

Key:

Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread

Blue – Explanation/Exposition

Red – Application

Green – Illustration

Brown – Quotation

Yellow – Sermon Notes

## Victory in Christ Jesus

Romans 6:12-18

Thank you, Don. Our passage today is **Romans 6:12-18**. We are studying the book of **Romans** in our series “Wholly Redeemed.” And I want to start this morning by recounting a date in American history. **June 6, 1944. 76 years ago this week.** What happened on June 6, 1944? Do you know? D-Day! On that day, “Operation Overlord” took place, and the allied forces including England and America landed 200,000 soldiers on the beaches of France. The operation utilized 1000 ships, the largest naval armada ever. And when those soldiers landed on the beaches and set up a beach-head, the war against Germany was fundamentally over. Germany couldn’t win a two-front war. They had already bled out in Russia the year before. Churchill, Eisenhower, Roosevelt and others knew that if we successfully landed our troops *en masse* on those beaches on June 6, the war would be won. And we did. And we won.<sup>1</sup>

But here’s the thing. Those soldiers still had to fight. Those generals (Patton, Montgomery, Mark Clark, etc.) still had to strategize. Those battles still had to be fought. Even though the war was fundamentally over, the victory still needed to be appropriated by our military.

Here’s where I’m going with this. It’s not a perfect analogy, but analogies never are. Your Christian life is lived in the battles between June 6, 1944 and May 8, 1945. What happened on May 8, 1945? Do you know? That was VE-Day. That’s when the Germans accepted our terms of unconditional surrender. And they wanted to surrender to us, because they were terrified of surrendering to the Russians who were coming the opposite direction. Your Christian life is lived in the battles between D-Day and VE-Day. The victory is won. But you still have to fight. The war is fundamentally over. But the strategies and the fighting and the counterstrikes by the enemy continue.

You got saved on such and such date. You fill in the blank. When you got saved, you became dead to sin and alive to Christ Jesus. You are going to die at such and such date in the future or Christ will return at such and such date in the future. I don’t know that date. In the meantime, in the here and now, you fight, you scrap, you battle, you follow Christ, and you reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive in Christ Jesus. And you daily appropriate the victory that you have in Christ Jesus. Everyone with me?

**You fight the battle against anger. You fight the battle against envy. You fight the battle against lust. You fight the battle against racism. And we struggle and we fight and we represent Christ before this world, and we wait for him to take us home. Amen? VE-Day is coming, Christian? Total and complete victory awaits us. But it hadn’t happened yet.**

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So let’s talk about appropriating Christ’s victory. Let’s talk victory in Christ Jesus, Church. Let’s talk about the power of Christ Jesus experienced in our lives. Remember now, in justification, the penalty of sin is broken. In sanctification, the power of sin is broken. In glorification, the presence of sin is broken. We find ourselves now in the “phase” ... I’m really tired of that word “phase” and “phases” aren’t you? Let’s just call it the realm... Right now we find ourselves in the realm of sanctification, where the power of sin is being continually broken. So let’s talk about that. Three things. Here’s number 1.

**We experience Jesus’s power in our lives as we...**

**1) Stop** letting sin reign over us (6:12-13a)

Paul says this. Let’s pay attention now, Harvest Decatur.

<sup>12</sup> *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body,*

**Last week I told you that I highlight commands in my Greek Bible pink. Do y’all remember me saying that? What color do you think this word “reign” is? This is pink! This is a command. Do this.**

<sup>12</sup> *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.*

<sup>1</sup> Fred Zaspel, “D-Day and VE-Day,” September 13, 2013: <https://credomag.com/2013/09/d-day-and-ve-day-fred-zaspel/>

You know every once in a while you run into some person who says, “Christianity is about grace.” It’s all about grace, grace, grace. Who cares about sin? There’s no hell. There’s no punishment for sin. It’s grace, grace, grace, grace, grace! I get so annoyed by that. Because they don’t mean “grace” in a Biblical sense, what they really mean is tolerance. Paul talks about grace. Paul loves grace. As a matter of fact, he’s going to mention grace in **verse 14**. But when Paul mentions grace, he doesn’t mean tolerance. He means the power of God to save your soul and change your life. That’s why Paul can mention grace and at the same time give you this order like a soldier: **“Do not let sin reign in your body!” “Don’t do it, Christian.” Remember what I said last week. “Grace is power not just pardon.”**

Here’s another command in **verse 13**.

