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Analysis of Romans 6:1-14 Concerning the Body as a Weapon of Righteousness in Confrontation with the Disabled Body

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Abstract
This study asks how the meaning of "the body as an instrument of righteousness" in Romans 6:1-14 can be understood by people with disabilities, since existing interpretations often assume that a "normal" body is needed to serve God and may exclude them. It interprets the text exegetically and reflects on it from a disability theology perspective. The method is a qualitative literature study with a biblical exegetical approach, focusing on the concept of the body in Paul's thought. The results show that the body in Romans 6 is understood not through biological function but through relationship with Christ in His death and resurrection. People with disabilities retain their dignity as the image of God and are able to offer their bodies as instruments of righteousness. Disability is not a theological barrier but part of the diversity of creation, so the church needs to build an inclusive and empowering faith practice.

Keywords: Romans 6:1-14, Body, Disability, Weapons of Righteousness, Disability Theology

Introduction

The human body has a physical structure that is far more complex and integrated than that of the other creatures God made, such as plants and animals.[1] God formed human beings with a particular bodily form and, through His Spirit, gave them life as living beings.[2] The body represents the physical aspect as well as the reality of human existence in the world. In the apostle Paul's understanding, the notion of the "body" plays a fundamental role in interpreting and living out the life experience of believers.[3] The body is the starting point for Christian anthropology, and the body becomes a source of knowledge not only about oneself, but also about the world and everything in it.[4] The apostle Paul commands believers not to present the

[1]Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, Third edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 477.

[2]Louis Berkhof, *Teologi sistematika*, trans. Yudha Thianto (Jakarta: Lembaga Reformed Injili Indonesia, 1993), 27.

[3]Walter A. Elwell, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, 1st ed, with Philip Wesley Comfort, Tyndale Reference Library (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 230.

[4]Albert A. Jr Herzog, *The Social Contexts of Disability Ministry: A Primer for Pastors, Seminarians, and Lay Leaders* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017), 195.

members of their bodies as instruments of wickedness against sin. Rather, those who have died and been raised with Christ must offer their bodies as weapons of righteousness (Rom. 6:13).[5]

Romans 6:13 affirms the call for believers to yield the members of their bodies to God as instruments/weapons of righteousness. Through this expression, Paul shows that every member of the body is used by God as an active weapon, indeed as equipment in the struggle against unrighteousness, in order to bring about a righteous life. This yielding is an expression of believers' devotion to their new Master, namely Christ.[6] Rio Ferdian and Ricky Santoso, citing Matthew Henry, state that the human body can incline in two directions: becoming an instrument of sin when it follows fleshly desires, or becoming an instrument of righteousness when it is devoted to serving the Lord and preserving holiness. According to Ferdian and Santoso, it is clear that being a Christian is not merely a matter of avoiding prohibitions, but of how believers move actively to do what is right.[7] In addition, Lewy and Jamin Tanhidy, in their article, also state that Romans 6:13 intends to remind readers that every believer who experiences freedom and victory in Christ must yield the members of the body to God to be used as servants of righteousness in order to bring glory to His name.[8] Through this, the author observes that church interpretation often assumes a normal and productive body for realizing righteousness, even concretely in ministry as a tangible expression. However, this assumption is problematic for persons with disabilities.

The bodies of persons with disabilities need to be placed as an important part of theological reflection, because theology of the body begins from concrete experience and human diversity. However, approaches such as that put forward by Albert A. Herzog, based on the thought of McFague, still view disability as part of the "brokenness of life."[9] By contrast, Jennifer L. Jones regards disability as a natural part of human diversity that needs to be addressed through spiritual support and theological reflection.[10] This difference of views shows the importance of a theology of disability that does not regard the disabled body as a deficiency,

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[5]Annette Potgieter, *Contested Body: Metaphors of Dominion in Romans 5-8*, ed. Andries G. van Aarde, HTS Religion & Society Series 7 (Durbanville: AOSIS, 2020), 109.

[6]Hanny Frederik, "Konsep Persatuan Dengan Kematian Dan Kebangkitan Kristus Berdasarkan Roma 6:1-14," *Jurnal Jaffray* 13, no. 2 (September 2015): 238, https://doi.org/10.25278/jj71.v13i2.179.

