
Responding to Basic Commands

Romans 6:12-14

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Christian truth stands over against almost all that moderns believe.

As a person, you are creating yourself. You can be whoever or whatever you want to be. You can even be a different gender.

As a person you are who you say you are. You can identify as a different race, a different nationality, a different heritage, a different background than you actually have. All that matters is that you have declared it to be so.

Truth and real history have almost no bearing on who you are. You are the god of your selfdom. Therefore, your sovereign words create and make who you are.

To question or to challenge your glorious selfdom, your declared identity, your sovereign words about yourself, your defined history is to attack you at the essence of your personhood. It shows that you are bigoted, hateful and unkind.

This is the world we live in. This is the world that people are being saved out of. To hear what the Bible says about the Christian and the Christian life now requires a total reversal of how people think. But then, this has always been true. Even when people had a Christianized background, there were massive renewals of the mind that had to take place.

So what does the Bible say about these kinds of things? The Bible declares that the truth about us is primarily of not exclusively from outside of us. We don't define ourselves; God does. Whether unbeliever or believer, God's declarations over you and about *are totally true*.

This even more important when it comes to being a Christian. You bring to your Christian life the way you thought as a believer. Now, God tells you who you are, what you were, and who and what you are becoming. Further, as a believer you are being united spiritually to Christ and therefore now have aspects of His human history applied to you. His history has become yours.

¹⁰For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

These verses then call for us to consider carefully these truths about Christ (v.10) and then count them to be true for us (v.11). The call here is not to imagine something not so or to conjure something that does not exist or to put something to our account that is not ours. The clear call here is to believe these facts about the death and resurrection of Christ and then, knowing we are in Him and united to Him, believe, trust and count them to be true for us *because they are*. So, because Jesus is dead to sin through the cross and alive to God through the resurrection, so are we dead to sin and alive to God because we are *in Christ*.

So here is what you have to know and believe:

You have to know that you have been placed into Christ.

You have to know what Christ's death and resurrection mean.

You have to know how being placed into Christ and thus His death and resurrection applies to you.

Once again, let us remember that Christians are not people with simple lists of what to believe and what to do. Christians are people with a Biblical view of all things. If we do not know the truths we need to know, and we do not believe them, then we cannot have the power of grace that comes through believing those truths.

In the light of these truths, there are two important imperatives. That is, we have the commands that are essential to applying our union with Christ. The truths about our spiritual reality in Christ call for responses from us. Therefore the way of holiness is not mysticism – just believe and it becomes real – nor is it activism – just will or choose to do right – it is believing in an obeying way. I realize and I respond. The Bible clearly joins the *indicatives* and the *imperatives*.

¹²Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. ¹³Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

In its Responsibilities (v.12-13)

We must believe the principles of the Word of God. This is what we are most familiar with. We recognize that we must believe truth, doctrine, the statements of the Bible.

We must believe the precepts of the Word of God. We usually don't think of it this way. We usually think of believing truth and obeying commands. *The Bible does not function this way.* All disobedience is a result of unbelief. All obedience is a result of believing the command.

Both involve faith. You will not obey what you do not believe.

Let me illustrate. (Illustrate with a child being warned not to touch a stove.)

Don't Allow Sin to Reign (v.12)

Though we are not in the realm of sin we can allow it to extend itself into our lives so that it rules and governs us and eventually enslaves us all over again. How does sin attempt to assert its rule and governance over us? In the part of our soul that wants. It strives to take our God-designed wants and biblically informed desires that were made to serve our pleasure in God and to turn them into that which we serve. Sin reigns through wrong desires: wanting something so much you'll sin to get it or sin when you don't have it. The more you allow you wants

and desires to control you, the more control they will have over you. And through those wrong desires, sin rules and reigns over you.

So, don't allow sin to rule you through lusts...

Don't Make Yourself Available to Sin (v.13)

Here is the second and very important precept. This is the realm where our thinking about *putting-off* and *putting-on* operates. This is where we don't give room to the devil. This is where we do not put ourselves in temptation's way. This is where we flee from evil in all its forms.

This is where we must know ourselves well. We must know our weaknesses and temptations. We must be aware of where we tend to be tempted. We have to know the tendencies of the flesh. These may be vulnerabilities that came because we sinned in them so much as unbelievers. These may be inherited tendencies of the old person we were (yes, I believe that is possible.) They may have come through adopting the patterns of our parents. They come because of sinful rejection of our parents' patterns. They may be deeply engrained in our habitual responses that sometimes their roots are hard to discern.

Then we are careful to avoid those "places" where we tend to be tempted. Or we are more vigilant when we are in those tempting situations. But we also recognize that what may be good for us may not be helpful to other believers. This prevents us from becoming legalists: the convictions and rules that help us suddenly become the laws everyone else must live by. This is ever been a problem in the church.

