be viewed as the crux of the matter at hand. Then, we will go back to v. 2 which refers to those who have believed on Christ.

Romans 6:10

¹⁰ For the death that He [Christ] died, He **died to [the] sin** once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

Jesus Christ experienced a literal death (he died). Having died, the sin condition and its consequences no longer had any relationship with him—he was dead. Stated another way, Christ was no longer subject to the sin condition or its consequences or to Sin because he was dead. This “death to the sin” has a couple of important aspects. First, Christ is never going to die again. “Sin” cannot subject him to death ever again. Second, in his resurrected form, Christ is inherently righteous, meaning, not even tempted with evil. Sin has no relationship with him or influence over him. No person has ever been inherently righteous. Christ is the first.¹³⁶

We will now backup to v. 2 where we have Paul’s short response to the question, “Are we to continue in the sin so that grace may abound?”

Romans 6:2

² May it never be! How shall we who **died to [the] sin** still live in it?

This is the same construction as in v. 10 above. In that verse, it was Christ who “died to the sin,” here it is we who “died to the sin.” Verse 10 explains verse 2—because Christ died to the consequences of the sin condition, those who believe on him should consider themselves as having also died to the

¹³⁵ We also note the following with respect to the definite article “the:” genitive case: 6:6 body of [the] sin; 6:7 freed from [the] sin; 6:17 slaves of [the] sin; 6:18 freed from [the] sin; 6:20 slaves of [the] sin; 6:22 freed from [the] sin; 6:23 wages of [the] sin. There is one occurrence of the nominative case: 6:12 do not let [the] sin reign.

¹³⁶ Regarding Christ being inherently righteous, see the section “[Sin and Law](#).”

consequences of the sin condition. As Adam's disobedience impacted everyone, Christ's obedience impacts everyone. The only difference is that there was no choice involved where Adam is concerned. This is described in v. 6, as being "enslaved to the sin." With Christ, there is a choice—anyone who believes on him can "inherit" his benefits and be "freed from sin."

The primary consequence of sin in this context is condemnation and the second death—the "wrath of God." Personified "Sin" cannot impose either of those on those who have believed on Christ. However, there are still consequences in the here-and-now for sins committed. We are not dead to sinning or its consequences. It may also be worth noting that Christ's death did not eliminate the "common death" except in the case where those who have believed on him are still alive when he returns. Those individuals will not experience the "common death."

Those who have believed on Christ no longer have any relationship with the coming condemnation and death. This is explicitly stated in v. 11.

Romans 6:11

¹¹ Even so consider yourselves to be dead to [the] sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

The word "consider" is legitimate but might be a little weak. The sense is more at "reason and conclude" based on the previous information. In the vernacular, we might say, "Adjust your thinking accordingly." You who have believed on the Christ are "dead to the sin" (the consequences imposed by the sin condition) and are now "alive to God in Christ Jesus." This is an interesting expression as well. Literally, the text has, "living to God." Most versions, like the NASB, have "alive to God." The opposite of this statement would be "dead to God," which is an accurate statement concerning everyone without trust in Christ. "Living to God," as in serving God is certainly an aspect of the relationship between us and God. So, this expression could be taken in two ways. Having believed on Christ, God sees us as alive rather than dead and since we are "alive" and not dead we can serve God. As we take this truth to heart, we can dedicate our lives in service to Him rather than in service to Sin. We can begin to foster a new relationship, a relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.¹³⁷

We note that the idea of relationship would perhaps serve as a backdrop for why there are frequent examples of personification of "sin" particularly in Romans: see "enslaved to Sin" or "slave(s) of Sin" (6:6, 17, 20), "freed from Sin" (6:7, 18, 22), "do not let Sin reign" (6:12), "Sin shall not be master over you" (6:14), "wages paid by Sin" (6:23). Note as well on the "positive" side: "[slave] of Obedience" (6:16) and "slaves of Righteousness" (6:18, 19). The relationship a person chooses to engage in impacts behavior in the here-and-now, but also impacts what is going to happen from an eternal perspective.

Up to this point, the focus has been on mindset or paradigm. Behavior comes into the picture in v. 13.

Romans 6:13

¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to [the] sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

For a visual representation of having been dead (a certain condition) but now alive (in a different condition) see [John 11:44](#). When Lazarus came out from the tomb, Jesus commanded, "Unbind him and let him go!" The one who has believed on Christ should want to be "unbound" from the wrappings of the Sin and Death. This leads us to our final point.

¹³⁷ See [Galatians 2:19](#) and [1 Peter 4:2](#).

“Freed from Sin”

Romans 6:6, 7, 18, and 22

⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to [the] sin; ⁷ for he who has died is **freed** [*dikaioó*] **from [the] sin**. ... ¹⁸ and having been **freed** [*eleutheroó*] **from [the] sin**, you became slaves of [the] righteousness. ... ²² But now having been **freed** [*eleutheroó*] **from [the] sin** and enslaved [having become slaves] to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life [life to the ages].

In these verses, “the sin” could be personified and translated as “Sin.” Therefore, having been slaves to Sin, but having died [with Christ], we are now freed from Sin. The picture being painted by this figurative language would have spoken loudly to Romans and others in Paul’s audience. Slavery was widely practiced and therefore was a very present reality. As a slave master, Sin eventually requires death. Christ died in our place so we are “free” from that slave master.¹³⁸ In literal terms, if a slave dies, they are “free” from their master and any obligation to that master.

