

“Instruments of Righteousness”

Romans 6:12-14

February 9th, 2020

After 20 years of shaving himself every morning, a man in a small Southern town decided he had enough. He told his wife that he intended to let the local barber shave him each day. He went to the barbershop, which was owned by the pastor of the town's Presbyterian Church. The barber's wife, Grace, was working that day, so she performed the task. Grace gave the man a shave, sprayed him with aftershave, and said, "That will be \$20." The man thought the price was a bit high, but he paid the bill and went to work.

The next morning the man looked in the mirror and his face was as smooth as it was when he left the barbershop the day before. "Not bad," he thought. "At least I don't need to get a shave every day." The next morning...his face was still smooth! Two weeks later the man was STILL unable to find any trace of whiskers on his face. It was more than he could take, so he returned to the barbershop.

"I thought \$20 was high for a shave," he told the barber's wife, "but you must have done a great job. It's been two weeks and my beard still hasn't started growing back." The expression on her face didn't change. She responded, "Sir, you were shaved by Grace. Once shaved, always shaved."

When we launched this sermon series on Romans several months ago, I shared a quote or two from pastors who said they'd never preach through this book. Its teaching can be controversial in today's wacko, all-things-are-permissible culture. Not to mention, in places trying to understand what the Apostle Paul is getting has been tough sledding! We've been in deep waters as we've worked through **Romans Chapters 5 and 6**.

Today's sermon text is just 3 verses. It is the first point in this letter where Paul begins to apply his teaching. The subject matter in **Romans Chapter 6** is sanctification. Sanctification is the process of becoming holy; of becoming more like Jesus, while also becoming less like the sinful people we came into this world like.

Romans 6:12-14:

"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."

Principle 1 – **Sin has a way of dominating your life. Don't let it!** Look again at verse 12, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts." Sin cannot dominate or destroy the new person I have become in Christ; the new "me" will always hate sin and yearn for righteous living. But sin can certainly dominate my body. I can become a slave to its cravings.

Paul wrote something interesting to the saints and faithful brothers in Colossae. "Put to death...what is earthly in you." That's **Colossians 3:5**. Whereas sin cannot rule us, it still wages war against us. It fights hard in us, seizing control in any way by obeying the desires it plants in our

hearts. When we get to **Romans Chapter 7**, we will study a classic passage we all can relate to in the back and forth between sin and righteous as they seek to gain control of our hearts and minds.

Principle 2 - Believer in Christ, God brought you out of sin, from death to life. We must act like it! Paul makes reference in verse 13 to “instruments,” which can mean “tools.” “And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.”

A friend of mine earlier this week, himself not a Christian, drove up beside me as I was walking along a street. I was carrying a Bible as I walked. As he rolled down his window, he said, “I see you’ve got your work tool with you!”

In this instance, though, “instruments” probably refers to physical parts of our bodies, as well as our strengths and abilities. *How can we do this?* Let’s consider a few body parts.

- **Our minds.** This is perhaps the most important part of our bodies to devote to righteousness as opposed to unrighteousness. Two verses that may be familiar to you begin **Romans Chapter 12**, where we read, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual act of worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Other parts of the body facilitate what goes into our minds, like the **eyes** and **ears**. *What do you feed your brain? What kind of images and information do you fill your mind with?* Some things on television, You Tube, social media, and the movies counterproductive in our becoming more like Jesus. And, the things we listen to can be harmful as well. Even so-called “Christian” studies and programs can be confusing, unhelpful, and filled with error. We must strive to fill our minds with what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable and excellent (**Philippians 4:8**). For every secular program we watch or book we read, we ought to at least watch or read one Christian program or book.
- **Our tongues.** What we say can be as harmful to others as hurting them with other body parts. Listen to how James describes the tongue: “How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell” (**James 3:5b-6**). Big things come in small packages. To stir up conflict or hostility, just share a bit of gossip or tell a little lie!
- **Our hands and feet.** Our hands and feet determine what we do and where we go. *Are you soaking up the world’s entertainment? Do your feet take you to places where sin is openly practiced?* Let us train our members to work and walk to the places Jesus would do as was His habit – houses of worship on Sundays, fellowship, outreach, and witness with His people, and resisting the pull of a sin-savaged culture.