<sup>13</sup> *Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness,*

**You’ve got to say every day, “Here’s my mind, LORD. Use it for good not evil.” “Here are my hands, LORD. Use them for good and not evil.” “Here is my heart. Here are my feet. Here is my brain. Here are my sexual organs. Use them for good and not evil. Use them for righteousness and not unrighteousness.”**

**You know when you get saved, you become like Wyatt Earp. Do you guys know about Wyatt Earp? Wyatt Earp was one of the most famous gunslingers in the American West. He was a menace to society. He was a criminal, and he was troubled. But later in life, nobody really knows why, he became a law-abiding citizen. And he started protecting people instead of harassing them. He started enforcing the law instead of violating it. Let me say it this way. He presented the members of his body as instruments for righteousness instead of unrighteousness.**

**Christian, when you came to Christ, you pulled your six-shooters out of your holster and you laid them down. You took your shotgun, and you took your gun belt, and you took your spurs... you took everything you had, and you gave it to Christ and you said, “Here I am, LORD. Use me for good and not evil.”**

**In fact, according to Romans 12, we are told to take our very lives and offer them up as a living sacrifice before God. Here I am, LORD. Use me. You are like Abraham in the OT. God said, “Abraham.” Abraham says, “Here I am.” “What do you need, LORD? What do you want? I’m here for you. I do your bidding with my life not my own.”**

Now does that mean you always do the right thing as a Christian? No! **You’re Wyatt Earp.** You’ve still got that gunslinger mentality inside of you. If you always did the right thing after you became a Christian, then Paul wouldn’t have to give you this command.

<sup>13</sup> *Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness,*

**By the way, if I could go back to my WWII analogy. In between D-Day and V-E Day there was a great German counteroffensive. It was called “The Battle of the Bulge.” 75,000 Americans lost their lives in that battle in December of 1944. That was the last great offensive of the German military in WWII. After that, they were much easier to neutralize. Is Satan going to score some victories in your life sometime? Yes. Are we going to make mistakes? Yes. Does that mean that Jesus’s ultimate victory is any less certain or definite? No. And that gives us hope to press on even when we do lose the occasional battle.**

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So, the power of Jesus Christ is experienced in our lives as we...1) Stop letting sin reign over us. That’s the negative side of this message. That’s the prohibition. Stop doing this. But that’s not enough. We also need to positively do something. The Christian life can’t just be a list of prohibitions. It also needs to be exhortations. Do this. So Paul says do this. Submit your bodies as instruments of righteousness.

**2) Submit** our bodies as instruments of righteousness (6:13b-14)

Here’s the prohibition in **verse 13**. Let me read it again.

<sup>13</sup> *Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness,*

But Paul doesn’t stop there. It can’t just be a defensive battle. He says also...

*but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life,*

By the way, that word “instruments” in **verse 13** can also be translated “weapons.” It’s the Greek word ὄπλον which often is translated “weapons” or “armor.”<sup>2</sup> If you are thinking to yourself, “**Man, Pastor Tony is using a lot of military analogies today. What gives?**” Well, I’m just following Paul’s lead here. Paul’s alluding to weapons of warfare when he says,

<sup>13</sup> *Do not present your members to sin as [weapons] for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as [weapons] for righteousness.*

**In other words, put your six-shooters back in your holster. Put your shotgun back in your saddle and mount up, Christian. Take your mind, and use it for Christ Jesus. Take your hands and use them in service of Christ Jesus. Take your heart and worship Christ Jesus. You used to sing with all your heart songs about sex and drinking and being stupid. Now, sing with all your heart songs of praise to Jesus Christ your Savior.**

**You used to use your tongue to insult people and tear people down. It made you feel better about yourself, for a while. It gave you cachet and credibility before the world. But now you use your tongue to encourage people. Now you use your tongue to tell people about Jesus. Now you use your tongue as an instrument of righteousness not unrighteousness. Right?**

**I could keep going with this. Use your hands, use your feet, use your mouth, and use your sexual organs for God’s glory and for God’s greater purposes. I love that song that we sing by Phil Wickham. It goes like this:**

*Take these hands, I know they're empty  
But with You they can, Be used for beauty  
In Your perfect Plan, All I am is Yours  
Take these feet, I know they stumble  
But You use the weak, You use the humble  
So, please use me, All I am is Yours*

**That song echoes that other great song from Frances Havergal:**

*Take my life, and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;  
Take my moments and my days,  
Let them flow in ceaseless praise  
Paul says,*

