



Romans 6:12-14

Greetings

Greetings, everyone! Welcome to Wednesday's edition of E-DiBS! Wednesday means we've made it to the middle of the week, and that's an accomplishment that we'll celebrate as a gift from God! Today we'll keep going forward through Romans 6, so let's pray and go right to the Lord's Word.

Prayer

Almighty God, you are worthy to be praised, and so we praise you! You are worthy of our worship, and so we worship you in spirit and in truth. Your will is holy and perfect, and so we desire to walk in your ways. By the power of your Spirit, help us to be faithful and obedient to you in all that we do today, that your name be glorified among us and that we know and experience the abundant life you desire for us. Bless the teaching of your Word to that end, for Jesus' sake, amen.

Getting Started

As we get started today, Romans 6 continues to speak to us as the new creations in Christ that we are, and though the text is very prescriptive, it is packed with the good news of the Gospel at the same time! Our focus: living as those brought from death to life.

Romans 6:12-14

¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

¹⁴For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

In church the other day I was talking to our kids about what it means to give an offering, and I was also sharing with them several different forms that offerings can take. It was a disaster! It was very likely the worst children's message I have ever given! First, in our tiny church with very little room, there were about 25 kids crowded up around the Communion rail. Next, the majority of those kids were pretty young, and I didn't do a good job of making things developmentally appropriate so that they could understand what I was talking about. And finally, because of the first two points there was so much chaos and divided attention/inattention that even if I had given an incredible presentation, most of the children wouldn't have gotten it! Sitting at home later that afternoon, I got to thinking about things, and I came to a rather startling conclusion: maybe one of the reasons I didn't do such a great job talking about giving an offering was because I didn't have a very good grasp on the issue myself. And if that was true, then maybe the people in my congregation didn't either. How long has it been since any of us has actually studied what the Word of God says regarding this topic? As I've been finding out anew, the direction the Scriptures take us on this subject as God's people isn't necessarily the one we would think.

Verse 12: As we've been finding out through our look at the past several verses here in Romans 6, in Christ the old man in us is dead, and there is new life - free from the power of sin - in our Lord Jesus. That being established, the apostle Paul now takes a big step forward in today's reading, and it starts with the exhortation we find in verse 12: "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires." Notice a couple of things: first, the responsibility for keeping sin at bay is on us - more about that in a moment - and second, the fact that we are dead to sin and that it has no power over us does not mean that our mortal body is not preoccupied with evil! Paul still says it, though, doesn't he: "Do not let sin reign." Here's what we need to understand as we get into this today: This admonition is one that can only be made to the Christian... to the one who has had the old man crucified with Christ and has been given a new man in Jesus. Only the person set free from the power of sin can be told, "do not let sin reign." In addition, the Christian, though a new creation in Christ Jesus, still needs the power of Jesus to have victory in this task. He cannot do it in his own strength.

And indeed, many of us as Christians can attest to that, can't we. So many of us never seem to experience the freedom that Paul is speaking about here. How many of you know what I'm talking about today? D. L. Moody used to speak of an old African American woman in the South following the Civil War. Being a former slave, she was confused about her status and asked: "Now am I free, or am I not? When I go to my old master he says I'm not free, and when I go to my own people they say I am, and I don't know whether I'm free or not. Some people told me that Abraham Lincoln signed a proclamation, but master says he didn't; he didn't have any right to." This is exactly the place many Christians are. We are, and have been, legally set free from our slavery to sin, yet we are unsure of that truth.

Verse 13: Here's another illustration: A person can be "officially" set free, yet still feel imprisoned in his or her mind. We see it all the time: folks who serve their time for crimes they've committed and who are then set free often still think and act like what? Like prisoners. The habits of freedom aren't ingrained in their lives yet...and so it is with we who have been set free from the bondage of sin. So – how then do we change? Take a look at verse 13. How does it start? Do not offer - there's the word, *offer* - the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness. This is the first key to walking in the freedom Jesus Christ has won for us is. We are told to not present the parts of our body to the service of sin. The New Living Translation says it this way: "Do not let any part of your body become a tool of wickedness, to be used for sinning." The idea is here is very practical: "You have eyes. Do not put them in the service of sin. You have ears. Do not put them into the service of sin," and on it goes. By the way, "instruments" here can also be translated as "weapons." The parts of our body are weapons in the battle of life. Given over to sin, they are weapons for evil; yet given over to righteousness, they are weapons for good. And that, incidentally, is the second half of what Paul is sharing with us here. Rather than giving over our bodies as instruments of wickedness, we are instead to offer ourselves – again, there's the word, *offer* - to God. This is the second key to walking in the freedom Jesus has won for us is. It isn't enough to take the weapons away from the service of sin. They must then be enlisted in the service of righteousness - and, as in any warfare, the side with superior weapons usually wins.

Verse 14/Wrapping Up

As if in response to that vividly drawn picture, Paul in verse 14 sums things up for us by reminding us once more of the superior power and triumphant victory of God over sin through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ - a power and victory in which we share by faith: "For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace." Wrapping up for the day, there's a lot here that I wish we could linger on, and to be sure, we don't want to be glib in our treatment of the Scriptures, but here we've seen a wonderful introduction to how it is that we walk in freedom rather than bondage as people bought with the blood of Christ. More to come on this issue as we work toward the end of Romans 6, so do be sure and stay with us, won't you? Have a great day, and I'll see you again next time.