It's a bit lengthy, but I'd like to share a story Donald Grey Barnhouse used to illustrate when he writes, "Present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead." He writes:

One Saturday evening several years ago, while I was driving south in Alabama, I crossed the border into Florida on my way to Pensacola. Just as twilight fell I had a flat tire, so I pulled to the side of the road. I was tired, having driven over 300 miles that day and having preached 12 times that week, and I did not look forward to changing the tire.

All at once a jeep came down the road and I flagged it. A young man got out and I told him I would pay him to do the work for me. He agreed and came to my car, followed by a little yellow dog. Before we could reach the spare tire it was necessary to unload about 200 volumes of my books which were in the trunk of the car. The young man opened one of those books, and seeing that the matter concerned salvation, he said that his wife would be interested in something like that because she was active in the little church down the road. When I asked him about his faith, he was totally indifferent.

As he worked his dog was constantly with him, nuzzling him when he stopped, putting his head between the man and his task, and coming back when he was pushed aside. I remarked that he and the dog seemed to be very fond of each other. He looked at me, saying earnestly, "That dog saved my life once." I asked him to tell me about it and the story came quickly.

The reason he was not in the army – it was at the height of the war against Germany and Japan – was that he had more than a dozen broken bones. He was a rodeo rider and had been thrown by bulls and horses. Not too far from where we were, he had been trapped in a patch of quicksand. He had thrown himself on his back to spread his weight, but he was caught almost to his knees, and he knew that there was no deliverance. There probably wasn't another human being for miles. Suddenly, out of nowhere, this dog appeared. He came to the man, and allowed the man to put his arms around his hips. Then, with the dog pulling, the man was able to release one leg at a time from the sand.

The young man said with a smile, "That dog is always with me. He can have anything I have. He eats with me, and though my wife doesn't like it, he sleeps with us." I said to him, "What would you do if someone kicked that dog hard?" The young man said seriously, "I believe I would kill him."

Barnhouse touched the man on the arm, saying, "Isn't it strange that you take such good care of a dog who saved your life at no cost to himself, and that you treat so indifferently the Savior, the Lord Jesus, who saved you at such great cost to Himself. For Christ didn't pull you out of the quicksand of sin by a mere effort of strength on your behalf, but He actually died to save you from hell."

When the tire was changed, the man asked if he could have one of my books instead of money. I gave him both and he shook my hand. He said, "You know my wife is going to be surprised when I tell her I'm going to church with her tomorrow, and when I start reading the Bible. But you know, Mister that really got me – to think I could treat a stray dog better than Jesus Christ who died for me."

Principle 3 – The law is burdensome, but grace is light and free. Verse 14 - "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace." I find the *New Living Translation* helpful here, "Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace."

Sproul notes, “From the beginning of our sinfulness we have been under the dreadful burden of the law, because law condemns us. The law reveals our disobedience, and the law cannot possibly be the means by which we will be saved because, as debtors to the law, we can never pay our debt” (Sproul, 199). So, when Paul says we’re no longer under the law, he means we’re no longer in the condition of being crushed under the weight of the law, and no longer oppressed by its burden of guilt and judgment.

In order that we might live free in the reign of grace, it is helpful for us to understand our position and rejoice in what God has accomplished for us. (These thoughts are original with Tim Keller, pg.147/148).

1 – Remember you are bought with Christ’s blood. If we remember that, we will not act as if we belong to ourselves. We owe Jesus Christ our lives and salvation, and we cannot live in disregard to his will.

2 – Remember we have been delivered out of the dominion of sin. That means that the Spirit of God is within us, and though sin may seem too powerful to resist, that is not the case. We are children of God, and we can exercise our authority over our sinful desires.

3 – We were saved by Christ specifically so we would not sin. Christ “gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good” (**Titus 2:14**). All the suffering and torture of Jesus was for that purpose; any Christian who gives in to sin is forgetting that. We should ask, *will I defile the heart Christ died to wash; trample on the very purpose of his pain; thwart the very goal of His suffering?*

If you can picture these, yet still sin, you don’t understand the gospel, and may be outside of God’s saving grace. When we realize the purpose of Christ’s death and as we think of it in gratitude, we find a new incentive to be holy! We long to, and we love to, be those who “present ourselves to God” because we have been brought from death to life!

The Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy;

O Divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.