[7]Rio Ferdian and Ricky Santoso, "Dimerdekakan Dari Dosa Menurut Roma 6: 12-14; Suatu Analisis Teologis Tentang Kemerdekaan Orang Percaya," *Jurnal POIEMA: Teologi Dan Misi* 3, no. 1 (2026): 45.

[8]Lewy and Jamin Tanhidy, "Prinsip Hidup Menang Atas Dosa Menurut Rasul Paulus Dalam Roma 6," *Veritas Lux Mea (Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen)* 1, no. 1 (2019): 5.

[9]Herzog, *The Social Contexts of Disability Ministry*, 196.

[10]Jennifer L. Jones, *Belonging and Resilience in Individuals with Developmental Disabilities: Community and Family Engagement*, with Kami L. Gallus, Emerging Issues in Family and Individual Resilience Ser (Cham: Springer International Publishing AG, 2021), 1.

but as part of the diversity of human bodies, which also has a place and a role in the life of faith.[11]

In this connection, the studies conducted by several researchers have also given very little attention to theology of disability. For this reason, a number of earlier studies have examined Romans 6:1-14 with various interpretive approaches. For example, Teresa Kuo-Yu Tsui, in her article, examines Romans 6:1-14 by highlighting the relationship between the indicative and the imperative in the text. She questions this pattern by arguing that the indicative should reduce the force of the imperative, while the imperative at the same time limits the certainty carried by the indicative. In the end, Tsui concludes that the understanding of this passage needs to be read in light of Paul's eschatological framework. In line with this, Cho Ho-Hyung, in his article titled *"Believers in the Situation of the Overlapping of the Old Era and the New One: Exegetical Notes on 6:1-14 in Light of Pauline Eschatology in Romans,"* approaches the text of Romans 6:1-14 exegetically and maintains the indicative statement followed by exhortation in the imperative. Nevertheless, Ho-Hyung introduces an element of novelty in his study by deepening the eschatological perspective, which enriches the discussion.[12]

Meanwhile, Hanny Frederik, in her article, discusses the death and resurrection of believers in Christ. Frederik states that believers have been united with the death and resurrection of Christ through baptism. Furthermore, dying and rising with Christ results in the death of the old body (the body of sin).[13] Differing from Frederik, who discusses the body in Romans 6:1-14, the article titled *"Paul among the Philosophers: The Case of Sin in Romans 6-8"* by Emma Wasserman argues that Romans 6-8 reflects certain elements of the Greek philosophical tradition concerning the soul. This framework is used to explain various concepts in the text, such as sin, death, flesh, passion, and the body, including the metaphors of slavery, imprisonment, and dominating power, while also highlighting the provocative role of the law in Romans 7:7-13.[14] That is, these earlier researchers have not yet connected the text of Romans 6:1-14 with the context of persons with disabilities. This study is crucial given that the church often equates ministry with normative bodily function. Therefore, this study sets out how persons with physical disabilities can yield their bodies as "weapons of righteousness" amid the exclusive bodily standards of society. The text of Romans 6:1-14 is a strategic text for discussing disability because it specifically addresses the body. Therefore, this study seeks to

[11]Isabella Novsima Sinulingga, "Keindahan Dalam Disabilitas: Sebuah Konstruksi Teologi Disabilitas Intelektual," *Indonesian Journal of Theology* 3, no. 1 (September 2015): 37, https://doi.org/10.46567/ijt.v3i1.64.

[12]Cho Ho-Hyung, *Believers in the Situation of the Overlapping of the Old Era and the New One: Exegetical Notes on 6:1-14 in Light of Pauline Eschatology in Romans* (Teologi Reformasi Korea, 2019), 64:43–76.

[13]Hanny Frederik, *Konsep Persatuan Dengan Kematian Dan Kebangkitan Kristus Berdasarkan Roma 6:1-14*, 13, no. 2 (Oktober 2015): 215–48.

[14]Emma Wasserman, "Paul among the Philosophers: The Case of Sin in Romans 6—8," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30, no. 4 (June 2008): 387–415, https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X08091441.

affirm that persons with disabilities are also able to present their bodies as instruments for righteousness.