With the advent of Christ and his righteous act of surrendering his life and God’s validation of his righteousness through raising him from the dead, those who accept Christ are “**freed from Sin**” ([Romans 6:7](#)). Being “freed from Sin” first means being “freed” from the ultimate consequence of sin, namely, the “second death.” Being “freed” also means being able to live a different life in the here-and-now. It may also mean for some to be freed from the “common death” when Christ returns. Because of Christ’s accomplishment, those who have believed on him are “dead to” and “freed from” a relationship with Sin and Death and are now “slaves of Righteousness” [[Romans 6:18](#)] and “have become slaves to God” [[Romans 6:22](#)]. These are statements of condition or legal status and not statements of behavior, although these truths should impact behavior in a positive way.

The word “sanctification” (v.22) describes an altered lifestyle, that is, a Christ-like life. While some verses in Chapter 6 indicate action along these lines, the emphasis is on establishing a new legal status and a new condition. As a person builds these truths into their heart and mind, it will tend to motivate towards more righteous living. However, how that new righteous life gets implemented is handled specifically in subsequent chapters.

“Freed from Sin” does not mean “freed from sinning” or “freed from our mortal (‘weak’) physical body” [[Romans 6:12](#)].¹³⁹ Nor does it mean being freed from any consequences of sin. There are still consequences for sin in the here-and-now.¹⁴⁰ Lying, cheating, and stealing still have consequences; however, the one “freed” no longer needs to “live in a relationship with” sin consciousness ([Hebrews 10:2](#)). Sin consciousness is the awareness of sin and the weight of expecting retribution from God for sinful acts. This is something very pertinent to the Jews, who, because of the Mosaic Law, were very conscious of sin (or at least should have been) and conscious of its ultimate consequence.

Being “dead to sin,” a person is dead to that relationship. The one who has believed on Christ should now “walk in newness of life” ([Romans 6:4](#)) realizing that they are in a new relationship with God and Christ and will “be in the likeness of Jesus’ resurrection” in the future ([Romans 6:4](#) and [5](#)). Particularly for the Jews, “sin” was a “master” because they were “under (subject to) the Mosaic Law,” which figuratively “demanded” obedience and “demanded” a penalty for violations of that Law. Now being

¹³⁸ For an interesting illustration, go to https://www.preceptaustin.org/romans_66-7 and search on “Napoleon.”

¹³⁹ See the section “[Flesh is Weak](#).”

¹⁴⁰ There are also “eternal” consequences in the form of loss of rewards, i.e., not receiving the reward(s) for leading the life of a true disciple.

“under grace,” the believer (whether Jew or Greek) is free and “alive to God” ([Romans 6:11](#)) without fear of any sin resulting in permanent death ([Romans 6:14](#)). Again, consider that the words “death,” “died,” and “dead” occur 17 times in Romans 6. This indicates a focus on a change of condition—being “dead” (permanently, eternally) or being “alive” (permanently, eternally)—changed behavior is a logical outworking of the realization of this new condition and new legal status. A person’s mindset is critical to experiencing the benefits of this new relationship with God and Christ.

This section of Romans would seem to potentially have more impact on the Jews of Paul’s day than on the Greeks of Paul’s day. The Jews lived under the Mosaic Law and under the curse of that law ([Deuteronomy 11:26–28](#)). “Sin” meant something specific to a Jew and it was closely associated with punishment, including death. The concept of “sin” [*hamartia*] to a Greek was something quite different.¹⁴¹ To say, “you died to sin” would have been a radical idea to a Jew. Back in [Romans 5:20](#) and leading up to Chapter 6, we see the expression, “The Law came in.” The subject of the Mosaic Law would not be particularly pertinent to a Greek who had no knowledge of that law. Nevertheless, the Greeks had to realize that though they were not “under the Mosaic Law,” they were still “under law” and liable before God because of the evidence of creation and conscience ([Romans 1:18–32](#)). The author admits to having been a “Greek”—not in a college fraternity but in a “Greek relationship” with sin—that is, one who “befriended Sin” (was in reality “enslaved to Sin”) and had no interest in pursuing a relationship with God.

“Freed from Sin” is a new **condition** for the one who accepts Christ. In [1 Timothy 2:6](#), this new condition is described as having been ransomed. This “ransom” was paid in the form of Christ’s death. This “ransom” can be viewed figuratively as having been “paid to Sin and Death” who held everyone hostage. Christ fulfilled the “demand” of Sin by offering himself to Death. Therefore, those who believe on him will not need to fulfill that demand. Those who believe are righteous before God...acquitted in legal verbiage and are in “right standing” with God. This new legal status is permanent, not because of anything a person does or does not do but because of what Christ did once for all. Being righteous equates to life...eternal, everlasting life—all through Christ—no longer under a death sentence but under a “life sentence” and this by grace. Hence believers are now considered to be, and should think of themselves as being, “**under the authority of grace** [Grace]” [[Romans 6:14](#) and [6:15](#)] and “**under the authority of righteousness** [Righteousness]” [[Romans 6:18](#)].

“Under sin,” “in sin,” “dead to sin,” and “freed from sin” speak to a change in legal status, condition, and relationship. How to address and potentially overcome “sinning,” which inhibits this new relationship with God and Christ is covered in subsequent chapters in Romans.

¹⁴¹ See the section “[The Word ‘Sin’](#).”