



Sanctification Commands

Romans 6:11-12

1. Win the War of Your Mind (verse 11)

2. Win the War of Your Will (verse 12)

As most all of you know, at Rock Valley Bible Church, we are using the "Fighter Verses" from Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The "Fighter Verses" are strategically chosen Bible verses that we are given to memorize on a weekly basis. It's a great program, complete with a website and an app and songs and commentary and memory helps.

We use these Fighter Verses in our prayer meeting to prompt our prayers to the Lord. We encourage them to be used in your families, during your family worship, that you might work on memorizing them together with many of us at the church.

Now, the name, "Fighter Verses" might strike you as a bit odd. What are we "fighting"? We are fighting for our faith. Paul told Timothy, "As for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith" (1 Timothy 6:11-12).

Paul knew that it is a battle to believe. It is a battle to live rightly in this day and age. In fact, Paul once described the Christian life as a cosmic battle.

Ephesians 6:10-13

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

The fighter verses are given to help us win the battle.

This battle is what Paul addresses in our passage this morning. Today, we will be in Romans, chapter 6. I want to read for you verses 11-13.

Romans 6:11-13

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do 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.

As I mentioned last week, verse 11 contains the first command in all of Romans. For five and a half chapters, Paul goes into great detail describing the extent of our sin, how we all (Jews and Greeks and Religious and moral) are guilty and condemned and under the wrath of God. And then, Paul describes the gracious salvation that God gives to those who believe in Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:8

God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

And then, beginning in chapter 6, Paul makes a turn. He begins to address our behavior. He begins to tell us what to do! Or, to put it theologically, he begins to address our "sanctification" --that is, the process by which we learn to live holy lives as we are conformed more and more to the image of Christ.

Don't ever mess up the order of salvation and sanctification. Salvation must come first. We don't clean ourselves up so that we can be saved from our sin. We don't seek sanctification so that we can have salvation. It's the other way around. We know and experience salvation, so that we can have sanctification.

Every other religion in the world gets this backwards. Because every religion in the world is about what we do. We do this. We do that. And if we are good enough, we will be saved. Christianity is totally the opposite. God saves us, and then sanctifies us.

See, when we come to faith in Jesus Christ, God begins a work in us. He begins to teach us what it means to live a holy life. This is what Paul begins in verse 11, with his first command. And when it rains, it pours. Because Paul follows up his first command with a second (in verse 12) and a third and a fourth in verse 13.

Three verses. Four commands. All commands about sanctification. My message this morning is entitled, "Sanctification Commands." We will only get through two of the commands this morning. And the first comes in verse 11. It is this, ...

Romans 6:11

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Here's my point, ...

1. Win the War of Your Mind (verse 11)

That's where Paul is guiding us in verse 11. He's telling us to think. That's what "consider" means. It means to "think." We are to "think" of ourselves as "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."

But, this word means something beyond merely "thinking." It is the same word that Paul used on chapter 4 when God "counts" our faith as righteousness. Romans 4:4 says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." When we believe in Christ, God counts it to us as righteousness. God "considers" it to us as righteousness. God "thinks" of it as righteousness.

But, I trust that you can see here how "thinks" fails a bit to reach the mark. Because, it's not merely that God "thinks" of us as righteous. It's not merely that God "considers" us to be righteous. No, God "counts" us to be righteous.

This is an accounting term. God takes our faith and he places it on the credit side of our account as righteousness. And that's what we are to do with our mind. We are to "count ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."

Now, this is no imaginary sort of thought. Because, we are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

This is everything that Paul has been saying since the beginning of chapter 6. We are united with Christ. We are united with him in his death. We are united with him in his life. Look back at verse 1, ...

Romans 6:1-2

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

That's exactly what Paul tells us to consider in verse 11. We have died to sin. So we ought to consider ourselves dead to sin! We ought to think about the reality of our union with the death of Christ.

But that's only half of the equation. It's not only that we have died to sin when Christ died to sin, we have also become alive to God in Christ, when he was raised from the dead. Look on in verse 3, ...