Method

The research method used in this study is a qualitative method with a *historical-grammatical exegesis* approach. The term "exegesis" comes from the Greek word "exegesis," which means "to lead out." This word is translated as "connected" or "explained." Thus, the term "exegesis" means an expository explanation and interpretation of the Bible. On this basis, "exegesis" can be defined as explaining a word, sentence, paragraph, or an entire book by drawing out its true meaning (that which the author of a text intended). To fulfill the exegetical method, the author applies steps using the *Novum Testamentum Graece*, as well as lexicons (grammar). After that, an analysis of the historical context and a syntactic/semantic analysis of key words are carried out, and finally a theological reflection is given.[15]

Findings and Discussion

Theology of Disability

The study of disability is something very important to research. It is important so that persons with disabilities can find space to express themselves amid various complexities. This web of meaning is what is to be explored as a first step toward introducing disability studies as a necessity, namely, to understand disability through a new perspective and to treat and practice it differently.[16] Speaking about disability cannot be separated from the body and the human experience of embodiment as a whole. This experience relates not only to the physical aspect, but also encompasses the dimensions of thinking, relating, and living out existence as a human being who is "embodied." In Christianity, this embodied experience is even understood as a means through which divine work is made manifest in human life.[17]

The Bible does not explicitly discuss disability as a specific concept. Nevertheless, various texts within it frequently touch on diverse conditions of disability, such as Exodus 4:11, which contains a conversation about the blind, the deaf, and the lame, placed alongside discussion of weak or limited bodily conditions.[18]

"Then the LORD said to him, "Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the LORD?" (Exod. 4:11).

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[15]Iwan Setiawan Tarigan, "Eksegesis Dan Penelitian Teologis," *Jurnal Teologi Cultivation* 5, no. 2 (2021): 87.

[16]Michael Oliver, *The Social Model in Context" Dalam Rethinking Normalcy: A Disability Studies Reader* (Toronto: Canadian Scholar Press, 2009), 1.

[17]Timotius Verdino, "Disabilitas Dan In(Ter)Karnasi: Memaknai Relasi Persahabatan Dalam Pelayanan Pastoral," *GEMA TEOLOGIKA: Jurnal Teologi Kontekstual Dan Filsafat Keilahian* 5, no. 1 (April 2020): 38, https://doi.org/10.21460/gema.2020.51.483.

[18]Jan S. Aritonang, ed., *Teologi-Teologi Kontemporer* (2018; Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2022), 389.

This statement was delivered by the Lord to Moses as encouragement for him to dare to speak before the people of Israel and Pharaoh. This passage aims to affirm God's sovereignty over the human body as part of all His creation.[19]

In contrast to this, Leviticus 21:16-23 is often used as a basis for discriminating against persons with disabilities. This text shows a tendency to exclude them from the duty of approaching the altar and offering the burnt offering. In the context of ancient Israel, attention to people with disabilities appears to have been less prominent, because the main focus was directed toward the conduct of worship that was proper, pure, and holy. Nevertheless, people with disabilities were still regarded as a special group under divine care, and were often mentioned alongside the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized. On the other hand, however, there are also biblical verses that portray the restoration of such conditions, such as Isaiah 29:18; 35:5-6; 42:6b-7; and 43:8.[20]

If disability is categorized as an unstable condition, what then is disability theology? Disability theology is a theology of liberation. According to Gustavo Gutiérrez, liberation voices the hope of oppressed groups and highlights the conflict in economic, social, and political processes that places them in confrontation with those in power. At a deeper level, liberation is also related to an understanding of history in which human beings are regarded as responsible for the direction of their own lives. Within this framework, persons with disabilities are among the groups that are often marginalized economically, socially, politically, and religiously, so that liberation theology can become a foundation for the development of disability theology. One aim of disability theology is to encourage religious communities to change so that they become spaces of mutual support and sustenance, as described by Gutiérrez.[21] The foundation of disability theology can be traced back to the Old Testament. The Levitical law does contain rules that exclude persons with bodily defects from service in the sanctuary; nevertheless, various biblical narratives, such as the stories of Jacob, Mephibosheth, and Job, show that disability was not always understood as a sign of impurity, but is also related to cultural, political, and even cosmic dimensions. The psalms of lament, especially Psalm 44, likewise show how innocent suffering can become the basis for a prayer that awaits the just and inclusive reign of God. Therefore, disability theology rests not only on texts that explicitly mention disability, but also on the whole of the biblical narrative and the diversity of its genres, which open the possibility of a theological understanding that is more just and more hospitable

[19]Jan S. Aritonang, 390.

