



Introduction:

Before his presidency and before his fame, Lincoln delivered a speech in January of 1838. In his address, he spoke of the awesomeness of our country's established political system, but gave a warning to the potential destructive power that could come from within. Speaking of being overcome or overtaken, Lincoln said, "If it ever reach us, it must spring up amongst us; it cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher." As with all great nations, so is it with mankind, and if we are to be defeated, it will not be from without but from within. Our enemies without (Satan and his world system) can influence believers, but they can't defeat and destroy us. The Bible calls the enemy within us, "*the flesh*." According to Romans 7:18, the power of sin is said to dwell in our flesh, and in our flesh dwells "*no good thing*." This potential defeat is a constant struggle and war within the life of every believer. Paul describes this daily battle in Galatians 5:17. But the question in the mind of every believer is "How can I be set free from the flesh and its desires that pull me toward sin that will result in either death or destruction?"

The Focus:

- **Every believer can be set free from the enemy within.**
 - **By understanding your union with Christ.**
 - **By living in the reality of your union with Christ.**
 - **By yielding to the truth of God.**
 - **By feeding the spirit, not the flesh.**

On Sunday, Pastor Dan equated the understanding of our union with Christ with understanding a car's brake system. As impossible as it is to stop a car by dragging your feet outside the door, it is equally as impossible to stop the power of the flesh through your own sheer willpower and strength. It is critical for every believer to understand that God has equipped us with a system for overcoming the enemy within. The brake system God has designed us with, if applied, allows us to avoid the obstacles of lustful debris that we are faced with daily. The system, when applied, ensures that we move about safely and freely, and it helps us avoid the problems of sin. Romans 6:22 declares that we have been made free from sin.

Because Christ has pardoned us (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 2:13), we no longer have to obey its pull to go our own sinful way. Why is this? Romans 6:3-4 provides the answer. We have been immersed by the Spirit – we have been included in all the activities of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, and we are recipients of every benefit (Ephesians 1:3; 2:6). Paul declared a revelation given to him by Christ (Romans 6:6) when he said, "*Knowing this...*" He was insisting that believers be absolutely resolved in their mind that they are dead, who they were before trusting in the crosswork of Christ is dead, and they have been "*crucified*." But why was this? So that the flesh, "*the body of sin might be destroyed*." Because this has happened, it enables every believer to live freely from the bondage of sin; the power of sin has been broken (Romans

6:7). The victory won by Christ is the defeat of sin's reign in our lives (Romans 6:14). What Christ accomplished through His death, burial, and resurrection has given us liberty from the tyranny of the flesh. The freedom given to us by Christ is the ability to now choose. We now have a choice: "Will I choose to live for God and follow His ways or will I choose to live for the flesh and follow after its lustful desires and ways?"

However, understanding something and living out the truth of something are two completely different things. One can know something mentally, but then live their life in a way that completely contradicts what they know. That's why Paul says in Romans 6:11, "*reckon*." It means "to count it as reality." As a believer, you must conclude that nothing of your former life can benefit God in any way, therefore, your former nature has been defeated, and He has given you a new nature whereby you now live (Romans 6:11; Ephesians 2:1, 10; Colossians 2:13; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:9). An illustration of this is that we all know that roads have speed limits, but to recognize it as truth is quite different. You may understand the speed limit, but you may feel that it is too slow. Well, for those of us who have acted on our feelings when it comes to driving, it hasn't always worked out in our favor – some may have been issued a ticket for speeding and others may have been at fault for causing a wreck by driving at excessive speeds. You see, you can't make decisions based on your feelings, but on the facts of God's Word. And for a person who goes back and forth between feelings and facts, they are unstable. The only stability in our lives is following God and His Word.