Romans 6:3-5

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

And this is what Paul tells us to consider. This is what Paul tells us to regard ourselves to be: that we are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

This is the truth that Paul bangs home in verses 6-10.

Romans 6:6-10

We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.

Now, I admit that there is much mystery here. How can it be that we, living in the 21st century, were united in the death of Jesus which took place 2,000 years ago outside the city of Jerusalem? And how can it be that we, who live today, are united in his life? I can't understand.

But that doesn't mean it's not true. If you had to understand everything that is true, you would be in trouble.

There are plenty of mysteries in the universe that you don't understand, yet you benefit from them every day. You don't fully understand chemistry of DNA. Yet, apart from DNA, life does not exist. You don't fully understand Maxwell's equations. Yet, apart from them, light does not exist. You don't fully understand how transistors work. Yet, apart from them, your phones and computers wouldn't work.

And the same is true with your salvation. You may not fully understand how it is that we are united with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. But, apart from that reality, you are dead in your sins.

There are many times in the New Testament when our union with Christ is mentioned. Romans 6 isn't the only place. Consider these verses. Ephesians 2:6 says that God, "raised us up with [Jesus] and seated us with [Jesus] in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." In other words, where is Jesus Christ right now? He is seated at the right hand of God, the Father. And Paul says that, because of our union with Christ, we are right there with him.

Colossians 3:1 says, "You have been raised with Christ." And Colossians 3:3, "You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

Now, I'm not saying that I fully understand these things.

But Paul places this at the forefront of our sanctification.

In fact, he expects us to know this. Verse 3 asks, "do you not know?" Verse 6 states that, "We know." And verse 9 likewise tells us that, "We know." And now, in verse 11, Paul is simply calling us to think upon what we know. This is what we know to be true.

Romans 6:11

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

We may not understand it, but we must know it. You say, how can I do this? Let me give you two very practical way of how to do this.

The first way I will present by way of illustration. Now, I don't often give illustrations from movies, because I don't watch a lot of movies. But this one fits. Star Wars day was a few weeks ago (May the 4th) "May the forth be with you!" And so, we as a family had a good time with it. Yvonne made some Star Wars food.

We had some Ham Solo wraps. We had some Darth Tater-tots. We had some Chew-Broccoli. We had some Princess Leia Twists. We had some Cuke Skywalker. We had some Egg Troopers. We even had a Death Melon. For dessert, we had some Obi-wan-cannoli. We followed up the dinner by watching the latest Star-Wars movie, "Rogue One."

And in that movie, there was one character that really caught my attention. His name is Chirrut. He's blind and lives on Jedha. He is a spiritual warrior-monk, one of the Guardians of the Whills.

Now, there was nothing special about this man. He was ordinary in every way, except that he was blind. But, he believed in the force and in its power. Over and over and over again, he would repeat his mantra: "I'm one with the force, the force is with me." "I'm one with the force, the force is with me." "I'm one with the force, the force is with me."

And though he possessed no Jedi powers, he did Jedi-like things. He could see people, though blind. He could read the minds of people. He could fight an army of soldiers, by the mere feel of his way. And presumably, he received all of this power because of his constant repetition of his belief: "I'm one with the force, the force is with me." "I'm one with the force, the force is with me." "I'm one with the force, the force is with me."

He's seen repeating this phrase when he is in the city square. He's seen repeating this phrase when he is in prison. He's seen repeating this phrase when he is in battle. And for him, it worked. Though not a Jedi, he had Jedi-like qualities.

OK, now, full disclaimer. This is mysticism at its finest. This is the occult in every way, thinking that a mantra is the key to successful living. Repeating something over and over and over again to bring it to life. And in no way am I advocating a belief in "the force."

But, I believe, we can take the example of Chirrut and transfer it into our fight for sanctification. It would do us well to repeat verse 11 often. "I'm dead to sin and alive to God." "I'm dead to sin and alive to God." "I'm dead to sin and alive to God."