[20]Jan S. Aritonang, *Teologi-Teologi Kontemporer*.

[21]Courtney Wilder, *Disability, Faith, and the Church: Inclusion and Accommodation in Contemporary Congregations*, 1st ed (Erscheinungsort nicht ermittelbar: Praeger, 2016), 8–9, https://doi.org/10.5040/9798400640964.

toward persons with disabilities.[22] Agreeing with Amos Yong, the author also holds that the foundation of disability theology can be found in the entirety of the biblical witness, and not merely in any one particular text.

Theological approaches to disability are still often centered on the medical model. This model understands disability as a condition inherent in the individual with a disability and regards the "problem" of disability as arising primarily from limitations of physical function, which then affect psychological aspects. For this reason, the medical model tends to assess disability as something objectively regarded as abnormal. Such labeling can ultimately diminish appreciation for the personal beauty of persons with disabilities, who were truly created by God in his image and likeness.[23] Persons with disabilities often face what Thomas Reynolds calls a theological view that demeans disability, that is, a perspective that reduces the value of their humanity and neglects the vision of love and inclusive hospitality witnessed to in the Bible. As a result, they are often pushed aside from the life of the Christian community, including from leadership roles. The interpretation of Scripture, preaching, and worship practices sometimes even reinforce prejudice against disability. Nevertheless, in the biblical tradition and in Christian life, persons with disabilities remain faithfully present and also respond to the call to serve and to lead.[24]

The Concept of the Body in Paul's Thought

The term "body" became a theological concept for the apostle Paul. General responses to Paul's thought on the human body are often dichotomous, in which a separation between body and soul is frequently assumed.[25] However, Paul is closer to the Old Testament tradition[26] that regards body and soul as two closely interrelated elements,[27] than to the view of the New Testament era, particularly in Hellenistic texts, which considered the body unimportant and held that only the eternal soul was of primary value.[28] Although Paul accepted the idea that a person could ascend to heaven without a body, he still affirmed that it makes no difference to

[22]Amos Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God* (Chicago: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2011), 46–47.

[23]Sinulingga, "Keindahan Dalam Disabilitas," 38–39.

[24]Wilder, *Disability, Faith, and the Church*, 2–3.

[25]Musa Wenkosi Dube, *Postcolonial Perspectives in African Biblical Interpretations*, 1st ed, with Andrew Mũtũa Mbuvi and Dora Rudo Mbuwayesango, Global Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship Series, v. 13 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 468.

[26]Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids (Mich.): Eerdmans, 1995), 1060.

[27]Kittel, Bromiley, and Friedrich, 1050.

[28]Kittel, Bromiley, and Friedrich, 1058.

him whether he is in the body or out of the body.[29] Yet, in his letter, Paul asserts that God will raise the mortal human body. This explanation shows that the body takes part in the resurrection, so that the body needs to be understood as an important element in the new life of human beings. Awareness of the resurrection of the body prompts human beings to regard their bodies seriously and responsibly, as a means of living out life on earth and of relating to God and to others.[30] In certain environments, the body makes human beings social creatures, that is, creatures who relate and communicate with their surroundings. As an embodied element, the body can act and be influenced by its environment. Therefore, in the physical environment, human beings exist as physical bodies. In the resurrection, however, the body is spiritual. For this reason, in his letters Paul holds that in the age when human beings are under the power of sin and death, the human body, too, belongs to the order of the age that is ruled by sin. Nevertheless, the values of that age have been brought to an end through identification with the suffering and humiliating death of Christ on the cross.[31]

In Paul's letters, such as Romans 1:3-4 and 1 Timothy 3:16, which refer to earlier Christian tradition, spirit and flesh are said to be two inseparable parts of the same person.[32] Paul's view, however, differs from the Greek view that regarded salvation as liberation from the body; Paul instead understands final salvation (eschatology) as thoroughly physical, that is, as involving the resurrection of the body. Hence, he can write of the "body of sin" from which human beings need to be redeemed (Rom. 6:6) and of the body of Christ into which believers are incorporated (1 Cor. 12:13). This means that believers are called to present their bodies as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1).[33]