*present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.*

**Every day, Christian. You do this every day!**

**Why, Pastor Tony? Why do we do this? Verse 14.**

<sup>14</sup> *For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.*

**“Wow. You mean being under grace means we are actually more focused on battling sin?” Yes, we are! Grace isn’t just pardon. It’s power. And when you were under law, you were defeated by sin. You had no chance of victory, so you were tempted to just give up. But now that you are under grace, victory is assured. So we have even more motivation to fight against sin. **We don’t fight against sin in order to earn God’s favor. That would be a fool’s errand. We fight against sin because we have God’s favor. We are children of God. God hates sin. God opposes sin. So we do like daddy, as best we can. And we strive to please him.****

Now to that you might say, “**Yeah, but Pastor Tony, why is it so hard sometimes?**” “**Why is victory over sin such a struggle?**” “**I feel like every day for me is the Battle of the Bulge.**” “**Satan is winning battles over me left and right.**” “**What do I do about that?**”

**Well here. That’s number three.**

**We experience Jesus’s power in our lives as we...**

**3) Surrender** to the teaching of Scripture (6:15-18)

**Stuart Briscoe tells a story about how he was drafted into the Royal Marines in England. And while serving, he had this drill sergeant that absolutely terrified him. He and his fellow soldiers lived in fear of this man. Every time he came in the room, they immediately stood at attention. And they went**

<sup>2</sup> James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek*, 3960 ὄπλον #2 (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997). Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Second Edition, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 325 says this: “A military dimension is probably present, since [ὄπλον] seems to have the mean “weapons” elsewhere in Paul.”

through this checklist of things in their mind. Did they shine their boots? Were their barracks clean? Were they standing at attention perfectly? And this terror persisted as long as Briscoe was in the Marines.

Well eventually Briscoe got discharged, and he became a civilian again like the rest of us. But one day after his discharge, he was approached by that old drill sergeant. And he just instinctively stood at attention and started to panic about his boots and his barracks. But that was ridiculous. He wasn't in the military anymore. This sergeant had no authority over him. Not anymore. And he had to train himself to not be obedient to that old nature. He was dead to that.<sup>3</sup>

Well some of us, when sin comes a knockin', we are like Pavlov's dog! We start salivating. We think it still owns us and has control over us. It doesn't! That's why Paul says we've got to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (6:11).

Paul says this in **verse 15**.

<sup>15</sup> *What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!*

That's almost the same question and answer that Paul gave at the beginning of **Chapter 6**. Remember that? "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means!" (6:1-2). Paul says "**uh-uh.**" "**Absolutely not!**" That's Rasputin theology, not Pauline theology!

Similarly, Paul says in **verse 15**,

<sup>15</sup> *What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!* <sup>16</sup> *Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?*

Who's your master, Christian? Who do you serve? You're going to serve somebody. Is it sin and death or Christ and righteousness?

"I serve Christ, Pastor Tony, but I still sin sometimes. Why is that?" Here's why. Here's a great analogy from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century preacher, Martyn Lloyd-Jones. I shared this illustration with my small group last Thursday, and they gave me the thumbs up to share it with you today. I always like to test out my sermon illustrations on my small group. They are like my vaccination trial group, if you will.

And here's the illustration. Martyn Lloyd-Jones tells us to imagine ourselves in this field that is owned by a master. And our master is sin. And this field that we are in is enclosed by these large stone fences. Lloyd-Jones is from England, and it was common in England to have stone fences that enclose fields.

And when you get saved, it's as if God plucks you out of that field and puts you in a field next door, with a different master, Jesus Christ. And you are again enclosed by a fence around that field. You are not getting out of that field. You belong to Christ, and you are no longer a slave to sin. Jesus Christ is your master now, and you will serve him.<sup>4</sup>

But here's the rub. Satan is still able to talk to you from the field next door. Satan is still able to convince you from time to time that sin is your master. He is still able to trick you into thinking that you are in your old field, that you are your old self. Everyone tracking with me?

**And so, when Satan does that, what do you do? Here's what you do. You reckon! You snap out of it! You reckon yourself dead to sin and alive to Christ Jesus. I am no longer a slave to sin. Shut up, Satan. I belong to Christ, and I'm going to serve him.**

Paul says in **verse 17**,

<sup>17</sup> *But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin*

**"I used to be a slave to sin, but not anymore."**

<sup>17</sup> *But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, <sup>18</sup> and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.*

How is the power of Jesus Christ experienced in our lives? How is the power of Jesus Christ appropriated in our lives? Three things. 1) We stop letting sin reign over us. 2) We submit our bodies as instruments of righteousness. And 3) We surrender to the standard of teaching. We surrender to the teaching of Scripture. We are obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which we were committed.