And as we do this, it's an opportunity for us not to bring something that doesn't exist into reality, but to bring reality into the forefront of our minds. To bring to mind the fact that we are dead to sin; that we are alive to God in Christ Jesus.

And if this is genuinely on your mind, when sin and its temptations come before you and you say, "I'm dead to sin and alive to God," your reminder of your reality will come as an aid to fight the sin. Isn't this what Paul tells us to do?

Romans 6:11

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

"I'm dead to sin and alive to God." And by focusing your mind upon this one phrase, it will help you overcome sin.

But that's not the only way to "Win the War of Your Mind." Because, there is a danger thinking that only repeating this one phrase over and over and over again will ultimately lead you into sanctification. Because, the more you repeat that phrase, the less and less it will come to mean. That's what mantras are! They are a way not to fill your mind, but to empty your mind.

And I say, "Fill your mind!" You want to "Win the War of Your Mind"? Then "Fill your mind." Fill your mind with the Bible.

Yes, this one phrase and this one reality is important. And the more you fill your mind with understanding the reality of our union with Christ, your sanctification will follow. And when there is deep meaning to the phrase, "I'm dead to sin and alive to God," it will help you turn away from sin.

But don't neglect the deep reality of our union with Christ. Don't neglect the other great truths of the Bible.

If you are looking for a place to begin, learn about the great themes of Romans: Sin, faith, grace. Learn more and more about sin--about its seductive nature, about its deceptive nature, about its destructive nature. Learn about faith--about how to trust in the Lord, about how the Lord rewards faith, about how faith is related to the law. Learn about grace--about how free it is, about how much it cost our Lord, about how it motivates to righteousness.

Learn about these things. Read of them (in Romans). Memorize key verses about them (from Romans). Listen to sermons. Read books. Because, when you aim your mind upward on the things of God, your desires to sin will reduce.

And yet, I know all too well that the world has its attractions. How easy is it to think of the things of the earth. The movies that are enjoyable. Our hobbies that are fun. The stories we love to read. All of these are not bad in and of themselves, but they can easily pull us away from the great realities of this life, the realities of God and our sin and of Christ Jesus who came to die for us.

So, church family, let's win the war of our minds. How are you doing? Where are your daily thoughts? Are they heavenward? Are they on the spiritual realities of the gospel? Or are they earthward? Are they on the carnal cravings of your flesh?

To help us all win the war of our minds, I'm seeking to add a new feature to the sermon notes this week. I've added a "Fellowship Conversation Starter Question" this week at the bottom of the notes. I don't know what to call it. But here's my intent. I want to provide you with a question that you can ask someone during our fellowship hour after church.

If you are new around here, we have three phases to our Sunday mornings. We have prayer at 9am. We have our worship at 10am. We have our fellowship at 11:30ish.

This is an important time to connect. We don't have a Sunday night service. We don't have a Wednesday night service. We don't want to clutter up your schedule with "going to church." We want to free up your schedule so that you can "do the work of the ministry" throughout the week.

But once a week we gather. And our time after the service is important to connect with one another. So, don't just leave. Hang around. Get to know other people. Connect. Make plans to connect during the week, so that you can do life together.

And to help promote spiritual conversation, I'm adding this "Fellowship Conversation Starter Question." It is intended to help you talk about spiritual things, rather than the Cubs or the Bears or (heaven forbid), the Packers. So, if you want to direct your conversation spiritually, ask this question: "What has been the focus of your mind this week?" And that's a good question, because it leads to communicating the burdens of your heart. And it also leads to spiritual encouragement that you have found this week in the Scriptures or some other book or sermons. And it also may confront you with the truth that your thoughts may have been entirely earthly this week.

My prayer is that this question will stir some profitable conversation over the next hour (or so). Perhaps leading to encouragement. Perhaps leading to repentance and confession of sin. Perhaps leading to sanctification.

So, the very first command of sanctification is this: Win the War of Your Mind (verse 11). Let's turn to the second, ...