Paul portrays the relationship between Christ and believers through the expression "in Christ." Many attempts have been made to explain its meaning, including its connection with baptism and the Lord's Supper. His letters affirm that continuing participation in the crucified and living body of Christ (Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 11:26) is a clear reality and one greatly hoped for by the congregations he founded.[34] In this context, the body of Christ becomes a concise metaphor, and also a symbol of strength against oppression. Paul advocates communal values of solidarity with the weak. Paul sides with "the weak" as members of the people of

[29]Kittel, Bromiley, and Friedrich, 1060.

[30]Kittel, Bromiley, and Friedrich, 1061–62.

[31]James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary. 38A: Romans 1 - 8 / James D. G. Dunn*, 15. print (Dallas, Tex: Word Books, 2008), 320.

[32]Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, eds., *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*, Nachdr. (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 986.

[33]Richard H. Bell, *The Theology of Paul in Three Dimensions: Dogmatics, Experience, Relevance* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2022), 133–34.

[34]Dube, *Postcolonial Perspectives in African Biblical Interpretations*, 477.

God.[35] For this reason, the author concludes that Paul's thought is relevant for answering the needs of persons with disabilities in giving meaning to the body as an instrument of righteousness. In this context, they are affirmed as full members of the people of God who need to be valued, supported, and empowered in the shared life of faith.

The Context of Romans 5-8

The Letter to the Romans is one of Paul's most important letters. It contains the most systematic development of the apostle's understanding of the gospel.[36] Especially in Romans 6-8, Paul uses a number of the same terms systematically and repeatedly, namely sin, death, law, and flesh (body). Through this, readers can see that Paul's discussion in Romans 6-8 is largely directed at these key words. Sin and death, which have entered the stage of salvation history, continue to dominate life in the old age ("sin reigned in death," 5:21) and become the main theme of the discussion, especially in Romans 6 and the opening section of Romans 7.[37] Another structural feature worth noting in Romans 6-8 is the way Paul sets out a principled statement firmly at the beginning of each chapter, and then immediately clarifies it by showing that the experience of believers has a more complex dimension. The reality of the "already" must be understood in tension with the "not yet": salvation has begun, but its process has not yet reached its fullness.[38]

The assurance and hope of salvation discussed in chapter 5 show that the Christian life involves not only the fulfilment of obligations but also demands a transformation of life. The new life brought by Christ involves the reshaping of the human person. Through baptism, believers are united with the death and resurrection of Christ, so that their existence or "self" undergoes change.[39] For Paul, baptism is a separation from one's original condition ("in Adam"), from one's original inclination ("in the flesh"), and from one's ethnic background ("under the law").[40] Chapter 7 then broadens the understanding of this freedom, especially freedom from the law. Thus, Paul explains the connection between Christian conduct and the status of believers who have been justified and reconciled with God.[41]

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[35]Dube, 478.

[36]James R. Edwards, *Romans: Based on the New International Version*, 7th printing, New International Biblical Commentary New Testament Series 6 (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson [u.a.], 2007), 3.

[37]Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary. 38A*, 301–2.

[38]Dunn, 302–3.

[39]Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: a new translation with introd. and commentary*, The Anchor Bible 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 429.

[40]Fitzmyer and Fitzmyer, 430.

[41]Fitzmyer and Fitzmyer, 429.

Exegesis of Romans 6:1-14

Union with Christ (vv. 1-12)

After setting out the certainty of, and hope for, salvation in chapter 5, Paul affirms that the life and conduct of believers are not merely a matter of fulfilling obligations. More than that, this salvation demands a concrete life response from believers.[42] The flesh tends to be used for self-gratification, so that Satan can quite easily influence the doctrine of salvation by grace.[43] In verse 1 Paul poses a rhetorical question that draws a conclusion, and this sentence runs parallel to the wording of verse 15. This shows that Paul intends to make clear that what he teaches often gives rise to mistaken conclusions among his hearers concerning that doctrine of grace.[44] In verse 2 Paul asserts that believers cannot live in sin any longer, because those who have believed have died to sin. The answer in this verse, "By no means!", parallels verse 15c; Paul declares that a person who has left the world has been cut off from the world. Likewise with sin, those who have been justified are required to sever their relationship with sin. When believers have entered into baptism in Christ, this means that every aspect of their lives, including the body, is in Christ. Baptism, which also means being immersed, signifies that the old nature is left behind.[45] The expression "baptized into his death" emphasizes an idea that Paul expects the Christians in Rome to accept without objection. He assumes that they have understood well a basic truth, namely that baptism, which unites a person with Christ, also means being joined to his death. Thus, a relationship with Christ through baptism cannot be separated from participation in his death.[46]