<sup>3</sup> Paraphrased in R. Kent Hughes, *Romans: Righteousness from Heaven*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 127.

<sup>4</sup> Cited by Doug Moo in his audio lectures, "Romans 1-7: Audio Lectures - Lessons on History, Meaning, and Application" (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017). See also Moo, *Romans*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 207-8.

What is the standard of teaching? That is the τύπος, the type of teaching, the form of teaching. We are becoming what we believe. Like **Rich Mullins** sang, **“I did not make it, no it is making me. It is the very truth of God, not the invention of any man.”** We are being formed; we are being changed; we are being sculpted by the truth of Scripture.

**Listen, Harvest Decatur, you are not just a soldier in the LORD’s army, you are a sculpture. You are God’s masterpiece, his workmanship.** Paul says elsewhere in **Ephesians 2:10**: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Jesus said himself, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father” (**John 14:12**). You know that statement by Jesus has always puzzled me. How can we possibly do the works of Jesus? How can we possibly do greater works than him? I can’t raise the dead. Can you raise the dead? I don’t think so.

You know what I think Jesus means by that? I think he was referencing quantity not quality. I think he was referencing the church as a whole throughout 2,000 years of church history. I also think he was referencing the kinds of works that sinful, wicked people like you and me are able to do. Jesus doing awesome righteous things is not that big of a deal. Of course, Jesus did that. He’s God. But us, wicked sinners that we are, empowered by the Holy Spirit to do righteous things? That’s amazing. Us, sinful creatures that we are, doing awesome God-glorifying things. That’s a miracle. And it is.

**“Pastor Tony, I can’t raise someone from the dead!” “I can’t walk on water.”** Okay. Me neither. **But can you edify another believer with your gift of hospitality? Can you teach in Harvest Kids, by the power of the Holy Spirit? Can you help a brother or sister in need with your gift of service or mercy, by the power of the Holy Spirit? Can you advocate for justice and righteousness in this world and be a beacon of hope in this world? That’s powerful, church!**

Listen, listen. Here’s my point. **Jesus didn’t die on the cross and save us from sin so that we could just turn around and indulge our flesh every chance we get. Jesus gave us new life. Jesus took us away from slavery to sin, so that we could be slaves to righteousness. That is what we are called to. And it’s good. Sin was a cruel slave master. But Jesus’s yoke is easy and his burden is light. And we are God’s masterpiece; we are his workmanship...** “created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (**Eph 2:10**). **And as we surrender to Christ’s teaching and to the truths of God’s Word, God refines us. We are being formed into the image of Christ, and it’s beautiful.**

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I’ll close with this. I want to close by reading you a poem, one of my favorites. I don’t know who wrote this poem; I don’t think anyone knows who wrote this poem. I don’t know when this poem was written, but I know that this poem describes what God has been doing in the lives of his people for hundreds of years. I love this poem because I think it encapsulates what God is doing in each of our lives. And every time I study and prepare to preach God’s Word, my deepest desire is for God to do this in our lives. This poem is entitled “When God wants to Drill a Man.” It goes like this.

*When God wants to drill a man  
And thrill a man  
And skill a man,  
When God wants to mold a man  
To play the noblest part;  
When He yearns with all His heart  
To create so great and bold a man  
That all the world shall be amazed,  
Watch His methods, watch His ways!  
How He ruthlessly perfects  
Whom He royally elects!  
How He hammers him and hurts him,  
And with mighty blows converts him  
Into trial shapes of clay which  
Only God understands;  
While his tortured heart is crying  
And he lifts beseeching hands!  
How He bends but never breaks  
When his good He undertakes;*

*How He uses whom He chooses  
And with every purpose fuses him;  
By every act induces him  
To try His splendour out—  
God knows what He's about!*<sup>5</sup>

Harvest Decatur, you are a soldier for Christ Jesus in this world, living between the victory established at D-Day and the victory that will someday be fully experienced at VE-Day. That's where we find ourselves right now. We are soldiers for Christ Jesus. But you are also a child of God. You are also a saved follower of Jesus Christ, whose sin has been paid for by Christ's blood. And you are God's workmanship. You are his masterpiece. He is working on you and shaping you and refining you as a work of art. **Lean into that. Receive that. And keep fighting the good fight of faith reckoning yourself dead to sin and alive in Christ Jesus, offering up the members of your body as instruments of righteousness not wickedness, as we await together the return of our LORD and Savior, Jesus Christ.** Amen and Amen. Let's bow together in prayer and then we can sing together.

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<sup>5</sup> Author Unknown. Quoted in J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007).