2. Win the War of Your Will (verse 12)

We see this in verse 12.

Romans 6:12

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

Paul here is talking about kingship. He's talking about ruler-ship. He's talking about control. He says, "What is controlling you." Who is king of your life? Are you controlling your life? Or is your body in control of your life?

The big difficulty with our union with Christ is that it's not yet fully complete. Yes, we were united with him in his death (verse 5). Yes, our old self was crucified with him (verse 6). Yes, we are no longer slaves to sin (verse 7).

But, our bodies haven't yet been fully redeemed! We are not yet what we shall be! We still have our old flesh. And as a result, there's a battle that rages in our bodies.

And our flesh doesn't like king Jesus. Our bodily passions can pull us away from obeying the Lord. Isn't that the picture that Paul gives in verse 12?

Romans 6:12

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

He says, "Don't let sin be in charge of your life." He says, "Don't obey the passions of your body." Be driven by another ruler. Let Christ rule in your hearts and your minds. It's a matter of the will.

That's why my second point is phrased this way. Win the War of Your Will (verse 12)

Who is going to win out? Are you going to win? Or is your body going to win?

It is helpful to see here that there is a battle taking place in your heart. In Romans 7, Paul pictures this battle that goes on. He says, ...

Romans 7:18-20

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

It's a battle between me and what I want and the passions of my body and what it wants.

A few years ago, I remember seeing a few pictures that Joshua Harris drew, describing our battle with the flesh. They have been helpful to me. I trust they will be helpful to you. You can watch his entire cartoon with his commentary [here](#).^[1]

I will copy the text here for you, in case you would like to read through it, and I will end with this.

This is you. Or us, a human made in God's image. Ladies, sorry you have to identify with a little guy. I'm not sure why he

doesn't have a shirt.

This is the flesh. He's kind of a Jabba the Hut meets WWF wrestler. The Flesh represents the sinful, corrupted desires of our heart. It's not a reference to our bodies—our bodies are created by God and are good. The flesh represents our sinful cravings to live for ourselves and disobey God's laws and commands.

Before Jesus saves us, this is how all of us relate to the flesh. The Bible says that we are slaves to our sinful desires. Our flesh is boss. If you're not a Christian, I'm not trying to offend you. I know this isn't a flattering picture of your current condition but it's true of all of us apart from God saving us.

This is what happens when we trust in Jesus. Because Jesus died on the cross and conquered sin and rose again, we are freed from the power of sin. It's no longer our boss. See how the chain is broken? And we get clothes, which is really great.

But our flesh doesn't disappear. It still hangs around to entice us. After we're Christians, we're no longer slaves to sin, but the flesh can still tempt us. We can choose to give into temptation and indulge the flesh. This is what theologians call "indwelling sin." Jesus broke the power of sin, but we still live with the presence and influence of sinful desires.

That's why the Bible is full of encouragement to fight our fleshly desires. We can't live at peace with it. We have to attack it and deny it. (In hindsight, I guess the "sword of the Spirit" would have been a bit more biblical. Oh well.)

The problem is that too often Christians make friends with their flesh. In fact they feed their flesh. We give into our sinful desires. We pamper our flesh. We provide it three rounded meals a day with snacks and dessert. We might think that since we've been freed by the cross it's okay to indulge the flesh. But there's a real problem.

When we feed the flesh, it grows! And before you know it, the flesh is bigger and stronger than you and starts to push you around. That's why Paul is telling us in Romans 13 that we need to starve our flesh!

That's what we want our flesh to look like. We want the flesh gaunt and feeble.

When Paul says "make no provision for the flesh" he's saying don't feed your sinful desires. Don't do things—don't think things, don't watch things, don't meditate on things—Don't do things that strengthen your sinful inclinations.

So, what does your flesh look like?

Are you obeying the passions of your mortal body? Or are you obeying the desires of king Jesus?

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on May 21, 2017 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] For reference, the YouTube link is: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFz_lgkiK_A