Therefore, baptism is the key for Christians, because a sinner who has been baptized will die to the power of that sin. Sin no longer has complete dominion over human beings.[47] That is, the "body of sin," or the body controlled by sin, has been done away with. In his exposition Paul uses the word *σῶμα* (sōma) to denote the body; this word is used in a more neutral sense and is qualified by various terms to clarify its meaning. Paul, who was a Jew yet also lived in Greek culture, distinguished between the physical body and the spiritual body. The physical body is the body that is "sown," that is, the one human beings now possess, whereas

[42]Fitzmyer and Fitzmyer, 429.

[43]David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, eds., *Calvin's Commentaries: The Epistles of Paul The Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians* (Grand Raapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1980), 121.

[44]Fitzmyer and Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 432.

[45]R. A. Jaffray, *Tafsiran Surat Roma*, ed. Yosep Kurnia (Bandung, Jawa Barat: Kalam Hidup, 2007), 112–13.

[46]C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Raapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1985), 126.

[47]Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 104.

the spiritual body is the body that will be received in the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:42b-44). Although they differ, the two nevertheless have continuity through the element of the soul.[48] Findings from within Paul's letters, such as Romans 1:3-4 and 1 Timothy 3:16, which refer to earlier Christian tradition, indicate that spirit and flesh are two parts of the person that are not distinct.[49] The word *sōma* is also synonymous with *sarx* (flesh). This means that the body of sin is sin that deceives the natural instincts of human beings. For example, when drowsiness turns into laziness, hunger into greed, and sexual desire into lust.[50] However, having been buried with Christ in baptism (vv. 4a, 5a, 8a), human beings must consider themselves as truly dead to sin (v. 11a).[51] Yet human beings do not only die to sin; they also live in Christ. Human beings have been raised from the penalty of sin, namely death, and now live in the power of his resurrection.[52] Accordingly, the indicative Paul sets forth in verses 1-10 is that believers are people who have been changed. Romans 6:11, in turn, functions as a summary of the indicative stated in the ten preceding verses and bridges the idea to the imperative in the following verses, namely 12-14.[53] It must be emphasized that for Paul, being and action, as well as theology and ethics, are mutually related and reinforce one another, since theological understanding shapes ethics and determines a person's actions. In other words, the theological indicative shapes the ethical imperative, while the ethical imperative confirms the theological indicative. Paul's main argument in this section moves from indicative to imperative, namely that because believers have transferred from the power of sin and the law to Christ and grace, they are called to live in accordance with their new status.[54]

The Body as a Weapon of Righteousness (vv. 13-14)

Paul begins to use the imperative explicitly in verse 12 through the word *οὖν* (oun), which connects the command with the theological indicative in verses 1-11. Because believers have been freed from the power of sin, united with Christ, died to sin, and live for God, they are called to express that identity by not yielding their members to sin, but to God (vv. 12-13).

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[48]Bell, *The Theology of Paul in Three Dimensions*, 133.

[49]Martin and Davids, *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*, 986.

[50]John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World*, Repr, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), 175.

[51]Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans*, 104.

[52]Warren W. Wierbe, *Benar Di Dalam Kristus: Pedoman Praktis Untuk Mengetahui Bagaimana Hidup Benar Dengan Allah, Diri Sendiri, Dan Orang Lain (Seri Tafsiran Surat Roma)*, ed. Ganda Wargasetia, trans. Tinawati Tedjana (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook; Bandung, Jawa Barat: Kalam Hidup, 1993), 58.

[53]Teresa Kuo-Yu Tsui, *Reconsidering Pauline Juxtaposition of Indicative and Imperative (Romans 6:1-14) in Light of Pauline Apocalypticism.*, 2 (The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 2013), 75:300.