Notice though what Paul says: "*Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God...*"

It is the members of your body that you must not make available to do what is sin. This means your eyes, your mouth, your nose, your hands, your ears, your feet, your sexual organs. You are responsible not to make them available for sinning.

You are to recognize that your body in all its parts should not be the means, the instruments by which you sin. They are not the sin itself. Sin is not embedded in them. They are instruments. They are like a knife. It is an instrument. It has no power in itself to cut bread or stab a person. It is the heart that makes the choice to use the instrument in the way God allows, commands, or wants. Or not...

What you do *instead* is to present them to God as instruments of righteousness. Sin or God... that is the choice. Every time you sin, you have made that choice. Will I in this moment, present this _____ to God or to sin.

The more we do either one, the more we will be controlled by it. This is how we become slaves to sin. This is how we become slaves to righteousness. We voluntarily present ourselves to be chained to sin or chained to God. Sin promises liberty and brings us into bondage. Jesus promises is liberty and

makes us into servants. Our surrender to God makes us the slaves of righteousness... and that is a good thing.

Notice that there is a *stop* and a *start* in this text. You must do both or you will succumb to sin. You must stop presenting the members of your body for sin's use and start presenting yourself for God's control. You do so as those who are dead to sin and alive to God. So the indicative is the back drop for the imperative.

In its Reasons (v.13-14)

¹²Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. ¹³Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Don't' Because You are in Life, not Death (v.13)

The truths in verses 1-10 are what are being referred to here. Particularly, the truth of your resurrection in Christ. You have been made alive in Him. This is simply a Biblical fact. But it won't have any transforming power in it if you do not believe it *in a way to leads to carrying out your responsibilities*.

What are some implications that we need to think through?

Disobeying is evidence of disbelief...

That we are alive in the Spirit is powerfully transforming...

When we present ourselves to God, we are believing what is true...

Why is "as those brought from death to life" important?

What if you don't know that is true?

What if you don't know that it is more than "merely" regeneration?

What if this is the most important truth for your Christian life?

Could there be a reason that we call this, "the Christian life?"

Don't Because You are Under Grace, not Law (v.14)

I'm not going to explain or expand on this much because that is what verses 15-19 do. Basically, Paul says that we are to know doctrine, personalize it and make application because we have been transferred from the sphere of Law to the sphere of Grace. The next chapter will tell us more about the proper function of the Law as does Galatians. In fact, law keeping cannot save and in this age, it cannot transform either. Outward obedience must arise from the heart that is enabled by grace. When we try to live by Law, we go backward to being under the law, in the realm of the flesh and thus we deny the cross and that we are in Christ dependent on His grace.

Now look at the Bible's logic. We have to learn the Bible's way of thinking. In essence verses 13-14 say this: *don't let sin master you because sin will not master you*. Now that might sound odd to us, but it does because we come to the Bible with the error that if we are commanded to do something, then we alone are responsible to do it. But the Bible does not reason in this way. The Bible says here is the command from God: obey it because God is enabling you to obey it. So, I choose not to allow sin to reign in my body because God is at work not to allow sin to reign in my body.

Now this works out in all the wisdom decisions of life and Christian growth in grace. You do not want to commit sin, so you guard against those things that tempt you to sin. You do not make opportunities to sin. You observe patterns and habits of life that make you vulnerable to sin and you break those patterns and habits. If you have a hard day at work, you don't rehearse all the badness of the day on the way home so that you arrive grumpy and angry. If you struggle with sexual temptation, you don't get suggestive movies. If you are tempted to get drunk because you stop on the way home to chat with the guys, then you stop driving home that way. If you lose your temper while playing sports, you stop playing sports until you identify and repent of the issues of the heart.

Now on the surface, most of this sounds either stunningly simple or frighteningly legalistic. Understand this. Sometimes we sin just because we are stupid. What is causing us to sin is right in front of us plain to us and easily changed *if we are not allowing our desires to master us*. These sorts of things are legalistic only if you mistake the doing of them for being spiritual and use them as measuring standards over others lives. So you don't listen to jazz because when you do you smell a bar or taste a beer. But don't tell me then that not listening to jazz makes you spiritual and makes me a sinner because I do.

Reflect and Respond

Do you know, believe and are growing in understanding these truths?

You have been placed into Christ at salvation and have been joined to Him.

His history has become yours.

You have died with Christ and have been made alive in Him through the Spirit.

The Christian life is lived by faith. We believe what God says is true.

You have died to the old person you were.

You are now alive as the new person you are becoming.

So what does this mean?

- We have union and identification with Christ.
- We may not live as though sin does not matter.
- We may not live as though sin has control.
- We have been delivered from the old life and are empowered for the new life (v.4-11).
- We have been delivered from the condemnation of the law to the freedom and power of grace (v.14ff).
- We must not let sin master us because sin is not going to master us (v.13-14).

Listen to our text again from the New Living Translation:

Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So, use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. 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.