Living in the reality of our union with Christ is a daily decision to yield to the truth of God. Many people, especially those who don't have a relationship with Christ, think they live without yielding or submitting to anything, yet they ignorantly submit to something every day. Although many would argue this, humanity is an expert at submitting. That's why Paul tells us of the importance of the gospel of Christ being declared (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). Mankind blindly yields to and follows the course of this world which has been charted by Satan himself (Ephesians 2:2; Romans 6:13, 17). When we follow the flesh and the path Satan has paved (Romans 6:19), what is the result (Romans 6:21)? But the good news is that because we are "*in Christ*," we now have the ability to choose (Romans 6:16-17, 19). The way of God is very simple; it isn't a long, drawn-out process. Paul informs us that we got into this mess by obeying the flesh and denying God, and the only way out is to start denying the flesh and obeying God. As followers of Christ, we often lack obedience toward God. Doing this happens one decision after the other, which causes us to slowly fade from the truth. We must stand on God's truth (Ephesians 6:11-18). We have God's Word, and His Spirit lives in us, therefore, it is our choice to listen and yield to Their leading.

Our life is like the being at the beach, the waves of ungodly influences are constantly coming our way, and if we don't exercise our will to stand against these things, the Bible is clear that they will wear us down (2 Peter 2:7-8). What often happens is that Christians bring about defeat by saying they want to live in victory, but oppose themselves by providing nourishment that allows the flesh to thrive (2 Timothy 2:25-26; Galatians 6:7-8; 1 Peter 2:11). If you willingly and ignorantly satiate your fleshly appetites, they can weaken your spiritual immune system and cause it to malfunction. If you quench the Spirit by feeding the flesh, you will never have

the strength to overcome the enemy within until you stop engaging with the contaminating elements around you. To build up the immunity needed to overcome the flesh, you must feed upon the truth of God (Romans 13:14). If you starve your spirit and constantly feed the flesh, the enemy within will overcome you, but if you starve the flesh and consistently feed the spirit, you will be set free from the enemy within.

Response to the Sermon:

Pastor Dan stated that if you go grocery shopping today, everything seems to be “fat-free.” Comparing that to the Christian life, he asked, how are you doing at following Christ? How flesh-free is your life? If you starve your spirit and constantly feed the flesh, the enemy within will overcome you, but if you starve the flesh and consistently feed the spirit, you will be set free from the enemy within. So, what are you feeding – the flesh or the spirit? What are you doing daily to strengthen the spirit within (Ephesians 3:16-19)?

Bible Study Thoughts & Questions:

Paul informs us that if we live a life pursuing the desires of the flesh, we will die, but if we “*mortify the deeds*” of the flesh, we shall live (Romans 8:13). “Mortify” means “to make obsolete, to destroy the strength or functioning of; to subdue or deaden the bodily appetites.” How can a believer do this? Paul says that the process of mortification is to disassociate yourself with the deeds of our old nature and begin to associate yourself with the works God has designed you to do (Colossians 3:9-10). Paul told us in Ephesians 5:11 that we shouldn’t participate in the “*unfruitful works of darkness.*”

According to Ephesians 5:2-4, what two things will keep us living as God desires for us to live? How does this relate to our relationships?

According to Colossians 3:24-25, we yield ourselves to either the flesh or the Spirit. What are the outcomes of this (1 Corinthians 3:8, 12-15)?

Application Questions:

It is important to remember that we received victory immediately upon us trusting in Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57). However, there are daily battles that we face. Usually, it is either our own flesh (Galatians 5:17) or the ideas and ways propagated by Satan in this world (Ephesians 2:2). Therefore, it is vital that we understand our union with Christ and live in the reality of that union. As well, we must yield to the truth of God and feed our spirit rather than the flesh.

How should understanding your union with Christ affect the way you live (Romans 6:3-4)?

Why is it so vital for every believer to “*reckon*” that our former life, our flesh, is dead to sin (Romans 6:11)?

What does it mean when we don’t yield to God and His Word (Romans 6:16-17)?

Why is it important to be nourishing our inner man (Romans 8:13; Galatians 6:7-8; Ephesians 3:16-19; Colossians 3:5-16)?

How should understanding and living out these four points from Romans 6 affect our relationship with others?

Prayer:

- Pray that you would remember that there is nothing in your flesh that God desires, therefore, we ought to live humbly before God (Micah 6:8; Romans 7:18; 12:3).
- Pray that you would live in the reality of who God has made us and what He has done (Romans 6:3-4).
- Pray that your life would show and demonstrate to others the victory that was accomplished on the cross (Romans 6:6, 9-18).