[54]Youngju Kwon, "Baptism or Gospel of Grace?: Romans 6 Revisited," *The Expository Times* 128, no. 5 (February 2017): 225, https://doi.org/10.1177/0014524616666709.

This does not mean that the life of believers will always be secure in God's love; rather, believers must struggle against sin and rebel against sin in God.[55] This imperative is then grounded by the indicative in verse 14, that sin will not have dominion over believers because they are no longer under law but under grace. Thus, the transfer of lordship from sin to Christ demands a radical transformation in the life and conduct of believers, as Paul summarizes in Romans 6:12-14.[56] Sin is the weapon used by the Devil to deceive human beings so that they perish. For this reason, Paul admonishes that the mortal body that human beings possess should not be used by the Devil to do evil.[57] The word "mortal" that Paul uses here refers to the physical human body. Not all the desires of the mortal body are desires to sin, as is the case with the body of sin explained above. However, sin can use the mortal body as an alternative means of gaining mastery over human beings. Paul then continues his command by saying, "Do not present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness" (v. 13a). Paul gives this reminder because the body appears to be the principal material of human life. The parts of the body, in the original language here *μέλη* (melē), refer to the various members or organs of the human being, such as eyes, ears, hands, and feet, and also include human abilities or capacities that can very readily be used as instruments of evil.[58] The word *melē* in this verse means presenting oneself in terms of one's capabilities; in short, one's natural abilities. Next, Paul formulates the positive command in a manner different from the preceding negative command, first urging believers to present themselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life. This emphasis is intended to remind them again of their new identity as already mentioned in verse 11, so that the act of presenting their members to God as weapons of righteousness is grounded in the reality of that new life.[59] Paul uses the word *ὅπλα* (hopla), derived from the root *ὅπλον* (hoplon), which means tool or weapon.[60] This word is usually translated as a tool in the context of warfare, that is, a tool used for war, and in the plural it denotes weapons for fighting.[61] The author tends to use the word "weapon," because even in the context of Romans 6 itself, Paul is discussing the warfare between sin and righteousness, so the author prefers the term "weapon" because the body is regarded as a weapon that plays an important role, not merely a tool. In

[55]C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Romans*, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1986), 316.

[56]Kwon, "Baptism or Gospel of Grace?," 225.

[57]R. A. Jaffray, *Tafsiran Surat Roma*, 118.

[58]Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 180.

[59]C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans A Shorter Commentary*, 318.

[60]Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, *Lingustic Key To The Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), 362.

[61]"Arti Kata ὅπλα (hopla)," *Bible Hub*, accessed July 2, 2026, https://biblehub.com/greek/3696.htm.

choosing the word *hopla*, Paul wishes to show not only that the body is used as a weapon for fighting, but also as a weapon for defense. Paul very often portrays his ministry as that of a "soldier of Christ." In Romans 6:13, however, the apostle Paul wishes to emphasize, through the use of the word *hopla*, that the task of being a "soldier of Christ" is the task of everyone who has been baptized.[62]

God desires that believers live in righteousness. The word for righteousness that the apostle Paul uses is *δικαιοσύνης* (dikaiosynēs), meaning "God's approval," which refers to righteousness or that which is approved by God.[63] Through this, the righteousness the apostle Paul has in mind is a relationship with Christ, or a new status in Christ. The new status in view is life in Christ; Paul uses the term *ζῶντας* (zōntas) to denote "living," which is in the present active participle tense and which, in the context of Romans 6:13, means "living after death."[64] The apostle Paul's point is that when believers have died to sin, they must live in righteousness, in the righteousness of Christ. The Bible contains many accounts of people who yielded their bodies to be used by God in fulfilling his purposes. God used the mouths and tongues of the prophets to proclaim his word, while Paul's feet carried him from one city to another to proclaim the Gospel. Likewise, the eyes of the apostle John saw various visions of the future, his ears heard the word of God, and his hands wrote it all down in a book that we can now read.[65]

Paul explains in verse 14 the reason why human beings must offer their bodies as weapons of righteousness. In this verse, he once again portrays sin as a master over slaves. He asserts that believers will no longer be slaves to sin. This is no longer merely a command from the apostle, but becomes a promise. Believers can offer their bodies to God as weapons of righteousness because sin no longer has dominion over them; they have been set free from sin by grace.[66]

Theological Reflection

The exegesis of Romans 6:1-14 in relation to the body as a weapon of righteousness, when set against the disabled body, shows that God does not evaluate human beings on the basis of physical perfection, but on the basis of their relationship with Christ. The disabled body cannot be equated with the "body of sin." In Romans 6:1-14, the body of sin refers to human

[62]Kittel, Bromiley, and Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 293–94.

[63]"Arti Kata δικαιοσύνης (dikaiosynēs)," *Bible Hub*, 2021, https://biblehub.com/greek/1343.htm.

[64]Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, *Lingustic Key To The Greek New Testament*, 362.

[65]Warren W. Wierbe, *Benar Di Dalam Kristus: Pedoman Praktis Untuk Mengetahui Bagaimana Hidup Benar Dengan Allah, Diri Sendiri, Dan Orang Lain (Seri Tafsiran Surat Roma)*, 63.

[66]Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Repr, A Pillar Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans [u.a.], 1994), 258–59.

existence dominated by sin, not to a particular physical, sensory, intellectual, or developmental condition. Paul asserts that the bodies of believers are called to be weapons of righteousness, and this calling applies to the whole community of believers. Romans 6 does not evaluate the body on the basis of physical productivity. Persons with disabilities are not merely objects of the church's ministry, but subjects of faith who help shape the church's understanding of the body, grace, weakness, and righteousness. Thus, persons with disabilities retain full dignity, worth, and role in the work of God. The disabled body is not a body of lesser value before the Lord, but part of the diversity of God's creation that can also be used to manifest his glory.

Romans 6:1-14 understands the body on the basis of participation in Christ. Union with the death and resurrection of Christ shows that the identity of believers is no longer determined by bodily weakness, but by the grace of God. Paul emphasizes that sin no longer has dominion over the bodies of believers. In the context of disability, this understanding is important for rejecting views that regard disability as a curse, a punishment, or a sign of spiritual imperfection. The bodies of persons with disabilities are also bodies redeemed by Christ and called to live in righteousness. The "members" in Romans 6:1-14 need not be understood solely as perfect biological function. The redeemed body is a body that God can use, including a body that is limited, wounded, or different. Therefore, the church is called to abandon discriminatory ways of thinking that often marginalize persons with disabilities from ministry and from the life of the faith community. Physical perfection is not a standard for undertaking ministry.

This reflection also shows that the body as a weapon of righteousness is not always related to physical strength, but to a willingness to live for God. Persons with physical disabilities can still manifest love, witness of faith, hope, and service through the abilities they have. Paul's concept of the body in this respect becomes highly inclusive, since the body is understood as a means of encounter with God and neighbor, not merely a biological instrument evaluated by its perfection.

The reflection on Romans 6:1-14 affirms that every believer's body, including the disabled body, is called to be presented to God as a weapon of righteousness. This calling is based not on physical perfection, but on God's grace, which raises human beings to new life in Christ. The church therefore needs to build a spirituality that values the diversity of human bodies and gives persons with disabilities space to serve, to lead, and to grow together as the body of Christ.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of Romans 6:1-14, it may be concluded that the concept of the body as a "weapon of righteousness" in the thought of the apostle Paul is not confined to the meaning of perfect biological function, but concerns the human relationship with Christ through his death and resurrection. Through union with the death and resurrection of Christ, believers experience a radical change of identity: from living under the power of sin to living in righteousness. This transformation is not only spiritual, but also encompasses the dimension of the body as a concrete means of living out faith.

Through the perspective of disability theology, which affirms that the meaning of the body cannot be limited by standards of normality, every human being, including persons with disabilities, retains dignity as the image of God and is able to participate in the work of righteousness through his grace. Thus, disability is not a theological obstacle, but part of the diversity of creation that in fact enriches our understanding of how God works within human limitation. Romans 6:1-14 speaks not only of liberation from sin, but also opens space for a new understanding of the body as a gift of God that can be used to manifest his righteousness amid all human diversity. Finally, this study offers a more inclusive perspective on Romans 6 and at the same time contributes to the development of disability theology in the context of the church in Indonesia.

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